



Safest People, Safest Places

Local Government Act 1972

A Meeting of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington will be held in the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters on Friday 15 September 2023 at 10.00 am to consider the following business:-

PART A

1. Declarations of interest, if any
If Members are aware of a private or personal conflict of interest in relation to any items on the Agenda, this should be disclosed at this stage or when the conflict of interest arises during consideration of an item in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Members
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 (Pages 3 - 6)
3. Current Correspondence - Report of Director or Emergency Response (Pages 7 - 20)
4. Fire Standards - Report of Director of Community Risk Management (Pages 21 - 26)
5. Draft Statement of Assurance - Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Pages 27 - 44)
6. Appointment of Independent Person for Audit and Finance Committee - Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Pages 45 - 46)
7. Business Fire Safety - Report of Business Fire Safety Member Champion (Pages 47 - 52)
8. Retained Duty System Member Champion Report - Report of RDS Member Champion (Pages 53 - 58)
9. Changes to Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975 and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) eligibility - Report of Director of People and Organisational Development (Pages 59 - 68)
10. NFCC Culture Statement and Action Plan - Report of Director of People and Organisational Development (Pages 69 - 72)

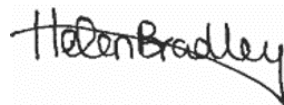
11. Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan - Report of Director of Community Risk Management (Pages 73 - 76)
12. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgent to warrant consideration
13. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

14. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

PURSUANT to the provisions of the above named Act, **I HEREBY SUMMON YOU** to attend the said meeting



Helen Bradley
Clerk to the Combined Fire Authority
for County Durham and Darlington

County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

TO: The Members of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, A Batey, R Bell, J Blakey, J Cairns, C Hampson, N Jones, B Kellett, L Kennedy, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, I McLean, E Peeke, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, P Sexton, J Shuttleworth and S Zair

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors A Anderson, G Lee, D Ray and M Snedker

Minutes of a **meeting** of the **Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington** held at **Fire and Rescue HQ, Durham** on **18 July 2023** at **10.00 am**.

Present:

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, A Batey, R Bell, J Blakey, J Cairns, N Jones, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Peeke, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, K Shaw (Substitute for I McLean), J Shuttleworth, S Zair

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors A Anderson, G Lee, D Ray and M Snedker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Hampson, B Kellet and I McLean.

Independent Persons:

Independent Persons to be appointed.

A1 Chief Fire Officer Commendation

Fire Control Operator Sue Smart was awarded a Chief Fire Officers Commendation in recognition of the concern, compassion and perseverance demonstrated which resulted in the successful rescue of two young girls from a precarious situation.

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

The Chair congratulated the Service on being ranked 26th best apprenticeship employer in the country, and one of only two Fire and Rescue Services out of the 100.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair (for copy see file of minutes).

A4 Current Correspondence

The Authority received an update from the Director of Emergency Response in relation to current correspondence received from government and other bodies relevant to the Authority and the status of each (for copy see file of minutes).

A5 Appointment of Committee Membership

The Authority received a report of the Clerk which sought approval of the Committee membership for 2023/24 (for copy see file of minutes).

The report was moved and seconded.

Resolved:

- a) The Committee membership for 2023/24 as outlined in appendix A was **approved**.
- b) The Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority and the appropriate group leader be authorised to make any changes to the Committees that may arise during 2023/24 was **agreed**.

A6 Member Champions

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided details of Officer contacts for each Member Champion role (for copy see file of minutes).

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that nominations for the two vacant positions had been received since publication of the papers. Cllr S Quinn would take the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion role and Cllr J Shuttleworth would take the HMICFRS role.

The report was moved and seconded.

Resolved:

The list of Member Champions outlined in appendix A was **approved**.

A7 Notes of the Performance Committee 30 June 2023

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Performance Committee which provided an update on the discussions and recommendations of the Committee held on 30 June 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Director of Community Risk Management clarified that, following debate at the committee meeting, the implementation date for the change in response to Automatic Fire Alarms had been amended to Monday 2 October 2023.

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

A8 Community Safety and Arson Reduction

The Authority considered a report of the Community Safety and Arson Reduction Member Champion which provided an update on community safety and arson reduction activity during 2022/23 (for copy see file of minutes).

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

A9 Estates Update

The Authority Received a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the latest position in relation to the Estates Improvement Programme and other matters relating to Service wide Estates (for copy see file of minutes).

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

A10 Any other Business

Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

A11 Exclusion to the Public

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

Part B

B12 Any Other Business

Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

CLOSE OF MEETING

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Current Correspondence: July 2023 – September 2023

No	Release Date	Subject	Summary	Action CFA Report	Action CFA Response	Action Info
1	6/7/23	Letter from Rt Hon Chris Philp MP, Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire	Letter regarding the legislative change on criminal record checks for fire and rescue authority (FRA) employees. Appendix A	X		
2	19/7/23	Letter from Rt Hon Chris Philp MP, Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire	Response to letter from Cllr John Shuttleworth and CFO Helps regarding CDDFRS funding challenges. Appendix B			X
3	19/7/23	Letter from HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM	Letter regarding thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services (FRS). Appendix C			X

4	25/7/23	Letter from FRS Inspections Portfolio Director Alex Hill	Alex Hill informing FRS that Richard Jolley will be his successor from 4 September. Appendix D			X
5	31/7/23	Letter from HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM	Update on the progress of the third round of FRS inspections. Appendix E Appendix F			X



6th July 2022

Dear Chief Fire Officers, Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities, and Partners,

Criminal Record Checks – Legislative Change

I am writing to you on the vital matter of improving criminal record checks on fire and rescue authority employees, to urge action in the interests of safeguarding our services and our communities.

Appropriate criminal records checks are crucial to allow our fire and rescue services to understand and mitigate risk, to protect colleagues and the public, and to support high standards of integrity.

For that reason, I am pleased to inform you that from today (6th July) all fire and rescue authority (FRA) employees are eligible for Standard Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. This is due to the inclusion of FRA employees in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order 1975. This new eligibility augments existing access to Basic DBS checks for all FRA employees and Enhanced DBS checks with a check of the relevant adults' or children's barred list for those employees who undertake certain activities.

I am also pleased that the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has produced guidance on use of DBS checks in fire and rescue services and related matters. The guidance, available on the safeguarding pages of UKFRS.com, provides information regarding:

- DBS eligibility, drafted with the support of DBS, to assist in determining the level of DBS check that may be appropriate for individuals undertaking various roles;
- Guidance and a framework for conducting a risk assessment of an individual with information found on their DBS certificate; and
- Managing allegations guidance in relation to concerns of harm relating to FRA employees.

The guidance clearly indicates firefighters' eligibility for standard DBS criminal record checks or for enhanced DBS checks (with a check of the relevant barred list) if undertaking any other duties that would bring their role into regulated activity. This applies whether the firefighter is full time, apprentice, or on-call and applies whether someone is a new or existing employee. I expect services to make proper use of this eligibility.

From this guidance, the Safeguarding Fire Standard and the National Framework, the expectation on fire and rescue services is clear. You must have appropriate arrangements in place in order to comply with these expectations.

I strongly encourage you to engage with this guidance and the additional implementation support being provided by NFCC and DBS via a series of workshops, details of which will be communicated by NFCC shortly.

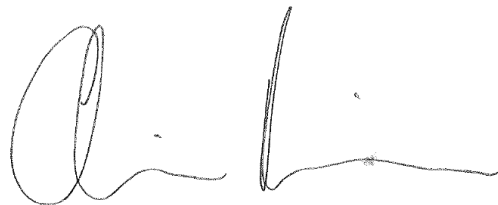
Further, the recent recommendations from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) relating to background checks reinforce the importance of having appropriate measures in place.

I am delighted that we are meeting an HMICFRS recommendation by creating new eligibility for Standard DBS Checks. I expect everyone in the fire sector to take similarly prompt action following the HMICFRS Culture and Values Spotlight report.

Another key HMICFRS recommendation was that appropriate DBS check requests were submitted for existing staff, new staff and volunteers. I would strongly encourage you to use the eligibility, guidance and workshops to support your work towards this recommendation and I understand that HMICFRS have already started monitoring progress against their recommendations.

We all want to see consistently high standards of integrity in our fire and rescue services. To that end, I would welcome your ongoing support in ensuring that all fire and rescue services are making proper use of criminal records checks.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Philp', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire



Councillor John Shuttleworth
Chair of County Durham and Darlington Combined Fire Authority
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

DECS Reference: MIN/0958866/23

19 July 2023

Dear Councillor Shuttleworth,

Thank you for your letter of 21 June jointly signed by Mr Steve Helps, Chief Fire Officer and Councillor John Shuttleworth, Chair of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority (CDDFRS) regarding the funding challenges the service currently faces.

As you are aware, the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) for 2023/24 confirms that fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.6 billion. Standalone fire and rescue authorities, including CDDFRS, will see an increase in core spending power of 8.1% in cash terms compared to the previous year. LGFS also confirms that Revenue Support Grant and Baseline Funding Levels will increase in line with September Consumer Price Index (10.1%). This represents a good deal for fire and rescue and will help to manage their inflationary pressures.

In addition to this, the Government announced a £5 core council tax referendum threshold for standalone fire and rescue authorities for 2023/24. This precept flexibility was granted having carefully considered the need to tackle immediate pressures on local services, alongside the need to protect residents from excessive council tax bill rises. This will raise circa £67 million if all standalone fire and rescue authorities choose to make full use of the flexibility.

Despite these increases, I note that CDDFRS still faces a shortfall in funding, which you have ascribed to be a result of inflation. To address this, I note your request for an increase in Government funding and precept flexibility of £5 for 2024/25 and 2025/26. As you will be aware, local government funding allocations and council tax referendum principles for next year will be announced by DLUHC at the 2024/25 Provisional LGFS, expected this autumn.

Ahead of this, the Home Office will be working with the National Fire Chiefs Council to review evidence of inflationary pressures (collected through the Inflation Pressures Survey) facing fire and rescue services.

If you have not already done so, I would encourage CDDFRS to complete the survey. It is also worthwhile for Mr Helps' officials to get in touch with mine to further discuss the challenges faced by CDDFRS. I would of course be interested to be kept up to date of the outcome.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Philp', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP



Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

23 Stephenson Street
Birmingham B2 4BH

Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue
Services

Sent by email:

Chief fire officers of England

19 July 2023

Dear colleague,

Thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct

On 13 July 2023, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to undertake a thematic inspection of the handling of [misconduct](#) in fire and rescue services in England. This commission builds on the findings in our [spotlight report on culture and values in the fire service](#) published in March 2023 and other high-profile reports of unacceptable behaviour.

We have published the [terms of reference](#) for this inspection. They include:

- the extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct;
- the effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied;
- how confident fire and rescue service staff are in raising concerns and in misconduct processes; and
- the role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.

To support the inspection, we will request data from all 44 fire and rescue services through our regular autumn data collection. As part of our evidence gathering, we will also issue a staff survey to all 44 services.

Services that would have received a staff survey for their scheduled inspection between September 2023 and January 2024 will receive it in September 2023 to avoid overlap. We will write to you to confirm this.

We will also inspect a sample of fire and rescue services to understand the handling of misconduct more thoroughly. The ten we have selected will make sure we gather evidence from a range of services, large and small, rural and urban. They will also cover the different governance models that operate throughout England and have been selected to avoid overlap with scheduled service inspections.

As this is a thematic inspection, the evidence will be used to inform our understanding of the handling of misconduct in general. We won't be publishing reports on individual services or making graded judgments.

I will write to the services we will inspect shortly, setting out our timetable and the documents and data we will require.

We will publish our report in June 2024.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RW', written in a cursive style.

HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services



Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

23 Stephenson Street
Birmingham B2 4BH
Direct line: 07768 533560
Email: alex.hill@hmicfrs.gov.uk

Alex Hill
Portfolio Director
FRS Inspections

Sent by email:

Chief Fire Officers
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners
Police and Crime Commissioners
Lead Fire Authority Members
Locally elected Mayors
Other FRS interested parties

25 July 2023

Dear colleague,

HMICFRS Update – FRS Inspections Portfolio Director

I am writing to let you know that I will be moving on from the FRS Portfolio Director role in August.

I will be handing over to my successor, Richard Jolley, through August and he will start full time in the role on his return from leave on Monday 4th September. Roy and I are delighted to welcome Richard to the role.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank you all for the support you have given me during my time as Portfolio Director for FRS inspections. It has been a privilege to work with you all and to be part of the work of the fire and rescue sector. I am also extremely proud of the contribution that we have made as an inspectorate.

Finally, I would like to make one last familiar plea to you all. Please continue to support your staff to take up secondments to the inspectorate. The experience and knowledge that secondees bring is hugely important to our work, and our team succeeds because of the range of skills and experience we have access to. I also know, from many of those that have worked here, that time in the inspectorate provides a unique development opportunity, particularly for those who have the potential to progress to more senior roles. I therefore very much believe that this is to the benefit of everyone involved.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Hill (by email)

Portfolio Director
FRS Inspections

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Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

23 Stephenson Street
Birmingham B2 4BH
Direct line: 020 3513 0523
Email: roy.wilsher@hmicfrs.gov.uk

HMI Roy Wilsher
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and
Rescue Services

Chief Fire Officers
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners
Lead Fire Authority Members
Locally elected Mayors
Other FRS interested parties

31 July 2023

Dear colleague,

Fire and Rescue Service Update

Round 3

I write to inform you on progress of our third round of fire and rescue (FRS) inspections.

Inspection activity is now underway for the first 12 services in the programme. A further update to the inspection schedule for round 3 is set out in **Annex A**. This running order may be subject to change, which could be due to several reasons, including changes in performance or risk. Services affected by this will be informed of any planned changes at the earliest opportunity.

Further to my letter on 19 July 2023, advising of our intention to conduct a thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct allegations. Any service who would have received a staff survey for their scheduled inspection between September 2023 and January 2024 will now receive their HMICFRS staff survey week commencing 4th September 2023 rather than alongside the document request. This is to avoid any conflict and confusion caused by having multiple staff surveys open at the same time.

Please contact your Chief of Staff, Mick Mason, michael.mason1@hmicfrs.gov.uk or Jo Hayden, jo.hayden1@hmicfrs.gov.uk, in the first instance if you wish to discuss it.

Progress against recommendations

HMICFRS routinely monitors progress against the recommendations that we make to fire and rescue services in our inspection reports. From September 2023 the progress

services have made against recommendations issued to them in their individual inspection reports will be published on our website. The website will show the recommendations and whether or not they have been completed by the service or remain open. Please note that the recommendations made in the Values and Culture spotlight report, published earlier this year, will not be included in this update though will be included in future updates.

The status of recommendations is currently updated twice yearly, in September and March.

Sharing information with HMIs

Can I also take this opportunity to remind you to raise any issues or allegations that come to light which may have a significant impact upon your service directly with your HMI. For example, an allegation of gross misconduct that has the potential to attract adverse media attention or impact upon the public confidence in the service and its staff. Similarly matters which affect your ability to keep the public safe, such as significant financial or operational pressures.

Finally I would like to remind you that Alex Hill, FRS Portfolio Director, will be leaving us next month. Alex will be replaced by Richard Jolley from 7 August 2023. I would like to thank Alex for his hard work and support since I joined the inspectorate, I wish him well for the future.

Should you need any further information please contact either me or your Chief of Staff.

Thank you for your continued support of our inspection programme.

Yours sincerely,



HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

FRS Inspection Schedule

(w/c = week commencing, * = Staff survey to be sent w/c 4th September 2023)

	Service	Document Request, Self-Assessment & Staff Survey	Inspection Fieldwork starts
1	Bedfordshire	w/c 09-Jan-23	w/c 27-Feb-23
2	Cambridgeshire	w/c 09-Jan-23	w/c 27-Feb-23
3	Cheshire	w/c 09-Jan-23	w/c 06-Mar-23
4	Warwickshire	w/c 06-Feb-23	w/c 27-Mar-23
5	Cornwall	w/c 06-Feb-23	w/c 27-Mar-23
6	Surrey	w/c 06-Feb-23	w/c 27-Mar-23
7	Lincolnshire	w/c 20-Mar-23	w/c 08-May-23
8	Buckinghamshire	w/c 20-Mar-23	w/c 08-May-23
9	Merseyside	w/c 20-Mar-23	w/c 08-May-23
10	Avon	w/c 01-May-23	w/c 19-Jun-23
11	Hereford & Worcester	w/c 01-May-23	w/c 19-Jun-23
12	Northumberland	w/c 01-May-23	w/c 19-Jun-23
13	Greater Manchester	w/c 24-July-23	w/c 11-Sept-23
14	Norfolk	w/c 24-July-23	w/c 11-Sept-23
15	Essex	w/c 24-July-23	w/c 11-Sept-23
16	Gloucestershire	w/c 11-Sept-23*	w/c 13-Nov-23
17	West Yorkshire	w/c 06-Nov-23*	w/c 08-Jan-24
18	Oxfordshire	w/c 06-Nov-23*	w/c 08-Jan-24
19	Northamptonshire	w/c 29-Jan-24*	w/c 18-Mar-24
20	Nottinghamshire	w/c 29-Jan-24*	w/c 18-Mar-24
21	Staffordshire	w/c 29-Jan-24*	w/c 18-Mar-24
22	West Sussex	w/c 11-Mar-24	w/c 29-Apr-24
23	Devon & Somerset	w/c 11-Mar-24	w/c 29-Apr-24
24	Tyne & Wear	w/c 11-Mar-24	w/c 29-Apr-24
25	London	w/c 29-Apr-24	w/c 24-Jun-24
26	Shropshire	w/c 29-Apr-24	w/c 24-Jun-24
27	Lancashire	w/c 06-May-24	w/c 24-Jun-24
28	Humberside	w/c 01-Jul-24	w/c 02-Sept-24
29	Hertfordshire	w/c 01-Jul-24	w/c 02-Sept-24
30	Suffolk	w/c 01-Jul-24	w/c 02-Sept-24
31	Isles of Scilly	w/c 29-Jul-24	w/c 16-Sept-24
32	Cleveland	w/c 19-Aug-24	w/c 07-Oct-24
33	Leicestershire	w/c 19-Aug-24	w/c 07-Oct-24
34	Royal Berkshire	w/c 19-Aug-24	w/c 07-Oct-24
35	Dorset & Wiltshire	w/c 30-Sept-24	w/c 18-Nov-24
36	West Midlands	w/c 30-Sept-24	w/c 18-Nov-24
37	Derbyshire	w/c 30-Sept-24	w/c 18-Nov-24
38	East Sussex	w/c 04-Nov-24	w/c 06-Jan-25
39	North Yorkshire	w/c 04-Nov-24	w/c 06-Jan-25
40	Hampshire & Isle of Wight	w/c 09-Dec-24	w/c 10-Feb-25
41	South Yorkshire	w/c 09-Dec-24	w/c 10-Feb-25
42	Cumbria	w/c 09-Dec-24	w/c 10-Feb-25
43	County Durham & Darlington	w/c 20-Jan-25	w/c 10-Mar-25
44	Kent	w/c 20-Jan-25	w/c 10-Mar-25

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Fire Standards

Report of Director of Community Risk Management

Purpose of Report

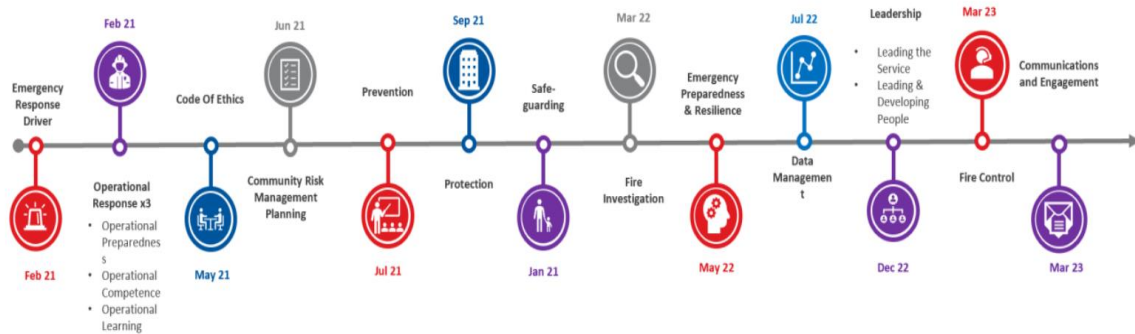
1. The purpose of this report is to update members on the National Fire Standards and to provide an update on the alignment of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) against the published standards.

Background

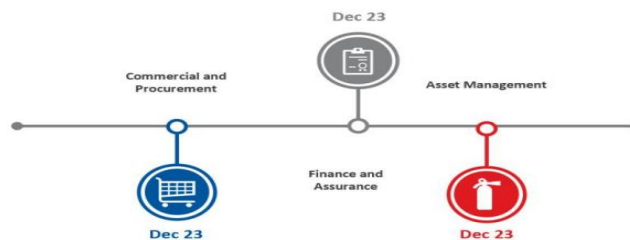
2. As part of the reforms for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in England and the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, a duty was placed on all fire authorities to implement professional standards and for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to have regards to those standards as part of their inspections.
3. The Fire Standards Board (FSB) was created in 2019 to develop and introduce new standards to the fire sector, thus improving professionalism and driving sector improvement, with the first four standards published in February 2021.
4. The role of the FSB is to oversee the identification, organisation, development, and maintenance of Fire Standards for FRS in England. The intention being to help identify what good looks like and drive continual improvement across the Services for the benefit of the profession, the FRS and the communities served by them.
5. Adoption is not mandatory however the standards are considered to be best practice and HMICFRS Inspection programme will be expected to increasingly give due regard to compliance with the standards. CDDFRS has taken the strategic decision to adopt all Fire Standards.

Published Fire Standards

6. There are now sixteen approved and published Fire Standards shown on the timeline diagram below.



7. The FSB is currently consulting on the three new standards shown on the timeline diagram below, however, at this stage it is not definite that these will be published.



8. The final area outstanding for consideration for a Fire Standard is Digital and Information Technology (IT). It is intended that work will start on this Standard early 2024.

9. Each Fire Standard describes:

- What is required to meet the standard.
- What the benefits are of achieving the standard.
- Legal requirements.
- Linked Qualifications, Accreditations or Fire Standards.
- Guidance or supporting materials.

Benefits of Fire Standards

10. The benefits of implementing the Fire Standards are to:

- Drive service improvement for local people, provide re-assurance to our communities.
- Assist Governing bodies and operational leaders in assessing local performance.
- Support local change activity and addressing issues (culture change, leadership).
- Consistency in approach to improve competence and decrease organisational risk.
- Generate more positive working cultures.
- Enable services to collaborate effectively, with others nationally as well as across border.

Implementation Support

11. To help with implementation of both Fire Standards and other National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) products the Service is supported by an Implementation Liaison Manager, Jo Hardy, who provides input from a national perspective.
12. A range of workshops and virtual sessions are being held to support FRS with implementation of the published Fire Standards. These are made available to relevant officers within CDDFRS to ensure knowledge and understanding is embedded at all levels of the Service in context to the Fire Standards.
13. The implementation support provided enables ongoing liaison between the Service and the NFCC to review progress and identify innovative ways to embed the Standards and other relevant NFCC products.

CDDFRS Governance Arrangements

14. To ensure the Fire Standards are consistently applied, reviewed and monitored, a governance framework has been put in place.
15. To drive forward the application of the standards requires involvement of the Director of Community Risk Management (CRM) as the strategic lead, supported by the Project Assurance Manager who is the conduit between strategic direction and operational delivery.
16. The current work undertaken to capture evidence and performance across the Service is facilitated by the Project Assurance Manager through an in-depth process of data collection working with Standard leads. This provides a more detailed analysis which is fit for purpose for the requirements of Service improvement and HMICFRS.
17. To support the governance framework central monitoring and reporting of progress is facilitated through the Project Board, chaired by the Director of People and Organisational Development which meets on a six-weekly cycle.
18. Adoption of the Fire Standards for FRS in England has also been integrated into CDDFRS Assets and Assurance Strategy 2023-26.

CDDFRS Implementation

19. The process of implementation for Fire Standards has been refreshed with a greater emphasis on engagement, support and progress. This approach has yielded the benefits of increased awareness of interdependencies between the Standards. It is anticipated that by continuing with this approach silo working will be reduced and the value of using nationally benchmarked standards recognised.
20. Each approved Fire Standard is introduced into the Service in a systematic and consistent way. The process consists of four phases:
 - Phase 1 Interpretation
 - Phase 2 Gap Analysis
 - Phase 3 Action Planning
 - Phase 4 Maintenance
21. When a new Standard is published the Project Assurance Manager engages the responsible lead to interpret the standard, associated guidance and supporting information.

22. Using this information, an initial assessment is undertaken utilising implementation tools provided by the NFCC to complete a gap analysis to identify where the Service is meeting the Standard, or areas for improvement and development. When completed, it provides a benchmark from which progress over time can be measured.
23. Any issues flagged through the process will, if necessary, be escalated to the Project Board.

CDDFRS Current Position

24. The Code of Ethics and Emergency Response Driving Fire Standards have been fully implemented and a maintenance phase is being developed.
25. A gap analysis and action plan were successfully completed for Community Risk Management Planning, Emergency Preparedness and Resilience, Fire Investigation, Operational Competence, Operational Learning and Operational Preparedness. With the introduction of the new Implementation Liaison Manager an assurance exercise is ongoing by the Project Assurance Manager and identified leads to challenge and develop the evidence and journey for these Standards.
26. Work on the gap analysis for Communication Engagement and Consultation, Data Management, Fire Control, Prevention, Protection and Safeguarding and Leading and Developing People is underway.
27. Following recent national reports, the 'Leading the Service' Fire Standard is a welcome framework for this area. The Service has approached initial implementation of this Standard from a Benefits Realisation perspective and have used the NFCC Maturity Model for Leadership Development engaging with the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and a range of internal stakeholder groups at different levels including future leaders and Service Management Team (SMT) to gain a Service wide view on the current position. The NFCC is supportive of the approach adopted and has requested a case study to demonstrate use of the Maturity Model as part of the Fire Standard journey.
28. Through this work the Service believe a more accurate position across all of the Standards will be achieved, recognising areas for improvement and development and areas of good practice. In particular, this workstream is enabling the Service to inform and assure existing and new Service development plans.

Collaboration

29. A Fire Standards Implementation Leads Network has been established by the NFCC Implementation Liaison Manager providing an opportunity to connect with other FRS to share learning opportunities and implementation experiences.
30. CDDFRS has recently engaged in a Peer Review with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service focusing on Service Improvement Systems, Organisational Learning and Response Reality Testing.
31. To support services continuing their Fire Standards journey, CDDFRS are hosting a session to focus on the assurance part of Fire Standards implementation. The session will be held on 27 October 2023 attended by Fire Standard leads from FRS in the Northern Region.

Review of Fire Standards

32. The FSB has a periodic review process in place following publication of a Fire Standard. The first Fire Standards to undergo the agreed periodic review are as follows:

- Operational Preparedness
- Operational Competence
- Operational Learning
- Emergency Response Driver

33. The recent HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Culture and Values identified a number of recommendations for the FSB. In light of this, they are reviewing the following standards:

- Safeguarding
- Leading the Service
- Leading and Developing People

Recommendations

34. Members are requested to:

- a. **Note** the contents of this report.
- b. **Receive** further reports as appropriate.

Claire Gibson, Project Assurance Manager, 0191 3755629

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Statement of Assurance 2022-23

Report of Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with the 2022-23 Statement of Assurance (SoA) for approval prior to publication.

Background

2. Guidance has been issued via the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012) on the content of the SoA.
3. The approval and publication of a SoA is a National Framework requirement.

The Statement of Assurance (SoA)

4. The SoA forms part of the Authority's Assurance Framework and complements the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which will be approved by the Audit and Finance Committee later in the year.
5. To avoid duplication, where assurances are provided by the AGS or other published governance documentation, a hyperlink reference has been made within the SoA as opposed to repeating information.
6. The 2022-23 SoA is attached at Appendix A.

Recommendation

7. Members are recommended to **approve** the 2022-23 Statement of Assurance.

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County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance 2022-2023



Safest People, Safest Places

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Foreword

Welcome to our annual Statement of Assurance. This document provides you, our communities, with the reassurance that in 2022/23 we met all our commitments to you as we strive to have the 'safest people and safest places' in every part of our Service area.

During 2022/23 the fire and rescue sector continued to face significant challenges and risks, including an increase in deliberate fires and the ongoing impact of high energy costs and inflation. As a result, we have implemented innovative ways to deliver our core functions, as well as continuing to develop our people and improve our leadership and culture.

We continue to support strong partnership working and to collaborate with our colleagues in the Police, Ambulance Service and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, as well as taking a leading role in the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Our work with the LRF this year has led to stronger relationships with other organisations in fields such as health, transport and the voluntary sector.

During 2022/23 we continued to invest in our community safety activity through our emergency response crews and Community Safety Officers who carry out home visits to give safety advice and install smoke alarms. We also operate an innovative and productive business model where crews carry out fire safety audits of businesses which complements the activity of our dedicated Business Fire Safety Team.

We consulted with our communities on future ways of working from February 2023 for 12 weeks as part of the review of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and listened to their views to help us decide how best to use our resources to meet the risks faced.

As Chief Fire Officer of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and Chair of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority we are satisfied that, during 2022/23 our business has been conducted in accordance with proper standards and law and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Additionally, we are satisfied that the Authority has done everything within its power to comply with the requirements of the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

Steve Helps
Chief Fire Officer

Cllr John Shuttleworth
Chair, Combined Fire Authority

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Purpose

The Statement of Assurance confirms the adequacy of the arrangements of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) in managing its financial, governance and operational obligations for the year 2022/2023. It also evaluates the adherence of the Service to the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018.

How do we make our judgements?

In looking at our obligations we have made a judgement on each based on the following:

Fully	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidance are being consistently met.
Substantially	Where legislation and guidance are not being met there is minimal risk to the Fire Authority discharging associated duties and powers for the provision of a fire and rescue service.
Partially	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidelines are being inconsistently applied exposing the Fire Authority to considerable risk in discharging the necessary duties and powers associated with the provision of a fire and rescue service.

Financial Assurance

It is the view of CDDFRS that, at the end of the 2022/23 financial year, requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were **fully met**.

How did we show this?

The Fire Authority places significant importance in ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body.

An annual, independent audit is undertaken to review the Fire Authority's Statement of Accounts, which summarise the financial position of the Fire Authority at the end of the financial year and performance throughout the year.

During 2022/23, the Service undertook a range of "reasonable worst case" planning assumptions exercises based on differing levels of government funding, aligning them to fluctuations in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and highlighting possible options to the Fire Authority for their scrutiny.

The primary function of the external auditor is to express an opinion as to whether the Fire Authority's financial statements are free from material misstatement. However, the auditor also has responsibility for assessing whether the Fire Authority has reliable systems of control in place and the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

The draft 2022/23 Statement of Accounts is published on the Service website. [You can read the Statement of Accounts here.](#)

The accounts are subject to audit by independent external auditors who provide a view on the information contained in the accounts being 'true and fair'. The auditor also considers whether the Authority has demonstrated it has delivered value for money prior to signing the audit statement. The audit of the 2022/23 accounts is ongoing and is expected to be completed by September 2023.

Further information about how the Service implements financial controls can be found in our [Constitution](#).

Governance Assurance

It is the view of CDDFRS that, at the end of the 2022/23 financial year, requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were **fully met**.

How did we show this?

Our governance arrangements

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority is a combined authority created by the Durham Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996.

Membership comprises of twenty-one elected councillors from Durham County Council and four from Darlington Borough Council. The Fire Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities, including the scrutiny of the Service as a whole. The Fire Authority is responsible for setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Service.

You can [find out more about the Fire Authority on our website](#).

Our legal responsibilities

The primary legislation governing the Fire and Rescue Service is covered by the following:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Service \(Emergencies\)\(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Police and Crime Act 2017](#)

The main legislative provisions which determine the functions of the Fire Authority include the following:

- Promoting fire safety
- Extinguishing fires and protecting life and property
- Rescuing people from road traffic collisions (and a large range of other risks determined through the Emergencies Order)
- Responding to other types of emergencies
- Entering into 'reinforcement' schemes with other fire authorities for mutual assistance

- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning, and in this regard to:
 - Put in place emergency plans
 - Put in place business continuity management arrangements
 - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
 - Share information with other local responders to enhance coordination
 - Co-operate with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency.

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. The National Framework outlines the high-level expectations although it does not require a detailed account of operational matters which are best determined locally.

The key priorities established by the Framework are:

- The identification and assessment of a range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or a national nature;
- The provision for prevention and protection activities and the appropriate response to incidents within County Durham and Darlington;
- Collaboration with the communities of County Durham and Darlington and a wide range of partners both locally and nationally to deliver a fire and rescue service;
- Ensuring effective business continuity arrangements are in place which include the provision of national resilience assets;
- Being accountable to the communities of County Durham and Darlington for the service we provide through an annual Statement of Assurance.

[The full 2018 document can be found at the following link: **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England**](#)

The Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Fire Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised.

Management of Risk

The National Framework requires the formulation of an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which captures and publishes the Fire Authority's plans to meet current and future risks to our communities. To align the plan with the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) Framework the Service now describes the IRMP as a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The framework provides that the Fire Authority must hold their Chief Fire Officer to account for delivery of the Fire and Rescue Service, and that the Fire Authority must have in place arrangements to ensure that their decisions are open to scrutiny.

When preparing the IRMP/CRMP we follow a process introduced by the Government to provide a modern, flexible approach to the provision of Fire and Rescue Services based upon locally identified need, aligned to risk and demand. The assessment of risk is the initial stage of the IRMP/CRMP process and requires quantitative and qualitative analysis of hazards and threats. The processes we have adopted use a combination of risk modelling software, historical data and professional judgement to make an assessment of impact and consequence with likelihood that an event will occur, ensuring that a thorough analysis has been completed. We take into account local community and risk information by creating Station Plans which feed into our risk management process. We outline our approach, the risks and the associated analysis in our Community Risk Profile (CRP).

The IRMP/CRMP delivers on our analysis of the CRP, that is aligned to our Service Strategies to effectively manage the risks identified over the period.

[You can read our current Community Risk Profile here.](#)

[You can read our current CRMP here.](#)

When setting the Service's strategic priorities, the Fire Authority refer to the IRMP/CRMP to ensure that our resources are directed to where the risk analysis tell us they are needed.

Organisational governance

The Fire Authority, as a public body, places significant emphasis on ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

Governance is concerned with how the Fire Authority manages its affairs on a day-to-day basis including business practices, standards of conduct and overall management procedures.

The Fire Authority operates in accordance with a Code of Corporate Governance that sets out the approach it takes to ensuring it operates in accordance with appropriate standards and frameworks. [The Fire Authority's Code of Corporate Governance is available to read here.](#)

To demonstrate how we have met our governance obligations the Fire Authority publishes an Annual Governance Statement that sets out the key governance issues that have been identified during the financial year. The Fire Authority works towards mitigating these risks as part of its approach to ensuring an effective governance framework is in place. [You can read our Annual Governance Statement here.](#)

The Fire Authority is committed to being fully transparent in accordance with the principles of good governance and legal requirements. [You can see our full transparency information on our website by clicking here.](#)

Operational Assurance

It is the view of CDDFRS that, at the end of the 2022/23 financial year, the requirements associated with our operational functions were **fully met**.

How did we show this?

Our services to the community

The primary legislation associated with fire and rescue services in England and Wales is the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which sets out the statutory responsibilities of the Authority for providing a FRS that has the people, equipment and training needed to carry out the following core functions:

Promoting fire safety (community safety and arson reduction) – the provision of information, advice and encouragement on the prevention of fires, restricting the spread of fires in buildings and the means of escape from fires. We use our data and information from partner agencies to identify members of the public who are at the greatest risk from fire and we deliver Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) to support them.

Additionally, we work closely with partner agencies such as Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council to reduce deliberate fires and arson. These fires are often associated with anti-social behaviour so a partnership approach to their reduction is more impactful. We also carry out fire safety, road safety and water safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to keep our communities safe, as well as social media campaigns.

Fire safety regulatory enforcement (business fire safety) – Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers to enable them to be compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, ensuring our communities are safe, using enforcement action where necessary.

Emergency Response – We respond to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies. Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We also work closely with our partners such as Durham Constabulary, the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue (TWSMRT), local councils and our neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services as part of the Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP) to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

Our Organisational Performance Framework is underpinned by our Operational Assurance Framework that sets out our approach to quality assuring that we can respond effectively and competently to the range of incidents we may be called to attend. A number of key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to monitor performance of our emergency response arrangements. Managers at all levels are accountable for managing the day-to-day performance of their fire stations overseen by their Divisional Teams and the Emergency Response Manager.

The Performance Board (PB) scrutinises performance and reports, by exception, to the Service Leadership Team (SLT). PB also reports to Members, who play a key role in scrutinising performance, through regular reports and presentations to the Performance Committee and the full Fire Authority.

In 2022/23 we have undertaken Operational Readiness Audits (OpeRA), where we assess the operational readiness of our stations across five areas (Prevention, Protection, Response, Efficiency and People).

The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) exists to monitor, report and act on the outcomes from active monitoring and incident debriefs and this feeds into both national operational learning and joint organisational learning. Membership of the group is drawn from a cross-section of key departments and is chaired by the Director of Community Risk Management, with the learning from debriefs routinely shared across the organisation.

Community & Business Safety (Prevention & Protection) Assurance

All protection activities carried out by the central Business Fire Safety team are subject to both internal and external annual quality assurance, as well as performance being reviewed at all Section meetings with an overview provided at our Performance Board.

A comprehensive Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) exists to support our protection activities. The RBIP is underpinned by a full suite of procedures and practice notes which give guidance to staff enforcing statutory fire safety legislation. We have taken account of our legal duties and guidance from the Fire and Rescue Services Act and the Fire Safety Order, National Framework, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) Circulars and any other relevant guidance.

The RBIP and Annual Audit Workload Programme are refreshed annually using intelligence gained from a range of sources including national guidance and statistical data, as well as local and national trends. As well as local intelligence gained from engagement with partners and post incident audits, we also utilise the specialist CFRMIS (Community Fire Risk Management Information System) software to inform the RBIP.

A well-established Operational Risk Information (ORI) inspection process and programme exists to capture important information on risks that firefighters may face when responding to emergencies. This information is made available via appliance mobile data terminals (MDT). Processes exist to ensure premises risks identified by fire safety inspectors are shared with Emergency Response managers for onward dissemination to our firefighters.

Health and Safety Assurance

We have an established suite of key health and safety (H&S) performance indicators that enable us to closely monitor performance at all levels. The indicators cover areas such as personal and vehicle accidents, near misses and cause for concerns. Staff across the Service can access the information via SharePoint and the performance management software. The H&S Manager produces a quarterly H&S report which is reported to the Joint H&S Committee which is attended by the Representative Bodies.

In 2022/23 we continued to experience a low number of accidents to personnel. In addition, we can report that the majority of these accidents were of a very minor nature and did not require additional medical treatment or absence from work. We also experienced low numbers of vehicle accidents that were attributable to our driver's fault, with most of those occurring being of a minor nature, occurring during slow speed manoeuvres.

Our Operational Assurance Framework illustrates how the learning outcomes from internal and external events identified through accident investigations, debriefs, active monitoring reports and stakeholder engagement are implemented via forums such as the OAG, PB, the Corporate Wellbeing Group and the quarterly Joint H&S Committee. Information is shared with staff via Organisation Learning Posts and H&S Newsflashes.

We have an established programme of proactive quarterly station inspections, undertaken jointly with the Representative Bodies, and internal audits led by the H&S Section to provide assurance on the effectiveness of our H&S management arrangements. Our OpeRA also provide a further level of quality assurance.

Training Assurance

A suite of key training performance indicators enables us to closely monitor staff competence in the risk critical skills required for a firefighter's role. Our Divisional Management teams are responsible for quality assuring the competency levels of their staff and ensuring that the competency recording system is kept up to date. Outcomes of the quarterly audits are reported to the Emergency Response Managers for the North and South Divisions.

The OpeRA framework is used to provide assurance of the operational readiness of all our fire stations and includes dip-sampling of training records and also themed practical exercises undertaken at the Training Centre to further quality assure the competency of firefighters.

All internal and external delegates attending our training courses and development days are invited to complete evaluation forms. These are analysed by the Training Manager and used to inform improvements in delivery.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a legal obligation to comply with the general equality duty. This incorporates nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To meet our statutory obligations, when exercising our functions, we must aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to the general duty, all public sector bodies are required to meet specific duties which are incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires us to:

- Publish diversity information annually to demonstrate our compliance with the general duty;
- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives.

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in both the service we deliver to the community and the employment of our staff. EDI is about understanding and respecting differences and ensuring the right people receive the right services. We also understand that a diverse workforce with individuals who can offer different skills, experience and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we are able to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.

We have published our strategic commitment to EDI and our equality objectives in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This is a public declaration and commitment of how we plan to meet the duties placed upon us by equality and diversity legislation and best practice, in managing our staff and meeting the needs and wishes of our local population.

Our EDI action plan runs alongside the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and members of our EDI group are responsible for developing and implementing the action plan. [Further information about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can be found here.](#)

Collecting and analysing equality data is an important way of developing our understanding about our employees and communities. [We produce an annual equality report](#) that shows how we comply with the general equality duty as well as publishing our gender pay gap, both of which are available on our website.

Our performance during 2022/23

The following tables provide an overview of our performance during 2022/23. [The latest statistics on fires, casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by all fire and rescue services in England are available online.](#)

Service Performance Indicators*	2022/23	2021/22	Direction of travel from previous year
PI 01 - Deaths Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings**	1	1	Same
PI 02 - Primary Fires	1003	977	Regressed
PI 03 – Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires	199	208	Improved
PI 04 - Injuries Arising from Accidental Dwelling Fires	9	15	Improved
PI 05 - Total Secondary Fires	3730	3106	Regressed
PI 06A - Dwelling Fires Attended Within 8 Minutes (Target 70%)	68.9%		New Standard Introduced this year
PI 06B - Non-Domestic Property Fires Attended Within 9 Minutes (Target 70%)	62.6%		New Standard Introduced this year
PI 06C - Road Traffic Collisions Attended Within 10 Minutes (Target 70%)	69.0%		New Standard Introduced this year
PI 07 - Home Fire Safety Visits)	18382	18865	Regressed
PI 10a - Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Premises	135	93	Regressed
PI 11a - Fire Control Calls Received and Mobilised within 90 seconds	85.7%	84.9%	Improved
PI 14 - False Alarms Caused by Automatic Fire Detection	806	764	Regressed
PI 17 - Number of Fire Safety Audits	1927	2115	Regressed
PI 42 - Proportion of Home Fire Safety Visits to High Risk People/Properties	83.5%	85.1%	Regressed
PI 69 - Number of Accidents to Personnel	8	13	Improved
PI 70 - The Number of Hydrant Inspections	6245	5153	Improved
PI 72 - Number of Vehicle Accidents (Caused by CDDFRS)	24	18	Regressed

*Figures correct at time of publication

**Figures are accurate at time of publication but are subject to change if a fatality is confirmed at inquest at a later date.

Our performance in 2022/23 was affected by the extreme weather that occurred during June and August. Due to the hot, dry weather, these two heatwaves had a direct impact on the number of primary and secondary fires, including those deliberately started.

Our future plans

The post 2008 financial crisis period of austerity and the current economic conditions mean that to continue offering a first-class FRS to people living, working, visiting and studying in County Durham and Darlington we must be innovative and do things differently. This means collaborating with partners more, looking at ways we can enhance and broaden the traditional firefighter role, enhancing the way we recruit our people and further embedding our positive culture.

We will continue to monitor the government's policies on Fire Reform, in particular the White Paper that was published earlier in 2022 and participate in consultations and engage with ministers to provide an evidence led response which will support the needs of our communities.

[Details on our future plans which includes our consultation on the next 3-year CRMP can be viewed here](#)

How we engage with our communities

You can get involved with the work of the Fire Authority by attending the public meetings that are held regularly by the Authority at our Headquarters. [You can find out more about the Fire Authority, its work and access documents from previous and future meetings on our website by clicking here.](#)

We value the views of our communities to ensure we are providing the service you need. We consult formally on the ways in which we propose to deliver services through the CRMP consultation document and this and more information about our plans and priorities can be found on our website: www.ddfire.gov.uk You can also find us on social media by searching for @CDDFRS

Access to information

CDDFRS is committed to being open, accountable and transparent and we constantly strive to develop a culture of greater openness and awareness.

More information on our arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on our website via the following link: [Access to Information](#)

How to pay a compliment or make a complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible for people to let us know their views. Through listening and learning we improve the quality of the services we provide and encourage and recognise good practice by our staff.

We want to hear from people if they:

- Would like to compliment us on a job well done;
- Have a suggestion on how we might improve services;
- Feel we have fallen short of their expectations;
- Feel we have fallen short of the standards we set ourselves in dealing with complaints.

There are several ways in which you can compliment, comment or complain about our services either:

Online via our website: www.ddfire.gov.uk

By phone: 0845 305 8383

By email: ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk

By post: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
HQ,
Belmont Business Park,
Durham.
DH1 1TW

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Appointment of Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose of Report

1. To seek members agreement to appoint an Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee.

Background

2. The Authority approved the appointment process at a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held on 16 February 2022.
3. The position was advertised and an Appointments Panel was held on 5 September 2023 in which the decision was made to appoint Alan Foster to act as an Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee.

Recommendation

4. Members are requested to **note** the appointment of Alan Foster as the Audit and Finance Committee's Independent Person.

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Business Fire Safety

Report of the Business Fire Safety Member Champion

Purpose of Report

1. The report is to give members an update of business fire safety activity delivered across the Service area.

Background

2. The start of 2022/23 was a challenging time for the Central Business Fire Safety Team with three unexpected leavers out of the establishment of seven in the section. This fully tested the succession planning for the section with new ways of working developed to allow the Service to successfully meet its statutory duties.
3. Findings from HMICFRS have been acted upon and changes can clearly be seen in certain areas highlighted in this report. This has improved Fire Safety delivery, ensured activities are based on risk and forward planning to ensure succession planning with career progression and development for all of the Fire Safety Team.

Risk Based Inspection Programme and Fire Safety Audits

4. The Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) is used to direct the delivery of fire safety audits (FSA) by operational crews and the Central Fire Safety Team to reduce the risk of fire amongst the business community.
5. Following consultation within the Community Risk Management Plan 2023/24 the Service is refreshing the RBIP to ensure all high-risk premises are included and the frequency for inspecting is based on risk.
6. Performance Indicator, PI 17 measures the number of FSA completed by both the central team and operational crews. The central team aim to complete their FSA at very high, high risk and medium risk complex premises, whilst the operational crews complete their FSA

on very low risk, low risk and some medium risk premises. This approach is in line with the Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators which the Service has aligned to since 1 April 2022.

7. The table below sets out FSA performance for 2021/22 and 2022/23:

Fire Safety Audits	2021/22	2022/23
Total Number of FSAs	2,120	1,928
Satisfactory Audits	1,517 (71.6%)	1,283 (66.5%)
Unsatisfactory Audits	603 (28.4%)	645 (33.5%)

8. Although the total numbers have slightly decreased, it is positive to note the increase to 33.5% of audits being unsatisfactory, showing that the Service is targeting the correct premises. The reason for the slight decrease was due to the upskilling of members of the central team, with some fire safety qualifications taking up to 12 months to achieve.
9. During our inspection by HMICFRS in 2022, they identified that the Service delivers almost four times the England average for FSA per 100 known premises.

Enforcement and Prosecutions

10. Enforcement activity has increased within the Service, aligned to the increase in unsatisfactory audits and also due to national direction following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.
11. The appropriate level of enforcement at the correct stage of an inspection ensures each step can be achieved should a Duty Holder decide not to participate fully. The following table identifies enforcement activity for 2021/22 and 2022/23:

	2021/22	2022/23
Enforcement	3	6
Prohibition	3	8

12. The direction of the Service is to have a more robust approach to enforcement than previously. This new approach is clearly evident with an increase overall and more Prohibitions notices served.
13. The Service last took court proceedings in 2017 with a successful fine against the Duty Holder due to omissions of the Fire Safety Order. During 2022/23, on attending a joint intervention with the Police, the Service identified and acted upon the findings where nine persons were found to be sleeping within a commercial premises not designed for sleeping.
14. Following investigation and case management the Service on behalf of the Combined Fire Authority served summons on two individuals and two companies in connection with the breaches identified.

15. On August 22, 2023, at Durham Crown Court Mr Tarlochan Singh and 5th Capital Limited pleaded guilty to a total of eight charges, all relating to breaches of the Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order 2005.

16. Sentencing will take place at Durham Crown Court on October 5, 2023.

Public Complaints / Information or Guidance relating to Fire Safety

17. A large proportion of the central team's work revolves around fire safety complaints and requests for information or guidance with regard to fire safety.

18. Complaints are normally from members of the public concerned about fire safety issues in their workplace or in publicly accessible premises. The Service acts promptly to follow up complaints with the expectation that all complaints will be dealt with within 24 hours.

19. Information or guidance can be requested by those with fire safety concerns or requesting help around fire safety. The Service aims to facilitate this support where possible, however importantly, the Service must strike a careful balance of advice and assistance and not take on the role of a Fire Risk Assessor or Architect. The following table identifies the team's activity in these two areas in 2022/23:

Activity	Job Count	Hours
Information or Guidance	254	200
Complaints	60	138

Building and Licensing Consultations

20. These consultations form part of the Service's statutory duty and are measured as a performance indicator to be completed within 15 days for Building Regulations consultations and 28 days for Licencing consultations. Only Fire Safety Level 4 Diploma qualified staff can complete consultations.

21. Reviewing submissions can take anywhere between an hour for a small renovation, to over a week for more complex projects. They can involve early planning meetings, sometimes years ahead of the programme as well as consultation and scrutiny of the plans when submitted.

22. These consultations are key to ensure new premises are fit for purpose at the start of their life. The following table identifies the central team's activity in these two areas in 2022/23.

Consultation	Job Count	Hours
Building Regulations Consultations	506	703
Other Consultations (Licencing etc)	165	182

Unwanted Fire Signals

23. Through previous Performance Committee reports, members will be aware that unwanted fire signals (UwFS) have increased during 2022/23 with 806 incidents compared to a target of 677. This is despite the current cost recovery process whereby the Business Fire Safety

Team have invoiced premises for £46,814 when they incur three chargeable callouts in a rolling 12-month period.

24. Members will be aware of the change in response to the way the Service responds to calls for assistance from Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) in non-residential premises commencing on 2 October 2023. It is expected this will have a significant reduction in UwFS realising the following benefits:

- Increased appliance availability to respond to life risk incidents;
- Reduced road risk to the public and staff due to less blue light emergency response journeys;
- An increase of time available for risk critical training;
- An increase of time available for community safety and arson reduction activities;
- An increase of time available for business fire safety activities;
- An increase of time available for operational crews to gather statutory risk critical operational information;
- Reduce the Service's environmental impact by minimising blue light journeys.

Post Fire Management

25. An important area for the Business Fire Safety Team is the investigation and follow up on all non-domestic primary fires. This scrutiny of fires allows the Business Fire Safety Officer to identify if a fire is a direct result of omissions against the Fire Safety Order (FSO) and should this be the case appropriate action is taken.

26. This proactive approach supports safer premises as even if a fire or its consequences were not due to an omission against the FSO, fire safety advice and compliance with the FSO is conducted on each occasion.

Business Engagement

27. To support and engage with businesses to ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, the Business Fire Safety Team have developed a Communication and Engagement Strategy. This includes supporting all national NFCC campaigns, utilising their toolkits and communication channels working with the Service's Communication Team.

28. The fire safety landscape has changed dramatically since the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, with the enactment of new legislation and fire safety practices. The Service has communicated this to businesses, with regular updates to the website, detailing the impact of the new legislation especially the expectations on premises owners to communicate changes and faults on their premises to the Service to inform operational planning.

29. Through the RBIP, the Service engages in audits and inspections with approximately 2,000 premises on an annual basis. This interaction with business owners and Responsible Persons is a key foundation of the Service's engagement approach allowing face to face advice and guidance on fire safety matters to be delivered.

30. In conjunction with Vital Fire Solutions, the central team has held engagement seminars with local businesses, to educate them on the requirements of fire safety legislation.

Recommendations

31. Members are requested to:

- a. note the contents of this report;
- b. receive further reports as appropriate.

Keith Carruthers, Director Community Risk Management, 0191 375 5564

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Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Retained Duty System Member Champion Report

Report of Director of Emergency Response

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to give the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) members an update and insight into the business areas and performance of the Retained Duty System (RDS) within County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

Background

2. As part of the approach to developing services and improving engagement with stakeholders, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority (CDDFRA) has sought to 'champion' particular areas of work through the CFA Member Champion roles.
3. The CFA Member Champion roles provide CDDFRS with an opportunity to work closely with individual members to help develop the services provided and to engage with all stakeholders through a closely aligned officer and member relationship.
4. Councillor John Shuttleworth has been supported by the Director of Emergency Response in her capacity as strategic lead to support the RDS across the organisation. The RDS is also referred to as the On Call Duty System.

The National Picture

5. The challenges linked to the recruitment and retention of RDS firefighters is recognised nationally within the fire sector. This has been analysed and reported on numerous times by the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA), Fire Brigades Union (FBU), National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and various Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) across the UK.
6. Despite these detailed reports and subsequent recommendations, the HMICFRS noted within their annual State of Fire report that almost every FRS with RDS firefighters faces problems linked to recruitment, retention and availability which confirms that these challenges are still prevalent nationally across FRS.

The RDS Project

7. In March 2023 the Service launched its new RDS project, planned to run for 12 months with objectives aligned to the strategic objectives set out in the Emergency Response and Resilience Strategy 2023/26, detailed below:
 - Improve the availability of the RDS appliances.
 - Analyse, understand and implement measures to improve the recruitment of new RDS Firefighters (FF).
 - Engage, understand and implement measures to improve the retention of current RDS FF.
 - Improve overall management of our RDS staff across the service.
8. Each objective has an accompanying action plan, with some of this work detailed in this report.

RDS Firefighter Recruitment

9. The recruitment of RDS FF has remained consistent over the previous 4 years with a variance of 3 as outlined in Figure 1 below.

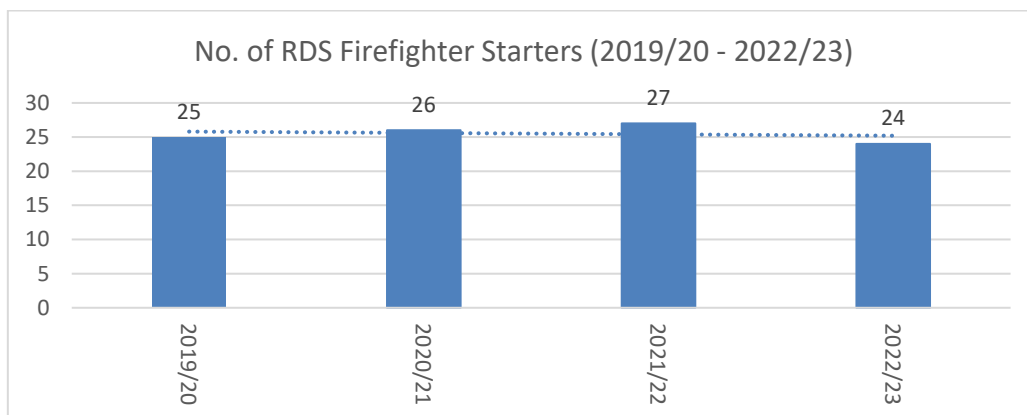


Figure 1 – Total RDS FF recruited during 2019/20 – 2023/24

10. As part of the RDS project, there has been a full review of the recruitment process to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The work which has been completed since March 2023 includes:
 - CDDFRS website recruitment section has been re-designed to streamline the process to make it easier to apply to be an RDS FF.
 - The design and purchase of bespoke recruitment banners for each fire station aimed at promoting the recruitment of RDS FF.
 - New recruitment videos describing what candidates can expect whilst progressing through the different stages of recruitment.
 - The creation of a SharePoint workflow(s) to manage candidates through the recruitment stages more effectively.
 - A more detailed approach to identifying candidates who will provide availability which will maximise the availability of the appliances.
 - A new booking system for fitness tests, to enable greater flexibility for candidates.
11. The work completed since March 2023 has resulted in 15 RDS FF recruited during quarter 1, a significant increase over previous years, and 114% greater than the next highest figure during the previous four years outlined in Table below.

	2019/20 Quarter 1	2020/21 Quarter 1	2021/22 Quarter 1	2022/23 Quarter 1	2023/24 Quarter 1
Number of RDS FF starters	7	2	6	4	15

Table 1 – Total RDS FF starters during quarter 1 (2019/20 – 2023/24)

The Retention of RDS Firefighters

12. The retention of RDS FF can be quantified in various ways, for the purpose of this report, retention will be broken down into the average time an RDS FF serves before leaving and the total number of leavers each year.
13. The average time served by RDS FF increased in 2021/22 but has remained relatively consistent over the previous 4 years as depicted in Figure 2 below. The average time an RDS FF will work for CDDFRS is 8 years.

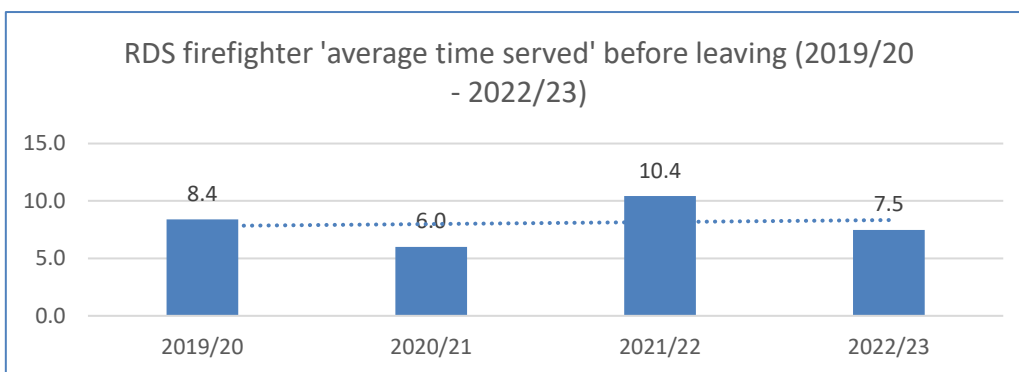


Figure 2 – Average time served for RDS FF broken down by year 2019/20 – 2023/24

14. 2022/23 recorded the highest number of RDS firefighter leavers over the previous 4 years demonstrated in Figure 3.

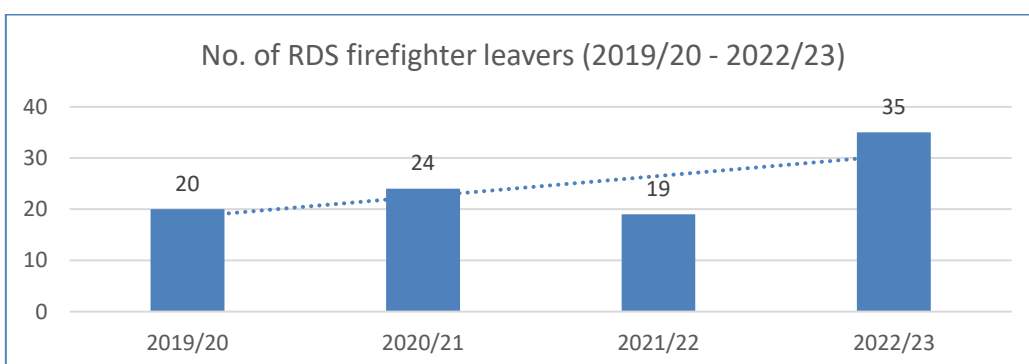


Figure 3 – Total RDS FF leavers during 2019/20 – 2023/24

15. When looking at the reasons given by RDS firefighters for leaving, the majority state 'personal reasons' which are predominantly out of the control of the Service, for example, changes to full time employment, family circumstances and moving home and in some instances no further information is obtainable to understand this further. There were also small numbers which stated 'retirement', 'alternative employment' and 'transfer to another FRS'.

16. The RDS project is reviewing the current measures in place to improve retention. Some of the work which has been completed since March 2023 includes:
- A full review of the exit interview process and the implementation of an improved exit interview to enable greater detail to be captured to assist the Service to understand reasons for leaving and to identify any trends.
 - Engagement with staff to better understand ways to improve retention via the monthly RDS Liaison meetings.
 - The introduction of flexible additional development sessions at Service Training Centre on a bi-monthly basis.
17. The work completed since March 2023, has culminated in the Service recording 6 RDS FF leavers during quarter 1, a significant decrease over the previous year (Table. 2).

	2019/20 Quarter 1	2020/21 Quarter 1	2021/22 Quarter 1	2022/23 Quarter 1	2023/24 Quarter 1
Number of RDS FF leavers	7	4	3	9	6

Table 2 – Total RDS FF leavers during quarter 1 (2019/20 – 2023/24)

RDS Station Establishments

18. The number of RDS FF on each RDS watch has varied over the previous 12 months with 4 watches maintaining, 7 watches increasing and 2 watches decreasing (Table. 3).

Station	Establishment 1 Aug 2022	Establishment 1 Aug 2023	Variation
Consett	10	16	↑
High Handenhold	14	13	↓
Seaham	14	14	↔
Wheatley Hill	13	14	↑
Durham	9	11	↑
Stanhope	15	13	↓
Crook	14	18	↑
Spennymoor	16	19	↑
Sedgefield	12	12	↔
Newton Aycliffe	16	13	↑
Bishop Auckland	14	18	↑
Middleton In- Teesdale	13	13	↔
Barnard Castle	15	15	↔
Total	175	189	+14

Table 3 – RDS watch establishments for 1 Aug 2022 and 1 Aug 2023

19. Whilst these numbers are positive, losing fully qualified RDS FF has a significant impact on the availability due to the timescales of training a newly recruited RDS FF.

The Availability of Fire Appliances Crewed by RDS Firefighters

20. The availability of fire appliances which are crewed by RDS FF is monitored through the Performance Board via performance indicator 'PI 16a Availability of on call appliances – 1st pump'.
21. RDS availability has marginally decreased each year over the previous 4 years as shown in Figure 4.

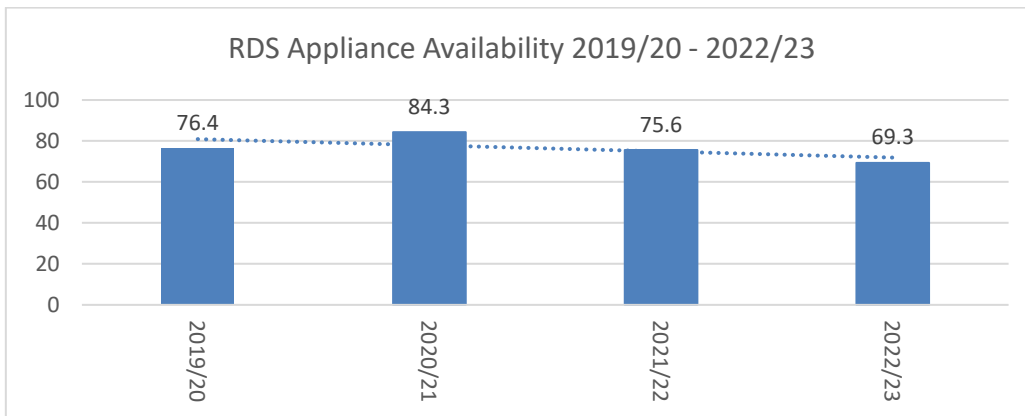


Figure 4 – PI 16a Availability percentage of RDS appliances – 1st pump (2019/20 – 2023/24)

22. As part of the RDS project, there is an action plan to assist with improving the availability of RDS fire appliances. Some of the work conducted since March 2023 which has assisted to improve RDS appliance availability includes:
- Utilisation of the Special Rescue Unit (SRU) and Targeted Response Vehicle (TRV) crews to staff RDS fire appliances.
 - Utilisation of Flexible Duty Officers (FDO) and Day Duty staff to staff RDS fire appliances.
 - Introduction of an electronic reporting system to measure RDS fire appliance availability with and without the use of additional staffing controls.
 - Creation of RDS Watch dashboards which provide information to help RDS Crew / Watch Managers and Station Managers manage RDS FF.
 - Review of the current procedures and practices for booking on / off call.
 - Review of RDS policies and procedures to ensure RDS Firefighters are fulfilling their contract.
23. It is envisaged that the RDS availability will continue to increase in the short and long term as a result of these actions.

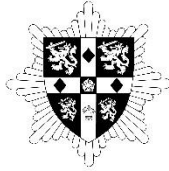
Recommendation

24. Members are requested to:
- a) Note the content of the report.

Sarah Nattrass, Director Emergency Response, Ext. 5587

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975 and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) eligibility

Report of Director of People and Organisational Development

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) an update on the changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975 which enables Fire and Rescue Services employees to be checked through the DBS at a standard or enhanced level.

Background

2. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Prevention Committee led a proposal for the inclusion of the fire and rescue service authority employees in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975.
3. Recently His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) made recommendations to the government in its recent report into the culture of the fire and rescue service nationally, highlighting the need to have a nationally consistent approach to background checks. This ensures that fire and rescue services can carry out background checks on staff like other emergency services currently do and can better identify concerns with applicants for jobs, such as any police warnings and reprimands and whether applicants are considered unsuitable for working with children or vulnerable adults.
4. On the 6 July 2023, the Ministry of Justice laid before Parliament a statutory instrument to make this amendment following a business case from the NFCC following support from the Home Office. The change enables Standard Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to be conducted on all fire and rescue authority (FRA) employees. This new eligibility to carry out standard DBS checks enhances the Services current processes of basic checks with a check of the relevant adults or children barred list for those employees who undertake certain activities.
5. Whilst the Government intention is clear that fire and rescue services will now be able to do standard DBS checks the recommendation from the HMICFRS in its report was that existing arrangements for fire and rescue services were an oversight that required amendment. It was advised and agreed that government should take forward the remaining recommendations from the Inspectorate's report to include amending relevant regulations

so that fire and rescue services are able to undertake enhanced checks like other emergency services, with the Inspectorate stating that the Home Office should work with the fire and rescue sector to arrive at an appropriate legislatively enabled solution that makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue services.

Legal Position

6. The amendment to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Appendix A) was heard and received full parliamentary approval at the House of Commons at the Seventh Delegated Legislation Committee on 17th May 2023, followed by debate and approval in the House of Lords on 13th June 2023. This legislation came into effect on the 6th of July.
7. Article 2 of the new legislation amends schedule 1 to the 1975 Order by adding new paragraphs to Part 2 (offices, employment, and work) to cover “Fire and rescue authority employees”. These amendments mean that a person’s spent convictions and cautions may be considered when assessing a person’s suitability to engage in such work. Therefore, all fire and rescue authority employees will be eligible for Standard DBS checks as described in Appendix B to this report.
8. The legislation does not permit wider use of the enhanced level checks referenced in Appendix B to this report. NFCC has provided guidance which outlines which roles would be eligible for enhanced level checks which primarily include those working in community safety teams and anyone who is managing someone working in regulated activity. These roles will need to be identified and defined in line with the legislation.
9. Additionally, the information provided in any DBS check is highly sensitive and subject to General Data Protection legislation. Therefore, how this information is used, processed and stored needs to be considered.

NFCC Guidance Documents

10. The NFCC have published a range of guidance to support FRs in their application of DBS checking and any decision making because of a disclosure. Undertaking DBS checks helps us to make safer recruitment decisions. The guidance provides a framework for all fire and rescue services to understand what eligibility checks should be considered and how these should be treated.
11. These include:
 - DBS eligibility Guidance
 - Managing Allegations Guidance
 - Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance

HMICFRS Spotlight Report Actions

12. The HMICFRS Report published on 30 March 2023 included a range of recommendations referencing vetting checks, including:
 - Recommendation 6 that FRAs incorporate employees in the RO (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks by January 2024.
 - Recommendation 8 detailed that the Fire Standards Board in liaison with the NFCC should review the existing standards and underpinning guidance of background

checks and clarify the minimum requirements for all staff roles, particularly those which have access to vulnerable members of the public.

- Recommendation 9 identified the need for all FRAs to immediately review their current background checks arrangements to ensure that suitable and sufficient checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve, with all appropriate checks submitted for all existing, new staff and volunteers according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standard Board.

Current Position

13. The Service completes basic checks for all new staff which are not rechecked at any point during employment (unless a concern arises). There are also a small number of roles which have been identified as requiring Enhanced DBS checks for posts that involve substantial access to children (CSO's and Trainers). The arrangements the Service have in place meet the government's Baseline Personnel Security Standards (BPSS). Human Resources currently manage the process for DBS checks for staff. Since the change in legislation on the 6 July, the team have implemented the standard level of DBS checks for all new staff.
14. The current roles have been identified as requiring enhanced level checking and this has been undertaken include the following however, this list may change under the new guidance:
 - Trainer (CM / WMB)
 - Community Safety Officer (Grade 6)
 - CS Team Leader (Grade 8)
 - Young Person Education Coordinator (Grade 7)
 - Station Manager CRM
 - Cadet Leaders
15. Recommendation 9 requires us to review our current background checks arrangements to ensure that suitable and sufficient checks are in place to safeguard our staff and communities we serve, with all appropriate checks submitted for all existing, new staff and volunteers according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standard Board. To satisfy the requirements of this recommendation, we will need to await the guidance of the Fire Standards Board however it is likely that they will advise all staff should be checked at standard level.
16. The Service have been utilising DBS checks at varying levels for the past 15 years. However, DBS guidance is clear that no records should be kept of the disclosure, only the fact that it had been undertaken. Records within the POD team can be evidenced back to 2018 when the Service started using U-check to undertake its checks, however the data is limited. There are no records which would evidence that all staff have been checked at some point during their employment.
17. It is often recommended within safer recruitment guidance that DBS checks are renewed every 3 years. DBS checks do not have an official expiry date, as a result DBS checks are only completely accurate on the day that they are issued by the DBS. A conviction could be recorded any time after completing the DBS check. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of an employer to determine if new DBS checks are required and when they should be renewed. The NFCC guidance does not give a position on this however the Fire Standards Board may determine this in the revised Standard.

18. Not rechecking background checks for specific posts could pose a risk in terms of reputational damage. Our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) notes the importance of trust the community require in our Service. We have seen high profile cases in partner emergency services where criminal activity has not been picked up resulting in serving members of the emergency services conducting the most terrible of crimes whilst in service. This evidence highlights the potential risk if we do not act upon this however, from a Service perspective, there have been no significant disclosures to date.
19. If we are required to progress with rechecking all staff, further work would be required to determine how the Service would manage current staff who do not pass the security vetting and legally if there is potential challenge to contractual employment in this instance prior to the retrospective vetting of staff who are currently in employment. Whilst our disciplinary procedure specifies that individuals inform line management of any convictions whilst employed, this does not give a guarantee that the Service is aware of all convictions of its workforce. The Service would utilise the NFCC guidance in developing this process in collaboration with the relevant unions.
20. The current budget for DBS check is £3000 per annum. If we were required to progress all staff through a standard DBS check at a cost of £32.20 per check, this would equate to approximately £17,066. If these were also required to be reviewed every 3 years, this would again incur the above costs. These costs would also be supplemented by the resource required to undertake the check. Whilst mostly done online, the administration of each test would take approximately 30 minutes equating to approximately 275 hours work (7.5 weeks) of the HR administrators planned workload.

Next Steps

21. The guidance from the Fire Standards Board is pivotal to understand what the expectation is nationally around checking and rechecking of employees. Therefore, it would be pertinent to wait for this to be issued before deciding on how to progress forward with this given the significant costs and resource identified.
22. There are several pieces of work however that can be progressed in the meantime to support the Service position with this, which are outlined below:
 - a) Implement a Standard DBS check for all new employees.
 - b) Review our Recruitment and Selection Policy to ensure reference to DBS is included and follows the principles of Safer Recruitment.
 - c) Develop a DBS procedure which outlines the Services approach.
 - d) Identify a list of roles which are eligible for Enhanced checks.
 - e) Identify a way to log and evidence that a check has been undertaken.
 - f) Develop a process which ensures reviews are undertaken where required for those working in identified roles.
 - g) Review the current position against the Safeguarding Fire Standard and engage with ongoing work in this area to keep abreast of any updates.
 - h) Complete the NFCC self-assessment in relation to safeguarding and utilise the outcomes to drive forward any work in this area.

Recommendations

23. Members are requested to:

- (a) **note** the content of the report and await further updates from the FSB.

Katherine Metcalfe, Director of People and Organisational Development, Ext.5665

Appendix B

Levels of Security Vetting

There are four levels of DBS checks:

Basic - Basic disclosures provide details of unspent criminal convictions and cautions to individual applicants.

Standard - Standard DBS certificates contain details of all convictions and cautions on record (including spent convictions and cautions). Protected convictions and protected cautions are excluded from disclosure.

Enhanced - all enhanced DBS certificates contain details of the individual's spent and unspent convictions, spent and unspent cautions, police reprimands and warnings, any other relevant police information and in some cases, further information stored on statutory lists which contain details of people considered unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.

Enhanced with barred list checks - this is an enhanced check however also includes a check of DBS barred lists. These lists include details of people deemed unsuitable to work with children or some groups of adults. The circumstances to which an enhanced check with list check apply are prescribed in the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2009, SI 2009/1882.

Security Check

Individuals who required to have SC vetting are to be employed in posts which require them to have long-term, frequent and uncontrolled access to SECRET assets and/or occasional, supervised access to TOP SECRET assets.

And for individuals who:

- while not in such posts, will be in a position to directly or indirectly bring about the same degree of damage.
- will have sufficient knowledge to obtain a comprehensive picture of a SECRET plan, policy or project.
- are being considered for employment where it would not be possible to make reasonable career progress without security clearance for access to SECRET assets.
- require access to certain levels of classified material originating from another country or international organisations.

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Status: This is the original version (as it was originally made). This item of legislation is currently only available in its original format.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2023 No. 767

**REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS,
ENGLAND AND WALES**

**The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions)
(Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2023**

Made - - - - *5th July 2023*

Coming into force - - *6th July 2023*

The Secretary of State, in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 4(4) and 10(1) of, and paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974(1), makes the following Order.

In accordance with section 10(2) of that Act, a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

Citation, commencement and extent

1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2023 and comes into force on the day after the day on which it is made.

(2) This Order extends to England and Wales only.

Amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975

2.—(1) Schedule 1 to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975(2) is amended as follows.

(2) In Part 1 (professions), after paragraph 18, insert—

“19. Chartered management accountant.

20. Notary public of England and Wales.”.

(3) In Part 2 (offices, employments and work), after paragraph 43(3), insert—

(1) 1974 c. 53. Schedule 2 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 was inserted by paragraph 6 of Schedule 10 to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4).

(2) S.I. 1975/1023. Relevant amending instruments are S.I. 2006/2143, 2009/1818, 2012/3006 and 2014/1707. There are other amendments to Parts 1, 2 and 4 of Schedule 1, but none is relevant.

(3) Paragraph 44 was inserted by S.I. 2009/1818 and revoked by S.I. 2012/3006.

“45. Fire and rescue authority employees.

46. Justice system intermediaries who are commissioned on behalf of His Majesty’s Government through an approved scheme or contracted service in force, such as the Ministry of Justice Witness Intermediary Scheme or His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service Appointed Intermediary Services.”.

(4) In Part 4 (interpretation)—

(a) after the definition of “chartered legal executive” insert—

““chartered management accountant” means a member, registered student or affiliate of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants;”;

(b) after the definition of “court security officers” insert—

““fire and rescue authority” has the meaning given by section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004;”;

(c) after the definition of “members of the judiciary” insert—

““notary public of England and Wales” means a notary who is appointed by the Court of Faculties of the Archbishop of Canterbury in accordance with rules made by the Master of the Faculties;”;

(d) after the definition of “judicial appointment” insert—

““justice system intermediary” means a person acting as an impartial communication specialist for vulnerable people, with respect to or in connection with the justice system, who provides assistance with communication needs and helps enable effective participation in proceedings;”;

(e) omit the definitions of “proprietor” and “independent school”.

5th July 2023

Edward Argar
Minister of State
Ministry of Justice

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

This Order amends the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (“the 1975 Order”).

The 1975 Order disapplies specified provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (“the 1974 Act”) which would otherwise prevent a person from having to disclose a spent conviction or caution and protect that person from being prejudiced by that conviction or caution or any failure to disclose it.

Article 2 of this Order amends Schedule 1 to the 1975 Order by adding new paragraphs to Part 1 (professions) to cover chartered management accountants and notaries public of England and Wales and Part 2 (offices, employment and work) to cover fire and rescue authority employees, and specified justice system intermediaries. These amendments mean that a person’s spent convictions and cautions may be taken into account when assessing a person’s suitability to engage in such work.

Article 2(4)(e) is a tidying up amendment as it omits the definitions of “proprietor” and “independent school” as these terms are no longer used in the 1975 Order.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant, impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen.

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

NFCC Culture Statement and Action Plan

Report of Director of People and Organisational Development

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to highlight to Combined Fire Authority (CFA) members the publication of the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Organisational Cultural Statement and Culture Action Plan.

Background

2. Following the NFCC's Culture and Inclusion Conference on 27 and 28 March 2023 and the Spotlight Report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services', released on 30 March 2023, the NFCC has developed a Culture Action Plan to support improvements in culture and inclusion within fire and rescue services.
3. The NFCC consulted fire and rescue services and national fire service partners on the draft action plan throughout May and June 2023 and received extensive feedback, both written and through focus group discussions. The Action Plan is a renewed call to action to improve culture and address discrimination, bullying and harassment across UK fire and rescue services.
4. On 26 July 2023, the NFCC released their Organisational Culture Statement and Action Plan. The Action Plan sits within and complements the wider strategic framework in which fire and rescue services operate and aims to draw together a range of influential documents all of which have responsibilities for FRA's around related to people, cultural values, behaviours, equality, diversity, professionalism, leadership, skills and tackling harassment, bullying and discrimination. These include the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Fit for the Future 2023 and the NFCC Strategy 2023-2026.
5. The main aim of the culture plan is that by working together we can change our culture for the better through a shared ambition. Working with partners such as the Fire Standards Board (FSB), Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG), Safeguarding Board and HMICFRS a common standard can be applied to ensure consistency across the sector.

The Culture Statement and Action Plan

6. The statement itself is a clear statement of intent from the NFCC on how its organisation will operate and that inappropriate behaviours will not be tolerated. A copy of the Organisational Statement and Action Plan are included in Appendix A.
7. On a local level, the Service have these intentions included in the People Strategy and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Both are supported with an action plan which has activities to support a positive culture and remove inappropriate behaviours.
8. The overarching outcomes of the plan are to:
 - a) Improved public confidence.
 - b) Improvement trust and confidence of staff
 - c) More diverse workforce that is inclusive of underrepresented groups, and people of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
9. The plan highlights a range of key deliverables which range from current NFCC product implementation, adoption of fire standards, HMICFRS inspections and spotlight report recommendations, further research, and improved data collection. All of which are designed to support FRA's continually improve.
10. There are several high-level measures of success which have been outlined in the action plan which are:
 - a) Improvements in HMICFRS inspection judgements for FRSs in relation to values and culture, including progress against the recommendations in the HMICFRS Spotlight report.
 - b) Improvement in FRS workforce diversity in relation to recruitment, retention, and progression.
 - c) Consistent service reporting and benchmarking of cultural performance enabled through sharing of good practice and cross sector support including identification and sharing of exemplar cultural dashboards.
 - d) All fire and rescue services have independent confidential reporting lines.
 - e) Increased take-up of NFCC leadership development, products and support in relation to culture, safeguarding and inclusion.
 - f) Completion of NFCC Safeguarding self-assessment and any local authority audits, enabling an adaptable and improved approach to safeguarding practice.

Conclusion

11. Good progress has been made through the People Action Plan, the EDI Action Plan and the Spotlight Report Action Plan on many areas which are highlighted above. All of which are monitored through the Human Resources Committee.
12. Further work has been identified around safeguarding through the Fire Standard implementation process which the Service are currently working towards. The recent changes Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975 and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) eligibility will also bring about changes to working practices relating to safeguarding. Further information and guidance are awaited from the FSB.
13. The Service will continue to engage with NFCC and utilisation of products as and when they are created which support our internal processes and offer. We will also continue to

be part of national working groups to ensure we are sighted of the national direction in the people area and help shape future interventions and products.

Recommendations

14. Members are requested to **note** the content of the report.

Katherine Metcalfe, Director of People and Organisational Development, Ext.5665

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan

Report of the Director of Community Risk Management

Purpose of Report

1. This report is to update members on the involvement of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) with the Government's anti-social behaviour (ASB) action plan.

Background

2. On 27 March 2023, the Prime Minister launched the ASB Action Plan introducing tough action to rid communities of ASB.
3. Durham Constabulary Force area was chosen as one of the 16 "trailblazers" to receive government funding totalling £50 million over two years. The Durham Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) will receive funding of £4.4 million over the two years to deliver the initiative.
4. The funding is to be used for two distinct areas:
 - Hotspot 'policing' – increase the visibility of uniformed officers (police and partners) in communities;
 - Immediate Justice – new service where perpetrators of ASB will be made to repair the damage they inflict on victims and communities.

CDDFRS Involvement

5. Officers of CDDFRS are members of the Strategic Board and the delivery groups for hotspot policing and immediate justice.
6. Through this engagement deliberate fires are identified as a key element of ASB and CDDFRS is part of three successfully funded initiatives which are detailed below.

Targeted Deliberate Fire, Arson and ASB Reduction

7. Funding totalling £60,000 has been received for the introduction of proactive patrols to increase visibility, and engagement in identified hotspot areas during those times they are at a high risk of deliberate fires.
8. Proactive patrols will be with two CDDFRS personnel in a marked and visible vehicle. Activities will be recorded and include:
 - Environmental Visual Audits;
 - Fly tipping referrals;
 - Blue routes;
 - Empty Building Risk Assessments;
 - Seasonal Arson Campaigns (e.g., Bonfire);
 - Abandoned vehicle referrals.

Community Safety Responders

9. In partnership with Durham Constabulary and Durham and Darlington councils, eight Community Safety Responders (CSRs) are to be introduced to increase proactive patrols, visibility and engagement with the community in identified hotspot areas.
10. The eight CSRs will carry out the role of Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), support Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council's work related to community safety, housing and environmental issues and deliver CDDFRS community safety, arson and deliberate fire reduction work.
11. The CSRs will receive training and be given the powers from these agencies to allow them to tackle more anti-social activity than one organisation in isolation.
12. Due to the expectation that the successful applicants will not take up their posts until October due to the recruitment exercise and stringencies of vetting, £176,250 of funding will be awarded for 2023/24 and funding of £375,100 for 2024/25. In addition, £10,000 for the purchase of information technology (IT) equipment has been agreed.

Young Person Developing Resilience Courses

13. Funding of £26,820 per year has been awarded to support delivery of three Developing Resilience Courses for young persons. This funding is part of the Immediate Justice element of the plan.
14. The course is based on the Princes Trust Level 1 Award in Developing Resilience. The project is designed for a maximum of eight young people, over a ten-day 'Initial Award' course.
15. The award is aimed at supporting young people to develop resilience as part of their journey towards achieving positive outcomes. It has been developed with the aim of supporting young people to increase their personal resilience by exploring, experiencing, and developing different protective factors and learning how to apply healthy habits to their real lives to help them manage life's challenges.

16. CDDFRS has previously delivered two of these courses through funding from the PCC. The Service is the first FRS in the country to deliver this course and will be a case study by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to facilitate learning for other services.

Recommendations

17. Members are requested to:
 - a. **note** the contents of this report;
 - b. **receive** further reports as appropriate.

Keith Carruthers, Director Community Risk Management, 0191 375 5564

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