

Proposed Consultation Questions

The Integrated Risk Management Plan

Every three years we produce a strategic plan which helps us to deliver our vision of Safest People, Safest Places. As part of this we assess all the known risks in our area and publish what we call an Integrated Risk Management Plan. We review and publish this document every year to ensure that our resources are directed to where they are most needed.

Question? Do you have any comments or suggested amendments to our three-year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) document?

Emergency Response Review

As part of our ongoing commitment to protect our communities we have undertaken a review of Emergency response across the whole Service area. This involves carrying out an analysis of the risks faced and deciding where to place our resources accordingly. This is in line with the legal duty set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to ensure that we are managing our resources in terms of the numbers of deployment of firefighters as well as our financial resources.

Part of this Emergency Response Review saw a trial taking place in 2019 to help us decide on the best way to use our fire response resources. This involved reviewing the shift arrangements at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe. Firefighters had previously been on a system called Day Crewing Plus but this was no longer going to be possible following a legal ruling on the Working Time Directive in South Yorkshire. Therefore, we have trialled a Day Crewing shift system with full time firefighters on duty from 7am to 7pm. We also reallocated resources to provide a wholetime crew in both Durham and Spennymoor.

The overall impact of the trials across the Service was an improvement in the response times to dwelling fires. The percentage of non-domestic property fires being responded to within the target time reduced slightly, as did road traffic collisions. However, the overall impact was positive and as predicted before the trial.

Question? Following our trial, do you support our proposal to implement the day crewing arrangements at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe on a permanent basis from April 2020?

Question? Following our trial, do you support our proposal to implement the crewing arrangements at Durham and Spennymoor on a permanent basis from April 2020?

Response Standards

We undertake a thorough assessment of community risk so that we can understand what we need to respond to. We recognise that this changes over time as our communities change, for example if new housing is built or the age profile of an area changes. This means we regularly review our community profiles and the associated risks. Our response standards are based on this profile information and risk assessment.

We use a range of measures to capture information about the types of incidents we respond to and continuously update our operational guidance and equipment so we can provide the best possible service to you.

Question? We have maintained our response standards based on our historical approach to responding to incidents. Do you support our approach to maintain these response standards or do you think we should carry out a review?

Arson Reduction

Historically the number of deliberate primary and secondary fires was reducing in the County Durham and Darlington area but since 2016/17 we have seen an increase. In 2018/19 there were 480 primary deliberate fires and 2534 secondary deliberate fires. We now have a small team in place to help tackle this and part of their role is dedicated to working on reducing arson. This team supports the work that crews are already doing in our communities regarding deliberate fires.

We have launched initiatives such as FireStoppers, which asks the public to report information on deliberate fires, and Phoenix Fire Champions, which educates children and helps to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Question? Given the increase in arson that we have experienced over the last few years do you support our intention to reallocate some resources into arson reduction initiatives?

Safe and Well Being Visits

Our Service carries out safe and well-being visits as part of our legal duty to prevent fires. In 2018/19 we conducted over 18,000 Safe and Well Being Visits.

Our Safe and Well Being visits are carried out by trained Fire and Rescue staff. At the visit they will do a personalised fire hazard assessment and fit free smoke alarms if needed, as well as offering advice to make the home safer.

We work with our partner agencies such as the police, health, public health services, councils and local charities, to identify the people who are most at risk and direct our services to these vulnerable people as a priority.

Due to these strong relationships our partner agencies can make referrals to us where they identify that fire safety advice and action may be needed. Equally, if we identify that a person is vulnerable at one of our visits we will refer to the most appropriate agency for support.

This is an approach supported by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services. This prevention based approach is working as we have had no fire deaths in the County Durham and Darlington area in the last 12 months and we are seeing a reduction again in the number of dwelling fires attended.

Question? Do you support our approach to continue to focus our safe and wellbeing visits on those people who are at greatest risk from fire?

Charging Businesses for False Alarms from Unwanted Fire Signals

False Alarms can be caused by three different factors:

- calls from individuals which are made with genuine intention but turned out to be incorrect. We record this as a 'false alarm - good intent';
- calls from individuals deliberately providing false information. These are recorded as 'false alarm – malicious';
- automatic fire alarm and detection systems may be activated deliberately by a person for either good intent or malicious reasons, however, where alarms operate due to a mechanical or electrical fault, or false activation by non-fire conditions e.g. cooking fumes, dust, cigarette smoke etc. and the fire service attend, these are recorded as 'Unwanted Fire Signals'.

Unwanted Fire Signals occur at business premises which could be places such as factories, offices, shops, hospitals and student accommodation. As a service we recognise the value of fire detection in protecting people from fire and reducing the numbers of fire deaths and injuries. Making sure that detection equipment is working as it should be is the responsibility of the business and we want to promote best practice wherever we can.

Good practice will also assist us with the availability of our operational resources meaning that our Fire and Rescue staff are on hand for responding to incidents.

Legislation allows us to charge businesses for multiple Unwanted Fire Signals and from 1st April 2019 we began a trial of the charging system. From April to September 2019 the number of unwanted fire signals was 240.

Question? Following our trial, do you support our proposal to introduce a charging system for certain businesses when we attend multiple unwanted fire signals to their premises?