



**Safest People, Safest Places**

## **Combined Fire Authority**

**16 March 2021**

### **Community Safety Update**

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## **Report of the Cllr Richard Manchester, Member Champion for Community Safety**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide members of the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with an update on how Community Safety (CS) has been delivered or adapted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to encourage members to continue to promote and support prevention activities to keep our communities safe.

### **Background**

2. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) is grateful that a number of CFA Members perform the CFA Champion role supporting various areas of service delivery. These roles provide the opportunity for members and officers to work closely together to help improve the services provided by better engagement with local communities, staff and other stakeholders.
3. I have undertaken the role as Member Champion for Community Safety since July 2019 and I see at first hand the vital community safety activities which covers a range of prevention activity including home safety, school education and deliberate fire reduction.
4. In 2020, a worldwide pandemic involving the Coronavirus impacted on the delivery of services across the public, private and voluntary sectors. This required the Service to adapted quickly and make changes to the way we deliver our prevention activity to keep both the community and our staff safe and ensure we continued to deliver our statutory duties and obligations.

5. This report provides an update on how the Service has continued to deliver Community Safety activities to our communities during the pandemic.

## **Update on Community Safety activity**

### **Home Safety**

6. The Service uses referrals from partner agencies as well as a range of data and information to identify residents who are at the greatest risk from fire in the home to target resources for the delivery of Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs). Until the beginning of the pandemic, this has involved Emergency Response (ER) crews delivering the majority of visits and the Community Risk Officers (CRO) focusing on the highest risk and most complex vulnerable residents.
7. Due to the risk of community transmission of Covid-19 and following guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), a risk-based approach was introduced. This involved additional PPE and safe systems of work when entering properties for both the ER crews and CROs. It also involved the introduction of ER crews providing SWV advice over the phone and, where necessary, the fitting of smoke alarms and letterbox fire bags. Due to the increased vulnerability and complex needs of those that are in our higher risk groups, CROs have continued to deliver SWVs physically in their home.
8. During 2020 partner referrals reduced due to the impact of the pandemic on their services and the availability of telephone numbers was limited for ER crews to contact residents. Throughout the year every effort has been made to generate referrals and encourage residents to contact the Service for home safety advice. This has included advertising campaigns on our website, social media campaigns targeted into the community, the use of partner information such as those residents who have been prescribed medicated oxygen for use in the home and leaflet drops in community venues and physical deliveries by crews to homes.
9. Although the use of telephone SWVs has been necessary and the number of SWVs have reduced due to the impact of Covid-19, it has been identified as a method which could be used to broaden the range of services, we can offer. Telephone SWVs will be examined further to see if this would be a useful and viable option post pandemic as a means of offering SWV to lower risk residents who request advice, potentially allowing more resource time for physical in the home visits to those at the greatest risk from fire.

### **Arson and deliberate fire reduction**

10. The National Fire Statistics for England show that in 2019/20 CDDFRS had the third highest rate of deliberate secondary fires and the highest rate of deliberate primary fires per 100,000 population. The Service recognise this as a priority, but it is clear this is also a wider regional problem, as similar rates are also seen in Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and Cleveland Fire Brigade. To address this, the Service has taken a number of actions which are outlined below.

11. The Arson Reduction (AR) Manager has worked through the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) to create the multi-agency Arson Suppression Group (ASG). This group is working on a range of areas to reduce arson and deliberate fires, such as:
  - a. Building a picture of activities that partner agencies are involved in, gathering data sets to understand trends and analysis of the various forms of arson experienced in the Easington Area.
  - b. The ASG requested a peer review from another FRS that has experienced arson at a similar level, this is currently being conducted with Merseyside FRS.
  - c. CDDFRS Information Services now provide relevant data daily direct to Durham Police for analysis.
  - d. The AR Team are collaborating with the Durham County Council Derelict Properties Group and Regeneration Team to develop a register of 'at risk' premises.
  - e. A project is being developed with the Communications Team based on 'Talk - Teach - Time to Act' which will support Fire stoppers.
  - f. ER crews have been allocated 'blue routes' which they drive through on return to station to conduct regular environmental audits and report fly-tipping and waste.
  - g. The ASG are developing a multi-agency deliberate fire and arson reduction strategy and will report progress through the SDP and the Safer Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
  
12. Project FLAME (Flexible Learning, Arson Messages and Education) has also been developed and is a new intervention that will be ready to open for referrals after the school Easter break or when Covid-19 restrictions permit. The FLAME programme will deliver a range of interventions and interactions to challenge anti-social behaviours and fire setting of children and young people within the community. This will be based on a referral scheme from secondary schools, Youth Offending Service, ASB / Police and Social Services. Flame is offered in three phases at a school, or at a local fire station, (depending on Covid-19 restrictions):
  - a. Phase 1 - One full day education, school based. School referral aimed at a group of young people who, as a year group or friendship group have demonstrated through their reported behaviours a potential towards ASB and where there is local intelligence around fire setting in the locality. These Young People will learn about the threats to their personal safety, safety of others and to the community.
  - b. Phase 2 - Two full days educational AR intervention, school / other venue based. School or Social Services or Police, (ASB referral only),

referrals where the young people are susceptible or vulnerable to further escalation on fire setting behaviours and may find themselves liable to more formal, punitive measures by the school or police. Some young people may also be vulnerable to involvement in crime or vulnerable to exploitation through criminal cohesive peer pressure. These young people will learn about the threats to their personal safety, safety of others and to the community, consequences of criminal behaviours and reckless deliberate fire setting.

- c. Phase 3 - Three full days of robust AR intervention, school / other venue based. Police, Social services, YOS or school referrals. These young people are on the cusp of criminal involvement, under Youth Offender Service or Social Services management or may be within a Pupil Referral Unit scheme (Young People who have had multiple exclusions, are difficult in class and truants get referred into PRUs). These young people are or have been involved in significant fire related behaviours to the detriment of the community and their personal safety. These individuals will learn about managing their impulsiveness and vulnerability to involvement in crime or vulnerable to exploitation through criminal relationships and peer pressure.

### **School education**

- 13. For over 15 years CDDFRS have organised and delivered multi-agency community safety workshops for year 6 school children across County Durham and Darlington. This was previously referred to as the Safety Carousel and in recent years was re-branded to 'Safer Futures Live' (SFL) and has been run in 'The Work Place' venue in Newton Aycliffe. This intervention has been extremely successful and had annual attendance of 7,000 – 7,500 school children each academic year and has received very positive feedback from teacher evaluations.
- 14. As this activity involves larger numbers of children being grouped together in the various education 'pods', the physical delivery of this was stopped during 2020-21 due to Covid-19 precautions. The Service has used this time and the funding allocated to SFL to develop an online version in collaboration with the schools and a company called Three Motion Ltd. 'Safer Futures Online' (SFO) will have the benefits of interactive delivery directly into schools right across the school year rather than only in March and November. It is aimed to commence delivery of this in April 2021.
- 15. In conversation with educational strategic leaders, due to the flexibility and accessibility of the online platform, it is envisaged it may double the number of children receiving this safety education to around 14,000 to 15,000 pupils, this project has evaluation built-in from both the children and the class teacher leading the interactive online session.

### **Other activity**

- 16. During the pandemic the Service has delivered many other activities to support partner agencies and the community through the use of staff volunteers. Some examples of the activities undertaken include the delivery of food, PPE and other essential supplies.

Staff have also been trained to support vaccinations centres, test centres and the local tracing partnership.

### **Conclusion**

17. As Member Champion for Community Safety, I am extremely proud of the way the Service and its staff have adapted during the pandemic and maintained delivery of its prevention activities to ensure the safety of our communities and meet our statutory obligations.
18. I would like to encourage Members of the CFA to join me in thanking the Service and its staff for their response to the pandemic and the flexible, innovative delivery of community safety activities. I would also ask members to help promote the work of the Service by encouraging our constituents to contact the Service for SWV advice.

### **Recommendations**

19. CFA members are requested to:
  - a. **Note** the content of the report.

Cllr Richard Manchester – Member Champion for Community Safety