



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

18 July 2023

Community Safety and Arson Reduction

Report of the Community Safety and Arson Reduction Member Champion

Purpose of Report

1. The report is to give members an update of community safety and arson reduction activity during 2022/23.

Section Restructure

2. During the year the Community Safety Team and the Arson Reduction Team were restructured to create a combined Community Safety and Arson Reduction (CS&AR) Team which will provide a holistic approach to all prevention activities with the aim to improve the flexibility and efficiency of the section.
3. As part of this approach a new Young Person Education Co-ordinator role was created to drive the Service's approach to education for children and young people. This role will liaise with key partners such as the Headteachers Forum, coordinate Fire Cadet activity, develop and support delivery of key educational messages for prevention activities under the central Community Safety campaign calendar.

Home Fire Safety

4. A review of the current Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) was conducted in August 2022 to ensure that the Service had fully adopted the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) person centred approach. This showed that the Service was compliant to the NFCC approach.
5. A total of 18,390 HFSVs were completed in the year with 83.6 percent being delivered to high-risk targeted premises, exceeding the Community Risk Management Plan's target of 80 percent. One-in-four residents completed the satisfaction survey with a positive outcome of 98.9 percent.

6. During the year the Service made 745 referrals to partner agencies and in turn, received 1,396 referrals from our partners. We continue to promote the Eyes Wide Open programme to partners to increase referrals of vulnerable persons.
7. The Service attended 204 accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) which is the lowest annual recorded number of incidents on record. There was also the lowest recorded number of casualties from ADFs with only nine injuries. Unfortunately, there was one fatality from an ADF in Newton Aycliffe.

School Education

8. The 2022/23 round of Phoenix Fire Champion (PFC) schools' programs concluded in March with two schools involved in the programme, with a positive impact with the children involved. The children stated they understand the consequences of arson, how to act if there is a fire and dangers involved with fire. Partner feedback was also gathered from the teaching staff and Believe Housing. The sessions worked well in relation to children participation, engagement and overall content.
9. The CS&AR Team will begin a desk top research project to look at deliberate fires and known hot spots around the Service area to identify where developing trends exist with the aim of reaching out via the Head Teacher Forum to schools and book the next cohort of junior schools to participate in the PFC project.
10. This PFC project will restart in September with delivery throughout October to coincide with the Bonfire Strategy commencing on the 25 October through the 7 November.
11. The Young Person Education Co-ordinator has been working with Emergency Response (ER) crews to review their delivery methods and reviewed the resources and materials available for Year 5 and 6 junior schools fire safety talks. This has led to a change in methodology and guidance given to the ER crews to realise the best we can from these critical interactions.
12. A 'Fires within 500m of Schools' PowerBi tool was introduced to allow Watch Managers to look at deliberate fires within a localised range of a school to provide better data for them to form a basis for trend analysis and content when discussing fire safety with children of the school.

Fire Cadets

13. Currently, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) has five operating Fire Cadet schemes, (Stanhope, Consett, Durham, Spennymoor and Peterlee), with the aim for Darlington to come online in September 2023. In recent months the Service has begun to introduce the NFCC Fire Cadet model to our Fire Cadet schemes with the Fire Cadet Manager I.T. System and training programmes for Unit Leaders, (formerly termed Cadet Coordinators), Adult Volunteers and Firefighter Instructors who all have a role to play in how the schemes are run.
14. Each scheme has a maximum of 15 Fire Cadets, led by two Unit Leaders, and assisted by Firefighter Instructors where required for drills etc. The Adult Volunteers have only recently been added to the schemes to assist with administration and assistance to those Fire Cadets with physical, learning, or emotional needs.

15. A review of the PPE, uniform, and costs associated with the Fire Cadet schemes started in November 2022 and a plan to change the existing fire kit, gloves and helmets was instigated. The new gloves and helmets have been issued. The transition from the PBI Gold style of fire kit to the new NFCC National Fire Cadet PPE, (blue fire kit), will go out to tender soon. The uniform is to be simplified to make it more flexible for all Fire Cadets regardless of gender and physical ability.

Arson and Deliberate Fire Reduction

16. New deliberate fire reduction activity targets were introduced for ER crews for 2022/23. The activities monitored were Blue Route patrols, Environmental Visual Audit (EVA) and Fly Tipping report forms to the local authority, with 6,140 activities delivered by the operational crews.
17. Despite this additional activity, deliberate secondary fires were extremely high in 2022/23 heavily influenced by the two heatwaves during the year. Although quarters three and four displayed downward curves compared to the 2020/21 statistics, it is hoped this improved performance continues in to 2023/24.
18. A new approach to understanding the local deliberate fire trends experienced within our station areas has been developed. Problem-solving guidance and boards will be located within the station offices that highlight the problem areas, the partners involved in addressing the issues and a breakdown of the allocated tasks. The aim is to allow the Watch Managers to monitor the problem-solving cycle and the various tasks, actions and outcomes that impact on the initial trend.
19. The aim is that this approach will support local Multi-Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) meetings and any subsequent Time Limited Projects (TLPs) instigated to reduce the fire trend.
20. The CS&AR Team have been working with named young people via the CURVE Project to address fire setting behaviours. Additionally, a PCC funded project was finalised between the Woodland Pupil Referral Unit, and Darlington Young Offenders Team, to run a 10-week program of Developing Resilience in young people. This is presented by the CS&AR Team, assisted by a volunteer firefighter. The project went live the week commencing 17 April 2023.
21. The CS&AR Team are participating in a study in partnership with Northumbria University and Seaham High School to look at two distinct projects under the academic supervision of Dr Faye Horsley. The studies are;
 - MSc study of Young People, (years 7 to 9 of secondary school), and their understanding of 'why young people set deliberate fires'. The young people involved in this project are volunteers and not necessarily involved in deliberate secondary fire setting.
 - PhD study of Young People, (years 7 to 11 of secondary school), This study will look to interview Young People who are active or have been active fire setters. One of the key points in this study is to define the sub-categories of young people who start fires deliberately, (as within the field of study, the definitions are very fluid), for instance when, where and why are the following terms used?
 - **Fire Play:** traditionally a term used for children up to the age of 10, (10 years of age is the age of criminal intent).

- **Firesetter:** a term applied to a young person who starts secondary fires. However, we have known firesetters who can start large and resource intense fires that place firefighter lives at risk. This is far-too wide a reference and takes no cognisance of ACE, (Adverse Childhood Experiences) that lead to the fire starting.
 - **Arsonist:** this term tends to apply to an adult who forms criminal intent as to the reason for their fire. This also is far-too wide a reference and takes no cognisance of other, wider emotional motivational factors and mental health issues.
22. CDDFRS are leading the way in trying to define who and what we are dealing with in terms of fire-related behaviour within our communities so that we better understand what and how we target our resources, educational practice, and interventions.
 23. The Durham Arson Suppression Group (ASG) and Fly Tipping Task Force meetings were combined in quarter three of 2022/23 to look at joint practices and intelligence sharing in relation to organised crime that involved deliberate fire setting and arson and look to understand trends in fly tipping within the Durham area.
 24. The now combined ASG / Fly Tipping Group is chaired by Durham Constabulary with members of Education, Health, Durham City Council, CDDFRS, Police and Housing associations to discuss six thematic areas, with the aim of sharing intelligence and discussing how specific legislation may be applied by the partner agencies to reduce arson and deliberate fire setting. The group meet on a quarterly basis and report directly to the Safe Durham Partnership.
 25. A new Safe Durham Partnership Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy has been developed which includes a partnership commitment to reducing deliberate fires. The CS&AR Manager is working with Darlington Community Safety Partnership to develop specific plans for reducing arson and deliberate fires in Darlington.

Organised Crime Group (OCG) Disruption Panel

26. This panel is formed from a wide range of agencies and at local, regional, and national level to share data and intelligence on named OCG's, operating in County Durham and Darlington. The aim is to target specific gangs and use powers of the various partners to disrupt or interdict the OCG's activities. Some of the OCG's, (particularly those on the East Coast), use arson as a weapon or means of intimidation against other OCG members, and on occasion, against specific individuals.
27. The CS&AR Team, (assisted by the Fire Investigation Team), provide support to both the ASG / Fly Tipping Group and the OCG Panel. In January 2023, SM Jewkes of the Fire Investigation Team, received a Chief Fire Officer's Certificate of Appreciation for three separate investigations that he had conducted, that led to the conviction of four men. Some of the activities of these four men were linked to ASG and OCG joint activities.

Service Campaign Schedule

28. The Service Campaign Schedule focuses on four main areas throughout the year, covering, Easter, Water Safety, Bonfire and Road Safety. Resources are created for use with each of the campaigns to ensure consistency across the Service area and to promote key messaging. Each campaign is evaluated with all parties invited to comment, this ensures continuing improvements and success.

Recommendations

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

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