

# COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

## ANNUAL REPORT

A review of our work from the past year.



County Durham and Darlington  
**Fire and Rescue Service**



**FIRE & RESCUE**

**KX13 LGK**

**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER  
STEVE HELPS**



# “ CHIEF’S WELCOME ”

Welcome to the Annual Report for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service. Our fantastic staff are always here to keep your community safe and this is our chance to show you the wealth of work that we do every day – and night - of the year.

Together we have achieved a huge amount over the past year, from our emergency response work, to being named as Fire and Rescue Service of the Year at the iESE awards (again!), achieving the status of Disability Confident Leader and welcoming another cohort of Firefighters onto our award winning apprenticeship scheme.

We have experienced some challenges too but we constantly strive to learn from them and improve whenever we can.

All this is coupled with a highly skilled, and highly motivated workforce which is a credit to

our Combined Fire Authority (CFA) and the communities they serve. I am extremely proud of our staff for the way in which they carry out their day to day duties with dedication, kindness and professionalism, and keep people, property and the environment safe.

A big thank you to them, and also to you, our communities and business owners who work with us to keep everyone safe.

Chief Fire Officer

*Steve Helps*

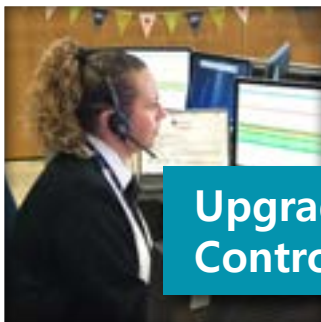
# KEY INVESTMENTS FROM THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY



## Wildfire Vehicle at Crook Fire Station

The Combined Fire Authority (CFA) made the decision last year to invest further in our fleet and equipment. In response to the increased threat of wildfire a dedicated vehicle and equipment has been stationed

at our Crook Fire Station. Firefighters at the station have received enhanced training and are able to respond to all wildfire emergencies across County Durham and Darlington.



## Upgrades in the Control Room

To make sure we could continue to answer 999 calls and mobilise our crews we invested a significant amount in new software to maintain our Control Room function. This replaced our old system which could no longer be supported.

## Continuing Investments



Our capital investment programme for major works has now come to an end and saw new buildings and major refurbishments to many stations.

The CFA will continue to invest in the Service estate through a new programme which will see smaller scale renovations and improvements to facilities.

We will also be going out to tender for new fire engines in the year ahead.

# COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY APPROVES LATEST COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Every year we review how we make sure you are getting the best service we can provide by using the resources we have in place to best effect. The plans we create are scrutinised by the CFA.

As you will appreciate the economic climate has had a significant impact on our budget with increases in the goods and services we buy, the financial impact on unfunded pay awards for our staff, and significantly high energy costs. As part of our governance cycle we carry out a public consultation with our communities and key stakeholders to seek the views and feedback on our plans and priorities for the forthcoming years.

In the last year we put the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) out to public consultation from February 2024 for 12 weeks, and used a more face to face approach by holding events, attending meetings, and staffing street stalls. We were pleased that this resulted in more people responding to our survey, giving us a wider range of views. The final version of the CRMP was approved in June 2024.

Before we develop our plans, we carry out a detailed assessment of all the risks we face in County Durham and Darlington. As well as fires in the home and business premises, we plan to respond to road traffic collisions, incidents involving rescues from water or from a height such as at High Force, industrial accidents involving chemical, radioactive or biological substances and of course protecting our historic buildings like Durham Cathedral. We use all the information we gather about risks to inform the CRMP.

## In 2024/25, the following options will be considered:

- Monitor the crewing of Wholetime fire engines.
- Implement the findings following the review of the Risk Based Inspection Programme.
- Continue to monitor the staffing arrangements and application of TRVs.
- Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects.

## In 2025/26 the following options will be considered:

- Review the newly implemented Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme
- Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects.

## In 2026/27 the following options will be considered:

- Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects.



**County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Authority**

# WHO IS IN THE COMBIN

## Elected Members — Durham County Councillors



**Cllr John Shuttleworth**

Chair – Independent  
Ward: Weardale



**Cllr Sam Zair**

Vice Chair – Independent  
Ward: Bishop Auckland Town



**Cllr Jim Atkinson**

Labour  
Ward: Aycliffe East



**Cllr Jan Blakey**

Independent  
Ward: Coxhoe



**Cllr Alison Batey**

Labour  
Ward: Pelton



**Cllr Richard Bell**

Conservative  
Ward: Barnard Castle West



**Cllr Julie Cairns**

Independent  
Ward: Chilton



**Cllr Carole Hampson**

Labour  
Ward: Craghead and South Moor



**Cllr Bill Kellett**

Labour  
Ward: Sherburn



**Cllr Neville Jones**

Liberal Democrat  
Ward: Aycliffe East



**Cllr Ian McLean**

Labour  
Ward: Horden



**Cllr Leanne Kennedy\***

Labour  
Ward: Dawdon



**Cllr Richard Manchester**

Labour  
Ward: Tow Law



**Cllr Carl Marshall**

Labour  
Ward: Stanley



# VED FIRE AUTHORITY

## Elected Members — Durham County Councillors continued



**Cllr Craig Martin**

Liberal Democrat  
Ward: North Lodge



**Cllr Kevin Shaw**

Labour  
Ward: Dawdon



**Cllr Shirley Quinn**

Labour  
Ward: Shildon and  
Dene Valley



**Cllr Joe Quinn**

Conservative  
Ward: Ferryhill



**Cllr Kathryn Rooney**

Liberal Democrat  
Ward: Consett North



**Cllr George Richardson**

Conservative  
Ward: Barnard Castle East



**Cllr Paul Sexton**

Independant  
Ward: Chester-le-Street  
South



**Cllr Elaine Peeke**

Conservative  
Ward: Bishop Middleham  
and Cornforth

## Elected Members — Darlington Borough Councillors



**Cllr Andrew Anderson**

Labour  
Ward: Bank Top and  
Lascelles



**Cllr David Ray**

Labour  
Ward: Bank Top and  
Lascelles



**Cllr Gerald Lee**

Conservative  
Ward: Heighington and  
Coniscliffe



**Cllr Matthew Snedker**

Green  
Ward: College

*\*Very sadly Cllr Kennedy passed away in September 2023. Our thoughts are with her friends and family at this difficult time.*

*\*\*Cllr Shaw came onto the CFA in September 2023.*

# REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR

The Authority's spending is planned and controlled by a rigorous budget and financial management process. The Authority received resources direct from the Government in the form of the Revenue Support Grant, Services Grant, and Non-Domestic Rates, with the balance of funding coming from precepts on billing authorities for amounts chargeable to local taxpayers. During 2023/24, the Authority's net revenue expenditure, which was met from the above sources, was £32.101m, while spending on capital projects totalled £2.116m.

The Authority's general reserve balance, which represents the sum set aside to meet unforeseen future circumstances, was £1.773m on 31 March 2024. This equates to 5% of the 2024/25 net expenditure budget and is in line with the Authority's policy on reserves to maintain a general reserve of 5% of net expenditure.

Financial performance against the approved budget is reported to elected members on a quarterly basis throughout the year. Further information on the Authority's financial performance is available on our website:

<https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/statement-accounts>

# 2023/24

## SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

The Authority's accounts show how it uses its resources to deliver a fire and rescue service across County Durham and Darlington. The summary accounts below provide an overview of where the funds come from, how they are used and the financial position on 31 March 2024. The 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is available on the Authority's website.



# REVENUE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Employees	27,199
Premises	3,626
Transport	657
Supplies & Services	4,289
Contingencies	0
Provisions & write-offs	-9
Capital Financing	3,063
Transfers to Reserves	546
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>39,371</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Government Grants	5,249
Other Income	1,973
Transfers from Reserves	48
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>7,270</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>32,101</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>	
Government Funding	10,185
Local Business Rates	1,459
Council Tax	20,700
Deficit on Collection Fund	-243
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>32,101</b>

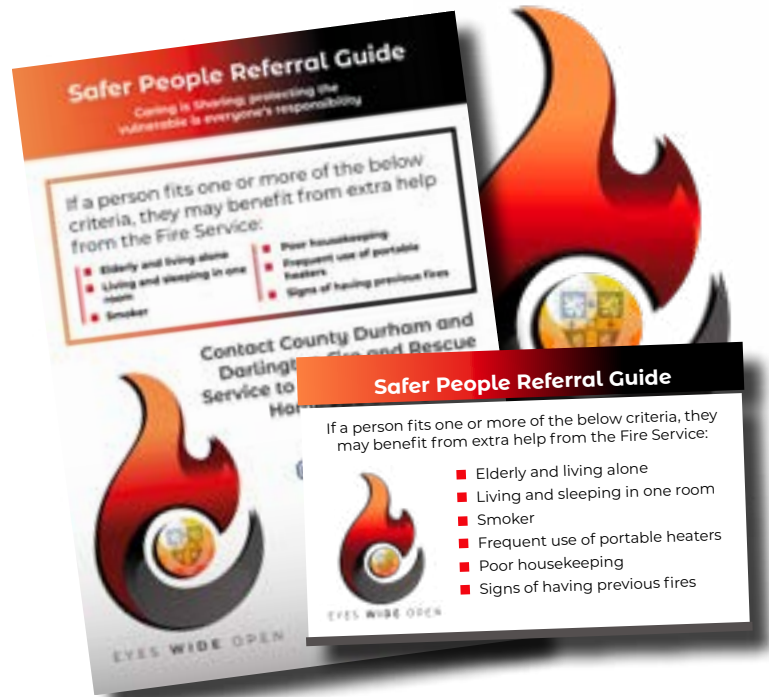
# PREVENTION

## EYES WIDE OPEN

This year we saw the number of accidental house fires stay the same as in the previous year, but in spite of this we also had a higher number of fatalities, which is always difficult to deal with.

Many of those sadly affected had differing needs so we are working hard with our partner organisations to make sure we reach vulnerable people, and that we refer on people who need additional help.

Our increased activity includes our Eyes Wide Open initiative which focuses on agencies looking out for signs that someone might need a visit from us.



## OPERATION TRAILBLAZER

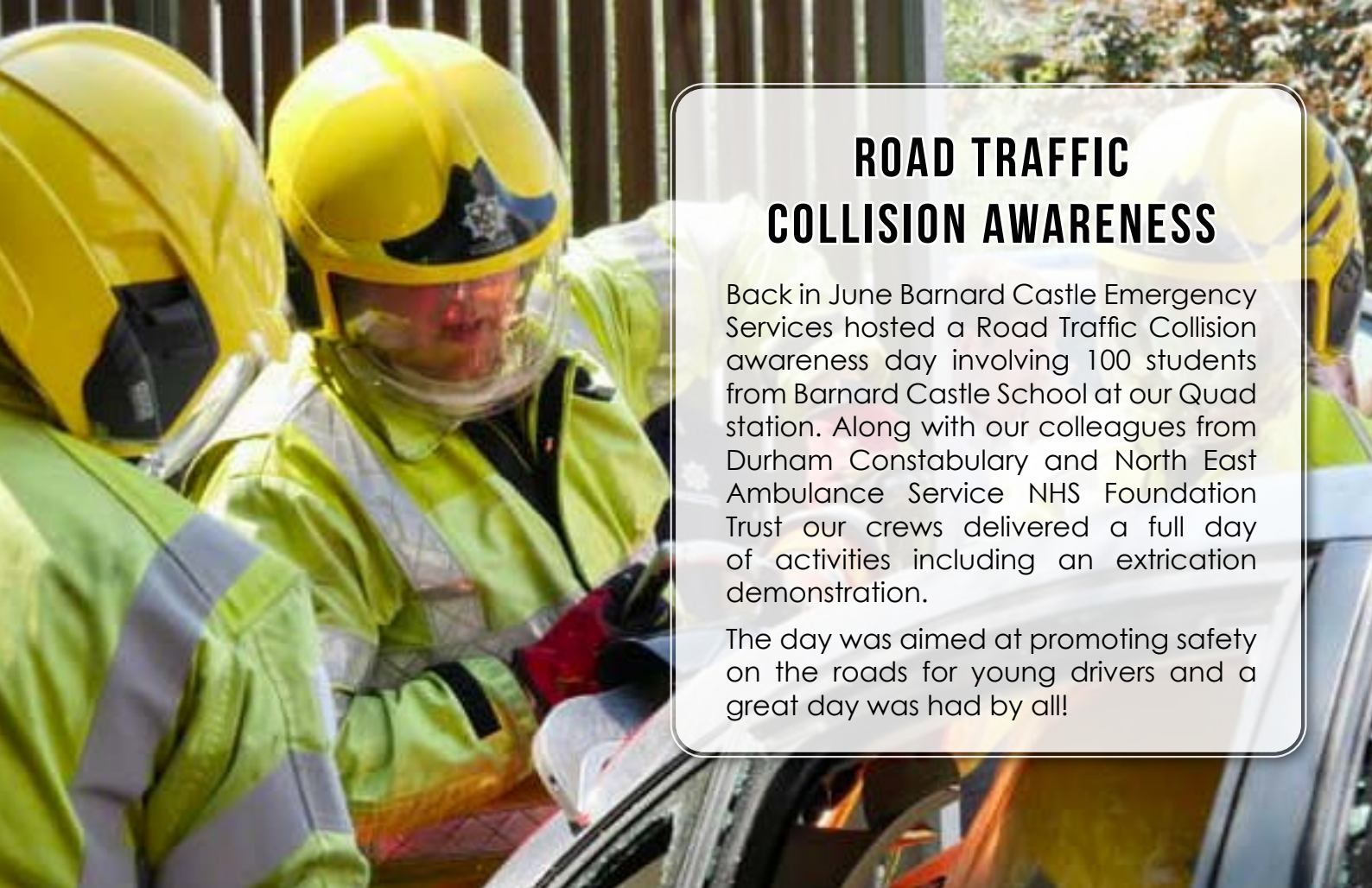
Officers from County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Service (CDDFRS) and Durham Constabulary have been conducting joint Trailblazer patrols in areas of County Durham that suffer from increased levels of antisocial behaviour and criminal damage.

The hybrid team spoke to local people and residents as part of an investigation into the damage caused by a building fire, and chatted to children around the dangers of causing damage and setting fires, which could ultimately lead to criminal convictions.

The scheme is being funded by the office of the County Durham and Darlington Police and Crime Commissioner and it is hoped will lead to a reduction in deliberate fires which can blight communities.







## ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION AWARENESS

Back in June Barnard Castle Emergency Services hosted a Road Traffic Collision awareness day involving 100 students from Barnard Castle School at our Quad station. Along with our colleagues from Durham Constabulary and North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust our crews delivered a full day of activities including an extrication demonstration.

The day was aimed at promoting safety on the roads for young drivers and a great day was had by all!

# PROTECTION

Last year our Business Fire Safety team delivered a Fire Safety Seminar to local business professionals in association with the Service's Trading and Training arm, Vital Fire Solutions

Our team ran two sessions covering everything related to Business Fire Safety including information on Fire Risk Assessments, The Responsible Person, The Regulatory Reform Order, Evacuation and planning and much more!

Jonathan Smith, Business Fire Safety Manager said "A large part of our role in Business Fire safety is to make sure we help our local community to be as safe as possible by preparing, educating and advising where we can. We had some excellent feedback and there were smiles all around!"





# APPRENTICES

Back in 2017, CDDFRS joined forces with New College Durham to offer firefighter apprenticeships, an award winning scheme which has proved to be hugely successful over the years with 7 successful cohorts since its creation.

In 2024 our seventh Cohort of firefighter apprentices successfully completed their risk critical training, concluding with their passing out ceremony, which would allow them to move onto the station rotation element of their development where they are placed on various watches across the Service. We will continue this innovative method of recruiting and training in future years.

We also encourage existing staff to enrol onto a variety of apprenticeship standards across the Service, for example; Leadership and Management, Fire Control Operators, Heavy Goods Technician, Accountancy and Human Resources.

In June last year we were proud to be named 26th in the top 100 Apprenticeship Employers in the national league table.



## FIRE FUTURES

start your fire story with us



# FIRE CADETS

Fire Cadets is a national uniformed youth organisation run by CDDFRS and volunteers. Fire Cadets provides fun, challenging and inclusive opportunities for young people to reach their full potential contributing to safer, stronger, and healthier communities.



Cadets are supported, empowered, and provided with opportunities to gain positive life skills and focus on wellbeing, develop their personal safety and general safety knowledge, improve their communication and leadership skills, and increase their self-esteem.

In 2023-24 our Fire Cadets were able to participate in a variety of activities including our fire station open days, charity car washes, nationwide Remembrance Services, attending Pride events with our crews, and competing in the national Fire Cadet Games.





# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Service has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group which meets regularly to review the ongoing work which supports this important strategy. We have representative champions from across the Service covering the 9 protected characteristic strands of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief and disability.

In 2023-24 we supported campaigns to raise awareness of such events as SANDS - Baby Loss Week, White Ribbon Day, Dyslexia Week, International Women's and Men's Days, and attended the Asian Fire Service Association summer conference. We also received training from Miss Menopause, attended Lunch and Learn workshops on topics such as suicide prevention and Black History Month and we are a proud member of the North East of England Rainbow Alliance. We regularly support the Durham, Darlington and Northern Pride events.

In the year ahead we will be hosting Bystander training sessions, and reviewing how we can support staff on station.



# OUR YEAR I

The number of calls we received last year was

**15758**



**2589**  
Deliberate fires  
were started

We inspected  
**6220**  
Fire Hydrants

We completed  
**18412**  
Home Fire  
Safety Visits



We completed  
**1716**  
Business Fire  
Safety Audits



# N N U M B E R S

There were  
**199**  
accidental  
dwelling fires



We had  
**1255**  
special  
services  
incidents  
which  
included  
attending  
road traffic  
collisions



The total number  
of injuries from  
accidental house  
fires was

**14**



As well as the many sporting challenges they undertake our staff and cadets across the Service carried out car washes, bucket collections, raffles and tombolas at our Open Days. In 2023-2024 the Durham and Darlington Firefighters' Charity raised the fantastic sum of

**£53,919**

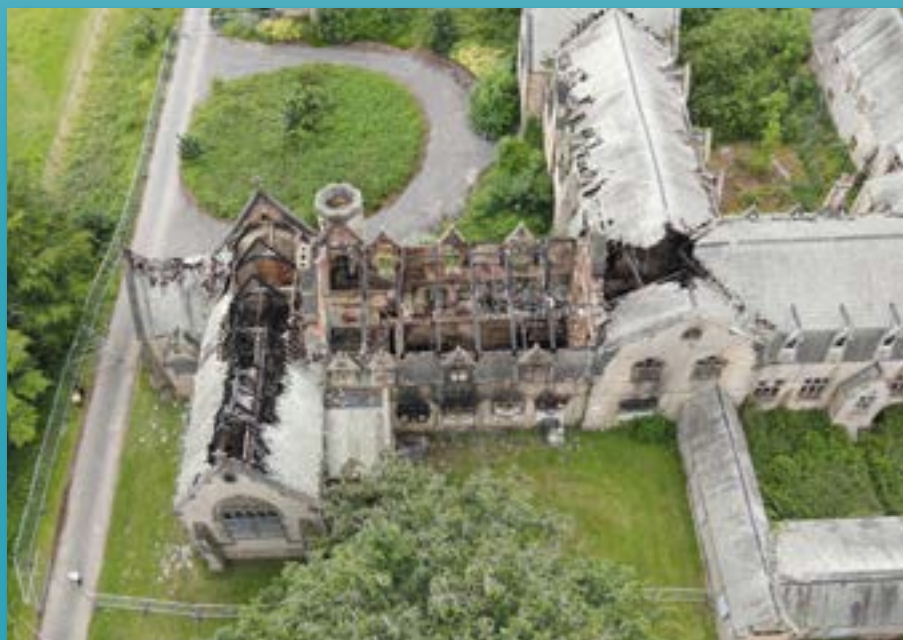
# INCIDENTS

## USHAW CHAPEL

Crews worked through the night at Ushaw Chapels and Gardens in Durham following a fire which took place at around midnight on Friday the 7th of July.

In total five appliances from Durham, Peterlee, Spennymoor, Consett, and an aerial ladder platform (ALP) from Darlington attended the incident.

Due to the quick thinking and swift actions of our crews the fire was brought under control, and they left the



scene at 4pm the following day. Our firefighters did an

amazing job to stop the fire from spreading.

## NOSE'S POINT

On 1st January 2024, a coordinated rescue operation took place at Nose's Point in Seaham, where a person had fallen a considerable distance off the cliffs and was in distress. Specialist trained crews from Newton Aycliffe and Seaham Fire Stations collaborated closely with multiple agencies, including the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) Hazardous Area Response Team (HART), HM Coastguard, and the Police, to carry out the rescue.

The operation involved a complex and challenging environment due to the terrain and the nature of the



injuries sustained by the individual. Despite these difficulties, the teams were able to work harmoniously and efficiently to achieve a successful outcome.

During a subsequent multi-agency debrief, several effective practices were identified that contributed to the successful resolution of the incident. These observations led CDDFRS to make a National Operational Learning (NOL) and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) submissions. These submissions are intended to share valuable lessons learned from the incident to inform and enhance national practices for similar future scenarios.



# TRAINING

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Crews from Peterlee attended a tactical training exercise with our colleagues from Cleveland Fire Brigade at Fleet House in Middlesborough. The

exercise simulated a flat fire on the 7th floor of an apartment block with multiple persons trapped.

Training exercises like this allow our crews to put their skills and knowledge into practice as well as improve collaborative working with our partners.





# CHIEF FIRE OFFICER COMMENDATIONS

WELL DONE TO  
CONTROL OPERATOR  
SUE SMART!



Control Operator Sue Smart answered an emergency call from a teenage girl who along with her friend, had fallen down a river embankment in a location which they struggled to identify.

Sue remained on the call with the teenagers for over an hour, continually identifying the best location to affect a rescue, and ensuring that the girls were safe and calm, when clearly, they were in a distressed and dangerous position.

Sue demonstrated an amazing amount of compassion and concern for the health and welfare of the girls, and remained on the phone to provide advice and reassurance until our crews were in attendance and the girls were rescued.

On awarding Sue with a Chief Fire Officer's commendation, CFO Steve Helps commented, "There is no doubt Sue's professionalism, patience and reassuring advice meant she was able to help save the lives of both girls. We cannot even put into words how proud and thankful we are to have a person like Sue working for us."



## AMAZING RESPONSE FROM DURHAM GREEN WATCH!

In May this year, Durham Green Watch were called to an incident at Milburngate Bridge in Durham City.

On arrival they found a woman in severe distress on the wrong side of the bridge. Time was of the essence and the crew immediately leapt into action, with the appliance driver, physically holding on to the woman while the rest of the crew assembled their working at height equipment to facilitate a safe rescue.

Praising the crew, CFO Helps said: "By working together and with great determination and compassion, I have no doubt our firefighters helped save a life that day. I am immensely proud of them all – well done."

The member of the public who alerted us to this situation was also thanked by CFO Helps.

In honour of their actions, Durham Green Watch firefighters were awarded a Chief Fire Officer's commendation.





# ACHIEVEMENTS

## 20 YEARS AS A SAMARITAN

Joanna Smith MBE has worked with us as our Estates Officer for over 30 years but last year she achieved a special milestone outside of her fire service career. In her work as a volunteer at Durham Samaritans Joanna has now celebrated 20 years' service.

Each year Joanna commits 168 hours of her own time to help those who may be struggling and need emotional support, not through giving people advice or direction, but by simply listening.

In addition to the hours Joanna gives answering the Samaritans helpline, for the past 12 years she has also been involved with the HMP Durham and Low Newton Samaritan Listener Scheme. In May 2017 she was nominated and presented with an MBE from HRH The Prince of Wales for this work.



## BETTER HEALTH AWARD

From blood pressure stations to menopause awareness training, Pilates classes to fitness challenges, health and wellbeing is at the forefront of everything we do here at CDDFRS in order to keep our firefighters and staff happy, healthy and in the best shape possible!

Last year we were thrilled to have achieved The Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) at Maintaining Excellence level



**Better Health**  
**at Work Award**  
Maintaining Excellence

For the past 10 years we've received the award annually, largely thanks to our amazing Health and Fitness Advisor Joe Astbury who has overseen a number of campaigns including awareness around cancer, mental health, physical activity, sun awareness and healthy eating as well as an abundance of other health and wellbeing boosting activities.

# THANK YOU FOR READING!