



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

21st October 2024

Community Safety and Arson Reduction

Report of the Community Safety and Arson Reduction Member Champion

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with a strategic update on the community safety and arson reduction initiatives within the Community Risk Management (CRM) directorate of the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).
- 1.2. This report highlights key activities, including Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs), community engagement campaigns, and the Fire Cadet program. It aims to inform the CFA about progress made in enhancing community safety, reducing fire risks, and fostering collaboration with local partners, while also outlining future strategic directions to strengthen community safety initiatives across the Service area.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Community safety and arson reduction are integral functions within the CRM directorate, which also encompasses other critical areas, including Business Fire Safety, Continuous Improvement and Assurance, Transport and Assets. Together, these teams work collaboratively to ensure a comprehensive approach to reducing risks, improving safety, and enhancing operational efficiency across the service.
- 2.2. The Community Safety and Arson Reduction team are responsible for delivering proactive initiatives aimed at reducing fire risk, promoting safety, and preventing arson-related incidents across the Service area. Their responsibilities include

conducting HFSVs, where they provide advice, install smoke alarms, and assess fire risks in homes, particularly for vulnerable individuals. They also engage with schools, businesses, and community groups to raise awareness of fire prevention and safety. Additionally, the teams focus on reducing deliberate fires through targeted interventions, working closely with partners such as the Police and Local Authorities.

- 2.3. More recently, there has been some significant staffing changes across various roles at all levels within CRM and the Community Safety and Arson Reduction team due to retirements, resignations, promotion and secondment.
- 2.4. The Service used the opportunity presented by these changes to restructure the Community Safety and Arson Reduction team with recent appointments, including a new Arson Reduction and Campaigns Manager and a Young Persons Education Coordinator. A copy of the new structure within CRM is detailed within Appendix A.
- 2.5. As part of this report, I would like to extend my gratitude to members of CRM who have either left or transitioned to other areas of the organisation. Their dedication to community safety and arson reduction across the Service area has been greatly appreciated.

3. Home Fire Safety

- 3.1. The Service remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering high-quality HFSVs and providing tailored safety advice to our communities. These efforts are pivotal in mitigating risks and reducing harm caused by accidental dwelling fires (ADF). In alignment with the National Fire Chiefs Council’s (NFCC) Person-Centred Approach and informed by local trend analysis, the Service continually refines its HFSV targeting strategy to address both national and locally identified risks effectively.
- 3.2. For the 2023/24 period, the Service set a target of delivering 18,000 HFSVs. Through sustained effort and dedication, this goal was exceeded, completing a total of 18,412 visits. Notably, 98.2% of these visits were conducted at targeted premises, far surpassing the Community Risk Management Plan's objective, which commits to ensuring that at least 80% of HFSVs be directed toward targeted households.
- 3.3. Over the course of the year, the Service made a total of 624 referrals to partner agencies. These referrals encompassed a range of specific needs and were made to ensure that individuals received the appropriate support and interventions beyond fire safety. The types and quantities of these referrals are detailed within Table. 1, reflecting the collaborative efforts between the Service and its partners in addressing broader community risks.

Referral Type	No. of referrals
Slips Trips and Falls Referrals- D & D	141
Winter Warmth/Managing Money Better- Durham	33

Dementia Referrals- D & D	57
Smoking Referrals- Durham	55
Alcohol Referrals- Durham	6
Loneliness and Isolation Referrals- Durham	68
Winter Warm Referrals- Darlington	40
Loneliness and Isolation Referrals- Darlington	37
Smoking Referrals- Darlington	20
Alcohol Referrals- Darlington	2
Sensory Loss Smoke Alarm Referrals- Durham and Darlington	165

Table. 1 – Referral types and numbers made by CDDFRS to partner agencies 2023/24.

- 3.4. In return, the Service received 1,474 referrals from partner agencies, generated when agency representatives identified individuals at risk of fire. These individuals would benefit from a HFSV. This reciprocal partnership approach underscores the importance of multi-agency collaboration in safeguarding vulnerable individuals and ensuring that they receive targeted fire safety interventions tailored to their specific circumstances.
- 3.5. As part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening collaborative efforts, the Service continues to actively promote the "Eyes Wide Open" programme. This initiative encourages partner agencies to identify and refer vulnerable individuals who may be at an increased risk of fire. In line with this, the Service has recently launched a project to digitise the "Eyes Wide Open" training. By transitioning to a digital format, the training becomes more accessible to our partners, enhancing their ability to identify vulnerable individuals and improving the overall referral process. This innovation is anticipated to result in increased participation from partner agencies and more comprehensive protection for those most at risk.
- 3.6. During the same reporting period, the Service responded to 199 accidental dwelling fires (ADFs), matching the previous year's total. This figure represents the lowest annual number of recorded incidents to date. However, despite the stable number of incidents, there was a slight increase in the number of injuries resulting from ADFs, with 11 individuals sustaining injuries compared to seven in the previous year. This increase highlights the ongoing need to focus on both prevention and education to further reduce the impact of such incidents on our communities.
- 3.7. Although the number of ADFs remains low unfortunately there were seven fire fatalities which represents a significant increase from one in 2022/23.
- 3.8. A serious fire review process was established and conducted for each of the incidents which prompted several actions due to the trends identified. Each review scrutinised the response in detail, the lifestyle, environmental and person-centred vulnerability factors to establish how further prevention activities can be improved. CDDFRS referred two incidents which resulted in 3 fatalities to the Adult Safeguarding Boards, where a wider partnership review takes place into the circumstances leading up to the incidents.

- 3.9. As a result of the identified vulnerabilities and cross cutting similarities we have a Safer Homes Protocol signed by all partners of the Safe Durham Partnership. We have developed additional links with a wide range of agencies and groups to deliver Eyes Wide Open Training. We have developed a new relationship with hospital discharge teams and strengthened and improved our referral pathways. The range of actions are all centred around identifying those members of the community at risk of fire and putting in place appropriate risk reduction and mitigation measures.

4. Service Campaign Schedule

- 4.1. The Service's Campaign Schedule is strategically designed to address four key areas throughout the year: Easter, Water Safety, Bonfire Night, and Road Safety (Fig. 1). Each of these campaigns is crafted to address specific seasonal risks and community safety concerns, ensuring that the Service provides timely and relevant safety advice to the relevant stakeholders.



Fig. 1 – The Service's Campaign Schedule four key areas.

- 4.2. To maintain consistency across the entire Service area, bespoke resources are developed for each campaign. These resources, including educational materials, social media content, and community engagement tools, are distributed to ensure that key safety messages reach all sectors of the population effectively. The campaigns are further reinforced by collaboration with local partners, including schools, community groups, and emergency services, to broaden the impact of the messaging.
- 4.3. In preparation for the Bonfire Night campaign, the delivery plan has been updated and circulated to all partners which have been asked to provide any updates by 12 noon on Friday, 4th October. Once all necessary revisions are made, the plan will be finalised, and all actions will be carried out where required to ensure the success of the campaign.
- 4.4. Following the conclusion of each campaign, an evaluation is conducted. The Community Safety and Arson Reduction team are currently working on improving this evaluation process by extending it to all stakeholders. Internal teams and external partners are invited to provide feedback on the campaign's effectiveness and areas for improvement. This feedback loop is essential in refining future campaigns, ensuring that they continue to meet the needs of the community and evolve in response to emerging safety challenges. By

consistently evaluating our campaigns the service can work to continuously improve the interactions we have with our communities and increase our effectiveness.

5. Fire Cadets

- 5.1. Fire cadets represent a dynamic youth program designed to engage and educate young individuals in the principles of fire safety, community service, and leadership. Aimed primarily at young people aged between 12 and 18 years, the fire cadet program provides participants with a unique opportunity to learn about the firefighting profession.
- 5.2. CDDFRS has five operating Fire Cadet schemes located in Stanhope, Consett, Durham, Spennymoor and Peterlee. Each scheme accommodates a maximum of 15 Fire Cadets, who are led by two Unit Leaders and assisted by Firefighter Instructors for drills and training exercises. Recently, Adult Volunteers have been added to these schemes to assist with administration and provide support to Fire Cadets with physical, learning, or emotional needs.
- 5.3. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical training, fire cadets gain insight into fire prevention, emergency response techniques, and the importance of teamwork and discipline. The program fosters a strong sense of community spirit, encouraging cadets to participate in local initiatives, safety awareness campaigns, and volunteer activities that benefit their neighbourhoods.
- 5.4. Fire cadets also engage in a range of exciting activities, including hands-on training in fire safety, first aid, and basic firefighting skills. They learn about the various roles within the fire service and may even have opportunities to assist with community events, showcasing their commitment to public safety.
- 5.5. Additionally, the fire cadet experience cultivates essential life skills such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving. By working alongside fire service professionals, cadets not only develop a respect for public safety but also build confidence and personal responsibility. Ultimately, the fire cadet program serves as a stepping stone for young individuals interested in pursuing a career in emergency services while making a positive impact in their communities.
- 5.6. The current disposition of the Fire Cadet schemes is:

Location	Enrolled	Spaces
Consett	15	0
Stanhope	7	8
Durham	15	0
Spennymoor	11	4
Peterlee	9	6

Table. 2 – The current establishments for the Fire Cadet schemes in CDDFRS.

- 5.7. There was a recent review of the personal protective equipment (PPE), uniforms, and associated costs for the Fire Cadet schemes undertaken. This review

prompted the decision to update the existing fire kit, gloves, which has been completed. Additionally, a new uniform will be issued to all cadets and volunteers going forward to ensure consistency among participants. The uniform will also be simplified to enhance flexibility and inclusivity for all Fire Cadets, regardless of gender or physical ability.

6. Arson and Deliberate Fire Reduction

- 6.1. Introduced in 2023/24 as a key control measure to reduce the number of deliberate secondary fires, the Deliberate Fire Reduction Model aims to ensure that appropriate solutions are applied to address the specific challenges being faced.
- 6.2. The Deliberate Fire Reduction Model operates through a cyclical process of continuous monitoring, identifying and profiling problems, and developing targeted action plans to address identified issues. After implementation, the effectiveness of the plan is reviewed, with adjustments made as necessary. If the issue persists or escalates, it is referred to the Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group for further intervention (Fig. 2).

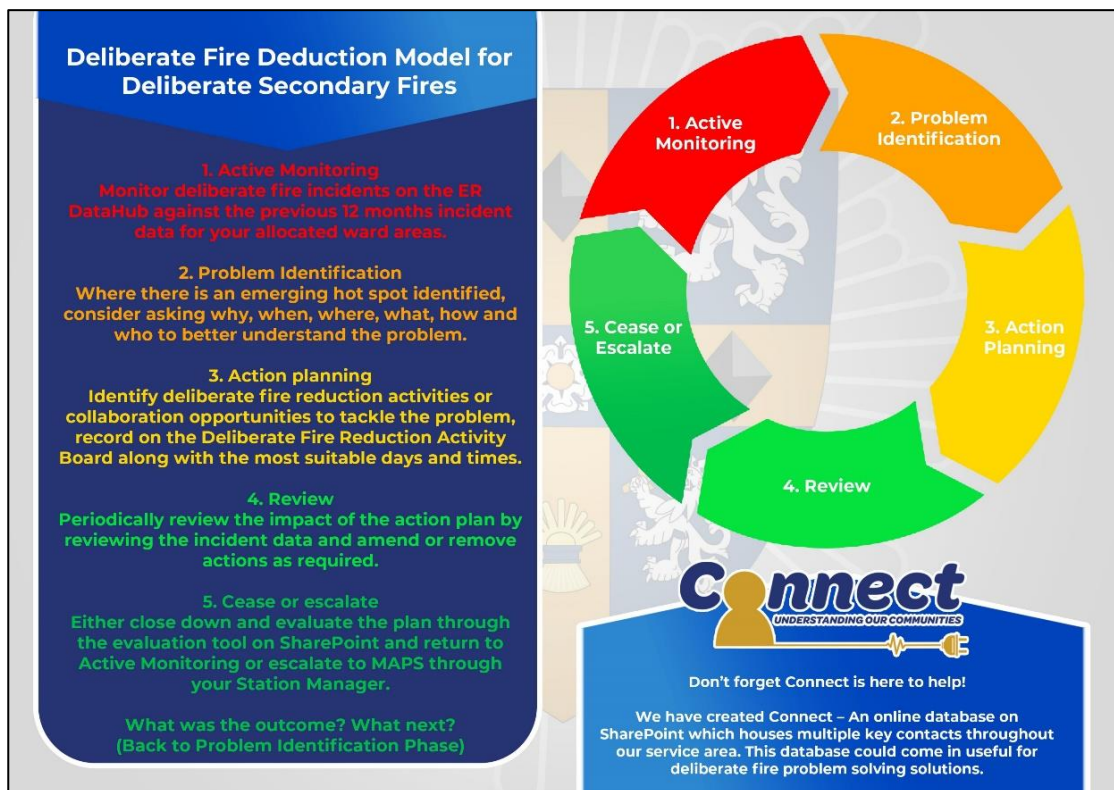


Fig. 2 – The Service's Deliberate Fire Reduction Boards.

- 6.3. In 2023/24, the Service introduced a new performance indicator, PI 09c, specifically focused on deliberate fire reduction activities. This initiative is supported by a comprehensive framework that includes 19 distinct activities (Appendix B), each designed to target and reduce fire-related incidents. By working in conjunction with the Deliberate Fire Reduction Model, the program enhances the Service's ability to address fire risks effectively and efficiently.

- 6.4. For the 2023/24 reporting period, the Performance Board set an ambitious annual target of 7,376 deliberate fire reduction activities. These activities were carefully profiled across fire stations and strategically distributed to align with the frequency of deliberate secondary fires. This approach ensures that resources are allocated optimally and allows the Service to respond proactively to fluctuations in fire activity throughout the year. By the end of the period, the Service had conducted 9,414 deliberate fire reduction activities, exceeding the target by 2,038.
- 6.5. During the same period, deliberate secondary fires totalled 2,041, a significant reduction against both the target of 2,415 and the previous year's figure of 3,381. However, while the efforts to reduce secondary fires were highly successful, deliberate primary fires saw a slight increase, with 563 incidents recorded against a target of 480 and a previous year's performance of 499. These results highlight both the successes and challenges faced by the Service, underscoring the importance of ongoing adjustments and strategic planning to address all categories of fire-related incidents effectively.

7. Fire Setting Interventions

- 7.1. The Developing Resilience course, delivered by CDDFRS is a pioneering initiative aimed at strengthening individual and community resilience. The course equips participants with essential skills to manage adversity, stress, and challenges, fostering empowerment and self-reliance. Through practical tools and strategies, it builds both mental and emotional resilience, helping individuals better navigate personal and professional difficulties.
- 7.2. This initiative is run in close collaboration with Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Joy Allen, whose support has been instrumental in its success. Funded through the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Trailblazer Fund, the course is designed to address community safety by empowering participants to overcome challenges and make positive life changes. The most recent course was visited by representatives from the Home Office policy team during a visit hosted by the PCC.
- 7.3. Since its inception, there have been five cohorts, held in April 2023, November 2023, March 2024, June 2024, and September 2024, each with resounding success. The course has received national recognition from the NFCC for its innovative approach and its impact on reducing community risk and addressing the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour.
- 7.4. By targeting individuals most at risk of social isolation, unemployment, or negative influences, the program plays a crucial role in improving participants' lives and contributing to broader community well-being. The NFCC's recognition underscores its importance as a model for resilience-building initiatives, with collaboration from key stakeholders ensuring that the program continues to deliver long-term benefits for community safety.

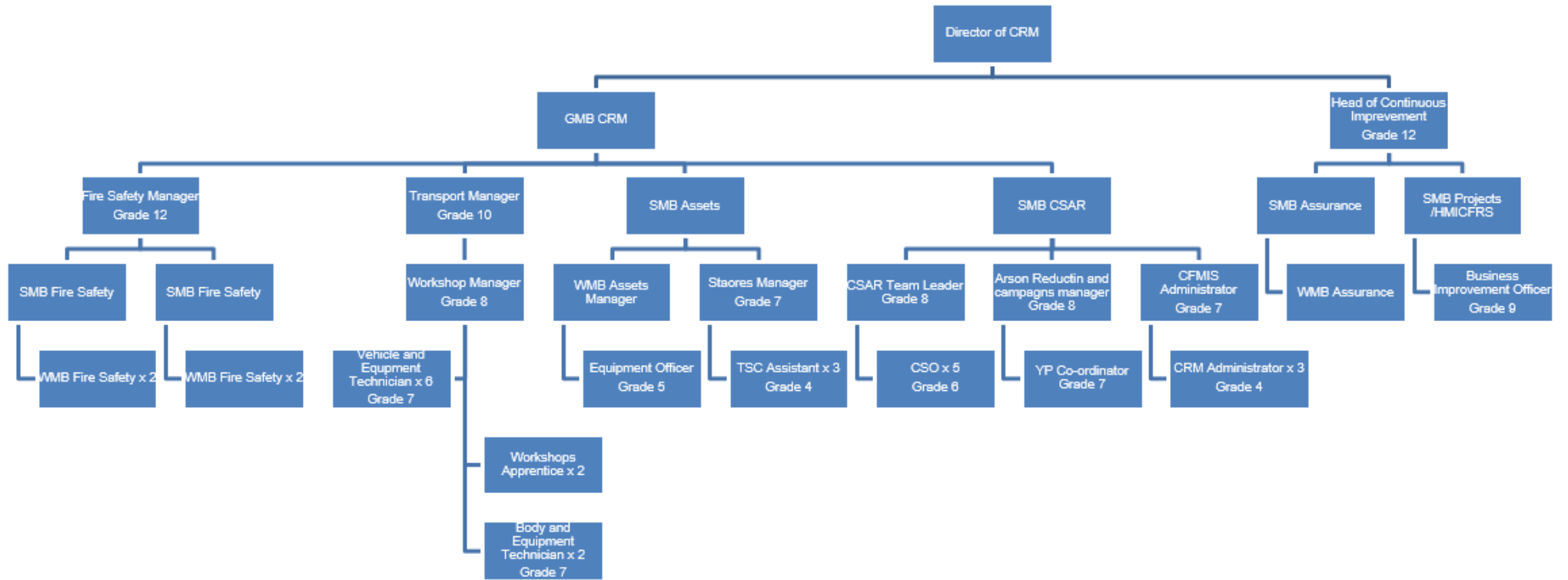
- 7.5. CDDFRS has recently collaborated with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service to train members of its Community Safety and Arson Reduction team as instructors for the Firesetter's Integrated Education Programme (Fire-P).
- 7.6. The Fire-P programme is specifically designed for individuals aged 18 or over who have been convicted of offences related to deliberate fire-setting. The program consists of eight structured sessions, which can be delivered either one-on-one or in group settings. Its primary goal is to prevent reoffending by educating participants about the risks, dangers, and wide-reaching consequences of deliberately setting fires. Through these sessions, individuals gain an understanding of the harmful effects of fire-setting on both people and property. The programme is academically accredited by the University of Portsmouth, adding a rigorous and credible dimension to the education provided.
- 7.7. CDDFRS is initially working in partnership with prisons to introduce this program as an educational course for inmates who display a fire-setting nature. In the future, the Service plans to expand its delivery by collaborating with probation services, with the long-term aim of incorporating Fire-P into the framework of restorative justice for offenders. This initiative seeks to provide those convicted of fire-setting offences with the opportunity to understand and take responsibility for their actions, ultimately helping to reduce recidivism and support rehabilitation.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. Members are requested to:
 - Note the contents of this report.
 - Receive further reports as appropriate.

Ben Cairns, Director Community Risk Management (0191 375 5553).

Strucutre chart for CRM



Deliberate Fire Reduction Activities

Primary School - Bonfire/Firework Safety
Primary Sch - Bonfire/Firework (Virtual)
Primary Sch – Arson Reduction Education
Primary Sch – Arson Reduction (Virtual)
Secondary School-Bonfire/Firework Safety
Secondary Sch-Bonfire/Firework (Virtual)
Secondary Sch– Arson Reduction Education
Secondary Sch– Arson Reduction (Virtual)
Attending MAPs
Environmental Visual Audits
Fly tipping referrals
Blue routes
Dark Nights Initiative
Op Mathis
Empty Building Risk Assessments
Intelligence Reporting
Seasonal Campaigns (Arson)
Abandoned vehicle referrals (Op Valdis)
Other Arson Reduction Visit / Talk