

Safest People, Safest Places

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Integrated risk management plan consultation 2016-2017





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Integrated risk management plan consultation 2016-2017

Introduction

In February 2016 the Combined Fire Authority, made up of local councillors from County Durham and the borough of Darlington, will meet to set County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) spending levels for the financial year ahead.

Funding for your local fire and rescue service comes from two main sources: a government grant, providing approximately 42 per cent of the total, and precept payments from local taxpayers and non-domestic rate-payers in County Durham and Darlington, which make up the remaining 58 per cent.

Since 2010 we have transformed the way we provide services to the community in response to a £4.9m cut in our central government funding. In 2016/17 we strongly believe grant funding from government will be cut once again forcing us to consider further proposals to reduce costs.

Before these decisions are made CDDFRS is keen to consult people living and working in

our area about five proposals which could affect spending and the way the Service is run.

In this document, which is linked to our three year strategic plan 2015 to 2018, we have included some background information about the performance of the Service and our role.

Five consultation questions, including information relating to each one, are set out in this document. For details about how to respond to the questions, as well as a link to the survey, please turn to page 15.

We would be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes to take part in our consultation by Monday 8 February. The results will be published in March 2016.

This is your fire and rescue service, funded by you and in existence to protect the community. Your help is invaluable to us as we prepare to make these difficult decisions.



Councillor Michele Hodgson
Chair of the Combined Fire Authority



Stuart Errington
Chief fire officer



Our role

As an emergency service CDDFRS is governed by legislation and national frameworks to ensure that we have the people, equipment and training in place to respond to a wide variety of incidents including:

- Fires of all types
- Road traffic collisions
- Specialist rescues such as using lifting equipment for injured horses and large animals; rescuing people trapped at height or in confined spaces
- Bariatric rescues
- Wildfires
- Search and rescue operations on rivers, lakes and reservoirs using our swift water boats
- Flood response and incidents involving the pumping of water from homes and buildings
- Incidents involving chemicals and noxious gases.

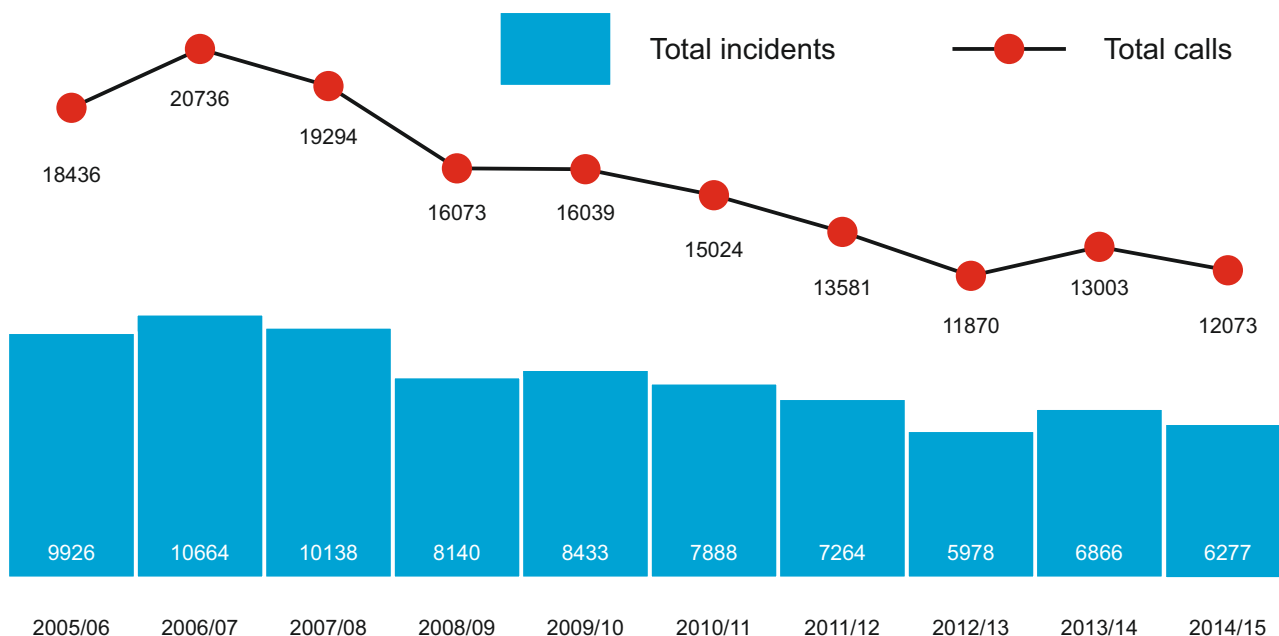
The Service also has a statutory duty to prepare for incidents where major disruption affecting the people of County Durham and

Darlington is likely to occur. These situations include:

- Severe weather events, such as flash flooding or prolonged and heavy snowfall
- Network power losses
- Major incidents involving fuel and chemical spills
- Public health issues, for example a flu epidemic
- Animal incidents, such as foot and mouth disease.

Reflecting a national pattern, the number of incidents attended by CDDFRS has decreased during the last ten years (figure one). However it is also evident that since 2012, the numbers have not changed greatly; indications are that we have reached a plateau with only slight variations recorded, up and down, each year. Although we continue to run a comprehensive programme of community safety work, reducing the number of incidents further is now proving difficult. Figures also show that the variety of incidents we respond to has increased and that the proportion of those involving flooding, rescues from water and other specialist rescues has increased by 24 per cent since 2005.

Figure one - Number of incidents attended and calls received since 2005





The decrease in fires can be attributed to operational crews carrying out comprehensive programmes of prevention and protection work as well as improvements to buildings and furniture making them less susceptible to fire. Figure two shows that we are the sixth best performing service nationally with regard to accidental fires in the home.

CDDFRS is one of the best performing services in preventative work; the graphs below show the Service in second place nationally on the list of home fire safety checks (figure three) and number of fire audits for businesses (figure four), carried out each year.

Figure two - Accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings, by fire and rescue authority 2014/15 – CDDFRS sixth best performing service nationally

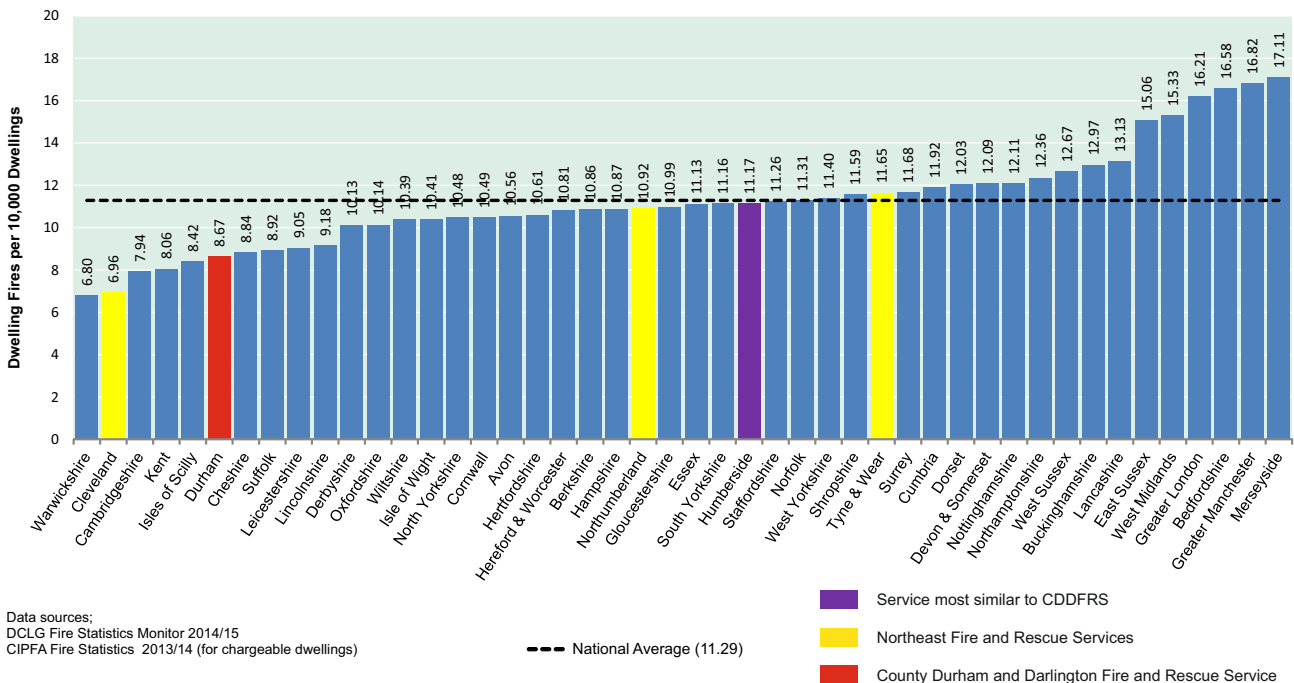


Figure three - Home fire safety checks per 1,000 dwellings, by fire and rescue authority 2014/15 – CDDFRS second best performing service nationally

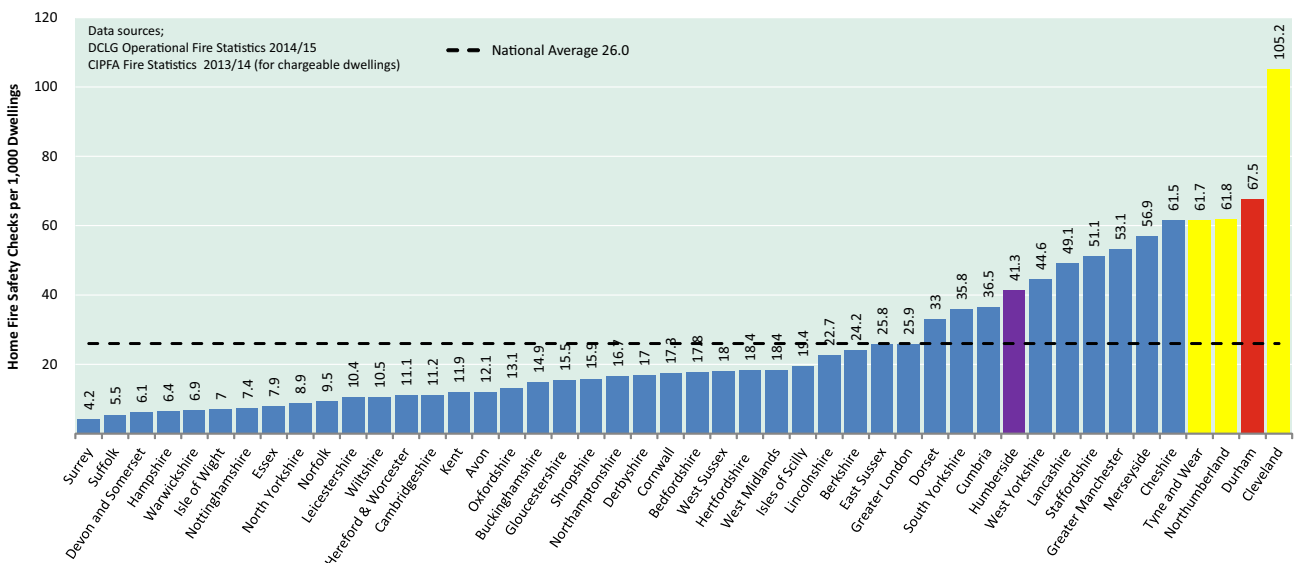
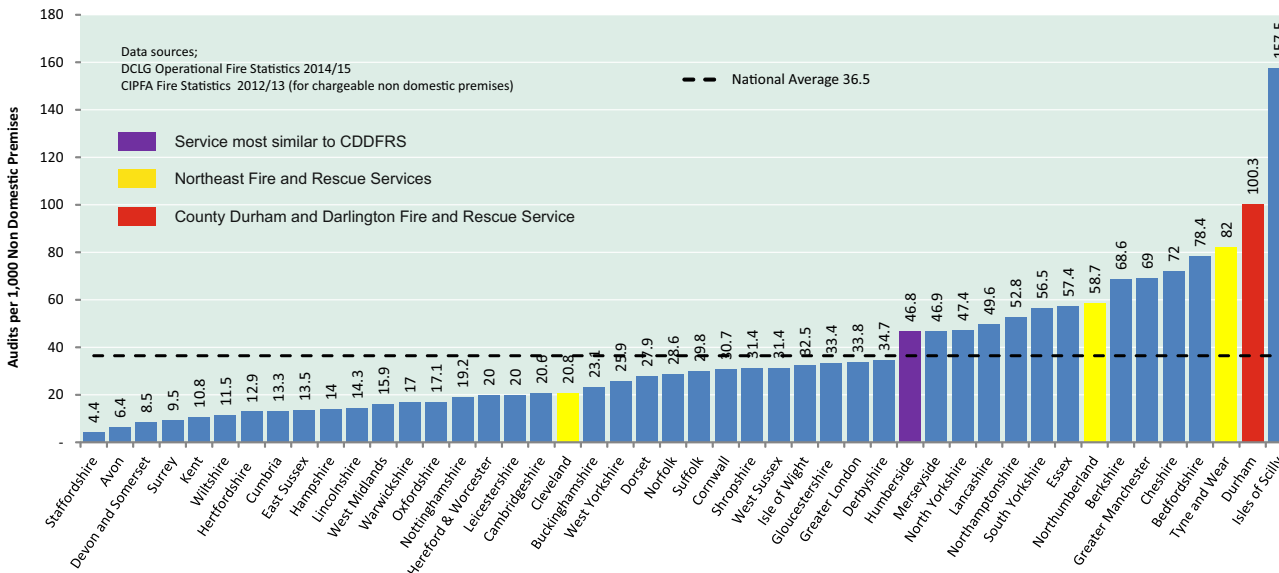




Figure four - Fire safety audits per 1,000 non domestic premises, by fire and rescue authority 2014/15 – CDDFRS second best performing service nationally



We are running this consultation to canvass views from across County Durham and Darlington to help us ensure we can continue to meet the needs of the community within available budgets.

All five consultation questions refer to collaborative work, the changing roles of the service and proposals to extend trials and existing schemes into other areas of County Durham and Darlington.

Examples of change within the Service include the two trading arms established by the Fire Authority:



The Community Interest Company (CIC) was founded in April 2013 to generate income for community safety projects by, for example, running training courses for external organisations in relation to fire as well as health and safety at work.



Vital Fire Solutions was set up in October 2015. The company will help to support the Service by generating income through areas such as sales of fire equipment and training for industrial firefighting.

Both of these companies have been established to assist CDDFRS improve safety in the community and both are important elements in our drive to ensure the financial viability of the Service in the face of reduced government funding.

In a similar vein, the new training centre in Bowburn, Durham, has been designed to benefit CDDFRS now and in the future.

The centre officially opened in October 2015 and has provided us with state-of-the-art facilities that are among the best in the country. It has also brought all of our training in-house, ensuring our staff are trained to the highest possible standard. The new arrangements will also help to reduce costs and cut travel time across the Service.

Income generation is also a key objective of the centre. This is now possible thanks to arrangements with external organisations and businesses, which can use the facilities for their own training and courses provided through the CIC or Vital Fire Solutions.

With a reputation for excellence in emergency and industrial training, CDDFRS is already attracting regular as well as new clients and customers.



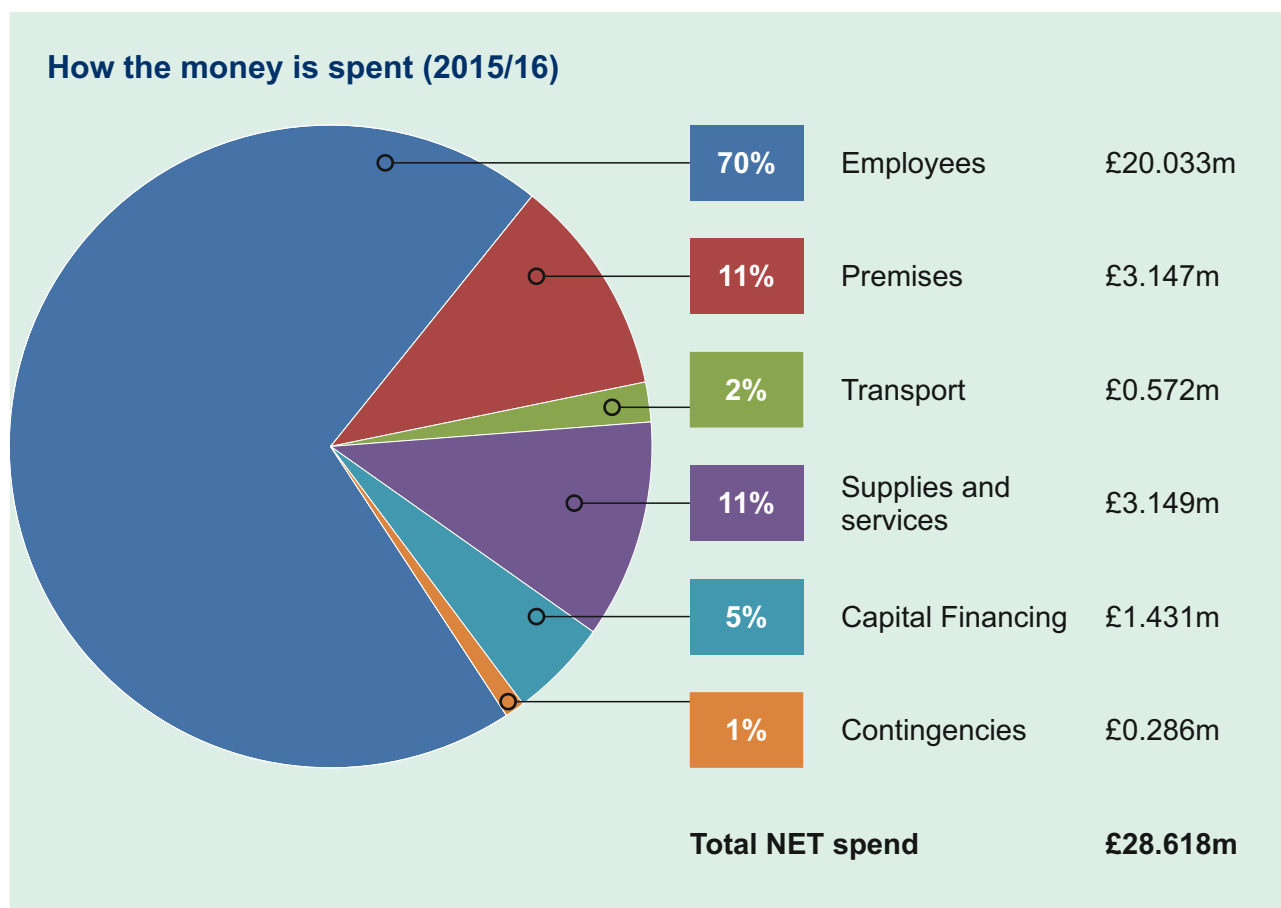
The financial outlook

We are facing the most significant financial challenge in our history as a fire and rescue authority.

Cuts to our central government funding totalling £4.9m (34 per cent) since 2010 have meant we have had to make significant savings; however, the next three years will be more challenging still, as we seek to deliver a further £3m of savings.

Having implemented the vast majority of cost savings available to us, to run a lean and efficient Service, we are now looking at other measures which could help to generate income and/or reduce costs without affecting our frontline fire appliances, stations and community safety activities.

Collaborative projects and schemes with other public sector organisations are a key consideration, as set out in the five consultation questions. This approach also fits into the government's agenda to enable 'closer working between the emergency services'. Based on our current finances, this is how the total (net) £28.618m of CDDFRS Fire Authority funding is spent:



As a marker, households paying council tax at band D level pay £1.80 per week towards the fire and rescue service, a total of £93.96 per year.



Our medium term financial plan

At a time when the future is so uncertain it is important that we have a medium term financial plan in place. This will allow us to work towards balancing the budget over the medium term taking into account our expectations of future central and local funding.

Our medium term financial plan for 2015/16 to 2018/19 is set out below. We have assumed that council tax increases by 1.9% each year; under current regulations this is the maximum increase permitted before a local referendum would be required to seek approval from residents.

Medium term financial plan

	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m
Net expenditure	28.618	29.101	29.153	29.807
Total government Funding	11.922	10.726	9.838	9.017
Local non domestic rates	1.459	1.488	1.518	1.548
Council tax	15.237	15.549	15.896	16.198
Total funding	28.618	27.763	27.252	26.763
Shortfall	0	-1.338	-1.901	-3.044



Consultation questions

1. Strategic review of fire control

Do you support our intention to review how we provide our fire control and 999 call handling function including exploring collaboration opportunities with other partner agencies to improve efficiency?

We provide a 24/7 emergency call handling and mobilising service, which ensures we send the right vehicles, equipment and staff to emergencies promptly. We aim to answer all 999 calls within six seconds.

In 2014, we invested in a new command and control system to provide us with state of the art technology; this has ensured that our control room service is as efficient and effective as possible.

We have also introduced a new shift system for our control room staff, which has improved resilience and allowed for additional work to be undertaken within the control room.

Control staff now book home fire safety checks and administer the staffing arrangements for operational staff across all the fire stations.

During large incidents requiring ongoing deployments or at times of flash flooding, for example, where multiple 999 calls are received, the pressures on control can be immense. It is important to ensure that while we use the capacity available during quieter periods, to pick up other work where appropriate, we resource for the risks and build in the flexibility to cope when call volumes are high.

Emergency calls will always be the priority and fire control already works closely with other emergency services to ensure a seamless response at multi-agency incidents. We hope to look closely into ways of working to assess opportunities for future collaboration where appropriate.





2. Extending the role of firefighters to assist public health services

The role of a firefighter could potentially include activities supporting the wider public health agenda, such as undertaking health prevention work. Do you support our proposal to participate in research and trials to test the viability of such initiatives?

As a Service our current prevention and protection programme focuses on educating the public and providing practical help to reduce the numbers of accidental fires in the home and workplace as well as road traffic accidents.

Firefighters have the skills and contacts across the communities they serve to include within their repertoire of prevention work elements of public health too.

Our successful prevention and protection programme has helped to reduce accidental dwelling fires by 47 per cent in the past 10 years. Each year our operational crews carry out approximately 20,000 home fire safety

checks – one of the most comprehensive programmes of prevention work in the country.

During these visits, crews often meet people most at risk of illness, isolation and accidents in the home. By refocusing some of our time, firefighters could provide advice and make referrals to health agencies, when and where appropriate, in the following areas:

Slips, trips and falls; warm and healthy home initiatives; flu vaccinations and chest infections; dementia; alcohol harm and reduction; smoking cessation, loneliness and isolation.

Over the years CDDFRS has run successful time-limited projects adding health and well-being into its prevention and protection work. We propose to carry out research into the options and assess the viability of extending such schemes beyond special projects. We believe this could improve the health and well-being of local people and provide much needed support to public health services.





3. Expanding the emergency medical response (EMR) scheme

Last year firefighters in Teesdale and Weardale were trained to respond to specific medical emergencies in support of North East Ambulance Service (NEAS). Do you agree that, providing the costs do not negatively affect our medium term financial plan, we should explore options to extend this trial to other areas of County Durham and Darlington in partnership with NEAS?

The aim of the trial in Teesdale and Weardale was to provide patients suffering from a life threatening medical emergency with the earliest assistance and treatment possible.

During the past two years NEAS has experienced a four per cent increase in demand and currently responds to more than 1,000 calls every day.

Figures show that the chance of surviving an out of hospital cardiac arrest decreases by 10 per cent during each passing minute before defibrillation is carried out.

During this emergency medical response trial, which ran from July 2014 to April 2015, crews from stations in Middleton, Barnard Castle and Stanhope attended 103 incidents. During the last six months of this trial 55 per cent of incidents attended by the fire and rescue service in the Dales were emergency medical responses.

The trial involved close communication between NEAS and fire control rooms with paramedics mobilised direct to an EMR incident at the same time as the fire crew. Firefighters are trained to provide basic life support to the patient until the paramedic arrives. EMR is in addition to, not in any way a replacement for, the current ambulance service. Its purpose is intended to complement the response currently provided by NEAS.



As a fire service our operational staff already have many of the skills needed to provide effective emergency medical response and they are very receptive to the additional training that is required.

We are able to provide 24-7 availability and our stations and retained duty service (RDS) crews are well placed to provide a fast response, often in difficult to reach rural locations.

The trial received positive feedback from both RDS crews and paramedics and the results showed that this response can save lives. Therefore, based on this evidence we would like the opportunity to extend the arrangements and apply them in other areas of County Durham and Darlington too.



4. Further collaboration – support services, estates and fire stations

CDDFRS already works collaboratively with partner organisations in the provision of information and services across many areas of work. Do you support our intention to explore further collaboration opportunities in the areas of estates management, use of fire stations, administration and office functions?

Examples of CDDFRS working with other emergency services and organisations include:

Sharing Newton Aycliffe Fire Station with Durham Police

This arrangement, in place since December 2013, has provided benefits for both organisations. It has allowed the former police station to be closed, saving costs and freeing up land for sale. It has also helped to maintain a police presence in the area, fostered partnership working between both services and generated income for the fire service to go towards the running costs of the building.

The Safer Homes project

The Safer Homes project is run by CDDFRS

in partnership with Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council. It is also supported by local housing companies and charities.

The aim of the project, which began in County Durham with a £500,000 award of government funding in September 2014, is to help public services work together to commission, manage and deliver services for vulnerable and elderly people in the best possible way.

The project gives people free crime and fire safety advice, as well as practical help, to make their homes safer through the free supply of smoke alarms, intruder alarms, wheelie bin locks, fire retardant blankets and bed linen.

The new CDDFRS Training Centre

This offers many opportunities for collaboration; from the regular training arrangements put in place to allow Durham Police to use the facilities for command training, to providing training for other emergency services, organisations and businesses on accredited as well as bespoke courses.





Barnard Castle quad station

With planning permission now secured, this building, which will be completed towards the end of 2016, will bring CDDFRS, the ambulance service, police and search and mountain rescue under one roof.

Durham Community Fire station

The extension of the station to provide an annex for the search and mountain rescue team will be in place in 2016.

Age UK's collaboration at Darlington Fire Station

Age UK Darlington is now managing the community meeting rooms at Darlington Fire Station. This is beneficial to Age UK Darlington, which uses the rooms for group meetings and activities throughout the week, as well as the Service, which can hand over the administrative tasks and free up staff for other work. The arrangement also builds on existing partnership work with the charity, which is involved in many of the prevention and protection schemes run by the Service for older people in the Darlington area.

Sharing procurement services

Working with other fire and rescue services we can ensure competitive tendering and benefit from economies of scale. This is currently in place with a regional clothing contract (for operational uniforms), an asset management agreement with North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service as well as a framework for the supply of fire appliances established between CDDFRS, North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services.

Sharing local authority services

Legal Services are provided to CDDFRS by Durham County Council as well as support with pensions.

All of these collaborations have been successful so far allowing the Service to share expertise, reduce costs and work in partnership more effectively. Based on these examples, we would like to explore opportunities for collaboration in other areas of work where there could be mutual benefits.



5. Extending the Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) / Fire Cadets' schemes

Youth engagement schemes currently operate out of five fire stations across the service. These have successfully improved resilience; strengthened community ties and helped the service to fulfil its role as a provider and supporter of education and training for young people. Do you agree with our proposal to invest in extending such schemes to other fire stations?

The Young Firefighters Association and Fire Cadets are part of national organisations with branches across the country.

Consett Fire Station was the first within CDDFRS to set up a YFA group in 2004 and since then Seaham, High Handenhold and Peterlee Fire Stations have followed suit; Darlington Fire Station has set up a similar Fire Cadets' group.

Both groups give young people between the ages of 13 and 17 the opportunity to join a uniformed organisation based on the values and practices of the fire and rescue service. Drills and activities are organised each week and membership of the YFA and Fire Cadets is well regarded by employers as a positive addition to any CV.



CDDFRS also benefits enormously from running the YFA and Fire Cadets; these young people form a dedicated pool of volunteers who are knowledgeable about the fire and rescue service and are ambassadors for CDDFRS. Here is a list of just some of contributions they make to the Service:

- Supporting public events – such as open days at stations providing cover for operational firefighters who may be on call.
- Volunteering as 'casualties' – helping to set-up realistic training scenarios.
- Work in the community – for example, clearing snow from driveways and roads.
- Taking safety messages and information about the Service back into the community through friends and family.

The YFA and Cadets' programmes can also be a step towards joining the retained duty service (RDS or part-time firefighters) of CDDFRS. At Seaham Fire Station, for example, of the 11 RDS firefighters currently serving, three have come through the YFA route. The RDS is an important element of the Service especially in remote areas where we are unable to run whole-time stations 24/7.

Taking into account the benefits set out above, we would like to invest some of our budget into extending these YFA and Cadets' schemes, setting up new branches where appropriate.

What to do now/how to respond

This consultation runs until **Monday 8 February** and we are keen to canvas as many views as possible. Please take part in our survey via the following link: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/irmp16-17

Should you require a hard copy of the survey to complete and return to us please phone: 0845 3058383 or email ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk

This publication is also available in other languages, large print and audio format on request.

More information about the work and performance of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority is available via the website at www.ddfire.gov.uk

