



# Community Safety Strategy

2021 - 2024



County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Service

Safest People, Safest Places

# Community Safety Strategy

## 1. Foreword

Welcome to the Community Safety Strategy for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

Our Service, governed by the County Durham and Darlington Combined Fire Authority (CFA), is responsible for making sure that all our communities in County Durham and Darlington are protected as far as possible from the risks we face. As well as fire emergencies we are here to respond to many types of incidents such as water and animal rescues, flooding and road traffic collisions. Our protection and prevention work forms the foundation of what we do to minimise risk and together with our vital emergency response function we maintain services which are effective and resilient.

Our vision is to have the safest people and safest places and we will strive to achieve this by delivering a professional, innovative and effective FRS with our communities at the heart of everything we do.

To ensure we are accountable to you, we produce a series of documents which set out our plans for the future. Our Community Risk Profile (CRP) and Station Plans set out the risks we face. Our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) shows how we allocate our resources to tackle those risks and our Service Strategies show you the detail of how we will manage the challenges that our various Sections face.

You can find all our Service Plan documents on our website using the link below:

<https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans>

Every year we ensure that our services can be delivered within the budget we are set. Since 2010 we have had our government funding reduced and we expect to continue to face a very challenging financial climate in light of the current economic conditions, Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions on the amount of income we can raise through Council Tax. The next three years are therefore likely to require further innovation and changes to the way we operate, and the Community Safety Strategy will help us to achieve this.

Our core strength is our people who are proud to work for an organisation connected closely with its communities and who are genuinely committed to changing and saving people's lives. We cannot provide our services without support from our excellent staff, and we would like to thank them for their continued hard work and dedication. Our partner organisations and neighbouring FRSs also deserve great credit for supporting and collaborating with us in the work that we do.

## 2. Where are we now?

In 2019, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected how well we prevent fires and other risks. We received a good outcome from the inspection, but some areas of improvement were identified. These were the need to ensure staff have received appropriate training on all the issues covered during a safe and wellbeing visit, and the need to evaluate our prevention work so that we understand the benefits. HMICFRS also identified that the management of our data could be improved. In 2020, we implemented an action plan to deliver the required improvements to our community safety activities.

We have consistently delivered above our annual target of 18,000 Safe and Wellbeing visits, with improved targeting using our pyramid to target resources to support vulnerable individuals or locations. As a result, compared to 10 years ago (2010/11) we have achieved a 17% reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) from 276 to 228, which per 100,000 population is now below the national average. Over the same period, we have also achieved a 34% reduction in associated injuries compared to the national reduction of 22%. However, due to the high social impact of ADFs, they remain our highest risk and we must do more to drive down the risk associated with ADFs.

We recognise that weather can impact on the number of outdoor fires, as prolonged periods of hot dry weather can increase outdoor fires and extended wet periods can reduce them. We are also aware through national data that there is a greater prevalence of deliberate primary and secondary fires in the North East compared to other parts of England. Deliberate fires in County Durham and Darlington reached a peak of 3,017 during the previous community safety strategy, with significant numbers of car fires in some areas. We introduced our Arson Reduction Team in 2018/19 and at the end of our previous strategy we saw a reduction of 13% to 2,634 deliberate fires. Investigation of deliberate fires and partnership work with Durham Police indicate a strong correlation from these fires to serious and organised crimes. The introduction of the ISO 17020 fire investigation standard will improve the expertise and competency of our fire investigators.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Community Risk Programme will deliver a standardised toolkit for fire and rescue services to identify, assess and mitigate community risks. The programme will produce risk assessment tools and models to influence the change in perceptions and behaviours of people and communities. We will continue to support this project and assist in the achievement of its objectives.

The County Durham and Darlington Road Safety Strategy 2020/23 provides a delivery framework for maintaining and improving road safety. The framework is based on the traditional 4E approach of education, engineering, enforcement and evaluation. We support the delivery of this strategy through a strategic partnership to oversee the delivery of intervention programmes. An operational working group is responsible for the delivery coordination, monitoring and evaluation of road safety performance.

Our children and young people team provide educational interventions to children from primary and secondary schools from Darlington and County Durham and they also provide a central governance function over the delivery of cadet schemes at stations throughout the Service.

### 3. Key Drivers

The key drivers which set the direction of the community safety strategy are the:

- Reduction of community risk identified in our Community Risk Profile to achieve our vision of safest people safest places.
- Accountability to provide an effective and efficient fire and rescue service to the communities of County Durham and Darlington.
- Reduction of demand on our resources, in particular deliberate fires due to the high prevalence across the North East and the need to keep resources available for life risk.
- Development of partnerships and collaborations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of our services.
- Compliance with our statutory requirements, national standards and best practice.
- Improvements in the areas of our community safety activities identified from our inspection by HMICFRS.

## 4. Our Values and Behaviours

Through the professional, innovative and effective delivery of the community safety improvement objectives, we will deliver the outcomes of this strategy and support the achievement of our Community Risk Management Plan.

### PROFESSIONAL



### INNOVATIVE



### EFFECTIVE



**PIE** represents our values and describes the service our customers should expect. This element of 'being the best' is the external key message around the service we provide

The 4C's communicates the behaviours we expect all our people to display at work. Delivery of the 4 C's across the service will lead to an organisation which displays the PIE values and fulfils the organisation aim of 'being the best'



### How We Approach Challenges

Our people should approach challenges with flexibility, enthusiasm, motivation, passion, determination & resilience.

### How We Conduct Ourselves

Our people should conduct themselves in an honest, trustworthy, reliable, accountable, consistent and respectful manner.

### How We Collaborate

Our people should be approachable, supportive, encouraging, inclusive and show that they value their own development and the development of others when collaborating and working with others.

### How We Drive Change Across the Organisation to Make a Difference

Our people should drive change by being creative, resourceful, courageous, original, clear and focused.

## 5. Where do we want to be?

There are many areas of good performance throughout our community safety activities, however we must continually seek to apply innovative ways of working to improve our effectiveness in reducing risk, driving down the demand on our resources and making our communities safer.

Although we have seen a reduction in accidental dwelling fires (ADFs), we need to do more to reduce them further. We will adapt our model for Safe and Wellbeing visits to the NFCC person centred approach for home fire safety visits and continue to review our risk identification tools and increase referrals to identify those people at the greatest risk from fire in the home. Also, in recent years the prevalence of deliberate fires and arson throughout some of our communities has increased, resulting in damage to local economies, neighbourhoods and the environment. Due to the high prevalence of deliberate fires, the damage they can cause and the demand on our resources, we must focus resources on reducing this incident type.

We need to improve data quality and business intelligence to ensure that our risk profiling is robust and targets our highest risks. We also believe that the greatest impact on our objectives will be achieved by developing effective partnerships and collaborations. We want to support the development of children and young people by giving them opportunities to learn and develop their life skills. We also recognise the reputation of our service within our communities can improve the engagement with young people who are the hardest to reach and who may resort to anti-social behaviour and criminality. We want to influence children and young adults before they engage in negative behaviours that can impact on the safety of themselves and others.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made fundamental changes to our model for delivering prevention activities. We want to evaluate prevention activities and implement the lessons learned from the response to the pandemic to make our longer-term prevention activities more effective in the approach to, and beyond, the new normal. The community safety strategy comprises of four main workstreams, and each year specific projects will be aligned to the delivery of the strategy. This strategy will complement the other service strategies that support our vision and our Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Our culture plays an integral part in enabling us to achieve our vision of Safest People, Safest Places. Through the key objectives set within our community safety strategy, we aim to support the creation of a positive, inclusive culture that encourages innovation and continuous improvement. Culture is at the heart of everything that we do, and we understand that the actions we take and the decisions we make through this strategy form part of our cultural journey. We believe achieving the right culture will enable us to give the best services to our communities and be the best fire and rescue service in the UK.

## 6. Key Principles

To support the delivery of this strategy we have adopted a series of principles that we apply to our improvement objectives. These are:

- We will provide the training and resources that enable our staff to deliver the improvement objectives effectively;
- We will provide local risk-based information and the resources to empower our staff to make intelligence led decisions that reduce community risk;
- We will work with partner agencies to increase referrals for those at the greatest risk from fire to ensure resources are targeted to risk;
- Evaluation of our community safety activities will enable us to understand the impact of our interventions. We will evaluate our activities to ensure we achieve effective outcomes and make improvements where necessary;
- We will introduce recommendations from our staff that improve the delivery of community safety activities and reduce community risk.

To achieve this, the Community Safety Strategy has four key improvement objectives (KIO) outlined below. Each objective will have an action plan which will be monitored regularly and refreshed as progress is made.

## 7. How do we get there?

We have identified four key improvement objectives to deliver our community safety strategy.

### 1. Home safety

We recognise that the effective targeting of resources to reduce community risk is influenced by sound business intelligence and that households may contain individuals who require varying levels of education and intervention. We will support the data project of the NFCC Community Risk Programme, which will integrate different individual sources of data into a national database of existing fire and rescue service data to enhance existing datasets. We will also support the research to establish an evidence base of evaluation methodologies to ensure that we use the most consistent, valid and reliable sector intelligence model available to identify and reduce our community risk. We will ensure that we have sufficient staff trained to the minimum standard set for the expertise of risk management planners to be able to demonstrate effective risk management competence.

To maximise the impact of the delivery of safe and wellbeing visits (SWV), we will ensure that our resources are focussed on the individuals and areas of greatest risk. By developing our risk assessed approach to safe and wellbeing visits, we will introduce low risk self-service interventions to enable our resources to deliver quality interventions to those most in need. We will also introduce a self-service process to empower individuals to make their own booking arrangements to receive a safe and wellbeing visit. We will also review our delivery model for SWVs to support the NFCC person centred approach and review our quality assurance process to ensure any areas for improvement are identified and addressed.

To maximise the interaction between staff providing safe and wellbeing advice to members of our communities, we will ensure that they support the NHS principle of 'making every contact count'. We will ensure that our staff who deliver prevention activities are trained to make every contact count and maximise their interactions with our communities. We will provide safeguarding training to ensure that our staff understand how to identify forms of abuse and take action to safeguard vulnerable people.

We will develop a communications strategy to provide appropriate and accessible information about fire prevention and promote community safety to support the diverse needs of our communities.

The provision of technology creates a platform to deliver more effective home safety advice. We will use technology, supported by business intelligence and the NFCC prevention campaign calendar to provide timely and relevant advice to make people safer in their own homes. The use of technology will also reduce the organisational risk associated with GDPR from the management of large volumes of personal data and improve the precision and relevance of our community risk data.

We recognise the positive contribution and flexible additional resource that the use of volunteers can bring to the delivery of community safety activities. We will work in partnership with the voluntary sector and use volunteers to assist in the delivery of our community safety activities.



## 2. Arson and deliberate fires

We are committed to the reduction of arson and deliberate fires to create safer homes, safer businesses and buildings, and safer neighbourhoods.

Within our communities, arson has resulted in the economic loss to individuals, businesses, and local authorities for a significant time. The demand on our resources from arson and deliberate primary and secondary fires outweighs that of other incident types, and results in resources being diverted away from other prevention initiatives.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 describes the expectation of fire and rescue services to target their resources on those most likely to engage in arson and deliberate fire setting. Additionally, the NFCC arson reduction strategy outlines a set of operating principles which provide a framework for the continuous development of our approach to arson and deliberate fire reduction. These operating principles enhance collaboration and partnership working and empower local communities to become stronger and more cohesive, to reduce the financial, psychological and environmental impact of arson and deliberate fires.

To reduce the prevalence of arson and deliberate fires, our strategy will be to work in collaboration, partnership and as a stand-alone service, and encourage our partners to use their wider use of their powers under the Crime and Policing Act anti-social behaviour legislation. The JESIP Joint Decision Model will be used in the context of arson reduction to assess the community impact and assist in the development of partnership solutions, using the recognised multi-agency objective of 'Working together to save life and reduce harm'.

The reduction of arson and deliberate fires to create safer home, safer businesses and buildings, and safer neighbourhoods will be delivered through our underpinning arson and deliberate fires delivery plan. We also recognise that we have higher rates of arson in our East Coast area and we will have specific plans for that area. The delivery plan provides detailed activities across the following objectives:

- Development and communication of a clear arson and deliberate fire local profile;
- Develop and implement effective collaborative, partnership and local solutions for intervention as a standalone fire and rescue service.

The arson and deliberate fire reduction delivery plan sets out a range of activities over a three year period which includes:

- The development of a communication strategy to maximise the impact of key messages through our engagement with individuals and wider communities, and the support of national themes and campaigns delivered through the NFCC campaign calendar;
- Identifying the economic cost of fire in anticipation, as a consequence and in response to arson and deliberate fires;
- The longer-term evaluation of the range of activities delivered to reduce the impact of arson and deliberate fires.

The NFCC supports fire and rescue service accreditation to the ISO 17020 standard and compliance with the fire investigation competency framework. We will aim to become accredited to this standard to enable us to improve collaboration with Durham Police and improve the expertise and competence of our fire investigators.

### 3. Children and young people

We recognise the strong position of being able to influence and provide positive role models for children and young people who may potentially become the perpetrators and victims of arson and deliberate fires, and antisocial behaviour.

We will have a programme of school interventions, providing engagement and education with children and young people so they become aware of the risks they face, understand the consequences of their actions and can make informed decisions to prevent injuries to themselves, their friends and families, both now and in the future.

Fire cadet schemes have the potential to influence children and young people to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle, make positive life choices, and provide a potential recruitment pathway to become an on call, or wholetime, firefighter, with the foundation skills and an understanding of the values and behaviours expected from all our members of staff.

We also recognise that engaging with children and young people at an early age through a fire cadet scheme, enables them to lead fulfilling lives, improves their opportunities for employment and supports the Service's workforce reform programme,

We will build on the introduction of formal qualifications into the cadet schemes by delivering a range of self-improvement programmes for children and young people to give them transferable skills and improve their employment opportunities. These programmes enable children and young people to demonstrate their commitment to the community, improve their fitness and develop their personal interests.

We will encourage the local fundraising for activities that enhance self-improvement programmes and involvement in national activities and provide central funding for essential resources including equipment and uniform.

We will provide development opportunities for scheme coordinators to improve their supervision and management of the local schemes and provide a consistent approach to the delivery of scheme objectives.

To enable us to have a central oversight and evaluate the wider impacts of the delivery of cadet schemes, we will commission a longitudinal evaluation from an academic institution to ensure that our cadet schemes provide value for money and that our resources are targeted where they have the greatest impact.

We will also work with children and young people to deliver road safety messages that support the delivery of the County Durham and Darlington Road Safety Strategy.

#### **4. Data analysis and business intelligence**

It is essential that we use our data to support effective decision making.

The translation of raw data through a range of processes and applications into business intelligence is the foundation to help us identify which individuals and communities are at risk, and enable us to target our community safety activities to those who are at the greatest risk from fire. As we work in partnership to deliver a range of community safety activities, it is essential that we are able to share intelligence and risk data to support risk reduction activities to those identified as vulnerable.

As we seek to develop more effective and efficient ways of working, it is essential that decisions at all levels of the organisation, from the point of service delivery to the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of our services, are taken which are informed by sound business intelligence. We will use data to identify community risk and inform our community risk profiles.

Our strategy will be to embed the use of data and risk information covering people and places, and business intelligence into our culture, so that it is readily accessible and empowers staff at all levels to access information to support their own decision making and management functions.

We will broaden out and embed the use of data and business intelligence into the day to day management of activities to drive local initiatives across the service. This will ensure a greater consistency with decision making and understanding of how decisions across the organisation align to the attainment of the Service's vision.

Multiple entry points into our prevention data sources over a number of years has gradually eroded the accuracy of a number of data sets. To establish a baseline level for us to build upon and improve the future quality of our data sources, which will lead to improved business intelligence, we will commission a cleanse of our existing data which will improve both its currency and accuracy.

The migration of the existing Service software to a cloud based platform supports our strategy to move products to the cloud where clear benefits can be delivered. The migration of firewatch to the cloud based platform will help reduce infrastructure costs and release capacity from our existing ICT team who would no longer need to manage upgrades and support.

We will streamline processes and harmonise workflows to support the access of business intelligence at all levels across the Service to empower users to be self-sufficient and understand performance across their individual areas. The creation of a data warehouse will deliver enhanced business intelligence by having access to information from various sources from a single platform. The data warehouse will also facilitate the flow of information through the service and will convert data from different sources into a consistent format, providing better insights for decision making by maintaining a cohesive database of current and historical data.

We will use our business intelligence tools to provide increased visibility and greater insight into organisational performance.

## 11. Governance and Measuring Progress

We will monitor progress of this strategy in the following ways:



### **Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)**

We will develop a suite of appropriate Key Performance Indicators to help measure the progress of this strategy.



### **Benchmarking**

We will consider the success of this strategy against the performance of other fire and rescue services through fire statistics performance data published annually by the Home Office.



### **Reporting Progress**

Scrutiny of progress against the strategy will be undertaken by the Service Programme and Performance Board (PPB) who will receive regular reports from the Area Manager responsible for Community Risk Management.



### **Measuring Perceptions/ Sense Checking**

We will seek feedback from our operational staff and community safety team to inform the success of this strategy. Their opinions and suggestions will be used to influence improvements.



### **Currency**

We will provide a progress report to the PPB and update the delivery plan annually to ensure that it remains current.

