

Community Risk Management Plan

2026–2030



County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Service



Foreword from the Chair and Chief Fire Officer

Welcome to the Community Risk Management Plan for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

Our Service, governed by the County Durham and Darlington Combined Fire Authority is responsible for making sure that all our communities 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 (RTCs). Our protection and prevention work forms the foundation of what we do to minimise risk and together with our essential 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 always strive to achieve this by delivering a professional, innovative, and effective fire and rescue service, and by placing 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. The Community Risk Profile (CRP), together with our Station Plans, sets out the risks we face.

This Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is the document which outlines how we keep you safe. Our 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 departments face.

The CRMP is supported by an Annual Plan which helps us break down and focus our efforts on key priorities and workstreams for the forthcoming year. The plan will evolve over the lifetime of the CRMP, informed by community feedback, quality assurance findings, and evaluation of the actions we take.

You can find all our [Service Plan documents](#) on our website.

Every year we ensure that our services can be delivered within the budget we are set. Funding challenges and continuing rising costs mean that we expect to face a very difficult financial climate in light of the current economic conditions with a reduction from the Central Government grant, and restrictions on the amount of income we can raise through Council Tax. The next four years are therefore likely to require further innovation and changes to the way we operate, and this CRMP 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 thank them for their continued hard work and dedication. Our partner organisations and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) also deserve great credit for supporting and collaborating with us in the work that we do.

Executive Summary

The CRMP sets out the strategic plans for the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) for County Durham and Darlington. The CRMP explains how we are accountable to our local communities through the CFA and through a wide spectrum of local community groups.

Our CRP, which is reviewed annually, describes the greatest risks and their impact on County Durham and Darlington. The CRMP planning process is informed by the CRP as well as our localised Station Plans. By identifying, assessing, and managing existing and emerging risks, we can decide how best to mitigate them using the resources we have available. We do this by investing in efficient, effective, and innovative prevention and protection activities, while also planning the most effective way to respond.

We produce a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which considers a range of possible financial scenarios in an uncertain future. The Service has plans that balance the budget in the short term, and contingencies for the medium to long term.

Some of the risks which our communities face are extremely complex and require us to work with a range of partner organisations and other FRSs. Working together supports us to deliver more efficient, effective, and resilient support services and we commit to collaborating where there is clear benefit.

Ensuring that we have a highly skilled and professional workforce is a key priority for the Service, and our plans include the use of the apprenticeship levy and career progression framework to develop staff. We are seeking to increase diversity in our workforce through a range of innovative methods, as we recognise that we need to have a workforce reflective of our community. Our commitment to our staff is to maintain a positive organisational culture through continuous improvement. This will ensure that we continue to be successful, despite the challenges ahead.

Our plans are developed in consultation with our communities and partner agencies, as well as our staff and their representative bodies. We are committed to listening to your views, thus far we have conducted a pre consultation process which has informed the development of the CRMP. We will be holding a further consultation exercise for this four-year plan before it is finalised.

The Challenge Ahead

Our ongoing challenge is to address the risks we've identified in our area with fewer resources. When we talk about risk, we mean the potential for emergencies to occur – which includes everything from fires and RTCs to flooding and terrorism. You will see more detail about how we deal with risk throughout this document.

Our greatest resource is our people, and we can afford far fewer of them because of a significantly reduced budget. Whilst we would prefer to have the level of resources available in other FRS, the Government works out our funding using a formula which favours high density population areas, and this means County Durham and Darlington end up less well provided for than elsewhere.

As is the case with all public services, we must work within our available budget. Our revenue budget has reduced considerably over recent years and a government grant of over £1 million which supported capital projects such as replacing older fire engines or modernising our estate was removed in 2013. Over the years there have been reductions in the funding we receive from Government and a limit on the amount we can increase Council Tax without holding a referendum, which from 2026 to 2029 will be £5 on a band D property. This has placed considerable pressure on our finances. We know we are facing further financial pressures in the future including further reductions in government funding and limited revenue from council tax, increases in the cost of the services we buy, unfunded pay awards to staff, and significant increases to our energy and fuel bills.

We are continuing to explore opportunities for making savings. This includes the potential for reducing spending on both pay and non-pay budgets, scrutinising every job vacancy which arises to ensure that the position is genuinely required and collaborating with other public services to provide better overall value for money and improve service delivery when we buy services and equipment. We're investing more in digital technology in a bid to modernise and automate paper-based processes, which we believe will improve productivity and help our frontline staff become more efficient in aligning their productivity to risk.

We are proud of our achievements, having been recognised as one of the most productive FRSs in the Country. We have some of the lowest levels of fires within the home and within business premises due to our proactive prevention and protection work. We recognise and work hard to ensure that CDDFRS remains the fastest 'Predominantly Rural' FRS in England to respond to life risk incidents. We believe this matters to our communities and we have invested significant time in engaging with our local MPs, elected members, and those in key government departments, including the Fire Minister, to highlight our disproportionate funding challenges.

We hold limited financial reserves (among the lowest of all stand-alone fire and rescue authorities) the majority of which are earmarked for specific purposes. Our reserve strategy is robust, supporting limited investment to replace equipment and modernise uneconomic buildings and practices however, our low level of reserves means that the use of reserves to fund our revenue budget on an ongoing basis is not an option.

What is a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)?

The CFA has a statutory responsibility, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan – which we call the CRMP. The plan must cover a three-year period, be reviewed regularly and outlines how CDDFRS will tackle and mitigate the risks our communities face. The CRMP is informed by our CRP, a document which assesses in detail the risks in our local areas, how likely they are to occur, how extensive the impact might be and also takes into account national risks. We use the National Risk Register and the Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register, community data, and our own data to help us prepare the CRP.

As an over-arching plan, the CRMP covers all parts of our Service, so it references our Service Strategies and other key documents such as our Station Plans, and it even links to our appraisal system. This helps everyone in our organisation to understand risks and how we plan to reduce the impact and respond effectively.

The requirements of a CRMP are set out in the ‘Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018’, (in which the document is called an IRMP). This states that each Authority must ensure the following five priorities are met:

1. To be accountable to communities for the service they provide.
2. To identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face.
3. To make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents.
4. To develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible, and diverse.
5. To collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide.

You will find details of how we address the above points throughout this document. The National Framework also says that CRMPs have a statutory responsibility to contain a number of areas including an outline of how we allocate our resources to mitigate risks, and how we manage and enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005. You can learn more about our legal duties by reading the [National Framework](#).

The CRMP will also show you how we consult with you – our communities – on the development of this plan, as well as how we seek the opinions of our staff, representative bodies, and partner organisations.

This document covers the four-year period between April 2026 to March 2030.

Vision and Values

We want to have the **safest people** and the **safest places**.

To respond effectively to the challenges that we face here at CDDFRS, we need to be clear on our strategic direction. A defined vision, strategic priorities, values, and behaviours are key to us doing this.

Our values:

These values are known in our organisation as the **PIE** values (Professional, Innovative, Effective) and describe the ethos of CDDFRS.



The range of these behaviours falls into four areas, which we call the **4Cs**:

How we approach **challenges**:

We will approach challenges with flexibility, enthusiasm and motivation, passion, determination, and resilience.

How we **conduct** ourselves:

We will conduct ourselves in a manner that is honest, trustworthy, reliable, accountable, consistent, and respectful.

How we **collaborate** with others:

We will be approachable, supportive, encouraging, and inclusive, and value development when collaborating.

How we drive **change** across the organisation to make a difference:

We will drive change by being creative, resourceful, courageous, original, clear, and focused.

Our staff work to a [Code of Ethics](#) which is aligned to the National Fire Chiefs' Council code.

How We Set Our Strategic Objectives and Supporting Strategies

This section of the CRMP sets out our strategic objectives and key priorities for the next four years. Each objective is underpinned by a high-level strategy shaped by national fire standards, learning from our most recent HMICFRS inspection, and the values, behaviours and ethics that guide CDDFRS. Together, these elements support our ambition to reduce risk and improve the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

To ensure these objectives translate into meaningful action, we will develop annual delivery plan that support the CRMP's priorities. These plans will evolve over the lifetime of the CRMP, informed by community feedback, quality assurance findings, and evaluation of the actions we take.

Our commitment goes beyond setting out intentions on paper. We actively engage with our communities to ensure our strategies remain dynamic, evidence-based and aligned with our shared vision for a safer, healthier future. Progress against our objectives and priorities will be reported at least annually and will be available on our [website](#).

Key Terms

Strategic Objective – A planned action or area of focus designed to reduce risk within the community. Strategic objectives are supported by a range of enablers such as people, physical assets, finance, data, and technology.

The services six Strategic Objectives are detailed below and are supported by a range of strategies shown in brackets:

- Reducing Risk and keeping our community safe (Prevention Strategy)
- Protecting people from risk in the built environment (Protection Strategy)
- Responding quickly and effectively to emergencies (Response and Resilience Strategy)
- An inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce (People Strategy)
- Making the most of our finances and resources (Finance and Resources Strategy)
- Optimising our technology and data (Transformation and Digital Strategy)

Priorities – These are key areas of work identified where the Service will prioritise its resources during the duration of the CRMP. These are outlined on [page 44](#) and will form the basis of the CRMP 2026–2030 consultation.

What You'll Find in the Following Pages

Each strategy is presented using a consistent structure to support clarity and transparency:

- **Title** – The strategic principle guiding the area of work.
- **Focus** – A summary of the key areas the strategy covers.
- **Key Aims** – The outcomes we intend to achieve during the CRMP period.
- **Key Risks** – Risks identified through our CRP and supporting evidence base.

- **Key Actions** – The steps we will take to achieve our aims and mitigate identified risks.

Prevention Strategy

Focus: Prevention, education, community resilience, and engagement.

Key Aims

- Prioritise reducing community risk by identifying and engaging with those most at risk of fire and other emergencies.
- Adopt a person-centred approach to deliver efficient risk-based prevention activities in collaboration with partners for more effective services.
- Support the development of children and young people; being a stakeholder of safeguarding partnerships and maintaining effective information sharing in line with guidelines.

Key Risks

- Fire related incidents in the home resulting in injury or death.
- People killed and seriously injured on roads and in water.
- Children and young people who are identified as being involved in fire setting behaviour.
- Emerging technological risks such as e-scooters, solar charging, and the increasing use of lithium-ion batteries in a wide range of domestic settings.
- Climate related emergencies, such as flooding and wildfire.
- Increased risk of arson linked to organised criminal activity.

Key Actions

- Collaborate with partners to capture, share, and analyse incident data enabling an intelligence-led, risk-based approach to prioritise and support those most at risk of emergencies.
- Engage regularly with the community to enhance our understanding of local risks and maintain a comprehensive risk profile for our area.
- Deliver high quality targeted, and quality assured, Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) to proactively mitigate accidental dwelling fires.
- Implement targeted initiatives which actively support national and local road and water safety campaigns across County Durham and Darlington.
- Innovative and targeted, safety education delivered by skilled staff.
- Prioritise safeguarding activities, working closely with partners to identify and support at-risk individuals.
- Maintain a continuous focus on monitoring and evaluating emerging risks and technological impacts.
- Implement targeted fire prevention campaigns in high-risk areas.
- Carry out targeted fire prevention activities to reduce the number of deliberate and arson related incidents.
- Collaborate with partners to identify, understand, and reduce the number of fire related incidents linked to Organised Crime Gangs.

Protection Strategy

Focus: Protection, education, and engagement.

Key Aims

- Ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, statutory duties, and regulatory standards to enhance overall regulatory compliance and fire safety measures.
- Support the decrease of fire-related incidents, injuries, and fatalities in business premises through education and regulation.
- Continuously improve the competency and capacity of our central protection team and wider front-line crews to deliver fire safety audits and provide valuable advice.
- Reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals so that capacity can be utilised more efficiently.

Key Risks

- The growth and diversity of buildings and land to which fire safety legislation applies in the fast-changing and increasingly complex urban environment we serve.
- Responsible persons failing to comply with fire safety legislation, either intentionally or due to a lack of understanding of their obligations.
- Changes in fire safety legislation needing to be effectively and consistently shared, and made accessible, for those affected or impacted.
- Although the Fire Safety Order applies, CDDFRS is not the enforcing authority for fires in Crown Premises (prisons), therefore we have limited influence in reducing the risk in prison premises.

Key Actions

- Regularly review and adapt policies, procedures, and practices in response to new or revised fire safety legislation, working collaboratively with partners to share knowledge and learnings.
- Review and enhance our data-led methodology for defining protection risk and implement a risk-based intervention programme.
- Deliver a comprehensive business engagement plan, supporting responsible persons in fire safety regulation compliance.
- Continuously evaluating protection activities for effectiveness, a targeted approach and accessibility.
- Respond proportionately to demand-led requirements, including consultations, fire safety concerns, complaints, and post-fire inspections.
- Implement an effective quality assurance process to evaluate the standard of our fire safety activities.
- Continue to monitor the impact of automatic fire alarms and work with the building owners and operators to reduce the instances of unwanted fire signals.
- Continue to work with Crown Premises to reduce the instances of fires in prisons.

Response and Resilience Strategy

Focus: Response effectiveness, training, and resilience.

Key Aims

- Competent operational and fire control staff.
- Comprehensive operational policies, procedures, tailored guidance, and training.
- Appropriate resources, vehicles, equipment, and systems.

Key Risks

- Challenges of On-Call recruitment and retention impacting on-call availability.
- Emerging technologies and changes in the built environment present new operational risks requiring adaptive response capabilities.
- Enhancing resilience during periods of extreme pressure, such as severe weather, national industrial action, or a pandemic.

Key Actions

- Ensure all operational and control room staff are trained in the hazard and control measure approach based on Operational Guidance (risk assessment, decision-making and risk management skills).
- Conduct risk assessments for emergency operations and gather site-specific risk information to enhance response effectiveness and firefighter safety.
- Integrate operational assurance and learning efforts to contribute to improvement at local, regional, and national levels.
- Plan and prepare clear and scalable operational responsibilities for emergencies based on foreseeable events.
- Ensure that essential resources, equipment, and adequately trained personnel are strategically available and align with planning assumptions.
- Optimise the structure and function of operational resources to meet preparedness requirements, managing asset types, numbers, and locations to mitigate identified risks.
- Prioritise health, safety and wellbeing in operational planning and delivery through a clearly communicated health and safety policy.
- Ensure all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their role and are committed to creating and maintaining a thriving culture.

People Strategy

Focus: People, culture, and leadership

Key Aims

- Provide clear development pathways for all roles and strengthen leadership capability through targeted training, coaching, and mentoring.
- Promote a culture of inclusion, belonging, and psychological safety.

- Improve recruitment and retention, especially in underrepresented communities.
- Support wellbeing and resilience through proactive health, safety, and wellbeing initiatives.
- Uphold the highest standards of safeguarding by embedding safer recruitment principles.
- Provide a high standard of training and development for all staff.

Key Risks

- Workplace culture at a national FRS level.
- Increases in normal pension age.
- Staff retention.
- Safeguarding current and future workforce.

Key Actions

- Reinforce our organisational values and expected behaviours across all levels, establishing clear professional standards that guide staff conduct and performance.
- Continuously refine succession planning strategies to attract, retain, and develop a diverse workforce equipped with the skills, experience, and leadership capabilities required for future success.
- Design and implement structured development pathways for high-potential employees, preparing them for future leadership roles.
- Improve the collection and analysis of equality and diversity data to gain deeper insights into workforce demographics and needs, supporting our commitment to a representative and inclusive workforce.
- Ensure robust and inclusive channels for staff engagement and feedback, with particular attention to under-represented groups, to promote wellbeing and a sense of belonging.
- Actively foster a positive health and wellbeing culture by ensuring fair, reasonable, and supportive working conditions for all employees.
- Strengthen staff understanding of diversity and inclusion through targeted education and initiatives, contributing to a more inclusive organisational culture.
- Evaluate and improve training provisions to ensure sufficient resources, infrastructure, and a sustainable pipeline of qualified instructors to maintain workforce competence and readiness.
- Continue to lead efforts in managing exposure to contaminants and other occupational risks, safeguarding the long-term health, safety, and wellbeing of our operational workforce.
- Ensure all recruitment activities are conducted with due diligence, transparency, and a commitment to protecting the wellbeing of current and prospective staff.

Finance and Resources Strategy

Focus: Value for money, sustainability, and assets.

Key Aims

- Align finances with risk, ensuring sound financial management, and providing staff with safe and effective facilities and equipment.
- Efficiency improvements delivered year-on-year and reinvested into the Service.
- Embed sustainability principles into procurement, construction, and asset management.
- Ensure that the MTFP can be delivered with the available resources and an appropriate efficiency plan, together with detailed options for savings is in place to meet any shortfall in funding.

Key Risks

- A real-term reduction in funding due to limits on Council Tax increases and Government grant funding.
- Additional cost pressures from general inflation and unprecedented increases in supply costs, such as gas and electricity.
- Government policy changes resulting in additional, un-forecasted costs, such as employer pension contributions, higher national insurance contributions and nationally agreed pay awards.
- Elements of the estate requiring increasing investment for refurbishment and maintenance, ensuring it remains safe and fit for purpose for our diversifying workforce.

Key Actions

- Maintain and continuously improve the governance framework, ensuring it reflects best practice and supports effective oversight.
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties, including fire safety legislation, financial regulations, and equality obligations.
- Reduce the Service's carbon footprint through greener buildings, energy efficiency, and low-emission vehicles where this is cost-effective to do so.
- Develop and maintain fit-for-purpose stations, training facilities, and control infrastructure that support operational needs and staff wellbeing.
- Ensure equipment is modern, safe, and fit for purpose, supporting operational effectiveness and firefighter safety.
- Provide transparent reporting on performance, risk, and financial stewardship through accessible public documents and engagement.
- Review the current estate portfolio to identify opportunities for consolidation, co-location, or redevelopment.
- Establish a clear capital investment pipeline aligned with strategic priorities and risk assessments.
- Explore external funding opportunities, including government grants and partnerships, to support major projects.

- Continuous review of the budget and MTFP to seek efficiency savings to ensure value for money.
- Maintain and review a list of savings options to meet any potential shortfall in funding in order to balance the budget.

Transformation and Digital Strategy

Focus: Technology, innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Key Aims

- An empowered workforce with effective technology for communication, secure information management, and remote efficiency.
- Enhanced decision-making through easy access to current, role-relevant data analytics and intelligence to enhance safety and reduce risk.
- A digitally engaged workforce that supports digital innovation and agility, embracing and promoting automation for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.
- Enhanced community engagement through tailored, accessible, and digitally enabled solutions, helping to deliver reduction in paper and improved process efficiency.
- Optimised infrastructure with modernisation of legacy systems and hardware. Improved integration and interoperability where possible.
- Strengthen the organisation's cyber security posture through increased staff awareness, system security by design and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Key Risks

- Increased exposure to cyberattacks, ransomware, or data breaches as digital systems expand.
- Breach of data protection laws (e.g., UK GDPR) or sector-specific digital standards.
- Fragmented digital systems that don't communicate effectively.
- Emerging technology.
- Cultural or operational resistance from staff to new technologies or ways of working.

Key Actions

- Collect and analyse new data to enhance our understanding of risk in CDDFRS.
- Conduct regular evaluations of existing IT systems to ensure they remain robust, scalable, and aligned with operational needs, acting as reliable enablers of service delivery and innovation.
- Ensure all systems meet up-to-date security requirements, maintaining data and system security alongside accreditation to relevant codes of connections and security standards.
- Actively engage with the Home Office-led Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme to facilitate the successful implementation of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) across CDDFRS.

- Collaborate with local and national partners to develop interoperable digital solutions and share actionable data that enhances public safety and supports integrated service delivery.
- Explore and develop the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to drive operational efficiencies, improve decision-making, and deliver better outcomes for the communities we serve.
- Enhance the Service's approach to data protection and information governance by embedding GDPR principles across all digital systems and operational processes.

Performance Monitoring, Governance and Key Measures

Delivering this CRMP requires strong management, clear governance, and effective oversight. Our internal governance framework ensures that we remain accountable for the commitments made within this plan. The diagram below outlines how this all fits together:



Our vision of 'Safest People, Safest Places' is the cornerstone of our organisation, guiding us towards our ultimate goals. It is supported by our core values (Professional, Innovative, Effective), which shape our culture and define how we interact with each

other, our communities, and our stakeholders. To achieve our vision, we have established the CRMP (supported by the CRP), which includes our six strategies and strategic objectives and key priorities which have been consulted upon by staff and our communities.

Our objectives and priorities are broken down into our annual delivery plan, ensuring that we stay on track and make progress. Each station or department within our Service has its own plan, tailored to its specific needs and responsibilities. These plans are aligned with our overall strategic objectives, ensuring that every part of the Service is working towards the same goals. Leaders across the Service will monitor the risks relevant to their areas and ensure appropriate actions are in place to manage and mitigate them. On an individual level, personal objectives are set for each team member, providing clear targets and a sense of purpose aligning to Station / Departmental Plans.

Our behaviours and ethics are the foundation of our work, guiding our actions and decisions. They ensure that we operate with integrity and respect, fostering a positive and productive work environment.

To measure progress, the CRMP is supported by a suite of key performance metrics. Some indicators directly reflect our performance (for example, the number of Home Fire Safety Visits completed), while others reflect external demand for our services over which we have limited control (such as the number of RTCs attended).

Performance is scrutinised across the organisation. The CFA regularly monitors the performance of the organisation through its Performance Committee. The Service has a Performance Board which tracks data across the organisation and provides performance reports to the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and Performance Committee, ensuring thorough scrutiny.

You will see our results throughout this document but for more detailed information on our performance visit the [Our Performance](#) page on our website.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have a remit to inspect all 44 FRSs in England. Every year HMICFRS publishes a review of the sector in the [State of Fire and Rescue report](#).

The HMICFRS' assessment examines the Service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well it looks after its people. It is designed to give you information about how your local FRS is performing in these three key areas, in a way that is comparable with other FRSs across England.

We are judged by HMICFRS and given ratings for each pillar: outstanding, good, adequate, requires improvement or inadequate.

[Our last inspection report](#) was published on the 14 August 2025 and we were rated as **outstanding** at protecting the public through fire regulation, **good** in nine other areas of the assessment and adequate in one area.

The latest results place CDDFRS amongst the top performing FRSs in England, highlighting our sector leading innovations and our efforts to share positive practices for wider improvement.

About our Service area

We look after the areas of County Durham and Darlington, which cover approximately 939 square miles with a population of approximately 642,744 people. We protect around 319,096 households and 27,870 business and other premises.

We have a mixture of rural, urban, and coastal areas so our prevention and protection work, as well as our emergency response, has to be tailored to the differing needs of each type of community.

We have 15 fire stations. These are:

- Barnard Castle
- Bishop Auckland
- Consett
- Crook
- Darlington
- Durham
- High Handenhold
- Middleton in Teesdale
- Newton Aycliffe
- Peterlee
- Seaham
- Sedgefield
- Spennymoor
- Stanhope
- Wheatley Hill

We border five other FRSs (North Yorkshire, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Cleveland), providing mutual cross-border support to one another if and when required.

About our communities

We recognise that we can only provide an effective service if we understand the diversity within our area and enable our workforce to meet the needs and concerns of people who live, work, study, and visit County Durham and Darlington.

Our CRP highlights the challenges faced by the public relating to deprivation and health, as well as the make-up of our population in relation to age, gender, and ethnicity.

Our rural communities cover a significant geographical proportion of the Service area, with some individuals extremely hard to reach and therefore at more risk of being vulnerable.

Health inequalities remain persistent and pervasive, with levels of deprivation being significantly higher and life expectancy here is lower than the national average. We know that living in isolation can have a negative impact on a person's health and well-being. We have also witnessed first-hand how poor-quality housing can exacerbate a range of underlying health conditions, from falls and poor mental health to hoarding and excessive alcohol and substance misuse.

The following Health Profile information highlights some of the challenges our communities face:

Life Expectancy:

The average life expectancy at birth for males in County Durham and Darlington is 77.5 years, for females this value is 81.3 years. Both lower than the national England average values of 79.3 years for males and 83.2 years for females (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023¹).

Adults:

In County Durham and Darlington, the average population of people aged 65 and over is 21.4%. This is higher than the England average of 18.7% (LG Inform²).

Dementia:

In County Durham and Darlington, the average dementia diagnosis rate for people aged 65 and over is 67.8%, which is higher than the national England rate of 62.2% (LG Inform²).

Physical Conditions:

On average 71% of people living in County Durham and Darlington over the age of 18 are classified as overweight or obese, which is higher than the England average of 64.5% (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023³).

Suicide:

The rate of deaths by suicide for County Durham and Darlington is 18 deaths per 100,000 people, higher than the England average of 10.7 per 100,000 (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023⁴).

Smoking:

In Durham 11.7% of adults are smokers, in Darlington this figure is 7.9%. The England average is 11.6% (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023⁵).

Children:

Within County Durham and Darlington, the level of child poverty is higher than the England average (21.1%), with 28.4% of children under 16 years living in relative poverty (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023⁶).

Indices of Multiple Deprivation:

Out of the 317 Local Authorities in England Durham ranks 70th in the league table of the most deprived and Darlington is 49th where 1 is the worst and 317 is the least (The English Indices of Deprivation 2019⁷).

The Service area has 51 Lower Layer Super Output Areas in the 10% most deprived decile, 39 of which are in County Durham and 12 in Darlington (Office for National Statistics, 2021⁸) The Service area has 51 Lower Layer Super Output Areas in the 10% most deprived decile, 39 of which are in County Durham and 12 in Darlington (Office for National Statistics, 2021⁸)

Achievements and Innovation

Every year the Service produces an Annual Report to highlight the achievement and innovation of the previous year. To read [our report](#) please visit our website.

Governance

How are we accountable to our communities for the service we provide?

Locally

Our CFA consists of 25 elected councillors: 21 from Durham County Council (DCC) and 4 from Darlington Borough Council (DBC). The CFA is the legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities for:

- Ensuring the Service is effective and efficient.
- Setting the strategic direction, policies, and procedures of the Service.
- Holding the Chief Fire Officer to account for the effective and efficient running of the Service.

The CFA has several subcommittees with delegated powers that look at specific areas such as audit and finance, human resources, and performance. CFA Members operate under our Constitution and Code of Corporate Governance, as well as a dedicated Code of Ethics, which is aligned to the jointly endorsed National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC), Local Government Association (LGA) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Code.

You can read more about the [CFA](#), how it works, and [papers from meetings](#) on our website.

We have representatives on all 12 of the Local Network groups in the Service. area who links directly with elected members and community representatives across County Durham. We are a member of the Darlington Partnership, and we also liaise with Parish Councils.

We publish a range of information on our website including, [Financial Governance](#), [Annual Governance Statement](#); [Statement of Accounts](#) and our [Performance information](#). In addition to our [strategic documents](#) which are available for the public to scrutinise.

Our staff work under a Code of Conduct for Employees which governs the standards we expect and ensures accountability to you. This was refreshed in 2022 to reflect the introduction of the National Fire Chiefs' Council Core Code of Ethics You can read the Code of Conduct which incorporates the national Core Code of Ethics, in our [Constitution](#).

Statement of Assurance

The annual [Statement of Assurance](#) provides the necessary accountability and transparency to the people of County Durham and Darlington and is evidence that their FRS continues to deliver in accordance with the expectations detailed within both the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 and our own CRMP process.

It also details the measures taken to assure our communities that the CFA's performance is efficient and effective in relation to finance and governance.

It measures operational assurance to demonstrate that our services are delivered in line with our statutory responsibilities and with due regard to the expectations set out in our CRMP, including cross-border, multi-authority and national incident arrangements.

How we identify risk

How do we identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks our areas face?

When determining how we identify risk, we first have to take into account a number of key documents which cover national, regional, and local risks. These documents feed into our 'Community Risk Identification Process.' We talk to our crews on the ground, senior officers, partner agencies, and other responder organisations to help us to better understand the risks in our community.

We use the latest version of the updated National Risk Register to assist us in aligning the risks we see locally to those which are identified by experts at national level. Our Local Resilience Forum (LRF), which is chaired by our Chief Fire Officer and is made up of all the key local stakeholder organisations that deliver responses to major incidents, also produces a Community Risk Register and we make sure our risks also align with these.

In addition to monitoring national, regional, and local risks, our Community Risk Profile (CRP) provides an in-depth piece of research and analysis of the incidents we have attended over previous years, and the risk of emergency incidents occurring in the future. This document is refreshed annually.

We have access to a variety of useful data which helps us to know where our risks are and to identify trends and demand. We use a number of datasets associated with elevated risk which involves profiling geographical areas, businesses, dwellings, and individuals by combining data from past incident activity and other demographic data such as age, deprivation, and lone households.

The first stage of our risk assessment methodology used within the CRP is to identify incidents that can cause harm to the people, environment, and economy within our communities, using various data sources and tools. We also utilise a nationally recognised risk assessment matrix based on a reasonable worst-case scenario, with an assessment of the likelihood and impact in order to come to definitive scoring.

Understanding national risks, together with our CRP and Station Plans, helps us plan our emergency response. The Service also has a Corporate Risk Register that looks at all the risks to our business (service provision and financial). These risks are monitored with measures put in place to ensure we can fulfil our role as a FRS protecting the communities of County Durham and Darlington.

Areas of business are addressed through one of our strategic priorities. The purpose of these priorities is to define a simple practical framework to manage risk, while highlighting how the Service intends to mitigate these risks on an ongoing basis through a detailed action plan.

A comprehensive understanding of risk and demand enables the Service to allocate our prevention, protection, and emergency response resources appropriately. We then consider how the productivity of our workforce is aligned to dealing with our greatest risks.

You can read more about this in the [Community Risk Profile](#).

Community Risk Identification Process

The Service follow a cycle for planning and managing risk, the cycle contains the following documents:

- National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies
- County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register
- CDDFRS Community Risk Profile
- CDDFRS Community Risk Management Plan which includes our strategic objectives and key priorities.
- CDDFRS Section and Station Plans
- CDDFRS Appraisal System

The infographic on the following page shows how these documents form our planning cycle.

Risk Planning Cycle



What are the risks we have identified?

Our CRP identifies the main risks within County Durham and Darlington, and further details of the proactive and reactive measures are contained within our Station Plans.

Risk 1 Dwelling fires

Every year, we experience fires in people's homes that are devastating for those people involved and can cause injury and death.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Identify those people most at risk/vulnerable.
- Conduct HFSVs, fit smoke alarms and provide fire-retardant equipment focusing on fire safety messaging which reduces the likelihood of an accidental fire and educate those within the property to reduce the spread of fire within the home if one should occur.
- Refer people to other agencies where vulnerability is identified.
- Arson reduction and fire setter interventions
- Attend national events to establish best practice.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to dwelling fires.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Attend 70% of all dwelling fires within eight minutes.
- Provide advice after the fire and carry out hot strikes.
- Utilise support, if required, from Red Cross Fire Victim Support Teams
- Investigate the cause of fires at the appropriate level in partnership with the police.
- Where appropriate, submit post-incident safeguarding referrals.
- Conduct performance-management processes to identify trends in incidents.
- Conduct learning reviews of serious fire incidents.

Risk 2 Other residential building fires

Other residential building fires are a classification of primary fires and includes institutional properties such as hostels for homeless people, hotels and B&Bs, nursing/care homes and student halls of residence.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Use data to understand which premises present the highest risks.
- Deal with complaints and enquiries.
- Carry out fire safety audits to ensure compliance with the Fire Safety Order
- Adopt a continuous re-inspection programme based on risk levels.
- Use enforcement action where required.
- Work with businesses to ensure they keep their premises safe.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to these types of incidents.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Attend 70% of all non-domestic property fires within nine minutes.
- Investigate the cause of fires at the appropriate level in partnership with the police.
- Carry out post-fire audits to offer advice.
- Consider enforcement action where necessary.
- Deal with complaints.
- Charge businesses for Unwanted Fire Alarms
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of these incidents on the environment.
- Ensure we have secured appropriate water supplies, to aid firefighting.
- Conduct performance-management processes to identify trends in incidents.

Risk 3 Other non-residential building fires

Every year, we experience fires in places such as offices, factories, prisons, and commercially operated residential premises.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Use data to understand which premises present the highest risks.
- Deal with complaints and enquiries.
- Carry out fire safety audits to ensure compliance with the Fire Safety Order
- Adopt a continuous re-inspection programme based on risk levels.
- Use enforcement action where required.
- Work with businesses to ensure they keep their premises safe.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to these types of incidents.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Attend 70% of all non-domestic property fires within nine minutes.
- Investigate the cause of fires at the appropriate level in partnership with the police.
- Carry out post-fire audits to offer advice.
- Consider enforcement action where necessary.
- Deal with complaints.
- Charge businesses for Unwanted Fire Alarms
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of these incidents on the environment.
- Ensure we have secured appropriate water supplies, to aid firefighting.
- Work with responsible persons for premises where we are not the enforcing authority e.g. Prisons.

Risk 4 Road vehicle fires

Road vehicle fires are a classification of primary fires and are fires in vehicles used for transportation on public roads, such as cars, vans, buses/coaches, motorcycles, lorries, and heavy goods vehicles. A significant proportion of road vehicle fires we attend are as a result of a deliberate act.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide training and equipment for crews.
- Use the Service data systems and business intelligence to identify areas where vehicle fires occur.
- Deliver dedicated arson reduction activities to reduce the number of car fires.
- Work in partnership with Durham Police to reduce the prevalence of road vehicle fires.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Investigate the cause of road vehicle fires.
- Work with authorities to prosecute those guilty of deliberately setting fire to road vehicles.
- Conduct performance-management processes to identify trends in incidents.

Risk 5 Secondary fires

Across the North East and within County Durham and Darlington higher levels of predominantly outdoor secondary fires occur, the majority of which are as a result of deliberate fire setting. These incident types have a significant community impact, as well as being a drain on the FRS resource that could be deployed elsewhere. Our

data indicates the areas of high levels of deliberate fires, which enables us and our partners to focus our resources effectively.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with partners to reduce the burden on all agencies.
- Work with authorities to prosecute those guilty of arson or deliberate fire-setting.
- Develop strategies with key partners and evaluate campaigns, education packages, and initiatives.
- Utilise data analysis software to highlight hotspot areas.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to primary and secondary fires.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Conduct arson/ environmental audits with partners in areas subject to high operational activity.
- Investigate the causes of fires in partnership with the police.
- Conduct Service-wide and local performance management measures to help to identify problem areas or trends.

Risk 6 Void and empty properties

Fires involving buildings which are no longer occupied present a significant challenge, especially if the void or empty property is left unsecured, unmanaged, accessible, and located in a populated area. When involved in fire, void or empty properties can be extremely hazardous for anyone within the building and responding emergency personnel.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Work with key partners to influence how void and empty properties are managed.
- Seek to identify void and empty properties and ensure operational crews have up to date risk information.
- Provide training to ensure operational crews are aware of the dangers associated with void and empty properties.
- Use the Service data systems to identify hotspot locations of void and empty properties.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Work in partnership and apply interventions to reduce the prevalence of fires involving void and empty properties.
- Investigate the causes of fires in partnership with the police.
- Conduct performance-management processes to identify trends in incidents.

Risk 7 Wildfires

Wildfires can quickly escalate and spread across large areas, causing major disruption to life, property, and infrastructure.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with landowners and responsible authorities to reduce the risk of widespread wildfires.
- Promote the potential dangers of starting fires in rural locations such as barbeques or campfires.
- Train our staff to provide expert advice.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to wildfires.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Deploy appropriate resources to contain and extinguish wildfires.
- Deploy specialist wildfire personnel and equipment as appropriate.
- Request assistance from other agencies and organisations for specialist equipment as required.
- Consider mutual aid requests where necessary to assist with large or protracted incidents.
- Conduct performance-management processes to identify trends in incidents.

Risk 8 Rescues from water

The rivers, lakes, and other areas of open water throughout the Service area present a risk when members of the public enter flowing or static water, get into difficulty, and require rescuing by fire and rescue service personnel.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide training and equipment to deal with water related incidents.
- Identify the locations of water risks throughout the Service area.

- Work in partnership to reduce the risk of water related fatalities.
- Deliver campaign to members of the public to educate them about the dangers posed by bodies of water.
- Make a specialist water rescue team available to respond locally and nationally.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to water related incidents.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Debrief these types of rescues to identify the opportunity for organisational learning to improve service deliver.
- Respond to water related incidents and carry out rescues of people requiring assistance.

Risk 9 Rescue from height

Incidents at heights could occur in many different formats and anywhere across the Service area. The dangerous nature of dealing with such incidents leads to an increased risk of injury to anyone involved.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work closely with partner agencies such as mountain rescue, coast guard, and other FRSs.
- Provide a specialist capability to respond to the most challenging rescues.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to height rescues.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Deploy specialist line rescue teams supported by additional fire crews to effect rescues.
- Utilise specialist engines such as the aerial ladder platform (ALP) to assist with rescues.
- Work in partnership to assist with the resolution of incidents.
- Support other agencies to assist vulnerable persons involved in height incidents.
- Debrief these types of rescues to identify the opportunity for organisational learning to improve service delivery.

Risk 10 Road traffic collisions (RTCs)

Deaths and serious injuries on the road affect County Durham and Darlington residents each year as well as people from further afield.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with our key strategic partners to reduce risk through education.
- Utilise local and national data sets on RTC numbers and type.
- Attend national and local working groups that share best practice.
- Provide crews with the latest technology to meet the modern methods of vehicle construction.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to RTCs.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Attend 70% of life-risk RTCs within 10 minutes.
- Respond with appropriate resources to RTCs to effect rescue, mitigate the risk from fire and other related risks, and assist partners in resolving the incident.
- Respond to non-life risk RTCs on request to help to make the scene safe.

Risk 11 Rail incidents

Fires and accidents on the transport network not only present an immediate threat to life and property but can also have a long-lasting impact on infrastructure and our communities.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with our partners to help to improve safety within the transport industry.
- Understand the main rail networks within our area.
- Conduct operational exercises at high-risk sites/locations.
- Collect information and develop plans on our highest transport risks so that we are prepared to respond.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our training in relation to rail incidents we attend.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Respond to incidents with sufficient resources to effect rescue, deal with fire and other hazards, and assist with casualties.

- Request support of specialist fire and rescue teams such as Urban Search and Rescue where appropriate.
- Work in partnership to mitigate the impact of such incidents and facilitate recovery.

Risk 12 Aircraft incidents

Fires and accidents relating to aircraft not only present an immediate threat to life and property but can also have a long-lasting impact on infrastructure and our communities.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with our partners to help to improve safety within the transport industry.
- Understand the main flight paths within our area.
- Conduct operational exercises at local airports.
- Collect information and develop plans on our highest transport risks so that we are prepared to respond.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our training in relation to aviation incidents we attend.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Respond to incidents with sufficient resources to effect rescue, deal with fire and other hazards, and assist with casualties.
- Request support of specialist fire and rescue teams such as Urban Search and Rescue where appropriate.
- Work in partnership to mitigate the impact of such incidents and facilitate recovery.

Risk 13 Maritime incidents

These incidents refer to fires on board ships or within the harbour area of the coastline within the Service area.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide training and equipment for operational crews to respond to an incident involving sea vessels.
- Work in partnership to reduce the impact of an incident occurring within Seaham Harbour

- Provide risk information to operational crews on the risks associated with Seaham Harbour

Reactive measures

We will:

- Respond to incidents with sufficient resources to effect rescue, deal with fire and other hazards, and assist with casualties.
- Debrief these types of incidents to identify the opportunity for organisational learning to improve service delivery.

Risk 14 Flooding

Widespread flooding can devastate parts of the community and leaves an impression for years beyond an event. We have also seen some tragic drownings in our waterways over the years, and climate change will lead to an increase in such events.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Develop flood plans and provide operational risk information for crews.
- Work with partners to prepare for flood risk.
- Campaign to members of the public to educate them about the dangers posed by bodies of water.
- Work closely with the Environment Agency (EA) to share ideas.
- Make a specialist water rescue team available to respond locally and nationally.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to water related incidents.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Work with partners to protect and maintain critical infrastructure in times of flooding.
- Respond to domestic flooding calls and assist if appropriate.
- Deploy a specialist water rescue team to perform rescues and evacuation of people affected by flooding.
- Work with other agencies to help to protect areas at immediate risk of flooding.
- Deploy High Volume Pumps (HVP), where appropriate, to areas most affected

Risk 15 Industrial incidents and fires

There are many industrial premises amongst the villages and towns in the Service area, which if involved in fire can have the potential to affect the longer-term viability of the business and have a negative community impact.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Conduct fire safety audits of premises across the Service area.
- Adopt a continuous re-inspection programme based on risk levels.
- Use enforcement action where required.
- Work with businesses to ensure they keep their premises safe.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to these types of incidents.
- Exercise and train with our partners to prepare for a range of eventualities.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Attend 70% of all non-domestic property fires within nine minutes.
- Respond with equipment, appliances, and personnel to help to resolve the incident.
- Work with partners to resolve the incident and minimise the impact on the environment.
- Debrief these types of rescues to identify the opportunity for organisational learning to improve service delivery.

Risk 16 Hazardous materials

Hazardous materials can present a risk to the public from a range of sources including road transport, industrial sites and malicious use by terrorists or organised criminal groups.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with industry to ensure safe practices.
- Conduct fire safety audits of premises across the Service area.
- Work with the police to understand the threat from terrorism and organised criminality.
- Exercise and train with our partners to prepare for a range of eventualities.
- Train a range of tactical advisors to provide expert advice.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to these types of incidents.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Respond with specialist equipment and personnel to help to resolve the incident.
- Seek specialist advice from national centres where required.
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of hazardous materials on the environment.

Risk 17 Waste and recycling sites

Fires in waste and recycling sites can have significant impacts on the local environment and can pollute water courses in the area surrounding a fire. Although waste and recycling sites are licensed, some may be unlicensed and linked to the illegal transfer and disposal of waste.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work in partnership to understand which premises present the highest risks.
- Work with owners of waste and recycling sites to ensure they keep their premises safe and reduce the impact on the environment.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Investigate the cause of fires at the appropriate level in partnership with the police.
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of these incidents on the environment.
- Ensure we have secured appropriate water supplies, to aid firefighting.
- Debrief these types of incidents to identify the opportunity for organisational learning to improve service delivery.

Risk 18 Animal related incidents

As a predominantly rural area, we are inevitably called to incidents where animals are in distress.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with partner agencies to keep animals safe in the service area.
- Maintain a specialist animal-rescue capability.
- Attend national and regional learning events to share best practice.

- Learn from specialist vets in how to deal with different types of animals.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Respond with specialist animal rescue teams to effect rescue.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to help to resolve incidents.
- Request other specialist teams and equipment as needed to assist with the incident.
- Seek specialist advice where required.
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of disruption to the public from animals on our roads.
- Debrief and learn lessons following animal rescue incidents.

Risk 19 Buildings of heritage and sites of special interest

Historic buildings are of considerable economic value, especially to the tourist industry and for their positive impact to their surrounding area and community. Fires in buildings of heritage and special interest can adversely affect the significance, authenticity, and continuing functionality of these premises.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Use data to understand which premises present the highest risks.
- Carry out fire safety audits to ensure compliance with the FSO.
- Adopt a continuous re-inspection programme based on risk levels.
- Use enforcement action where required.
- Work with owners of buildings of heritage and special interest to ensure they keep their premises safe.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Investigate the cause of fires at the appropriate level in partnership with the police.
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of these incidents on the environment.
- Ensure we have secured appropriate water supplies, to aid firefighting.
- Debrief these types of fires to identify the opportunity for organisational learning to improve service delivery.

Risk 20 Marauding terrorist/malicious attacks

The UK faces a serious and sustained threat from terrorism.

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Work with the police to understand the threat from terrorism.
- Be ready to respond to local and national incidents and events.
- Learn from similar events of this nature that have occurred both within the UK and internationally.
- Train a range of tactical advisors and commanders to provide expert advice.
- Conduct regular evaluation of our work in relation to these types of incidents.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Respond with appropriately trained and equipped specialist teams to effect rescue and casualty care for victims.
- Use fire crews to support the work of specialist teams where appropriate.
- Seek specialist advice from national centres where required.
- Deploy National Incident Liaison Officers (NILO) to provide a unified approach with key partners.
- Ensure measures are in place to support staff welfare post-incident.
- Undertake debriefs to ensure learning from incidents is captured.

Risk 21 Battery energy

This risk encompasses a range of risks involving new energy technologies, predominantly involving lithium-ion battery energy storage. The principal risks are electric vehicles (EV), Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEV), and battery energy storage systems (BESS).

Proactive measures

We will:

- Provide equipment and training for crews.
- Gather risk information posed by battery energy fires where appropriate.
- Offer fire safety advice to owners of battery energy technologies.
- Seek professional advice from specialist partners and national bodies to try and prevent such incidents occurring.

Reactive measures

We will:

- Debrief and learn lessons from fires involving battery energy.
- Work with partners to mitigate the impact of these incidents on the environment.
- Respond with specialist equipment and personnel to help to resolve the incident.
- Investigate the cause of battery energy fires at the appropriate level

Emerging Risks

As part of our risk identification and analysis process we assess emerging factors that we think will cause risks in the future. This involves monitoring the external environment and our own incident data to help build up a picture of emerging risks. Our most recent analysis has identified the following as likely to require a greater response from us in the coming years:

Adverse Weather

In recent years, the UK has experienced extreme storms resulting in loss of life, considerable damage to property and the environment, and loss of power to thousands of homes. In the North East on 26 and 27 November 2021 Storm Arwen resulted in a red warning being issued by the Met Office due to severe winds and snow. In 2022 the UK also experienced extreme heat events which contributed to an upturn in secondary fires and affected infrastructure such as transport. We capture the effects of severe weather in some of our existing risks such as flooding and wildfires and climate change means we can expect to see an increase in such events in the future as we become more susceptible to summer drought, and autumn/winter storms. The impact of storms with accompanying strong winds or snow can be very disruptive, especially in our rural communities. It can also impact on our response times. Where storms lead to felled trees and power lines our firefighters can be called to assist other agencies in the aftermath. This is a risk we are monitoring closely and will add in the future if the data supports this.

Cyber Events

As more of our functions across public and private services come to rely on Information and Communications Technology it is vital that we plan for potential disruption from cyber events. They could come in the form of criminal or state sponsored cyber-attacks, loss of power, or system failures. The Service will work in collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure that cyber events are monitored and planned for, with a focus on making such events part of business continuity planning and testing.

Hydrogen as a clean energy source

The transition towards cleaner energy is an immediate priority as the government seek to achieve net zero. Hydrogen is one of a handful of low carbon solutions which can help the UK achieve its emissions reductions targets for Carbon Budget 6 and

net zero by 2050 as well as provide greater domestic energy security. Hydrogen blending refers to the blending of low carbon hydrogen with other gases (primarily natural gas) (NG) in pre-existing gas network infrastructure and appliances. Unlike NG, hydrogen exhibits distinct detonation characteristics including a broader explosion range, lower minimum ignition energy, higher flame velocity, flame temperature, and greater diffusivity. Not only is hydrogen proposed as a clean energy source to replace NG it is also being developed as an energy source within the motor industry, where it shares the same risks albeit more dynamically. We will keep this risk monitored as part of the horizon scanning continuous assessment of community risk.

Medium Term Financial Plan

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority remain committed to protecting front line services to the public. The Service has faced considerable financial pressures including reductions in government funding together with cost pressures arising from increasing inflation which is resulting in demands for higher pay awards. The financial pressures faced by the Service are compounded by the outcome of the review of the allocation of government funding (the Fair Funding Review 2.0) which will lead to further reductions in government funding over the period 2027/28 to 2028/29.

Our challenge is to balance our resources against the risks we face. By resources, we mean money. By risk we mean the potential for emergencies to occur which covers everything from fires and RTCs to flooding and even terrorism. Like all public services, we must work within our available resources. We have continued to adopt a progressive approach to managing our finances making sensible and sustainable efficiencies to offset known cost pressures.

We have set a balanced budget for 2026/27 of £40.2M without using reserves, however we are facing shortfalls in funding of £0.8M in 2027/28, £1.0M in 2028/29 and over £3.0M in 2029/30 as outlined in our MTFP. We will continue to closely monitor our spend to identify further savings to minimise the use of reserves. The Authority has one of the lowest level of reserves of all English fire and rescue authorities therefore using reserves to balance the budget is not sustainable on an on-going basis.

We have developed options to deal with reductions in funding through our MTFP which will assist in balancing the budget in future years. Like other FRS our capabilities are built around our people and staff costs make up over 80 percent of our budget. We have always aimed to protect our front-line resources, but it is not sustainable to cut the numbers further without reducing the service we provide to the public and increasing risk.

Despite the reductions in funding, we continue to operate from the same number of fire stations, albeit some have different crewing systems. Ultimately, we still aim to deliver the best possible service to the communities of County Durham and Darlington with the funds we have.

Historically, we have received an equal amount of our funding from direct government grants and Council Tax. However, over time this has changed, with two

thirds of our funding now being received from Council Tax, increases which are subject to strict limits without going through a very expensive referendum process. The Government have determined a band D Council Tax increase limit of £5 on fire and rescue authorities for 2026/27. Reliance on Council Tax also brings with it challenges in an area such as ours where a significant number of the properties are in Council Tax band A and B. A 1% increase in Council Tax raises an additional £230,000 for the Authority whereas in other areas 1% raises significantly more. To further illustrate the problem a 1%, pay award costs us over £330,000 per year and other inflationary pressures are adding significant costs to the Service. For more detailed information about our finances, [you can read the Medium-Term Financial Plan using this link](#).

Allocating resource to risk

Who are our people?

- We have 291 Wholetime Firefighters, 246 of which work on our Fire Stations with a further 45 in managerial roles working from Headquarters, Service Training Centre and Technical Services Centre.
- We have 159 On-Call firefighters.
- We have 18 Fire Control operators.
- We have 98 Corporate Non-operational staff based at our key sites.

Where do they work?

They are based out of our 15 fire stations, our Service Headquarters in Belmont, a Training Centre in Bowburn and a Technical Services Centre also located in Bowburn.

What resources do we have?

We have a fleet of 26 front-line fire engines in addition to specialist appliances and national resilience assets along with a range of off-road four-wheel drive vehicles to help to deal with those risks identified throughout our CRMP process. These include:

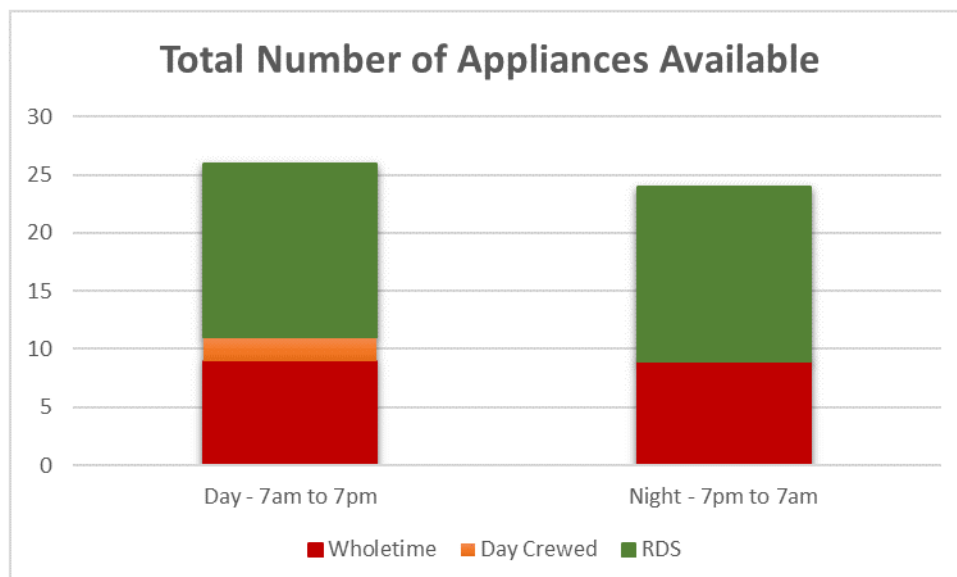
- Aerial Ladder Platforms for performing rescues at height.
- Line Rescue Teams for performing rescues at height.
- A Specialist Rescue Unit for RTCs, building collapse and animal rescue.
- Water rescue equipment including boats and flood response units for water-related incidents
- A High-Volume Pump, foam unit, and bulk water carrier to provide water and foam at large incidents.
- Environmental Protection Units for hazardous materials incidents
- A Mass Decontamination Unit for dealing with hazardous materials incidents.
- A Welfare Support Unit to provide welfare facilities for our staff at protracted incidents.
- An Incident Logistics Support Unit to support Incident Commanders to coordinate the logistics of large or complex incidents.
- 4x4 targeted response and wildfire vehicles to provide support to the front line and access hard-to-reach areas.

- Targeted Response Vehicles for attending small fire incidents and responding to automatic fire alarms.
- A wildfire unit for attending fires which may be difficult to gain access or require special firefighting techniques to extinguish.
- A specialist team dealing with Marauding Terrorist Attacks (MTAs)

The distribution of our fire stations across the Service area ensures we are able to provide the optimum level of response in those areas deemed to be of greatest risk. Each station is resourced with appliances and specialist equipment that match the levels of risk and demand in that part of our Service area.

Appliance availability

The graph below shows our maximum appliance availability from 7am to 7pm is 26 whilst between 7pm and 7am it is 24. This supports risk and demand across County Durham and Darlington.



Degradation plan

Our degradation plan considers a range of local and national events. These include the reasonable planning assumption of responding to two simultaneous incidents of 5 pumps or one large incident of 10 pumps. The degradation plan also provides the strategic location of the number of required appliances for normal business. Management intervention is enacted when the Service reaches a heightened state of appliance availability, this is defined at below 15 appliances.

Response standards

We are committed to responding to life risk incidents as quickly as possible. The proactive work our teams undertake, such as delivering HFSVs to the most vulnerable, continues to reduce risk and the number of incidents we attend.

However, we continue to see a high level of risk to life as a result of accidental fires within the home and accidents on our roads. Conversely, we see much lower levels of risk to life from fires in non-domestic buildings, recording just eleven injuries that required hospital treatment over a 5-year reporting period this is partly as a result of our engagement with businesses but also due to our risk-based approach to auditing premises.

To ensure we remain focused on providing a prompt response to life risk incidents we have the following challenging response standards, and we monitor our performance against these. Overall CDDFRS is the fastest responding predominantly rural FRS.

Our Response Standards are:

- Attend Dwelling Fires in 8 minutes on 70% of occasions.
- Attend Non-Domestic Fires in 9 minutes on 70% of occasions.
- Attend RTCs in 10 minutes on 70% of occasions.

To view our performance against the Response Standards [please visit our website.](#)

Consultation

We are constantly striving to make our prevention, protection, and response services to you better and we are accountable to you in everything we do. We want to hear from you about how we can improve and shape our activities over the next four years.

The more informed we are by your views, the more able we are to meet your aspirations and deliver positive outcomes for the residents of County Durham and Darlington.

During our consultation exercise, we aim to consult with a representative sample of the community we serve. This means consulting with as many of the population across County Durham and Darlington as possible. Our aim is to receive as many responses as we can to ensure the sample size is robust, which means we can be confident in the findings of the consultation.

This year we will be consulting both online and out in the community, for example at your Local Network meeting. If you have any difficulties with internet access let us know by telephone and we can provide you with a paper copy of our survey.

Our 2025 – 2028 Consultation

Over 1,450 people participated in our 2025-28 CRMP consultation. In our consultation we highlighted our intention to invest in our communities, people, on-call firefighter response, and future.

Investing in our communities

We said:

The effect of an accidental fire in the home is devastating for both individuals and communities. We know that there are several factors that mean some people are more at risk from a fire within their home. For instance, people's lifestyle choices, such as smoking or drinking alcohol or those living with physical or medical illness often present a greater risk with many of these people known to or engaging with other agencies. Our priority is to reduce the number of accidental fires in the home. To achieve this, we need to identify new and innovative ways to share information and train other agencies to reduce the risk.

We asked:

We will invest further with partner agencies to increase our access to people vulnerable from fire and other emergencies. Do you agree?

You said:

99% of people agreed with our plan to invest further with partner agencies to increase our access to people vulnerable from fire and other emergencies.

We did:

We produced a digital training package called Eyes Wide Open to help partner agencies identify hazards when visiting the homes of vulnerable people. We also strengthened our referral pathways to make the process easier for partners and obtained specific datasets linked to fire vulnerability, enabling us to better target our prevention activities. In addition, we developed a new risk methodology and live dashboards to help staff focus home fire safety visits on those most at risk. Our partnership network has now grown to 151 individual agencies, and in 2025 we received 1,793 referrals for Home Fire Safety Visits.

Investing in our communities

We said:

County Durham and Darlington experiences some of the highest numbers of deliberate fires across England. We recognise the negative impact these fires have on our communities, not to mention the time we spend dealing with them. We work with a range of partner agencies to identify opportunities where we can have a positive impact. We know that deliberate fires are often linked with anti-social behaviour or crime and therefore we remain committed to working with our partners to both reduce them and investigate them with a view to supporting prosecutions.

We asked:

We aim to reduce the impact that deliberate fires have on our communities through targeted interventions and prevention activity. Do you agree?

You said:

99% of people agreed that the Service should aim to reduce the impact that deliberate fires have on our communities through targeted intervention and prevention activities.

We did:

We have strengthened our information sharing with the Police and now have dedicated daily calls to discuss organised crime where there is a link to fire. We have dedicated arson and deliberate fire reduction plans which involve a range of partners and initiatives tailored to the specific problem, in 2025 we conducted over 9000 deliberate fire reduction activities. We have explored the use of Artificial Intelligence to help profile our reduction efforts with a view to being as effective as possible and are currently developing this technology further. We are supporting a PHD study with the University of Northumbria which aims to better understand the psychology of deliberate fire-setting in the North East of England. Despite the initiatives having a positive impact deliberate fires remain high, in 2022/23 there was 3870 deliberate fires and in 2024/25 this has reduced to 2924. This will continue to be an area of focus for us.

Investing in our people**We said:**

We know that our people are our greatest asset and therefore deserve the right support so they can be their best. Our focus is to have a fit, healthy, and highly trained workforce that help us deliver our commitment to you “safer people, safer places.” This starts by recruiting the right people, providing them with support so that they can flourish and an environment which is welcoming, supportive, and caring. We want to see our staff develop and reach their potential across all sections of the service.

We asked:

To ensure we provide the best service to the public we will invest in our people by promoting our approach to recruitment, retention, and staff well-being. Do you agree?

You said:

99% of people agreed we should invest in our people by promoting our approach to recruitment, retention, and staff well-being.

We did:

We enhanced our safer recruitment practices, ensuring we attract the right people with the right values while maintaining robust standards of professionalism and integrity. This included:

- More rigorous pre-employment checks, such as enhanced vetting, right-to-work verification, and qualification validation.
- Behaviour and values-based interview techniques, designed to assess candidates' attitudes towards teamwork, inclusion, and ethical behaviour.
- Strengthened reference and background screening, helping us identify any safeguarding concerns early and ensure the suitability of candidates for roles involving public trust.

We also maintained our Better Health at Work Award Maintaining Excellence status, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of our workforce. Over the past year we delivered a wide range of health and wellbeing campaigns, which aligned with the award's requirements and helped foster a healthy, engaged workforce. Examples include:

- Physical Activity Campaigns — promoting movement, fitness, and healthier routines, encouraging staff to build physical wellbeing into their working week.
- Mental Health Awareness Campaigns — raising awareness of mental health conditions, reducing stigma, and signposting staff to support resources.
- Healthy Eating Campaigns — offering practical advice, nutritional guidance, and tips to improve daily food choices.
- Cancer Awareness Campaigns — increasing understanding of cancer risks, early warning signs, and the importance of screening.

We also continued to develop our people through high quality training and progression pathways, supported by our Investors in Apprenticeships accreditation, which recognises our commitment to nurturing talent across the Service. These actions have helped us build a fitter, healthier and more capable workforce, better equipped to deliver our commitment to “safer people, safer places.”

Investing in our on-call firefighter response

We said:

CDDFRS covers approximately 939 square miles including a large proportion of rural areas. We use on-call firefighters to provide cover in our rural areas and increase our response in more urban areas. Through this approach we remain one of the fastest responding FRSs in England. We can only do this with the right people, in the right places at the right time. Therefore, it remains a priority to explore all opportunities to continually improve our response model. This will include investing time and resources in our people, our infrastructure and technology to provide the best service to our communities.

We asked:

We are committed to continually improving our on-call response model. Do you agree?

You said:

99% of people agreed that we should continue to improve our on-call response model.

We did:

2024/25 saw an increase in our On Call availability when compared to 2023/24 and although maintaining On Call availability remains challenging our four most rural On Call stations to the West of the Service area provided more than 90% cover throughout the year.

Our On Call Liaison team who continue to work hard, undertook a review of our recruitment processes to make sure they are both as flexible and engaging as possible which has led to greater recruitment opportunities and more people being employed by the Service as well as reviewing our retention policy to make sure it is applied consistently to ensure we have a greater understanding of why people may choose to leave.

Investing in our future**We said:**

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service consider the challenges we and society face today and those in the medium to longer term. Responding to these challenges is complex and requires commitment, planning and investment. We recognise the impact we have on the environment and have developed an Environmental, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy which sets out how we aim to reduce our impact. Legislative changes together with our own aims means we will continue to invest in our estates, fleet and equipment whilst exploring technological solutions to meet our vision.

We asked:

To meet the challenges of the future and reduce our impact on the environment we will invest in our buildings, equipment, and technology. Do you agree?

You said:

99% of people agreed we should invest in our buildings, equipment, and technology to meet the challenges of the future and reduce our impact on the environment.

We did:

Through strategic investment in key sites for deployment of solar panel schemes, the Service has achieved both environmental improvement and efficiency savings.

We have continued to invest across our estate with further modernisation schemes to stations, most recently Consett fire station. This helps to ensure that our facilities are fit for use for modern operational requirements, such as decontamination procedures and workflow, and improves the efficiency of the building in the process.

We continue to invest in new technologies associated with both efficiency and our environmental impact, these include purchasing electric vehicles (EV) where appropriate and introducing the infrastructure to support this.

We have rationalised our fleet and strengthened our response by procuring Enhanced Rescue Tenders (ERT) which will provide a more sustainable and efficient response and in turn reduce the impact on the environment.

There has been a comprehensive refurbishment of the service response Land Rovers undertaken by our in-house workshops. This approach was an economical method for substantially increasing the lifespan of these vehicles, eliminating the need for costly replacements, promoting financial responsibility, and lessening environmental impact.

We have designed a new Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) live risk mapping tool and introduced technology to enable firefighters to be fully connected whilst away from the fire station. This helps improve efficiency and productivity locally by cutting journey times and fuel use, benefiting the environment.

Our 2026 – 2030 Consultation

Our next CRMP will cover a four-year period between 2026 to 2030. During the course of this CRMP we will focus on four key priorities.

1. Emergency Response

We're committed to making sure our emergency response across County Durham and Darlington is strong, reliable, and ready for the future. This means having the right people and equipment in the right places, so we can respond quickly and effectively when you need us most.

To do this, we will:

- Review where our fire engines and specialist vehicles are based to make sure, they're in the best locations to reach you quickly.
- Check our response times and standards to ensure they continue to protect people and property.
- Improve the availability of our on-call firefighters so we can respond whenever we're needed.
- Review our plans for extra support during busy times or major incidents so we can handle unexpected demand.
- Make our emergency call handling even more reliable and efficient to help us get to you as fast as possible.

Consultation questions

- **Do you support our approach to delivering a stronger, more resilient Emergency Response for our communities?**

Yes/ No

- **Do you have any comments related to your answer or suggestions for future emergency response?**

2. Strengthening Collaboration

Working together makes us stronger. Over the next four years, we'll look for new ways to collaborate with others where it can improve efficiency and deliver better services for our communities.

Our focus will be on building and strengthening partnerships with:

- Regional FRSs
- National fire sector partners
- Other emergency services and Local Resilience Forum (LRF) partners

Opportunities to explore will include:

- Running joint training and development programmes so our teams can learn and work together.
- Sharing fire control systems and support to improve response and resilience.
- Planning strategic support for major incidents and emergencies.
- Accessing expert advice in areas like legal services, fire engineering, and technical compliance.
- Working with partners to support vulnerable residents and make prevention programmes more effective.
- Joining forces on buying equipment and services to save money and get the best value.

By working together, we can deliver better value for money, improve resilience, and provide the best possible service for our communities.

Consultation questions

- **How important do you think it is for us to collaborate with other organisations (such as neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, emergency services, or local authorities) to improve efficiency and effectiveness?**
 - Very important
 - Important
 - Neutral
 - Not important
 - Don't know
- **Do you have any comments related to your answer or suggestions for future collaboration?**

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3. Community Safety and Arson Reduction

Keeping our communities safe is a top priority. Over the next four years, we'll review and update our approach to community safety and reducing arson to make sure it reflects changing risks. Our goal is to reduce the impact of deliberate fires on both the Service and the people we serve.

We will:

- Match our prevention work to new and emerging risks so we stay ahead.
- Make sure our activities are effective and provide the best value for money.
- Target our resources where they can make the biggest difference for communities.

Key areas we'll focus on will include:

- Reviewing how we engage with children and young people to raise awareness and prevent fire-setting.
- Managing fire risks in prisons to keep staff and inmates safe.
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and deliberate fire-setting in our communities.
- Reducing arson-related crimes such as vehicle fires.
- Helping communities become more resilient against deliberate fire incidents.

Consultation questions

- **Do you support our approach to minimise the impact of deliberate fires on both the Service and communities?**

Yes/ No

- **Do you have any comments related to your answer or suggestions for minimising the impact of deliberate fires?**

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4. Supporting Our People

Our people are at the heart of everything we do. Over the next four years, we'll continue to prioritise the health, safety, and wellbeing of our workforce so they can deliver on our promise of "safer people, safer places."

We want to make sure our team is fit, healthy, and highly skilled. That means looking after both physical and mental health, providing timely support, and building resilience. Regular health checks for firefighters will remain a key part of this approach, alongside new initiatives to keep our people safe and supported.

Key areas we'll focus on will include:

- Improving trauma support services to help build psychological resilience.
- Updating fire engine designs and equipment to improve safety and performance.
- Offering comprehensive health and wellbeing checks for staff.

- Exploring cleaner fuel options for breathing apparatus training to reduce the contamination risk.
- Improving decontamination processes to reduce exposure risks after incidents.
- Modernising our buildings and facilities to meet operational needs.
- Ensuring easy access to Occupational Health services for everyone who needs them.

Consultation questions

- **How important do you think it is for us to invest in health, safety, and wellbeing initiatives for our workforce to ensure effective service delivery?**
 - Very important
 - Important
 - Neutral
 - Not important
 - Don't know
- **Do you have any comments related to your answer or suggestions for future initiatives to further support our people?**

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- **Do you have any feedback or comments about our Service or our CRMP?**

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How do we consult?

This year's consultation runs from 18 February 2026 to 13 May 2026. We will be carrying out a brief survey to capture your views, and you can also email governance@ddfire.gov.uk with your comments.

This year's survey asks you to answer some key questions and is available to complete:

- On our website.
- On our Facebook page.
- During a Home Fire Safety Visit.
- At online events and meetings.
- At in person events and meetings.

We will be consulting over a period of 12 weeks, with the next set of results available in May 2026. To read about [all our plans and to complete our survey](#) please visit our website.

If you would like to request a paper copy of the survey, a translation into another language, or need any assistance, please call us on 0345 305 8383.

References

1. [Local Authority Health Profiles – Life Expectancy Durham - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)
2. Contains public sector information from the Local Government Association licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0
3. [Local Authority Health Profiles - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)
4. [Local Authority Health Profiles – Life Expectancy Durham - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)
5. [Local Tobacco Control Profiles Key Indicators Durham Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)
6. [Local Authority Health Profiles – Wider Determinants of Health Durham Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)
7. [The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
8. [Exploring local income deprivation \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)