



Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 10 October 2023

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Safety Plan 2020-2024 Update

Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report is to update the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the delivery of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan (SP – Integrated Risk Management Plan – IRMP). The publication of the Safety Plan fulfils the legislative obligations as defined within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Panel note the update on the delivery of the plan and make comment as appropriate.

3. Background

- 3.1. The IRMP is a document that each Fire and Rescue Authority in England is required to produce. Whilst there is no specific template that the Authority is required to follow, there is guidance detailed within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018 on the content of the plan. Each plan must:
 - reflect up-to-date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
 - demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
 - outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
 - set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat;
 - cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;

- reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
 - be easily accessible and publicly available.
- 3.2 Following the transfer of governance from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority to the Staffordshire Commissioner, a new Safety Plan 2020-2024 was developed which was published in August 2020.
- 3.3 The four priorities outlined in the current Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan are:
- A flexible and responsive Service
 - Protect people and places
 - Help people most at risk stay safe
 - A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

4. Progress to Date

4.1. A flexible and responsive service

- 4.1.1. The Service has launched a review into **on-call crew availability**. Whilst there have been peaks and troughs in availability in previous years, it now remains at a low level throughout the year and is currently around 50%. It is particularly low during weekends which is proving to be a challenge for our current response model; one that is not unique to Staffordshire and is being seen nationally. We continue to invest and support our on-call teams to be able to provide better levels of fire cover. The commitment required and provided by our staff is clear, with some stations providing more availability than they are contracted to through goodwill. However, it is clear that more needs to be done.
- 4.1.2. The review will examine the fundamentals of the on-call system, and identify blockages and opportunities to improve processes. This will require all departments to think differently; processes which work for whole-time crewing will not always be suitable for on-call. The review will be conducted through the following work streams with clear leadership and governance, support and direction through monthly meetings. All decisions will be through the relevant boards, including staff engagement and consultation.
- **Recruitment:** Time to recruit is currently 120 days. This is far too long and contributes to staff dropping out of the system prior to starting. The aim is to reduce this to 40 days.
 - **Retention:** The first element of this work to understand why people are leaving and the second is to review training structures, schedule and content. The focus for this work is to introduce a system which is relevant and works for on-call staff.
 - **Availability targets:** On-call provision varies, with some crews operating secondary appliances at whole-time stations in urban

areas, however availability targets are the same as for rural bases which are on-call only. This work will introduce a system which reflects our structure.

- **Turn-in time:** This will examine the current policy for firefighters to reside within a five-minute journey to the station. This is an historical position. Increasing this limit may extend the scope of the available population that can be targeted for recruitment, balanced against attendance times.
- **Skills:** Crew availability is often impacted by driver and Officer in Charge (OIC) availability. This strand will look at roles and skill requirements and ensure they are fit for purpose.
- **Competency recording / admin:** This will examine processes for recording operational competencies to remove and reduce work which doesn't add value.
- **Recognition:** This will look at reward and recognition systems.
- **Contracted hours:** This will introduce more flexible systems to support individuals and increase availability.
- **Equipment:** On-call appliances are similarly equipped, irrespective of demand levels, which impacts on training time needed. This will challenge current provision and ensure crews are provided with what is needed.
- **Fire Control:** This will consider how the service interacts with Fire Control, including awareness / training and review of systems to simplify mobilisation.
- **Productivity:** This will look at current practical training and drill sessions to ensure core elements are covered and use innovative ways to deliver training.

4.1.3. Alongside this work, the service is currently undertaking two trials. One is the **three-person crewing** trial which means crews of on-call staff who would not normally be mobilised to incidents under traditional operating models can be deployed when they are naturally on a crew of three. The six-month trial commenced service-wide on 1 June 2023. The approach breaks away from the tradition that only a crew with four or more will be mobilised to an incident. The trial mobilises a crew from on-call stations to pre-determined types of incidents and provides additional resources to other fire crews when they are naturally limited to three riders. The trial has been misinterpreted through reports to the media as "Reduced crewing". The Service is not reducing crewing levels but utilising resources when they are naturally limited to give better fire cover and services to our communities. There is a clear choice for the Service to make: either to deploy the limited crews of three or decide not to deploy them at all and wait until the next nearest fully crewed appliance arrives.

4.1.4. The Service is capturing feedback and outcomes to inform the evaluation of the trial. During the first three months:

- 172 incidents were attended in this way (not including stand-bys).
- No safety concerns were reported.
- Some stations saw availability for incidents increase by 30% - others much less so because they already have better crewing levels.

- On-call appliance availability increased by an average of 12.5%.
 - Feedback from crews is that they feel safe whilst dealing with these incidents.
 - Crews have also provided examples of how they have arrived earlier and dealt with incidents more quickly, removing the need for other appliances to attend.
- 4.1.5. The Service consulted widely with the workforce ahead of the commencement of the trial. Following recent objections from the FBU, whose national position is against three-person crewing and claim that on-call staff do not support it, the Service asked staff if they wished to continue with the trial through a vote. The Service agreed to abide by a majority decision. The results were:
- 67% in favour
 - 23% against
 - 10% split 50/50
- 4.1.6. The second trial is the **Roving Appliance Project in South Staffordshire**. This project concluded its three-month trial in 2022 and was scrutinised by the Service Delivery Board in December 2022. The results appeared to be positive, with the costs of funding on-call crews for 24 hours every weekend appearing to outweigh the costs of cross-border mobilisations into the area from neighbouring FRSs. However, the data was limited due to the restrictions of the trial and did not consider all factors such as management time and logistical support. The Board therefore agreed to commence a further six-month trial in 2023 with 48 hours available each weekend. This will conclude by September 2023 and provide more robust data to assess.
- 4.1.7. In addition to the trials, longer-term investment continues into the on-call system following previous work with Keele University and the National Fire Chief's Council to see how the Service can improve the availability for its on-call staff. As a result, an extra £300,000 per year has been invested in additional training to improve skills and six staff members (on-call Support officers) have been recruited to support our on-call teams with training and management, whilst at the same time bolstering their crewing on a flexible fire basis. There have also been changes to improve recruitment, better training processes and an investment into a transfer process into the whole-time service which has given a better career progression pathway for our on-call staff.
- 4.1.8. As previously reported, through collaborative working with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (SSOTICB) our **Falls Response Team** went live on 7 December for a six-month pilot period. This initiative initially involved SFRS personnel attending and resolving falls calls in the Eastern Service Delivery Group area, but was subsequently extended throughout Staffordshire. The team are dispatched by the NHS-led Unscheduled Care Coordination Centre (UCCC), who draw calls from the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) 'Stack'. The UCCC will dispatch SFRS to what are termed 'Green' calls, i.e. where there are no known injuries to the patient and

they just require assistance getting up, and SFRS are to attend within two hours of dispatch.

- 4.1.9. As at 31 August 2023 the Team had responded to 548 calls. This initiative has been recognised nationally, with the Service winning an Organisational RISK Award. The University of Chester is carrying out an evaluation of the project. The Integrated Care Board are developing a Reactive Falls Plan, which could mean our teams are further upskilled to provide blood pressure checks with patients.

4.2. Protect people and places

- 4.2.1. The most recent HMICFRS Inspection report rated the Service as 'Good' at identifying people in our communities who are most at risk from fire and working with partners to reduce this risk. The inspection noted how the Service has responded positively and proactively to learnings from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and improved the safety of residents in Staffordshire who live in high-rise buildings through its sprinkler scheme.

- 4.2.2. **Building regulation consultations** (along with Licensing and Planning consultations) are business as usual and represent an incoming demand over which the Service has no control. The time remaining once these have been completed is then used to carry out **fire safety audits**. An increase in buildings regulations consultations will therefore correspond with a decrease in completed fire safety audits. Around 213 fire safety audits were completed between February and August 2023, of which 27 were deemed unsatisfactory and required further input from Fire Safety Teams. 400 Building Regulations consultations were received in the same period, 95% of which were responded to within 15 days. During the same time period, 10 Enforcement Notices and 5 Prohibition Notices were issued.

- 4.2.3. Introduced under the Building Safety Act 2022, the **Building Safety Regulator** will have a major impact on this aspect of the Service's responsibilities. The BSR will be located within the Health and Safety Executive and will have the following roles:

- Oversee the safety and performance of all buildings.
- Promote the competence of professionals, tradespeople and building control professionals working on all buildings.

This has two elements:

- Working with industry to promote competence of professionals working on buildings.
- Improving the competence of building control inspectors, who assess, inspect, monitor and enforce building regulations across the vast majority of buildings. This includes a registration regime.

- 4.2.4. The BSR will work with local authorities and fire and rescue authorities in delivering its role as the regulator and building control authority for in

scope buildings. In scope buildings are defined as 'higher risk', meaning:
(a) at least 18 meters in height or having at least seven storeys, and
(b) of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State.

- 4.2.5. Staffordshire will be part of a regional approach being run by West Midlands Fire Service. Staffordshire have recruited one person to be in that team who will start work with them shortly.

4.3. Help people most at risk stay safe

- 4.3.1. **Home fire safety visits** are undertaken by operational crews, safe and well technicians and prevent staff, and delivered using newly-developed risk profiles designed to target delivery to the most vulnerable people. The risk profiles are currently targeting people over 80 living alone or living with another. Referrals are also received through partner referral networks and managed through the contact centre. The Service is also working with partners on extended safe and well visits using prevent teams. These cases involve a range of complex needs and require significant support to help with matters such as hoarding, mobility, mental health, drug and housing issues. Between February and August 2023, 7,533 visits were completed, which is in line with our operational demand for the same timeframe. Referrals to other agencies are made as part of this process to ensure people get the support they need. During the same period, 82 safeguarding concerns were raised. Neglect and self-neglect remain the top safeguarding concerns recognised and reported. Work is also taking place with local hospital trusts to encourage staff to refer people leaving hospital for a Home Fire Safety Visit.
- 4.3.2. Such visits are a major part of community contact and the Service is ensuring they take place with all necessary safeguarding measures in place and that staff are highly aware of safeguarding issues. **SFRS Safeguarding Board** are working on implementing new guidance following amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions). This will place additional requirements for DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks to be carried out on staff and arrangements to be put on pace to manage any allegations made. Widespread training for staff in safeguarding issues has also been provided. 95% of staff have completed Adult and Children Safeguarding Awareness courses, 97% have completed Counter Terrorism training and 90% have completed Prevent training.
- 4.3.3. As a result of recent fire fatalities, we have held a number of case conferences to identify the causes leading up to the fire. This learning is then shared with partners and used to prevent further fires occurring. The case conferences involve representatives from a range of organisations, such as Fire and Rescue, Housing and Social Care and Health.
- 4.3.4. Prevent and operational staff have been involved in a number of activities relating to **Road Safety** across the county. These have included integrating education into events at community fire stations, linking in

with local colleges and retail outlets and undertaking training provided by Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership.

- 4.3.5. Prevent teams also supported many events around the county, taking the opportunity to discuss **fire safety** with members of the community and partner agencies. These included Dementia Awareness Week, the County Show, PRIDE events, Joint Operations Groups, local hub and strategic meetings, post fire activity, resident coffee mornings, Olive Branch training sessions, supporting warmer spaces initiative, hoarding intervention training, water safety events at local marina and mooring areas, static home initiatives, young fire setter intervention, fire safety on Cannock Chase and other identified woodland / grassland areas.
- 4.3.6. Online delivery of the **Safe+Sound** programme continues to support communities to make informed and positive lifestyle choices, improving their health, safety and wellbeing. The third full academic year of weekly programmes for Key Stage 2 children also saw the first full year of national delivery. To summarise:
- Total views – 336,844 devices
 - Weekly average – 9,104 devices
 - Maximum viewers on 12 July 2023 - 12,425 devices
 - Staffordshire schools – 125,698 devices – 37% of total
 - National (schools outside Staffordshire) – 211,146 devices – 63% of total
 - Cost per programme - £345, funded by SFRS
- 4.3.7. This pilot return of face-to-face Safe+Sound delivery took place at Sandyford fire station to gauge the appetite for a full return to delivery in September 2023. 481 children and 42 adults attended from nine schools. The response was positive, although schools did express concerns about transport costs and some were unable to attend because of this. A Safe+Sound **Young Driver Event**, requested by Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership, was delivered in March 2023 to 40 Uniformed Public Services students at the Newcastle and Stafford College Group (NSCG).
- 4.3.8. 2023 marks five years since Ryan Evans drowned at Westport Lake. 120 children and eight staff attended a **Water Safety Event** held in July 2023 at the Bescura Family Hub at Port Vale FC and organised by Red Watch at Newcastle, who were on duty when Ryan drowned. Specialist group International delivered a workshop and also donated 16 life jackets/buoyancy aids to the attending schools. Ryan's Dad also attended and Radio Stoke reported on the event.
- 4.3.9. On Wednesday 9 August an event took place for families with children with disabilities at the Caudwell International Children's Centre. Over 60 people attended the day.

4.4. A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

- 4.4.1. Two HMICFRS inspections are scheduled. The Service has been

selected to take part in a thematic inspection, commissioned by the Home Secretary, into the **handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services**, which will take place over three weeks in November. The inspection will focus on:

- The extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct;
- The effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied;
- How confident fire and rescue service staff are in misconduct processes and in raising concerns;
- The role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.

The inspection will be a mix of remote and on-site engagement and will include a desktop review of a sample of complaint, grievance, discipline, and whistleblowing files; interviews; focus groups and reality testing. Ahead of this, a staff survey has been published which we are encouraging all staff to complete. This survey will not only feed into this inspection but also our full inspection which will now take place early 2024.

- 4.4.2. 20 Areas for Improvement for the Service were detailed in **HMICFRS Effectiveness, Efficiency and People report**, published in July 2022. Six of these have now been fully completed:

Ref	HMICFRS Service Areas for Improvement	Status
1	The Service should make sure that firefighters are confidently and suitably trained in gathering risk information.	Completed and Signed Off
3	The Service should make sure it puts in place measures to catch up on the backlog of Safe and Well visits	Completed and Signed Off
10	The Service should assure itself that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.	Completed and Signed Off
12	The Service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours	Completed and Signed Off
16	The Service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms.	Completed and Signed Off
17	To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and make its workforce more representative, the Service should make sure diversity and inclusion are a priority and become important values of the Service	Completed and Signed Off

- 4.4.3. Following the NFCC's Culture and Inclusion Conference and the Spotlight Report from **HMICFRS 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services'**, in March, the NFCC has developed a Culture Action Plan to improve culture and address discrimination, bullying and harassment across UK fire and rescue services. The NFCC Culture Plan is a commitment to work with fire and rescue services, UK Government and wider fire partners to deliver sustainable improvements and establish an inclusive, safe culture. The plan will do this by continuing to support services in developing effective leadership and behaviours, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, finding and nurturing diverse talent, and supporting the health and wellbeing of people in fire and rescue services.

Working with partners, the NFCC will monitor and review progress, drawing on feedback and learning to continue to develop and implement the Plan.

4.4.4. The Action Plan also provides all leaders and staff across fire and rescue services with details of how the NFCC will support them to develop and embed a positive organisational culture in their services. 35 Recommendations were made in this report, directed towards National Government, the National Fire Chief's Council, Local Authorities and all Fire and Rescue Services within Great Britain. Of these, 19 were directed for the attention of Chief Fire Officers, and these have since been adapted by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue into an action plan for the review and reform of culture within the Service. Four have been completed and signed off, and two further recommendations are to be taken to the next Service Delivery Board for overview and decision.

Ref	HMICFRS National Recommendations	Status
1	Recommendation 1 By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	Completed and Signed Off
3	Recommendation 3 By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	Completed and Signed Off
5	Recommendation 5 By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief fire officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.	Completed and Signed Off
17	Recommendation 17 With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that: involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; are of a serious nature; or relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.	Completed and Signed Off
18	Recommendation 18 By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	Completed
34	Recommendation 34 With immediate effect, chief fire officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services.	Completed

4.4.5. The requirement for **Service Transformation** is to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service “is able to provide a modern, efficient and sustainable level of service to the public which does not compromise the safety of our staff or our communities”. Only 4 of the 19

topics are still to be completed:

- Mobilisation of crews of 3 from on-call staff (see update at 4.1.3)
- The Roving Appliance trial in South Staffordshire (see update at 4.1.6)
- The Prevention, Protection and Partnerships review (In Progress)
- The continued sharing of Estates – primarily with Staffordshire Police (On-going)

4.4.6. A full review of **Prevention, Protection and Partnerships** was conducted and separated into five work streams:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Education and Engagement
- Volunteers
- Princes Trust

Options and recommendations were explored through two Service Management Boards in May and July 2023 and decisions in principle have been made by the Board in July. The next stages include consultation with all staff affected through a phased, formal process.

4.4.7. Work is progressing in 2023 on a number of fire stations to become **co-located sites** between the Service and Staffordshire Police at Kidsgrove, Chase Terrace (completed), Uttoxeter and Stone. There may also be Police posts located in Wombourne and Penkridge Fire Stations. Other opportunities for shared estates are being considered which involve the Home Office operating an immigration support team from Sandyford Fire Station.

4.4.8. The combined transformation work is on track to deliver a £1,000,000 recurring saving to the Service by 2025, plus a further saving of £250,000 from the review of prevention, protection and partnerships if agreed following consultation. It must be noted that this recurring saving achievement will not meet the expected £1.4m funding deficit which the Service is facing by 2025/26 and further saving options have been explored with the Staffordshire Commissioner which may have to be introduced in the near future. The Service also needs to invest in future areas of service delivery particularly around staffing levels, information technology and systems, training, equipment, appliances and areas of the Estate.

4.4.9. A number of initiatives are in place to address issues around **recruitment, retention and workforce diversity**. Work took place in April 23, designed to ascertain the appetite for a central event for Uniformed Public Service (UPS) students. A delivery model has now been approved and will commence fully in September 2023. It aims to greatly increase interactions with UPS students at colleges to:

- promote Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service with local colleges, including positive action opportunities;

- highlight the variety of both operational and non-operational opportunities within Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- forge links with local colleges and demonstrate aspects of the firefighter and fire staff roles through UPS events, presentation and station visits across the county.

The offer will consist of;

- An annual UPS event at HQ to which all colleges are invited;
- A presentation delivered at colleges by local Station Manager (SM) (or representative);
- A visit to local fire station by students to undertake a table-top exercise coordinated by local station staff and volunteers;
- Online programme - A compilation of non-operational personnel giving an insight into their roles within SFRS.

4.4.10. A review is being undertaken into our **use of volunteers**. We currently have 44 volunteers and one Volunteer Coordinator. Our time in the last six months been focused on training, particularly on safeguarding, to ensure all our volunteers are fully trained and supported to volunteer for the Service. We have also reduced the total number of volunteers by ensuring everyone is able to play an active volunteering role. Recruitment is on hold while we consolidate and stabilise the volunteer offer in the aftermath of the Volunteer review. Examples of volunteer activity this year include Chaplains supporting local crews, community events such as Pride and the County Show, station open days, charity car washes, and Safe+Sound events. Volunteers are also being trained to deliver workshops to enable them to support when partners are unable to attend – Canal & River Trust have trained three volunteers to deliver their water safety workshop and SSRP are to train four volunteers to deliver their seatbelt safety workshop. Volunteers are more active than ever in their support of crews with station and school visits and are also currently supporting a recruitment campaign for retained firefighters.

4.5. Conclusion

4.5.1. The Police, Fire and Crime Panel will continue to receive updates in line with their proposed work plan for the coming year and as requested.

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