



**Northumberland  
Fire and Rescue Service**

# **Fire and Rescue Plan**

(Integrated Risk Management Plan)

**2017-2021 | Year 5 Update 2021/22**



**Northumberland**  
County Council

# 01/Foreword

## Welcome to Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service's Fire and Rescue Plan (FRP), Year 5 Update (2021/22).

We are grateful to NCC Executive and Cabinet for their agreement to extend the 2017/21 IRMP by an additional year due to the combined and concurrent impacts of covid-19, NFRS service restructure, HMICFRS preparations and work to complete the delivery of the NFRS improvement action plan. The Year 5 Update extension provides an opportunity to provide details on our performance, risks, progress and achievements during 2020/21, a look forward to what we hope to deliver in 2021/22, before beginning development of our new strategic plan in late summer / autumn to cover the period 2022-26.

Covid-19 has had an incredible impact on NFRS and our workforce and required us to fundamentally change much of our service delivery methods and ways of working to ensure that we could maintain an effective operational response whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff and communities. NFRS was inspected in October 2020 by HMICFRS to assess our response to the pandemic. The inspection letter, published on 22 January 2021 provided positive feedback and reassurance that the service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively.

Despite the impact of Covid-19, we have continued our progress against the improvement action plan developed to address the recommendations and areas of improvement highlighted following our first HMICFRS inspection. The Year 5 update builds on our previous work to improve our protection, prevention and response to emergencies, our prevention initiatives to reduce harm, and increase the protection to vulnerable members of our communities.

Late 2020 saw the service introduce several new posts, coupled with an internal restructure, to allow us to improve both our strategic and delivery capacity and resilience. While we are already beginning to feel and see the benefits of these changes, the full effect will not be realised until later in 2021 when the current Covid-19 lockdown is fully eased.

The 2017-2021 Fire and Rescue Plan is available [here](#)  
The 2018-2021 Service Statement is available [here](#)

Strategically, we have started our ambitious plans to focus upon improving our staff engagement and staff development; putting our values and values-based behaviours at the heart of all we do; revising our recruitment and promotion policies; extending our reach and integration with partners to develop more effective community safety initiatives and developing an integrated performance assurance framework with colleagues from Northumberland County Council. All these areas will continue to feature as priorities for the service as we move to developing our new strategic community risk management plan for 2022-26.

Corporately, we are excited by the new opportunities we are exploring to deliver improved outcomes for our residents through NCC's 'One Team' approach and maximising our ability to the council's vision of 'One Council Working for Everyone'.

As we stated in the Year 4 Update, we remain in challenging times financially. The full impact of Covid19 on future budgets and finance has yet to be determined and NCC are required to make significant additional efficiencies in the coming years. But we also know that we must ensure that we continue to deliver high quality protection and prevention services to those most at risk, whilst at the same time maintaining a resilient, well equipped and highly trained operational workforce able to respond effectively to incidents when they occur.



**Cllr Colin Horncastle**

Cabinet Member for  
Community Services  
and Fire Authority Chair



**Paul Hedley**

Chief Fire Officer  
and NCC Head  
of Service

## Contents

Foreword	1
Statutory Responsibilities	2
Your Fire and Rescue Service	5
Identifying Risks	6
Performance	8
Progress	9
Priorities 2019/20	10
Achievements	11
Looking Forward	12



**Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service**  
West Hartford Business Park  
Cramlington NE23 3JP  
Tel 01670 621111  
[www.northumberland.gov.uk/fire](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/fire)



# 02/Statutory Responsibilities

Fire and rescue authorities have a number of duties as set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Under the Act, fire and rescue authorities must:

- > Promote fire safety, including the provision of information and publicity on how to prevent fires, and on the means of escape from buildings in case of fire.
- > Extinguish fires and protect life and property in the event of fires.
- > Rescue people and protect people from serious harm in the event of road traffic collisions.
- > When necessary, deal with emergencies other than fires and road traffic collisions.

Fire and rescue authorities in England have further responsibilities under the fire and rescue national framework for England 2018 to ‘**assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities**’.

## The framework identifies five priorities for fire and rescue authorities:

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

Fire and rescue authorities are required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which will inform communities how it will deliver those priorities. Our current plan covers the period 2017-21, however this has been extended for an additional year to allow us to fully consider our local risk profile and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) risk programme developments.



Staff testing smoke alarms throughout Northumberland (Left), Fire recruits training with our Learning & Development Department (Right).

The Service also supports the Council in its responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, providing businesses, and other responsible persons, with education, advice and guidance. Prosecutions will be pursued when it is in the public's best interests to do so.

In addition, fire and rescue authorities have a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to work with partners in their Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to plan and train for hazards identified in a joint Community Risk Register (CRR). A CRR identifies potential risks to the community from, for example, flooding. This assists in risk management planning, including the allocation of resources, training and preparation for the response to emergency incidents. Risks identified in the CRR are reflected in our plan.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 further reforms policing and enables important changes to the governance of fire and rescue services. The Act places a duty on police, fire and ambulance services to work together and enables police and crime commissioners to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services where a local case is made.

Prior to the enactment of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service established a Strategic Delivery Board with the following aims:-

- > Better value for money - the collaboration produces quantifiable efficiencies, either on implementation or in the longer term.
- > Improved outcomes - the collaboration maintains or improves the service it provides to local people and local communities.
- > Reduced demand - the collaboration should contribute towards the longer term strategic objective of decreasing risk in communities and reducing demand on services.

In 2018 the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was extended to incorporate the inspection of fire and rescue services. Rebranded as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS); the team inspected all 45 fire and rescue services in England during 2018/19. NFRS were inspected during autumn of 2018 with the final report published in June 2019. The inspection programme included assessment of:

- > **Effectiveness** – including prevention, protection, resilience and response.
- > **Efficiency** – how well we provide value for money, allocates resources to match risk and collaborates with other emergency services.
- > How well we look after our **People** – promoting values and culture, training staff to ensure everyone has the necessary skills to perform their role, ensuring fairness and diversity and developing leadership and service compatibility.

The inspections are designed to enable the public to see how well fire and rescue services are performing and assess how well we are performing against set judgement criteria. The service was inspected in October 2018, with our report published in June 2019. The report can be found [here](#). An improvement action plan was established and can be found [here](#). The service underwent a Covid-19 Thematic Inspection in October 2020 and the report can be found [here](#). We are expecting our second full inspection in June 2021, with our report expected by the end of the year.

‘Your safety and wellbeing is at the heart of what we do’



NFRS Young Firefighters Association



Pegswood Fire Training Facility

To deliver our mission statement of ‘*Making Northumberland Safer*’, NFRS has developed the following aims:

- Reduce the number of fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies occurring in Northumberland.
- Reduce the number of deaths and injuries and mitigate the commercial, economic and social cost of emergency incidents.
- Safeguard the environment and heritage sites (both built and natural).
- Support communities to protect themselves from harm.
- Provide value for money through the provision of a lean, efficient and resilient service.

NFRS recognises that values act as a framework for attitude and behaviours that are necessary to achieve a positive outcome. As a result, all staff were invited to participate in a consultation process to agree the NFRS narrative and underpinning leadership commitments that support NCC values of:

- Residents First - ‘Here for you’.
- Excellence and quality - ‘Listening and learning to improve your service’.
- Respect - ‘You are valued’.
- Keeping communities safe and well - ‘Your safety and wellbeing is at the heart of what we do’.

150 members of staff participated in the consultation during 23 workshops and the feedback from these sessions was presented and approved by Service Leadership Team (SLT) in February 2020. The underpinning behaviours were agreed as follows:

- Be professional and provide leadership by example.
- Be open to challenge and change.
- Be fair, honest and transparent, acting with integrity.
- Communicate openly and demonstrate empathy to all.

With the development of the NFRS People Strategy, NFRS is working in partnership with Northumberland County Council Improvement and Innovation Team to drive improvement and a culture based on its values.

# 03/ YOUR FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

## Northumberland County Council’s (The Fire Authority) area:

Area:	5026 Sq Km (1941 Sq Miles)
Population:	322,434
Dwellings:	162,707
Non Domestic Premises:	20,729
Fire Stations:	15
2 Wholetime (full time), 2 Day staffed (part time at night), 11 Retained (part time), 1 Garaged appliance on Holy Island.	
Fire Engines/Specialist Vehicles:	37
Support Vehicles:	37
Average yearly incidents attended:	3,255

## The people who deliver your service

Fire and Rescue Establishment (as of 1 April 2020)	
Emergency Response: Wholetime (including Officers)	131
Retained*	134
Fire Control	18
Corporate**	38
Total Establishment	321

\* Note the number of retained / on-call firefighters fluctuates due to the nature of their role.  
\*\* includes Community Safety, Fire Safety, Fire Support Services and Learning & Development.



## Fire Engine Availability

Northumberland FRS always strives to maximize the availability of its 21 operational fire engines from our 15 fire stations across the county. Whilst the expectation of the public may be that their local fire engine(s) are always available to respond, the reality may be different. **In 2020/21 we averaged a total fire engine availability rate of 89% (Retained and Wholetime combined)** - this is influenced by a large number of factors; with recruitment to fill current vacancies of On-Call firefighters a primary challenge across Northumberland. We are working hard to improve that figure.

70% of Northumberland FRS area (1348mls<sup>2</sup> / 3492km<sup>2</sup>) is initially covered by an operational emergency response from one of 11 On-Call fire stations. Those stations are staffed by firefighters who, in most cases, are self-employed or have other primary employment. There are a number of factors which mean that they may not be available to respond to fire calls, especially during 08.00 - 18.00 Monday to Friday - this potentially impacts upon the availability of an operational response from their local station. Because NFRS operates a “global” fire cover model, we often use on duty whole-time personnel to supplement staffing at On-Call stations to maximise the fire cover across Northumberland and to ensure that we can have as many fire engines as possible ‘on the run’.

NFRS believes that a more useful and meaningful indicator for the public would be how often their local fire station was available to respond to an emergency incident rather than focus on the availability of all of the fire engines. **In 2020/21 we had an available resource response rate from our 15 fire stations of 93%.**



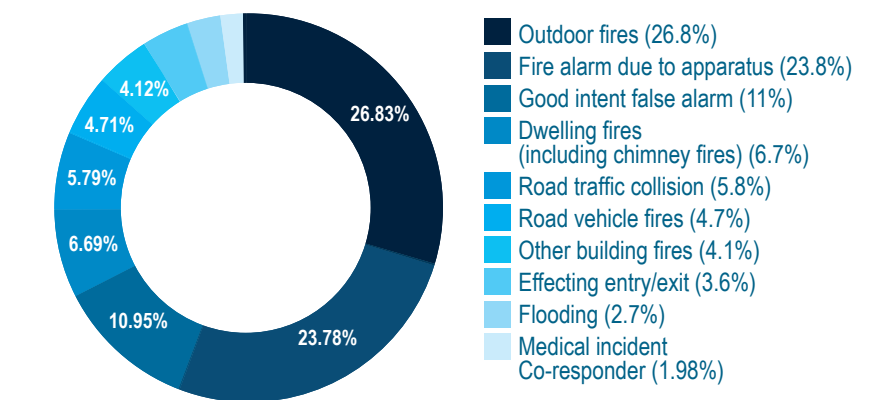
# 04/Identifying Risks

The 2017-21 Fire and Rescue Plan outlines how we identify, assess and mitigate fire and rescue related risks to the communities of Northumberland. Whilst we have a requirement to identify **all** fire and rescue related risks, it is risk to **life** that is given the highest priority.

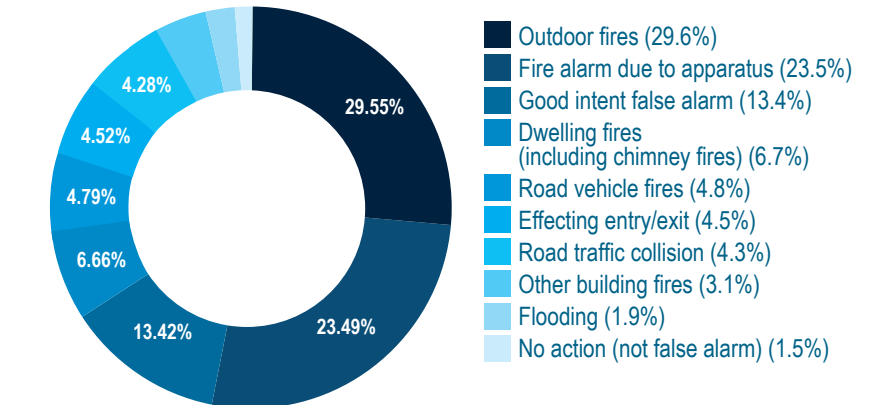
We have continued to identify and assess the level of risk to communities within Northumberland. This work includes consideration of risk modelling, historical data and professional judgement. The assessment of risk requires both quantitative and qualitative analysis that examines both the likelihood and impact of identified risk. Working with Operational Research in Health Ltd (ORH) we have refreshed our fire and rescue related risk profile of Northumberland. This risk model informs our strategies for prevention, protection and emergency response, and is now being developed by NFCC for use by the sector nationally.

In the last 10 years, the total number of incidents in Northumberland has reduced by nearly 22%. Over the past 5 years (2016/17 - 2020/21) the 10 most frequently attended incident types account for 91% of all incidents, 84% of casualties and 66% of fatalities. A comparison between the most frequently attended incident types over the last 5 years and those attended in 2020/21 are detailed in the pie charts below.

Pie Chart 1: to show the 10 most frequently attended incident types across Northumberland in the last five years



Pie Chart 2: to show the 10 most frequently attended incident types across Northumberland in 2020/21\*



## Activity 2020/2021



Emergency calls taken



INCLUDING



AND



Significant efforts have been made by the service to reduce the high level of demand placed on fire crews by false alarm (apparatus) and outdoor fire incident types. Combined, these two incident types account for over 50% of the total incidents attended. Initiatives to reduce the number of such incidents include:

Working with partners to identify and, where appropriate, remove outdoor fire risks e.g. accumulations of flammable materials.
Securing premises awaiting demolition.
Working with schools to educate students about the risks of outdoor fires.
Supporting farmers and landowners to encourage safe burning practices.
Provision of advice and guidance for organisers of bonfires.
Provision of advice and guidance to owners/occupiers of premises where fire alarms activate when there is no fire.
Reducing the number of fire appliances mobilised to automatic fire alarms.
Recovering costs from the occupiers/owners of premises that repeatedly call in the fire service to false alarms.
Developing and implementing a communications plan for periods of elevated wildfire risk.
Proactive collaboration with members of the Northumberland Fire Group to place temporary Extreme Fire Risk notices up in key locations around the County when wildfire risk is high.
Proactive patrols/public engagement in known hotspot areas for outdoor fires during holiday periods and periods of elevated risk.
Provision of advice and guidance to owners/occupiers of premises where fire alarms activate and there is no fire (both domestic and non-domestic).
Nonattendance policy for commercial premises between 08:00 and 18:00 Mon - Fri, (exemptions for certain premises types) and the implementation of a cost recovery process.

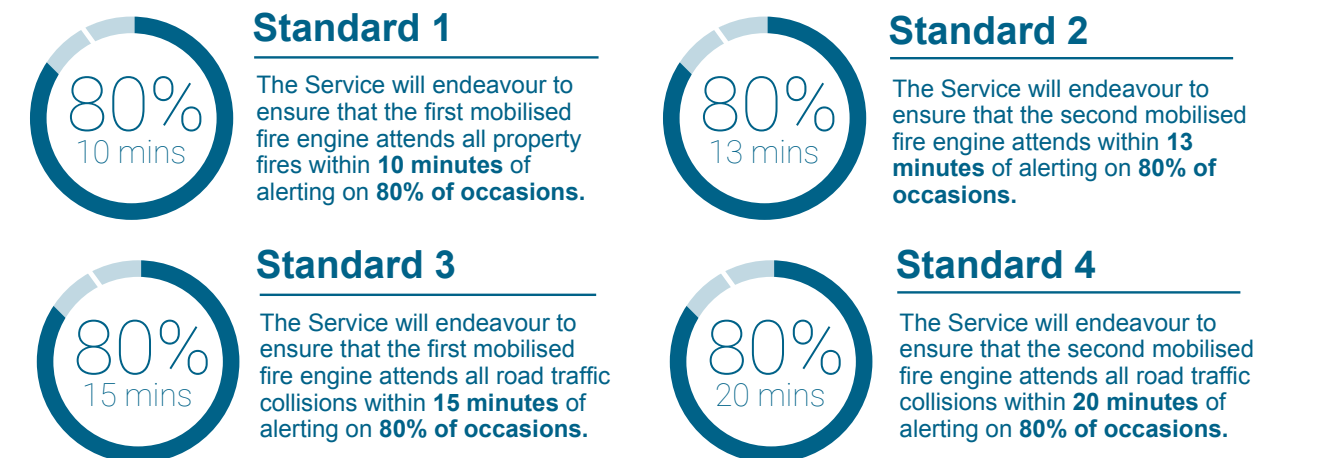
The review of community risk will continue throughout 2021/22 to inform the Fire and Rescue Plan (Integrated Risk Management Plan) 2022-2026 and we will take cognisance of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Community Risk Programme while we undertake this work.

## NFRS response standards

There are a number of response standard (times) methodologies in use by English FRS. Many consider a combination of life and area risk, as well as reflecting the geographical size of the area to be covered. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service has undertaken a review of similar fire and rescue service's response times to act as a benchmark for revising our current attendance times.

It is important to ensure that we are able to operate to a single standard across Northumberland which challenges us to provide a high quality emergency response but also reflects the unique challenges of providing an effective operational response across a large, predominantly rural area with an average station area of 334km<sup>2</sup>, and where 70% of the county is covered by On-Call personnel.

## Response standards 2020/21 are;

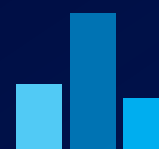


Standards 1 and 3, relating to the attendance of the first responding fire engine, have been increased from the previous performance measure of 75%.

# 05/Performance

## How well are we performing?

A robust process for measuring and reporting against performance ensures the authority regularly monitors outcomes for our communities. Detailed information about our performance can be found [here](#). We have summarised our performance for you below:



### 2020/21 in numbers:

Total incidents attended	2990
Dwelling fires attended	146
Road Traffic Collisions attended	128
Smoke detectors fitted	884
Safe and Wellbeing Visits completed (Covid-19 triage arrangements)	881
Visits to fit a smoke alarm (Covid-19 triage arrangements)	25
Telephone calls to provide advice (Covid-19 triage arrangements)	30
Young people engaged	1102
School visits	19
Fire safety audits	278
Fire Investigation Tier 2	255
Fire Investigation with Northumbria Police	18
Arson Prosecutions	1
Training courses delivered 194 totaling 790 instructor days	

### 2019/20 to 2020/21:

19/20 20/21

Reduced Deliberate Primary Fires by	149	102	32% ▼
Deliberate Secondary Fires increased by	614	675	10% ▲
Reduced all Primary Fires by	494	414	16% ▼
Injuries from Primary fires increased by	4	5	25% ▲
Reduced Accidental Dwelling Fires by	135	134	1% ▼
Reduced Fires in Non-domestic premises by	69	39	43% ▼
Reduced malicious false alarms by	31	19	39% ▼
Reduced false alarms from AFD systems by	345	307	11% ▼

### Since we introduced the IRMP in 2003/04:

Reduced Deliberate Primary Fires by	84% ▼
Reduced Deliberate Secondary Fires by	60% ▼
Reduced all Primary Fires by	66% ▼
Reduced injuries from Primary fires by	90% ▼
Reduced Accidental Dwelling Fires by	46% ▼
Reduced Fires in Non-domestic premises by	85% ▼
Reduced malicious false alarms by	91% ▼
Reduced false alarms from AFD systems by	68% ▼
Reduced malicious false alarms attended by	85% ▼
Reduced false alarms caused by fire detection systems by	64% ▼

# 06/Progress

## Our progress against priorities for 2021:

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service priorities for 2020/21 were as follows:

### 1 Continue to identify fire and rescue related risk within our community to ensure the effective delivery of our service.

We have analysed our fire and rescue risk profile for Northumberland, using the profile to inform our prevention, protection and emergency response strategies. Community Fire Station profiles have informed local station plans. In addition, the service continues to support the development of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Community Risk Programme.

### 2 Create a healthy and positive culture, reflective of our vision and values.

Ensuring that we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time, we have developed the NFRS People Strategy. This is based on a set of guiding principles which will underpin and cut across all areas of service and six key commitments to assist in ensuring that the strategy can deliver on our strategic aims and objectives and better support the role of the service within our council, communities and partnerships.

### 3 To continually develop the service through the delivery of the service-wide Improvement Action Plan.

We have continued to deliver against actions identified and captured within the Improvement Action Plan. With regular updates to Service Leadership Team, the plan formed the focus of our Service Planning Day held in January, to ensure areas for improvement remain a priority for the organisation.

### 4 To undertake a service wide governance review.

Following Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection in 2018 and subsequent report published in 2019, Northumberland County Council has invested significantly in the service. A number of additional roles have been introduced across the organisation to support service improvements. As such, we have restructured our Service Leadership Team and Service Management Group to better reflect governance arrangements.



# 07/Achievements

During 2020/21 Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service has achieved the following:

- Gaining the Skills for Justice Quality Mark, ensuring our training provision is consistent, relevant and designed and delivered to a high standard.
- Undertaken a Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) review to ensure we continue to have the right number of fire engines attending incidents in our county.
- Created a new Emergency Response quality assurance process to ensure a robust system is in place to assure emergency response activities and preparedness.
- Implemented new ways of working in response to Covid-19 to ensure the safety of our personnel and the public with the continuation of an effective emergency response.
- Improved communication and governance arrangements within Emergency Response to ensure operational personnel have the opportunity to exchange relevant information.
- Completed a fleet review to inform the fleet capital spend programme.
- Reviewed the service's specification for pumping appliances and ordered six new appliances.
- Developed a specification for replacement breathing apparatus equipment and published the invitation to tender.
- Launched the Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) programme as a replacement for critical incident debriefing.
- Upgraded mobile data terminals (MDTs) on all fire appliances (hardware and software).
- Developed a service SharePoint structure and successfully migrated core documentation from Google drives.
- Developed and maintained risk assessments and procedural documents to support the service response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Responded to 98% of Statutory Consultations within the timeframe (target of 95%).
- Delivered virtual engagement sessions with businesses to address fire safety needs.
- Assisted Northumberland County Council with Covid assessments in commercial premises.
- 861 HFSC carried out despite Covid restrictions.
- 1 completed virtual Prince's Trust programme.
- 553 Mash requests handled with a 99% response rate from NFRS staff.
- 61 Safeguarding Adult referrals.
- 21 cadets in 3 branches for 3 weeks before lockdown restrictions were reintroduced.

# 08/Priorities 2021/22

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service priorities for 2021/22 are as follows:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Undertake a root and branch review of the safe and wellbeing programme, including the development of a new fire and rescue service safe and well product in partnership with Northumberland County Council services and Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust. | Develop and fully implement a strategy for collecting, storing and sharing risk information both internally and with partners. Explore and develop further lines of enquiry as detailed in the Improvement Action Plan. |
| Undertake a health and safety review of the service and implement identified recommendations.  | Undertake an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Thematic Review and implement identified recommendations.  |
| Develop and fully implement a strategy for talent management in order to support robust and effective succession planning.   | Develop and establish a Performance and Assurance Framework for the organisation.   |



Community Safety Department conducting a Safe and Wellbeing Visit in Bedlington (Top), Fire Safety Team inspecting local business premises (Bottom Left), Fire Control receiving calls at NFRS Headquarters (Bottom Right).

# 09/Looking Forward

During 2021/22 we will strive to:

## Community Safety Department

- Work with partners to develop our safe and well-being programme to reflect identified risks faced by our residents including; slips, trips and falls, dementia, smoking and alcohol.
- Support the integration of the safe and well-being programme across the service.
- Review and further develop quality assurance processes for all Community Safety programme delivery.

## Emergency Response

- Undertake an independent Northumberland Wholetime Firefighter recruitment campaign and training course.
- Implement the findings of a phased response review to ensure we effectively and safely utilise available personnel on retained stations.
- Review the Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI) process to ensure high quality risk information is collected and available to all operational personnel.
- Review options for a specialist Wildfire vehicle.
- Consider options to enhance facilities at Berwick Community Fire Station.
- Increase the Swiftwater Rescue Technician capability across the service.
- Introduce Retained Duty System (RDS) Support officers on a pilot scheme and evaluate their impact.

## Fire Safety Department

- Inspect all non-domestic high-risk premises.
- Increase the inspection capability of NFRS Fire Safety Department.
- Support and mentor NFRS' station-based fire safety inspection officers.
- Increase NFRS business engagement to raise awareness of fire safety responsibilities in non-domestic premises.
- Work with regional fire and rescue services to collaborate on Business Fire Safety.

## Learning and Development

- Design, develop and implement a refreshed approach to our internal selection, promotion, and development processes which will include talent management and succession planning.
- Deliver operational risk critical training to develop and maintain a safe and competent workforce.
- Plan and prepare for our HMICFRS 2021 inspection.
- Conduct a holistic critical review of our Redkite competency recording system and implement service wide improvements.
- Establish a new Wildfire Hub Station at Haltwhistle to support NFRS response to Wildfire incidents.

## Fire Support Services

- Oversee the development and issue of a suite of operational information notes to replace current standard operating procedures in line with National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP) doctrine.
- Procure and deploy replacement breathing apparatus equipment.
- Introduce six replacement fire appliances into the front-line fleet.
- Complete the review of health and safety arrangements within the service.
- Complete a review of personal protective equipment (PPE) and workwear provision, including cleaning and servicing arrangements.
- Roll-out an asset management system for the service.

## Risk and Response

- Develop and implement a Performance and Assurance Framework for the service.
- Work with Northumberland County Council Partners to develop Tableau as a platform for performance monitoring.
- Develop a fire and rescue related Incident Profile for Northumberland.
- Develop and consult on the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2022-26.
- Establish a dwelling fire risk model for the targeted delivery of our safe and wellbeing programme.
- Deliver a deliberate outdoor fire research project in partnership with Newcastle University and on behalf of the regional fire and rescue services.





**Northumberland**  
County Council

**Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service**

West Hartford Business Park  
Cramlington NE23 3JP

**Tel** 01670 621111

**[www.northumberland.gov.uk/fire](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/fire)**



**@NlandFRS**