

**Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service**

# **Statement of Assurance 2018/19**



## **Fire and Rescue Service**

# Foreword



**Councillor John Riddle**  
Executive Member  
for Public Protection

We are proud to bring you Northumberland Fire Authority's (NFA) Statement of Assurance. Northumberland County Council are a unitary authority who are the designated fire authority for Northumberland.

The new administration of Northumberland County Council was elected in May 2017 and is committed to improving the social and economic well-being of the people of Northumberland and their surrounding environment.

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) is a key part of the County Council and is fully committed to the Authority's aims, whilst assuring value for money.



**Paul Hedley**  
Chief Fire Officer

This assurance statement outlines priorities, projects and initiatives that are in place to ensure service delivery and the safety of our staff and communities within Northumberland.

We are committed to delivering risk critical 'joined up' services for NCC and to continuous improvement through new initiatives as well as building upon success of previous work to provide the best possible services delivered to the communities of Northumberland.

We will continue to invest in our locally based workforce and deploy resources in an intelligent way based on an assessment of risk in all our communities (both urban and rural), as well as maintaining a very high level of prevention and protection work.

Central to this is preventing fires and other emergencies happening in the first place, reducing harm to vulnerable people, the incidence of deaths, injuries and damage to property, whilst working toward our vision of 'Making Northumberland Safer'.

# **The communities we serve**

## **Our community**

Northumberland is home to around 320,274 people. The population is decreasing and is forecast to fall by 0.8 per cent to 315,257 people between 2020 and 2041.

## **Our natural environment**

Northumberland is one of the most rural counties in England and is a popular visitor destination renowned for its rural beauty covering over 500,000 hectares. The provision of additional off-road response vehicles and partnership work through the Local Resilience Forum will assist in managing the risk from adverse weather, including wildfires, severe winter impact and flooding.

## **Our built environment**

Northumberland has plans for attracting future economic and investment housing growth, with a focus on the Local Enterprise Partnership hubs. As we develop our service we will consider residential and commercial buildings/development, to ensure that we can continue to provide an excellent prevention, protection and response service to all areas of our changing county. Therefore, we will continue to engage early in any planning processes throughout the county to address any areas of concern and provide specialist advice where necessary.

## **Our heritage**

Northumberland has over 5,600 listed buildings, including many sites of importance to the country's national heritage. Alnwick and Bamburgh are internationally renowned for their castles. Cragside and Wallington Hall head a list of nationally-important buildings/estates operated by the National Trust and are two of the many listed buildings in the county. Holy Island and Hadrian's Wall are also ancient sites of worldwide historical interest within the County. We will continue to work with owners and occupiers to ensure plans, risks, training and information are continuously reviewed to safeguard our heritage.

# The risks we face

The Fire and Rescue Plan is NFRS's four year analysis of the county's community risk profile, together with our strategic approach of how we intend to effectively manage those risks over the period. The National Framework requires us to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan, known as the Fire and Rescue Plan (FRP), which identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities, including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or national nature. Each year NFRS produces an annual update based on the FRP which sets out progress against the FRP priorities, any required revisions or amendments to the plan and a precis of our work and projects to ensure that residents and businesses are safer, whilst at the same time delivering an efficient and effective emergency response when necessary. To view the Fire and Rescue Plan for 2017 – 2021 please see the link below:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Reports.aspx>

## **Social risk**

Northumberland's population is living longer. 24.3 percent of the population of Northumberland is aged 65 and over, this is set to rise to 34 percent by 2041. Historical data shows that older people are at a greater risk from suffering serious injuries or death from accidental fires. Our Community Safety Department, through partnership working, will continue to lead on work that targets high risk groups through our home fire safety checks programme.

## **Environmental risk**

Northumberland has flood risks, which have associated risks to people and property. Across the County we have firefighters trained to rescue people from both moving and still water, including faster moving 'swift water'. They will also respond to national emergencies resulting from large-scale flooding.

## **Economic risk**

The county is home to a number of nationally and internationally recognised businesses, large employers and a number of strategic military establishments. Our operational and fire protection personnel work with businesses to plan for emergencies and carry out fire protection enforcement/advice.

# **Risks beyond our borders**

## **Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements**

Through Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 NFRS has set up reinforcement schemes for securing mutual assistance with Fire Services of Scotland, Tyne & Wear, Cumbria and Durham & Darlington to provide and utilise resources such as additional fire appliances and support vehicles. Plans are also in place, through National Resilience arrangements, to provide, and receive, specialist appliances and crews for mass decontamination, water rescue, urban search and rescue & high volume pumping.

## **Fire Control Project**

Utilising £3.6m of central government funding, NFRS, in partnership with TWFRS have designed, developed and installed an emergency fire control system which utilises modern technology to provide increased levels of resilience. Since the system went live in November 2013 both services can accept calls and mobilise resources for each. Ways of working have been developed which ensure that the nearest resource is mobilised to any life risk incident, regardless of the area in which the incident occurs. This project remains on target to achieve a combined efficiency of in excess of £4m by 2019/20. NFRS has also extended the provision of the out of hours call handling service on behalf of the local authority, raising additional revenue for the service and supporting efficiencies within the local authority. Further revenue efficiencies have been achieved through the implementation of a staffing model which has reduced the requirement for overtime payments for fire control staff.

# Overview of Fire and Rescue Service

## Overview of our structure

NFRS is managed by the Service Leadership Team (SLT) whose members are listed below. Full SLT meetings are held monthly with weekly meetings of the Principal Officers to discuss specific issues. The Chief Fire Officer reports directly to the Chief Executive and is a member of the County Council Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

The Service Leadership Team is as follows:

Paul Hedley - Chief Fire Officer (Chair)  
Mark McCarty - Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery & Strategy & Support)  
Rob Clow - Area Manager - Fire Support Services  
Deborah Brown – Community Safety Manager  
Ian Clough – Civil Contingencies Manager  
Keith Laidler – Group Manager - Emergency Response  
Craig Ducat – Group Manager - Fire Safety  
Lee Buckingham – Group Manager - Learning and Development

## Our Staff

In April 2018, we had a total of **136** full-time operational firefighters (including officers) and **16** Emergency Control Room personnel. We also had **147** retained (part-time) firefighters working in and for our local communities across Northumberland. We employ 5 Apprentices, utilise 15 Community Volunteers, **38** corporate and delivery staff including 5 Civil Contingencies staff and 3 Learning Centre & externally funded staff.

## Our resources

There are currently 16 community fire stations in Northumberland which deliver services 365 days a year by utilising full-time, day staffing and retained firefighters. They offer community safety advice, education and respond to emergency calls, and in many cases act as a focal point for the delivery of community services from a wide range of partner agencies.

We have a front-line fleet of 22 fire engines and a number of specialist vehicles. These include an incident support vehicle (ISU) providing resilient command, control and communications facilities, a specialist rescue vehicle for attending transport incident/rescues and other specialist rescues, 3 swift water rescue team vehicles/boats (SRT) and a fleet of over 20 4x4 support vehicles, some fitted with specialist cutting gear and water fogging systems.

## Our values

NFRS is an organisation committed to equality and fairness and reflecting the diverse nature of the communities we serve. This approach applies to our staff, relationships with partner agencies, Elected Members, NCC colleagues and, most importantly, the people of Northumberland. You can find more information at: Equality and Diversity: <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Equality.aspx>

## Our services to the community

The Fire & Rescue Plan is NFRSs three year analysis of the county's community risk profile, together with our strategic approach to how we intend to effectively manage those risks over the period. Each year NFRS produces an update based on the plan which sets out a number of priorities to ensure that residents and businesses are safer, whilst at the same time delivering an efficient and effective emergency response when necessary. We will be undertaking public consultation on our proposed priorities to cover our new Fire & Rescue Plan which will be extended to cover the four year period 2017 - 2021. In addition the plan will describe how we intend to reduce or mitigate risks under the following headings:

- **Prevention** – eliminating or reducing the likelihood of the risk occurring
- **Protection** – reducing the impact of the risk should it occur
- **Response** – providing a rapid and effective response should an incident occur
- **Civil Contingencies** – ensuring effective business continuity arrangements



# Governance arrangements

NFRS is an integral part of NCC. NCC are responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and according to proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and that public money is used economically, efficiently and effectively. NCC is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes making arrangements for the management of risk. NCC has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. The NCC Annual Governance Statement enables the Fire and Rescue Service to demonstrate that it has fulfilled its obligations under the Framework. Full details can be found in the NCC Annual Governance Statement which is included within our 'Statement of Accounts' publication, at the end of the document. These documents are published each year on the Council's website, on the 'Statement of Accounts' page: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Finance/Statement-of-accounts.aspx#statementofaccounts>

## Your Fire and Rescue Authority

NCC is a unitary authority and, as such, is the delegated Fire Authority for Northumberland. All key decisions are taken by Elected Members, either jointly as the Cabinet or as individual Members making decisions within the remit of their delegated responsibilities. Councillor Dave Ledger has delegated responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service as Chair of the Fire Authority.

NCC Policy Board (Executive) meetings are held once a month and are attended by all ten Members. The Policy Board is also responsible for preparing the budget and policies to propose to full council. The five scrutiny committees provide advice to the Policy Board on major policy issues and may review its decisions. Details of how the community can attend meetings and access agendas and reports can be found at the following link:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=11058>

## Our legal responsibilities

### Responsibilities under the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004

The Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 sets out the duties and powers of fire authorities. Under the Act, the Fire Authority has a number of core functions:

- Fire Safety - promoting fire safety, including the provision of information and publicity on steps to be taken to prevent fires and the giving of advice on how to prevent fires and on the means of escape from buildings in case of fire
- Firefighting - extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of fires
- Road Traffic Accidents - rescuing people in the event of road traffic accidents and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents



- Other Emergencies - when necessary deal with emergencies, other than fires and road traffic accidents.

We address these core functions in our 4 year Fire and Rescue Plan (FRP), which identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 can be found via the following link: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents>

### **Responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

NFRS enforces general fire safety legislation on behalf of the County Council. The legislation the Authority enforces includes:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Sites) Regulations 1990
- The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

Our enforcement activities adhere to the principles of Better Regulation contained within the Enforcement Concordat and Regulators Code and we aim to support business and other responsible persons through education and the provision of advice and guidance.

Where it is absolutely necessary, we will take enforcement action and will only consider prosecution where it is in the public's best interest. Full details of how we discharge our responsibilities under fire safety legislation can be found via the following link:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Business.aspx#firesafetylegislation>

### **Responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999**

NFRS operates within the County Council's management framework which incorporates the provisions of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the responsibility to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. Full details of how we discharge our responsibilities under Health and Safety legislation can be found via the following link:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Protection/Safety/Work.aspx>

## **The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework**

The Fire and Rescue National Framework (see link below) sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England to:

- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately;
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service;
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

A copy of the Fire and Rescue National Framework can be viewed online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england>

Full details of how NFRS assesses the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that our areas face, makes provision for prevention and protection activities and responds to incidents appropriately, can be found within the Integrated Risk Management Plan, also known as the Fire and Rescue Plan. A copy of the Fire and Rescue Plan can be viewed on our website:

<http://fire.northumberland.gov.uk>

## **Management of Risk**

The County Council has a risk management strategy which aims to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the arrangements for managing risk across NCC Groups. Full details can be found within the NCC Annual Governance Statement which is included within our 'Statement of Accounts' publication, at the end of the document. These documents are published each year on the Council's website, on the 'Statement of Accounts' web page. page:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Finance/Statement-of-accounts.aspx#statementofaccounts>

NFRS risk management strategy follows the principles of the Office of Government Commerce, Management of Risk Framework. All members of staff work to identify threats and opportunities to the service and our communities. Once a risk has been identified we decide how we want to deal with the risk and it will be closely monitored. Risk registers are maintained for Strategic Risk, Operational Risk, Community Incident and Firefighter Safety Risk and a Business and Resident Profile Risk Report is kept. The nature of certain risks means that not all records will be accessible to all: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Civil.aspx>

# Our Purpose

## Our Vision

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is proud of the quality of the services that it delivers to the public. We have a clear vision of *'Making Northumberland Safer'* and strive to recognise and respond to key issues and challenges.

## Our collaborative arrangements

We have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with a number of partner agencies including Highways Agency, Northumbria Police, North East Ambulance Service, Defence Fire and Risk Management Organisation, other Category 1 responders and the Environment Agency. We also work with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, local organisations such as RAF Boulmer, British Red Cross, HMP Northumberland and the Northumberland National Park and North of Tyne Mountain Rescue Teams.

## Partnerships Arrangements

NFRS has several partnership arrangements in place. For instance, through our partnership arrangements with SureStart we host Children's Centres within a number of our Community Fire Stations, and co-locate with partners, including North East Ambulance Service and Northumbria Police across the county. We are actively seeking to expand our partnerships, including further co-location with organisations such as Northumbria Police and the co-location of Northumberland County Council Public Protection colleagues at West Hartford, Hexham and Alnwick.

## Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management is a series of processes and plans which identify risk and develop NFRS resilience to ensure that adverse events cause minimal disruption to the services provided and that critical services are maintained. The Civil Contingencies Team (CCT) manages the Business Continuity process for NCC and the Team sits within NFRS for management purposes.

The Civil Contingencies Team is responsible for statutory directives coming from:

- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 1999
- The Pipeline Safety Regulations 1999

Priorities for the team are to:

- Identify and record risks in a Community Risk Register
- Prepare appropriate emergency response plans
- Train our staff
- Test our arrangements through regular exercises
- Apply learning to review and amend plans

# Our Performance

## How we performed during 2018/19

Our performance is reported by the County Council on a quarterly basis and reported to the Council's Scrutiny Committee and NCC Policy Board:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=378#meetings>

## Benchmarking

We use national benchmarking reports and tools. We are also part of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and benchmark against fire and rescue services of similar size and demographics and against national statistics provided by the Home Office.

National Fire Chiefs Council: <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/>

National Fire Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics>

CIPFA National: <http://www.cipfastats.net/cipfastats/>

## What others have said about our performance

### Operational Assurance (OPA) Peer Challenge

An operational assessment has been undertaken in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA) and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). Following the submission of a self-assessment, NFRS invited a Peer Challenge Team on site in November 2013 to assess our Service against seven key areas. The final report was received in January 2014 and was extremely positive, with national work on tackling wildfires and our long established work on co-location being highlighted as areas of notable practice. Areas for consideration have been noted and were included as priorities in our Fire & Rescue Plan 2017 – 2021 where appropriate. The final report can be accessed by following the link below:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Fire-and-Rescue/Northumberland-FINAL-peer-challenge-report-070114.pdf>

## Customer Service

The Government wants services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering, with the citizen at the heart of service provision.

## Lessons learnt

### Coroners Regulation 28 Notices

Coroners have issued three regulation 28 notices following firefighter fatalities at emergency incidents in the UK. The purpose of a regulation 28 notice is that the coroner will inform persons or authorities that they believe a similar incident can be prevented by taking certain actions.

It is important that the Fire and Rescue Service learns from these tragic incidents and implements changes to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future. As a result, we have conducted a review of the recommendations against our current policies, procedures and training programmes and have produced an action plan for improvement:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Reports.aspx>

## **Financial Performance (Statement of Accounts)**

### **Our Budget for 2018/19**

NFRS is an integral part of NCC. NCC provides the Statement of Accounts which can be found on the NCC public website:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Finance/Statement-of-accounts.aspx#statementofaccounts>

### **Revenue expenditure**

The budget for the Fire and Rescue service for 2018/19 was £14,029,650.

Expenditure per head of population<sup>12</sup>

NFRS cost £39.05 per head of population in 2018/19. This compares to the average cost per head of;

- North East region fire and rescue services £40.87
- Family group fire and rescue services £36.84
- Predominantly rural group of FRS £35.94
- All UK fire and rescue services £36.43

The NCC Pay Policy statement can be found at the following link:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4402#objectives>

### **Expenditure per incident**

Our overall expenditure against the number of incidents we attend is £3,614 per incident in 2018/19 compared to the average of;

- North East region fire and rescue services £2,917
- Family group £4,209
- Predominantly rural group of FRS £3,794
- All UK fire and rescue services £3,757

The above average expenditure per incident is mainly due to the success of our prevention work. By using our resources effectively to deliver prevention work we are reducing the number of incidents that occur. Therefore those incidents that do occur are seemingly more expensive. It is also to a lesser extent due to the rural nature of Northumberland. To provide a suitable response across the whole county

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<sup>1</sup> Financial data is taken from the CIPFA Fire and Rescue Statistics 2018/19; FRSs that did not supply data to CIPFA are not included in these averages. Number of incidents taken from Home Office Fire Statistics Table 0102 is the latest available data

<sup>2</sup> Northumberland costs include central re-charge such as legal, HR, finance

the level of resources we require are higher than more densely populated areas. This is why our retained firefighters are so important in delivering an excellent and cost effective service.

### **Auditor's findings**

A summary of auditor's' reports and findings can be found in the Annual Audit Letter on the link below. The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 require local authorities, including fire and rescue authorities, to prepare an annual governance statement in support of the annual statement of accounts. Full details can be found within the NCC Annual Governance Statement which is included in our 'Statement of Accounts' publication, at the end of the document. These are published each year, on the Council's website, on the 'Statement of Accounts' page:

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## **Our Future Plans**

### **Our future challenges**

We regularly analyse the county's community risk profile and set out our strategic approach as to how we will effectively manage those risks. This is detailed in our Fire & Rescue Plan 2017-2021, which can be found using the link below. The Government requires us, by law, to regularly produce and review our plan, which is also known as a 'Strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan':

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Reports.aspx>

## **Our Service Priorities**

### **1. Review risks to our service.**

In order to improve the safety, health and well-being of our communities we will use intelligence and risk modelling to inform risk prediction and resource planning.

We will review key risks to our communities in order to identify priorities and inform our service delivery.

### **2. Deliver the continued modernisation of the Emergency Control Centre, including the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Project.**

Business Case options will be considered and implemented for the future working of the emergency fire control centre. Further work will take place to establish more robust ways of working and the mutual provision of resilience with neighbouring services.

### **3. Creating a healthy and positive working environment.**

### **4. Resource and support inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).**



## **Our Community Engagement**

### **How we can help you**

If you are concerned about your fire safety and would like to know if you are eligible for a free safe and wellbeing visit please call our freephone number on **0800 731 1351** or email: [SWV.NFRS@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:SWV.NFRS@northumberland.gov.uk)

### **Access to information**

Referral@northumberland.gov.uk

Details regarding the Fire Authority's arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on the following website page:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#dataprotection>

### **Comments and Compliments**

NFRS is passionate about delivering top quality customer service. Delivering excellent customer service benefits both our organisation and our customers. We also know that we need to continually adjust and improve because we need to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers. If you have any compliments, comments, complaints or suggestions please contact us using whichever of the following methods is most convenient to you:

- In person at our offices
- By phone to Reception: 01670 621110
- By Freephone to: 0345 600 6400 (you may be charged if you call from a mobile)
- By fax to: 01670 713653
- By email to: [ask@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:ask@northumberland.gov.uk)
- Online at: [www.northumberland.gov.uk/fire](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/fire)
- By post to: Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service  
Service Headquarters  
West Hartford Business Park  
Cramlington  
Northumberland  
NE23 3JP