Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance

2021-2022

Follow us

Suffolk County Council

Welcome to our Statement of Assurance for 2021 - 2022.

The Statement of Assurance reflects our performance and achievements as a service over the last financial year. We always feel a sense of pride when compiling the report as it highlights the fantastic work of our dedicated staff. All of whom demonstrate professionalism, enthusiasm, and dedication for what they do, no matter what role they play in Suffolk Fire and Rescue, making us incredibly proud of our service.

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Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Le Jog 2021 Charity Cycle Challenge Team.

1 Foreword

This Statement of Assurance details the financial, governance and operational arrangements which were in place for the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority during the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. It has been produced in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework 'Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England.'

I am satisfied that the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority ensured that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. I am further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been fully met.

I am extremely proud of the fire and rescue service we provide and of the people who work so hard to keep our communities safe. During 2021/22 the service continued to invest in our public and community safety and although we attended more incidents in 2021/22 the number of fires attended decreased. Whilst the service has achieved much, it has not been without its challenges and managing changing risks will form a key part of our future planning, which will also take into consideration the outcome of the HMICFRS inspection carried out in early 2022.

I remain committed to developing the Authority so that it continues to provide an effective, efficient, and resilient service which looks after the people who work in, live in, and visit our great county.

Councillor Andrew Reid
Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection

Introduction

As Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2021/2022.

The Statement is a requirement under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (revised May 2018). It reinforces my continued commitment to providing our communities with clear information about how our Fire and Rescue Service keeps people and local businesses safe from fire and other emergencies, through effective governance and the efficient management of public funds.

When emergencies do occur, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service provides a 24/7 operation in line with legislation, to deal with a wide range of incidents including fires, road traffic collisions and a variety of other, more unusual emergencies that pose a risk to the community.

Our Protection activity is designed to offer advice to support local businesses, as well as undertaking enforcement action where necessary, to keep people safe in buildings across Suffolk. We work closely with partners and the community to prevent road traffic collisions and fires in the home and, when they do occur, we strive to reduce their consequences and promote a quick recovery.

We continue to work closely with other partner agencies to maximise the benefit of public spending. Together we ensure Suffolk remains a safe county to live and work in.

Jon Lacey

Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety

2 Statement of Assurance

Fire and rescue authorities must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Statements of assurance should be open and transparent, demonstrating accountability to communities who expect to know how these services are provided.

This document outlines how Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Authority, including its Fire and Rescue Service, has delivered the requirements contained in the National Fire and Rescue Framework and the authority's IRMP during 2021-22.

3 Governance

The Fire and Rescue Authority for Suffolk is Suffolk County Council (SCC), consisting of 75 elected councillors who represent the county. Most of the Authority's daily business is undergone through SCC's Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service for the period of this report was Councillor Andrew Reid, who was appointed as the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection in June 2021.

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for ensuring that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) operates in accordance with the law. It must ensure public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used efficiently and effectively. The Fire and Rescue Authority also has a duty to continually improve the way in which its functions are carried out and must collaborate with other blue light emergency services.

The council publishes its Annual Governance Statement through the Audit Committee. This sets out the council's governance arrangements, which apply to, and include Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Performance is assured through several routes, including SCC Corporate and Joint Leadership teams, the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Steering Group, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Performance Assurance Board and external agencies such as the Home Office, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue. Monitoring of performance is undertaken via various methods, including:

- Quarterly Performance Assurance Board
- Corporate and Joint Leadership team meetings
- Internal and external audits

Political engagement with fire and rescue service representative bodies, including the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Fire Officers' Association (FOA), the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) and Unison, is managed through the Fire Service Joint Forum. The Forum is a cross-party councillor group supported by the Chief Fire Officer and senior staff. It is chaired alternately by the Cabinet Member and a representative from the FBU, FRSA or FOA.

3 Our Values

The leadership in SCC is underpinned by the WE ASPIRE organisational values, which have also been adopted by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). These values helped us deliver the council's priorities for Suffolk throughout 2021 and 2022 through ethical leadership.

Wellbeing: We look after ourselves, each other, and the planet
Equality: Respecting, valuing, embracing, and celebrating everyone's unique differences
Achieve: We are the best we can be
Support: We work as one team
Pride: We are passionate about making a positive different to the people and place of Suffolk
Innovate: We believe in making every penny count, every minute matter and reducing environmental impact
Respect: We give and earn respect
Empower: We empower, encourage, and motivate

National Fire Chiefs Council Core Code of Ethics

The National Core Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services has been developed in partnership with the NFCC, the Local Government Association, and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. It helps to support a consistent approach to ethics and improve the organisational culture and workforce diversity for Fire and Rescue Authorities across the country.

Our Vision in SFRS is that we are all: **Swift to Serve**

Our Priorities are the areas we focus our activities and resources on. We collaborate with our communities and partners every day to prevent emergencies, working together to ensure that Suffolk continues to be a place where people lead safe and healthy lives.

- **Preventing** fires and other emergencies from happening.
- **Protecting** people and property.
- **Responding** to fires and other emergencies quickly and effectively.
- **Valuing** our people so they can focus on making Suffolk safer.
- **Delivering** value for money making best use our resources.

4 Risk Management

Risk is the potential for an emergency to occur that may threaten life or cause damage or harm to people, property, or the environment, including impacts on critical infrastructure or protracted demand on emergency service resources.

To understand what risk looks like in our county, we have undertaken extensive research, using expert analysis by our partners in SCC and evidence from national data. We have also drawn on local incidents and feedback and learning from significant local and national events, to help identify and assess our foreseeable risks. Our risk profile is reviewed every year to inform our priorities, set our objectives and measure our performance.

Our operational risk teams support all aspects of SFRS by providing information on risks within our service area, enabling our teams to access risk information, coordinating risk visits, and providing site-specific risk information on our mobile data terminals.

- We monitor agreed performance measures and key service measures quarterly with progress reported at our quarterly Performance Assurance Board, The SCC Fire Service Steering Group and the SCC Joint Leadership team.
- Creating service wide and local community risk service plans which review the local risks and horizon scan to assess future potential risks to the communities and county.
- Our annual Service Plan will outline key priorities for delivery against our Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- We use learning from incidents and other events, both locally and nationally, to improve our service delivery.
- Using learning from National Operation Learning and Joint Operational Learning to ensure continuous improvement in our service.

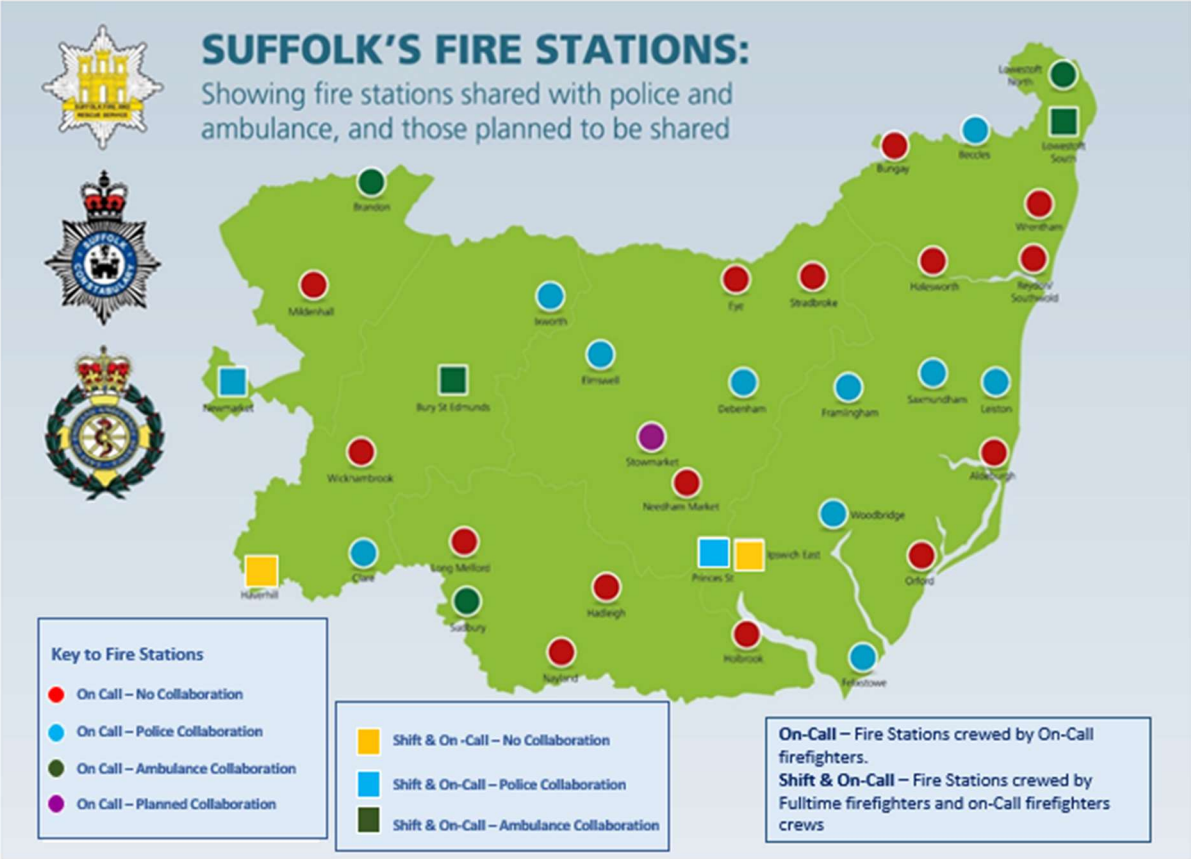
The Suffolk Risk Map summarises some of the core risks that impact Suffolk, including areas susceptible to flooding, major roads, mass attendance events (such as Latitude Festival), seaports, rail networks and airfields.

5 Your Fire and Rescue Service

The service is run by a management team headed by the Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey and governed by the Fire Authority with our Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection Councillor Andrew Reid.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has 35 fire stations located strategically in Suffolk's largest towns and villages (see map below). All stations have On-Call crews, whilst four stations situated in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft South, Ipswich East, and Ipswich Princes Street, are crewed around the clock, seven days per week by Shift Firefighters and On-Call firefighters. Two additional stations at Haverhill and Newmarket are 'day crewed' from Monday to Friday and only revert to On-Call at night and at weekends.

To support the On-call stations, we provide County Day Crewing (CDC), which enables firefighters to be sent to any fire station to support local crewing arrangements during weekdays, when On-Call firefighter availability is more challenging.



We currently employ 584 operational staff, some of whom have dual contracts, which means they have various roles, including being part of the On-Call crew for their local station.

We have 29 flexible duty operational officers who undertake daily leadership functions, providing operational response at larger and more complex incidents.

We have 77 support roles across the service in essential operational and business support areas, including Fire IT, Fleet and Equipment, Health and Safety, Wellbeing, Training Performance, Prevention and Protection. These roles are in line with SCC pay and grading arrangements.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service operates a fleet of 151 vehicles, including 43 fire engines and a range of other vehicles and equipment to help ensure an efficient and effective response to incidents.

Service overview 2021 -2022

35 Fire Stations

43 Fire Engines

5,565 Incidents

2,641 False Alarms

1,490 Fires

280 Road Traffic Collision

1,154 Special Service

584 Operational Staff

77 Support Staff

2,730 Home Fire Safety Checks

950 Fire Safety Audits

394 Ambulance Assist

153 Animals Rescues

67 Safeguarding Referrals

Full performance data on pages 15-19

5 How we serve our community

We focus our activities and resources on our priorities, working in collaboration with communities and partners every day to prevent emergencies and make Suffolk a safer place. Our key priorities are:

Prevention

Our prevention activities keep people safe in their homes from fire and other risks. Working with partners, such as our local authorities, district councils, police, and other agencies, we have:

- Worked in a proactive, targeted and effective way.
- Taken an inclusive approach and tailored our services to meet the requirements of Suffolk's communities.
- Better understood the risk in and to our communities.
- Used prevention activity to reduce harm and save lives in relation to fire, road safety and water risk.

In 2021-22 we:

- Delivered a range of programmes to enhance community safety.
- Contributed towards Suffolk's road safety with our road safety education for vulnerable road users including:
    - Biker Down – A motorcycle safety course as part of the FireBike scheme.
    - It Can Wait – A pre and young driver road safety intervention package aimed at 15-18yr olds to help reduce the use of mobile phones by drivers.

- Adapted the way we carried out our Home Fire Safety checks during the pandemic to safely continue face to face support for the most vulnerable and at risk of fire.
- Carried out Safe and Well visits to enable older and vulnerable people to live independently and safely in their homes by reducing the risk of fire.
- Developed an evaluation strategy to enable better evaluation of our prevention activities, implement continuous improvement and ensure our efforts make a positive difference for the community.
- Developed our safeguarding arrangements to help the most vulnerable in society and continue work on the already strongly embedded safeguarding culture amongst our teams.
- Created a formal information sharing process with the Suffolk Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub.
- Contributed to various safeguarding panels including Children and Adult Safeguarding boards, and the Modern Day Slavery Panel.

Moving Forward we plan to:

- Use local risk knowledge held by fire stations to target our resources.
- Increase our Prevention Practitioner team.
- Increase the number of Safe and Well visits we complete to reduce the amount and impact of fires in the home.
- Continue to work in partnership and collaborate with other agencies in the county to increase our contribution to a safer Suffolk.

Our performance data can be seen on pages 15-19

Protection

Our Protections team has continued to work with local businesses and individuals who are responsible for protecting people from fire in their buildings or premises to ensure that they comply with fire safety regulations.

Commercial buildings require specific fire safety measures to protect employees and other occupants. This legislation is used to enforce the regulations when necessary.

We also have a statutory duty to respond to building consultations, licensing applications and fire safety concerns raised by businesses and the public.

In 2021-22 we have:

- Increased our inspection activity linked to our Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP). Premises are selected for audit based on the risk they may present to those who work, visit or use the building.
- Adopted the NFCC national guidance document 'Competency framework for Fire Safety Regulators' and development programmes for our Protection Officers to ensure they have the right skills, competency, and technical knowledge to carry out inspection audits to a high standard.
- Invested our Protection Uplift Grant received from Government to improve the competency and consistency of our Protection team by employing a Training Manager.
- Used some of our Protection Uplift Grant funding to improve the quality and accessibility of our data, which allows us to focus, and performance manage our activity.
- Investigated how we use our data to develop an evaluation strategy for our activity.
- Completed all audits on buildings over 18 metres tall as part of the Government's Building Risk Review.
- Held Joint Impact Days which involve Protection, Prevention and Local Authority Housing Officers regularly targeting premises in a different Suffolk town. The Joint Impact Days provide education, advice and support for premises owners and managers.
- Successfully taken legal action in two cases where building owners have not complied with the legislation.
- Trained more officers to complete fire investigations, enabling us to learn from incidents and contribute to national statistics and trends.
- Focussed activity on reducing unwanted fire signals, working with the premises and providing guidance and advice.
- Trained response staff to undertake initial audits, giving them additional skills and increasing our audit activity.

Protection

Moving forward we plan to:

- Continue our focussed efforts on our Risk Based Inspection Programme.
- Adapt to the requirements of the new Fire Safety Act 2021, which came into force in May 2022.
- Prepare for the introduction of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, which will come into force on 23rd January 2023. This will be part of the implementation of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations.
- Continue to monitor and work with premises owners and managers to reduce the amount of Automatic False Alarms we attend.
- Continue to work in partnership with district and borough councils on building and significant infrastructure plans to ensure legislation for fire safety is adhered to and offer relevant advice.
- Train our officers to the highest standards, investing to enable some to become engineers to a Level 5 standard, ensuring we continue to provide the best possible advice to developers and building owners.
- Engage with developers to ensure early guidance is provided at the planning stage for a building for the fire safety arrangements.
- Increase the number of Level 3 qualified staff to improve the quality of our inspection of simple premises.
- Use our website and social media channels to communicate important messages regarding the legislation changes and to host and support NFCC campaigns for fire safety.

Our performance data can be seen on pages 15-19

Response

We cannot predict when emergencies happen or what type of event they will be. That is why when they do, we are ready to respond with professional, competent firefighters with the right equipment in the quickest time possible to help people and save lives.

We respond to a variety of emergencies which include fires, road traffic collisions, specialist rescues, flooding, hazardous materials, ambulance assists and many other incidents

Fire stations, fire appliances and equipment are located across Suffolk to provide the appropriate level of emergency response cover. Their locations ensure an efficient emergency response is provided for our smaller towns, parishes, and villages alongside the more built-up areas of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft.

To provide the best possible service, we operate a number of duty systems to maximise our fire cover and the availability of specialist resources. This ensures we can deliver the required speed and weight of response to emergencies, based on known, and reasonably foreseeable, risks in our communities. Our aim is to improve the safety of the residents of Suffolk and those who visit our county.

As the risk profile of the county changes, our station-based teams are also adapting. They are fully engaged in community safety and prevention activities and use education and intervention to reduce negative impacts. The following are some of the national and locally led initiatives the teams provide:

- Home Fire Safety Visits
- Fire Protection Audits at businesses
- Compliance Checks and Risk Based Inspections

This work is set to develop and grow, enabling us to reach those most in need of our support and focus on the highest risks in the community.

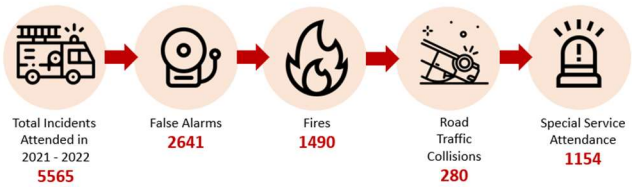
We continue to develop the skills of our staff and utilise our resources, to provide the best possible service effectively and efficiently to our communities.

Supporting station availability is the County Day Crew, who help ensure key stations are available during peak operational hours from Monday to Friday.

In 2021-22 we have:

- Continued to recruit firefighters for our On-Call and Wholetime crews.
- Completed and introduced a new radio system improving our effectiveness at incidents.
- Continued to work in partnership with Cambridgeshire Fire Service to implement a new mobilising system in the joint control.
- Progressed work on our new Stowmarket Fire Station, which is a collaboration with Suffolk Constabulary.
- Improved our training facilities and the team at Wattisham Airfield, providing up-to-date specialist training for our staff.
- Increased our Special Service assists, providing additional support to the East of England Ambulance Service.
- Continued to support our regional neighbours, responding where required.
- Monitored advancements in equipment and personal protective equipment, ensuring that our firefighters have the most up-to-date equipment, enabling them to work safely and effectively.

In 2021-22 we responded to



Response

Moving forward we plan to:

- Appraise and update our Speed of Response Standards to reflect the recommendations from the PDP Committee.
- Continue to develop our staff training, development and culture.
- Establish a working group to better understand how we retain and can recruit both On-Call and Wholetime future firefighters.
- Undertake a review of the role of the firefighter and how we work with the East of England Ambulance Service.

Our performance data can be seen on page 15-19

6 Our Performance in 2021-22

SFRS is committed to providing the most effective and efficient response to our community. We review how well we are achieving this ambition by using various performance measures, which we report back to the service and to Suffolk County Council via their Corporate Leadership team.

We monitor our data carefully to identify our successes and areas where we need to focus more resources to drive continuous performance. The data will always be subject to other factors, and their influence can cause fluctuations, so we must look at trends historically and take into account recent changes. An example of this is the Covid-19 pandemic, where we had to consider changes to how people worked and travelled during lockdown to help give a more accurate way of assessing our performance.

Response Standards

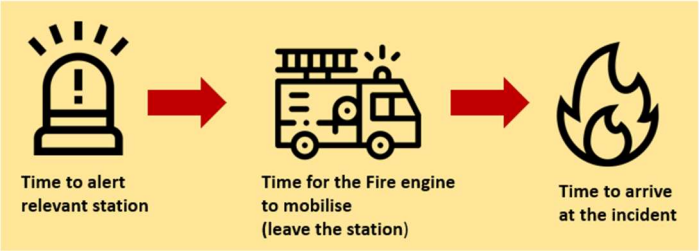
We have three performance standards for our Speed of Response, which measure how long it takes for fire crews to get to an incident. There are no nationally specified standards for fire services to respond to emergencies, and different services have various measures, response times and targets. In Suffolk, we endeavour to meet our locally agreed standards at least 80% of the time.

Current Response Standards

RS	Description	Target	2019-20	2020-21	**2021-22**
1	**First fire engine to a property fire within 11 minutes**	80%	69%	69%	**67%**
2	**Second fire engine to a property fire within 16 minutes**	80%	75%	73%	**70%**
3	**First fire engine to a road traffic collision within 13 minutes80%**	80%	72%	70%	**66%**

How do we measure Speed of Response?
Currently, the Speed of Response data is broken down into three steps, which are used in combination to give us the overall time.

We start the clock on the time it takes to alert the relevant station, how long it takes for the fire engine to mobilise (leave the station) to the time of arrival to the incident.



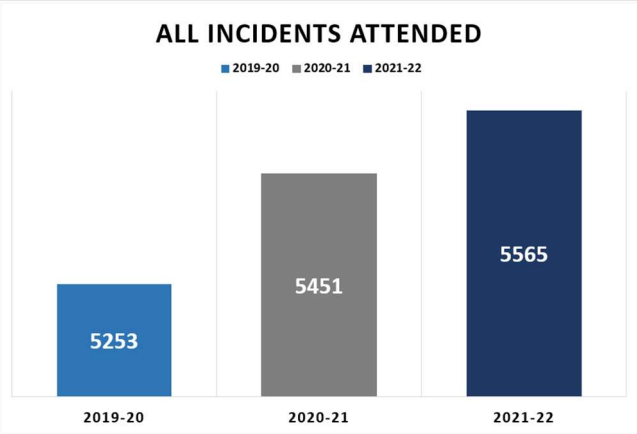
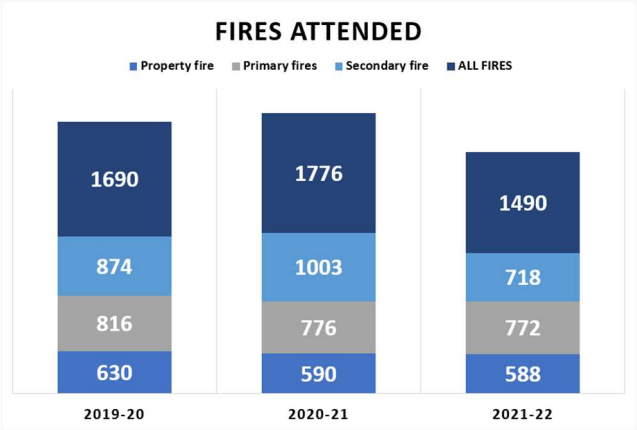
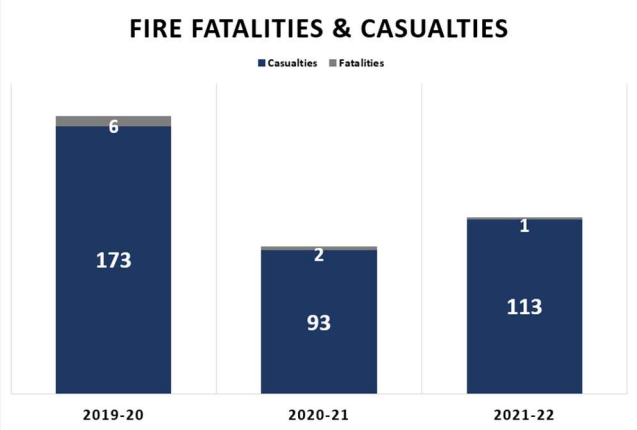
We are looking at different ways in which we can continue to improve our performance in this area to meet our targets.

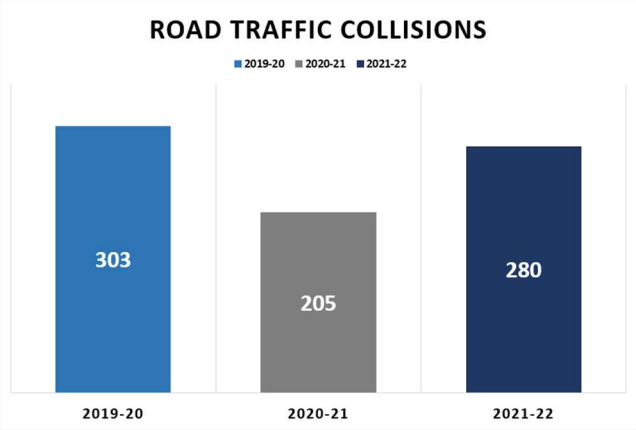
During this reporting period, the response standards were reviewed by a Policy Development Panel (PDP) formed by SCC Members in readiness to carry out public consultation and present recommendations.

The recommendations from the PDP will be taken into the next Community Risk Management Plan consultation.

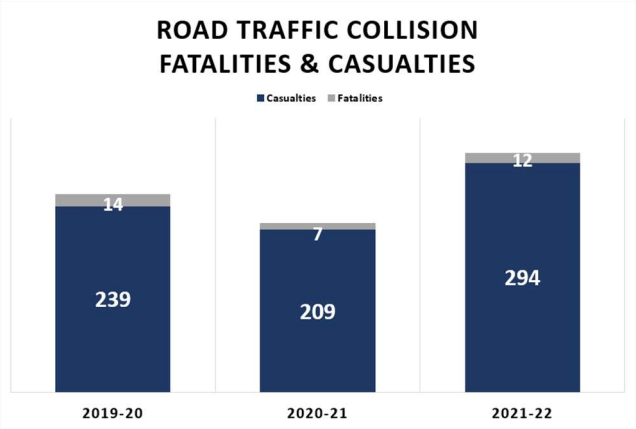
Suffolk Fire and Rescue Performance Measures 2021 – 22

The following tables provide an overview of our performance in the financial year 2021 – 22. All data was correct at the time of writing but could be subject to change pending outcomes of ongoing investigations.

	The number of incidents attended has increased since last year. There has been an increase in False Alarms and Special Service Assists, such as ambulance assists and non-fire related incidents. We have not identified any patterns or trends behind the increase in incidents.
	The number of fires has decreased since last year, with the main decrease in secondary fires, which are often fires out in the open, such as bin fires or grassland. This reflects the increase in local communities returning to working at their place of employment or education rather than at home and the work our Prevention team has been doing regarding home fire safety.
	There was an increase in fire-related casualties from last year. This includes smoke inhalation or burns, however minor. Fire Fatalities have significantly reduced from six in 2019/20 to one in this reporting year. As a service, no fatality is ever acceptable.



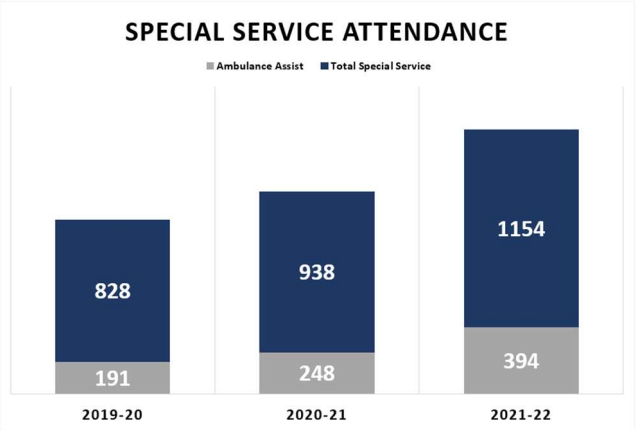
Road Traffic Collisions have increased compared to last year. We have identified that this is probably due to increased road use following the easing of Covid restrictions and the community increasingly returning to employment and education.



The increase in Road traffic Collisions fatalities and casualties reflects the overall increase in incidents.

There has been increased road use following the easing of Covid restrictions and people increasingly returning to the workplace and education.

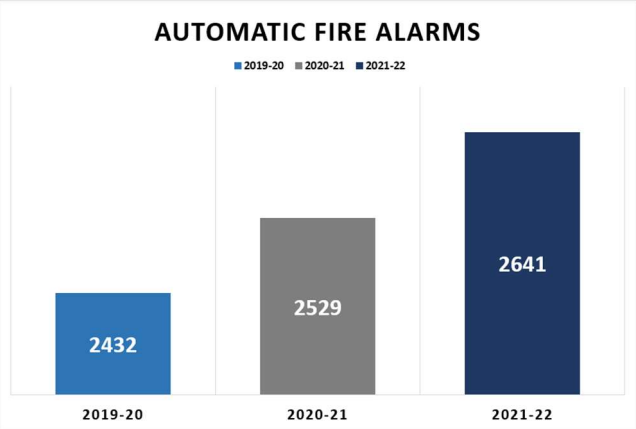
Road Traffic Collisions and corresponding casualties have increased compared to last year.



Special Services make up 21% of our incidents for this financial year.

Special Services are non-fire related incidents, such as rescue of persons, utility issues, water rescue and assisting other agencies.

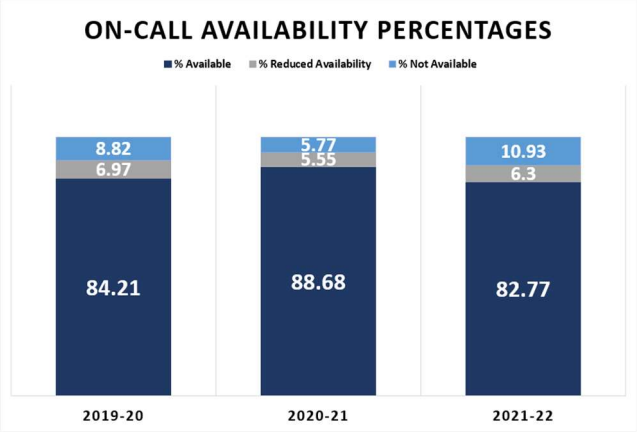
We are increasingly assisting other agencies, including the East of England Ambulance Service with removal of casualties from buildings.



Automatic Fire Alarms make up 47.5% of the service's callouts.

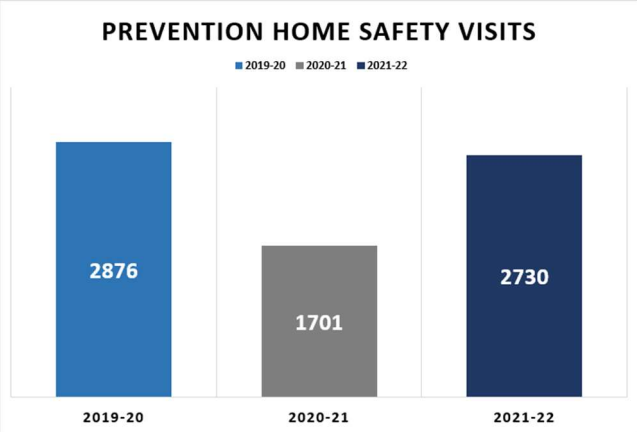
Work continues to be carried out to reduce the occurrence of false alarms with many of these being in our tall buildings and public service buildings such as hospitals.

Only a small number of these calls are found to be actual fires. In these circumstances, the callout is re-categorised as a fire.



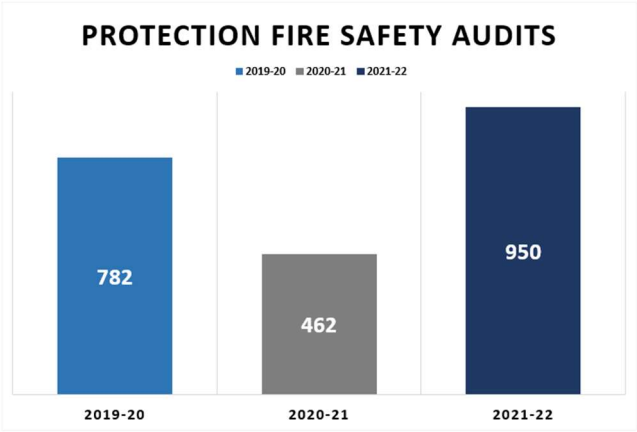
On-Call availability has reduced by 7%, this is due to a combination of On-Call staff returning to their workplaces rather than working from home and an overall reduction in the number of On-Call firefighters.

One of the areas the service will be reviewing next year is our retention and recruitment of firefighters, especially those who are On-Call, who make up the majority of our operational firefighters.



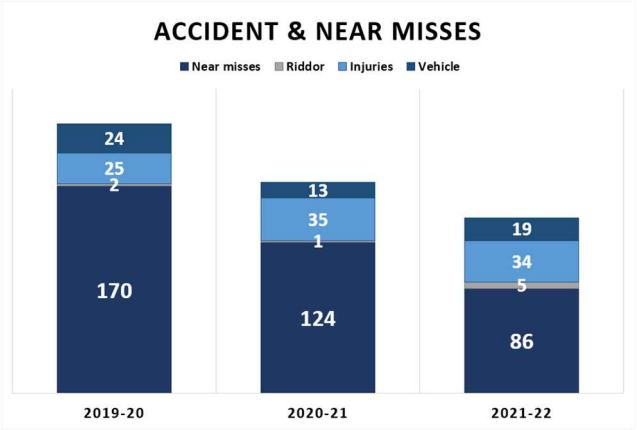
Our Prevention team has increased their Home Fire Safety Visits, where we visit someone's home to carry out a fire safety check on their property.

This increase is a combination of the additional investment in the department, with new Prevention Practitioners employed, and the easing of Covid restrictions, enabling us to visit people in their homes in person again.



Our Protection team has doubled their audit programme by 101%.

This increase is a combination of additional investment in the department, clear departmental focus, and the ability to access premises again now Covid restrictions have eased.



We recognise the importance our staff play in maintaining good health and safety in the workplace. We provide health and safety training commensurate to their role and have begun an active programme in improving H&S culture.

We have also sought to improve efforts to communicate health and safety concerns or activities through direct contact and via service news bulletins or publications. Doing so has driven down our accident levels and near misses.

Performance

Effective performance first involves identifying the organisational direction and defining necessary actions. Then by monitoring, maintaining and improving performance, it can be used as a key tool for delivering better outcomes which are service driven, efficient and effective.

Moving forward we plan to:

- Review the performance management and implement a new Performance Framework.
- Enable better scrutiny of the service by the community and our governance structures, including the Suffolk County Council Fire Service Steering Group.
- Review the performance measures we currently report on to ensure they are relevant and make any changes required.
- Review and implementation of the Performance Assurance Board which will drive effective performance management from the Senior Leadership Team throughout the service.
- Review how we report our performance to our community via our website.
- Continue to focus on our three core functions of Prevention, Protection and Response.
- Conduct evaluation of performance in all aspects of the service to drive improvement and allow us to continue to keep Suffolk safe.
- Improve and develop our data analysis to allow continuous improvement, giving managers performance tools to enable effective use of resources, new ways of working and review of current work practices.
- Use performance to assist the service in delivering on our HMICFRS recommendations.

6 External And Internal Assurance

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is subject to internal and external assurance in the form of Performance Assurance, audits, action plans and inspections. Such assurance helps us manage our delivery and ensures the processes we use are effective and efficient, providing us with the tools to support the service ambitions and strategic priorities.

Internal assurance gives us a method to monitor how our processes work and ensures that we are implementing relevant recommendations from internal and external learning, such as the Grenfell Tower Fire Recommendations. Our action plans help to deliver improvements and identify service gaps where we can challenge performance, then identify and implement improvements and monitor via the various governance structures in place.

SFRS also ensures that processes are audited internally. Findings are reported via the Operational Assurance Board with action trackers in place for improvements to identify and share good practice.

The Service is also subject to external scrutiny from the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Service (HMICFRS).

Our HMICFRS inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service Inspection for SFRS took place in February 2022. The inspection lasted six weeks, during which inspectors carried out an onsite and virtual inspection. We are currently awaiting the formal report, which is due to be published in January 2023.

The inspection looks at three pillars:

Effectiveness
How effective are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

Efficiency
How efficient are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
People
How well do we look after our people?

There are four possible outcomes of ratings from the inspection: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate (serious failings in policy, practice or performance)

We were last formally inspected in 2019, with the report published in December 2019, in which we received a rating of Good in all three inspection pillars.

Following the report publication, the service developed an action plan which included areas for improvement recommended by the HMICFRS report.

In 2020 HMICFRS undertook a Covid thematic review of all fire and rescue services and inspected SFRS in November 2020.

The findings were good with HMICFRS impressed at how the service had adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively with efficient use of staff providing support, utilising extra capacity, and maintaining its statutory functions.

7 Our People

Our People are our most valuable asset in terms of delivering our service to the residents of Suffolk. We need our staff to have the right skills, qualities, values and attitude to ensure that we can meet the needs and expectations of our communities across Suffolk.

We want to ensure that SFRS is a great place to work, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and can work in an innovative, empowered, and collaborative way to support our communities.

The Service is committed to ensuring we are seen as an employer of choice for everyone within our communities, promoting inclusion, diversifying staff, and creating a fair and equal place to work.

Your service is made up of operational and support staff.

- **On-Call firefighters make up the majority of our firefighters, responding to emergency calls within their local area either from home or their place of work.**
- **Whole time firefighters are shift based, some working days and nights and others working only day shifts.**
- **We have a whole time County Day Crew that travels around the county to ensure full coverage where required.**
- **Support Staff carry out a variety of roles including Fleet Maintenance, Fire IT, Business Support, Prevention, Protection and Performance.**

Many of our shift firefighters and support staff are On-Call firefighters.

In 2021-22 we have

- Worked with an independent specialist provider to facilitate Equality and Inclusion workshops to understand our culture and plan how we become a more diverse service.
- Attended the Royal Foundation Symposium on Mental Health at Work and signed the Mental Health at Work Commitment.
- Conducted an extensive recruitment drive of both On-Call and whole time firefighters.
- Created EDI mentors and supported them in gaining qualifications to champion EDI throughout the service and become EDI ambassadors.
- Embedded the NFCC leadership framework to support leadership at all levels of the service.
- Provided all staff with relevant H&S training for their role.
- Developed our workforce planning, implementing a succession planning tool to enable us to talent manage, support development and plan for any changes in the workforce.
- Supported Fire Aid with the donation of two Saxon fire engines to the Ukraine Fire Service, with six staff, firefighters and fleet mechanics travelling across Europe to deliver the vehicles to Ukraine.

Moving forward we plan to:

- Continue to seek a more inclusive and diverse workforce.
- Find new ways to enable members of the public to become On-Call firefighters without the role impacting heavily on their home, leisure and work life.
- Review of the Development and Progression Guidance Document (DPGD) to ensure our staff have the best pathway to development and progression.
- Develop the new Firefighter Apprenticeship Standard as part of a national working group.

Health & Safety

Firefighting, responding to emergencies, training and other public safety-related activities present risks to employees. Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for our employees and the public we serve that exceeds minimum legal and statutory obligations.

Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing team works closely with managers, staff, and representative bodies. Focus on firefighter safety is front and back-loaded, evidenced through investment in training, PPE, appliances, equipment, innovative firefighting technologies, operational guidance and learning from incidents to inform new, safer approaches.

'Safe systems of work' are established for operational incidents, training, and general non-operational work activity, based on national guidance. The systems contain key risk and control measures along with supporting information to assist firefighters with resolving operational incidents effectively and safely. They also underpin training, assessment, and the development of staff.

In 2021- 22, 34 personal injuries were recorded, a decrease from the 35 recorded in 2020-21. There were 19 vehicle accidents, an increase of six from the 13 reported in 2020-21. Five accidents were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) in 2021-22, representing an increase of four when compared to reportable incidents in 2020-21.

Staff reported 86 near-miss events in 2021-22, a decrease of 38 when compared to the 124 near-miss reports in 2020-21. Near-miss events are circumstances where staff report a potential hazard but where there is no associated accident or injury. Staff are encouraged to report near-miss incidents to help reduce the risk of future accidents.

Moving forward we plan to:

Our focus has been and will continue to be based on the principle that we all have a personal and collective responsibility to keep ourselves and others safe through our behaviour, attitude, and actions. The importance of writing, reviewing, and producing effective policies and procedures is significant but will, in addition, seek to promote a positive, people-centric health and safety culture at all levels

Wellbeing of our People

Our People are at the heart of our service, and none of what we do would be possible without our professional, highly skilled, and well-developed workforce. Ensuring their wellbeing, positive morale, and purposeful engagement is vital and strengthens the service we provide to you.

This work is linked to Suffolk County Council's strategy and tools for wellbeing. We also have access to the SCC Occupational Health contract, which has a specific Fire Service consideration. We have begun a process to become the first Fire & Rescue Service in the UK to adopt a new dedicated Emergency Service Peer Support Programme from the National Police College for staff exposed to traumatic events.

Ensuring our staff can look after their mental health is a key priority for us. We have mental health first aiders, access to SCC Mental Health Tool kits and focused training on mental health. Our staff can also access specialist counselling services, and we have specific critical incident management procedures in place to provide support following exposure to traumatic incidents.

We have a dedicated Wellbeing Officer who is committed to promoting mental health issues via awareness initiatives, physical fitness, and staff training. They are key to developing a culture committed to health and wellbeing.

Firefighters are required to undertake an annual fitness test, and our Wellbeing Officer is also available to support and help operational staff with their physical fitness including the use of online fitness classes, tailored development programmes and relevant equipment for stations.

Focus on firefighter safety is imperative, and we have invested in training, PPE, appliances, equipment and innovative firefighting technologies.

Training, Learning and Development

The training, learning and development of our personnel remain a service priority, as evidenced by our significant investment in staff training and training facilities. Training is provided to all firefighters, officers, and non-operational staff throughout the year to improve knowledge, skills, and experience in key areas, and ensure people can carry out their roles safely and effectively.

This year we have been modernising our Wattisham Training Centre, which has new facilities for Live Firefighting exercises, Breathing Apparatus training and a Tactical Firefighting rig which allows for training in Thermal Scanning, Positive Pressure Ventilation.

There has been investment in an LPG burner unit which provides a realistic training environment whilst minimising students' exposure to harmful products and reducing traditional timber burning.

Collaboration with regional services and partner agencies is important to us. Areas in which our Training, Learning and Development team currently collaborates with partners include incident command training and assessment, driver training, technical rescue training, breathing apparatus training for local industry firefighting teams, Rail Incident Officer training for Network Rail, and trauma training with our East of England Ambulance Service colleagues. We also participate in multi-agency exercises through our Local Resilience Forum and work closely with the MOD, maintaining our operational training centre within a military base. In future, we hope to further our collaborative practices by providing blue light training to partner agencies, such as to doctors who attend emergency incidents

Wattisham

Incident Command

BA Course

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) both in the service we deliver to our community and our staff, ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect to help make the service an employer of choice. We believe that a diverse workforce with individuals who offer different perspectives, skills, experience, and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we can meet the needs and reflect the community we serve.

We know we have room for improvement in some areas of our EDI including:

- Increasing the number of diverse applicants applying for roles across the service.
- Understanding how we can attract more diverse applicants to make us an employer of choice.
- Understanding how we can change ways of working to improve retention of staff.
- Reducing the risk of domestic fires by increasing Home Fire Safety Visits to hard-to-reach communities.
- Improving staff's confidence and skills in engaging with different communities.

In 2021-22 we:

- Participated in Suffolk Pride.
- Engaged with an independent specialist provider called Equality Works to facilitate EDI workshops.
- Secured funding for a dedicated EDI Officer position to help support our commitment to drive EDI within the service. The EDI Officer will give advice on how we can improve the diversity profile of our workforce including attraction and retention.
- Worked through our Community Engagement Officer to ensure our harder to reach community groups are involved in events and consultations and given the opportunity to contribute.

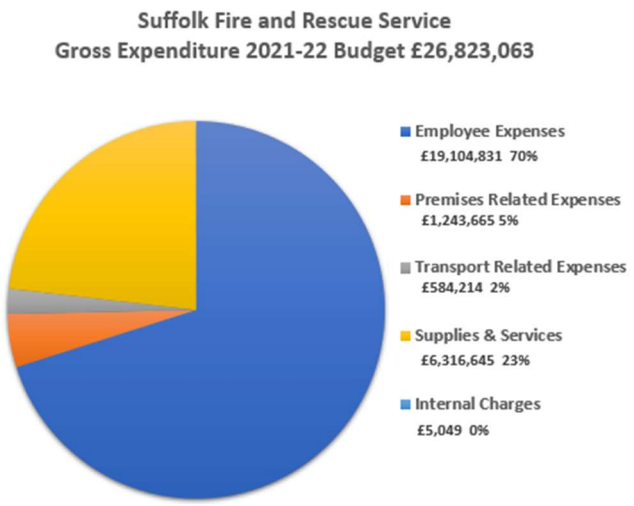
8 Financial Performance

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is required under the Local Government Act 1999 to account for all public money and to ensure it is used efficiently and effectively. As part of Suffolk County Council, the Service follows the Council's financial procedures for budget setting, monitoring and production of final accounts.

Suffolk County Councils Annual Statement of Accounts is examined by external auditors. The auditors' report also reviews arrangements to ensure the use of public resources is economical, efficient, and effective.

Ensuring we have an efficient service that offers value for money underpins everything we do.

The Statement of Accounts and External Auditors' Letter are published on Suffolk County Council's website:

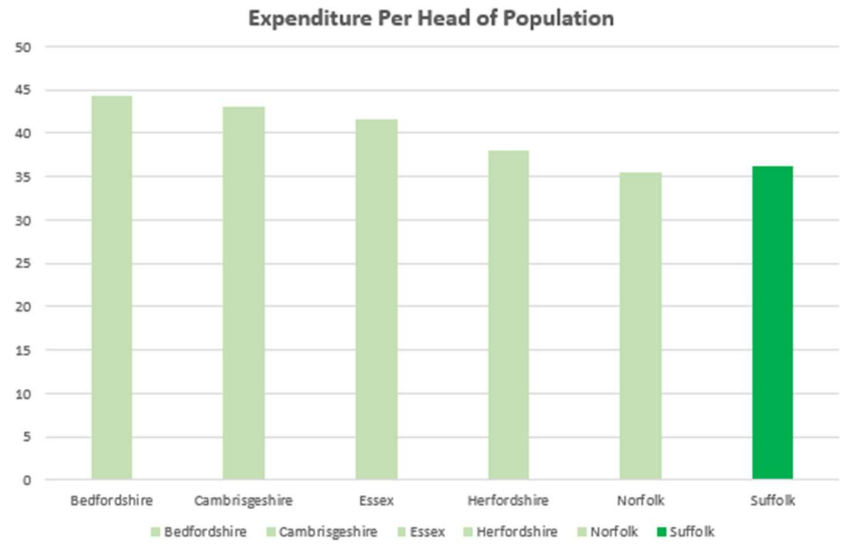


https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/council-accounts/

How we compare nationally

Annual financial and performance data for all fire and rescue services are published, enabling comparisons to be made between each fire authority. In comparison to other fire services, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service consistently provides value for money and is well performing.

Average Expenditure per Head of Population regional comparison:



Suffolk
£36.19

County Council FRS
£37.84

England rate
£41.85

9 National Resilience

National Resilience is our capacity and capability to work together with other responders to deliver a sustained and effective response to major incidents and emergencies.

We work closely with the SCC Joint Emergency Planning Unit; this arrangement ensures that the service is well-prepared and joined up with other partnerships to help keep our communities safe and prepared.

Plans are established for responding to major incidents at sites such as the Sizewell B Power Station or for off-site emergencies. Our Risk and Resilience Manager continually engages with our wider partners to ensure we are closely aligned and can work effectively together.

Regional training with other fire and rescue services, police and the ambulance service supports operational readiness through Joint Operating Principles or a wider response to both terrorist and major multi-agency incidents.

SFRS are an active member of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which aids us in meeting our obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act. Our service hosts two key roles of the LRF; Partnership Manager and Planning Officer roles.

Service risk management arrangements align with the local community and national risk registers, ensuring that we have the appropriate response and have recovery plans and resources to meet these risks and our duties. The plans are reviewed and exercised periodically through the LRF.

10 Partnerships and Collaboration

Our Partnerships

We work in collaboration across various work streams with our partners, including our Joint Fire Control with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and as the service delivery area of Suffolk County Council's Fire and Public Safety Directorate.

We collaborate closely with our Suffolk partners to provide prevention education and advice to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, enable the vulnerable to live safely in their homes and support and improve the lives of the community.

We are partners on both the Adult and Children's Safeguarding boards and have a formal process for information sharing with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). SFRS is also a member of the Multi-Agency Modern Day Slavery Network and has been involved in the development of training films for partner emergency services and the wider professional network.

Emergency Service Cadets are an important part of our Fire and Police family. The Cadets get the chance to develop skills in firefighting and policing, develop qualities of positive leadership and good citizenship and influence the shape of the community and the fire /police service.

Cadets are run jointly by volunteers from SFRS and police personnel.

Our Collaborations

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has an excellent history of working together with our Suffolk partners, including undertaking joint activity with blue light services and our regional Fire services. We actively develop our relationships with our partner organisations to promote and deliver services and provide value to the community and improve our effectiveness and efficiency.

Since 2014, SFRS has established an emergency service shared estates programme, where we have developed several of our fire stations to share with our police and/or ambulance colleagues. We now share 16 stations with our blue light partners, with plans for a further two collaborations.

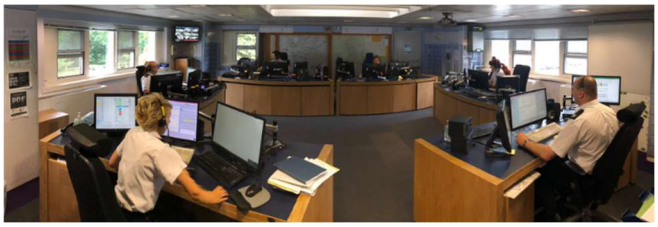
The refurbishment of Princes Street Fire Station in Ipswich is due to be completed in June 2022 and will allow the Service and Suffolk Police to operate a 24-hour shared premise.

The first new build station in Suffolk is currently under construction in Stowmarket.

In addition to creating more efficient public sector estates, we are assessing how the sharing of other resources and information can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services to the public.

Our Combined Fire Control, based at Cambridgeshire HQ, has been in operation for more than ten years. It is established under a Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 16 agreement which details its governance, performance, and funding.

Combined Fire Control employs ‘dynamic mobilising’ protocols, and staff are empowered to deviate from the pre-determined attendance, should the need arise based on professional judgement. This flexibility can result in resources sent to an incident being increased or decreased, depending on the intelligence gathered during the call-handling phase of the emergency.



Mobilising systems enabled Controllers to allocate fire engines and other appliances to attend to the 999 calls received. Our Combined Fire Control has committed to implementing a new mobilising system. The new system is currently in development and is being provided by Systel following a competitive tender process, with plans for this to go live in 2023.

Suffolk has borders with three counties – Cambridgeshire, Essex, and Norfolk. We work closely with them and our regional partners, carrying out joint operational exercises that ensure our border firefighters and our service have the most up-to-date training in risk areas, enabling them to carry out incident response safely and effectively.

11 Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

SFRS has a statutory duty to consult on and publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan as detailed in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

The plan must cover three years, identifying and assessing all reasonably foreseeable fire and rescue related incidents that could affect our communities, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority or national nature. It is reviewed and revised as often as necessary to ensure we can deliver the requirements of the national framework. It also includes reactions to local or national events such as the Grenfell Tower Enquiry and recommendations.

Once we have assessed those risks, we review the resources we have in place and the activity we need to undertake to meet current and emerging risks. We then develop supporting strategies and action plans to reflect how we will respond to the risks.

The Plan outlines:

Prevention – How we educate the community on reducing risks, to keep people safe in their homes from fire and other risks. Our community risk reduction work is designed to reduce the number of incidents related to fire in the home, on the road or on water.

Protection – How we give support and advice to provide safer public spaces within the built environment. The Protection team supports business owners to minimise the risk of fire, understand their duties and continue to manage and maintain their premises within legislation.

Response – How we respond to incidents and emergencies with professional, competent firefighters with the right equipment in the quickest time possible. These can include fire, road traffic collisions, specialist rescues, ambulance assists and many other incidents.

People – How we ensure we have the right skills, qualities, values, and attitudes to ensure we can meet the needs and expectations of our communities across Suffolk. We will also investigate how we meet the challenge of recruitment and retention of our people.

Our Current IRMP is available on our website:

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-22

The current IRMP will be ending on the 31st of March 2023 and next year will see the introduction of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which replaces the IRMP.

The CRMP is supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council, and our CRMP must be in line with NFCC guidance.

SFRS have several key stages that must be carried out during our consultation period which will start in May 2022, including:

- Public Consultation – Engagement and consultation with our communities across Suffolk.
- Engagement and consultation with staff across Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.
- Engagement and consultation with our stakeholders
- External Data analysis

Planned public consultation events and online surveys will take place between October and December 2022.

12 Future Planning

How we plan, set our priorities, and deliver your service will be reviewed this coming year as we move into our consultation period for the new Community Risk Management Plan.

To do this we use a risk evaluation cycle:

Other influences on our planning will be the HMICFRS inspection report, which was carried out in February 2022, with the report due to be published in early 2023 and set to contain recommendations for any improvements to be reviewed and implemented.

This work will enable the service to analysis and appraise emerging risks, matching our resources to those potential risks, meaning we are better equipped to serve our communities.

Suffolk has various risks which are dealt with on a day-to-day basis. The rural nature of Suffolk can make some rural areas difficult to access. In addition, farms, rural businesses and heritage buildings can have specific fire risks.

Other risk areas within Suffolk are thatched properties, wildfires and flooding, all of which are affected by climate change and severe weather.

In February 2022, we declared a major incident in relation to Storm Eunice, which caused significant disruption in Suffolk, with the Service attending 51 incidents in a day.

When looking to the future we also need to factor in emerging risks. Emerging risks are varied and when appraising Suffolk's there are some very specific to our county such as:

Climate Change & Extreme Weather

- Increasing variants in extreme temperature and weather conditions
- Supporting delivery of SCC's Suffolk Climate Emergency Action Plan

Aging Population

- An increase in age and associated health conditions may also result in risk of fire.
- Commitment to strengthen our partnerships to effectively deliver our prevention programmes.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects Including:

Sizewell C

- 3,200 Mwe Nuclear power station with two EPR reactors.
- North Suffolk

Solar Farms

- Battery Energy Storage Sites
- Large infrastructure across Suffolk

Off Shore Wind Farms

- Developments across the Suffolk coast.
- Cables routed to shore substation will connect to the national grid.

13 Legislation

Our Legal Responsibilities

Our responsibilities as an emergency service are set out in the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and various other legislation as listed below, included are links to all relevant documents.

Fire services Act 2004

The act replaced the Fire Services Act 1948 with a new framework to ensure fire and rescue services were better able to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

The Act clarifies the duties and powers of Fire authorities to:

- Promote fire safety
- Fight fires
- Protect people and property from fires
- Rescue people from road traffic incidents
- Deal with other specific emergencies such as flooding or terrorist attacks.
- Do other things to respond to the needs of their communities and the risks they face.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

The Act imposes a clear set of roles and responsibilities to those organsiations with a role in preparing for and responding to emergencies.

Under part one of the Act, emergency services and local authorities (defined as category one responders) have a legal obligation to assess risk, plan and exercise for emergencies and undertake business continuity management.

We are involved in ongoing partnerships to plan multi-agency responses to major incidents. This work involves carrying out risk assessments and producing emergency plans which are tested and continually updated.

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England. Their current priorities are:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents.
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their communities face.
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide.
- Be accountable to the communities they serve.
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible, and diverse.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 provides a framework for regulating fire safety in all non-domestic premises including workplaces and the pats of multi occupied buildings.

This is due to be replaced in 2023 by the Fire Safety Act 2021, with guidance published under article 50 of the Fire Safety Order later in 2022.

Fire and Rescue Services Emergencies (England) Order 2007

The Emergencies (England) Order 2007 outlines the additional statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 for fire authorities. The duty requires fire authorities where provision of resources has been made by central Government to respond to incidents both within and outside the authority area involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear hazards (CBRN) and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR).

The Equality Act 2010 and 2020

The public sector equality duty requires public bodies to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their roles.

The Equality Act 2020 replaced previous legislation and created a legal framework providing clearer streamlined law that is more effective at tackling disadvantage and discrimination. The Act protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

Links and other legislation:

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England
Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-22
The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999
Audit Commission Act 1998
Regulation 11 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011
SCC Priorities
The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
The Localism Act 2011
The Health and Safety Act at Work, etc. Act 1974
Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Peer Challenge Report 2017
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Suffolk Report
Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Assessment of Risk 2018-2021
Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2019-22
Home Office National Statistics
Police and Crime Act 2017

14 We are listening …

Share your views and feedback.

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual Statement of Assurance, we would very much welcome any comments you have about this document, our activities, or our service.

You can visit our website for further information:

https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/

You can use our online contact form to leave any feedback:

https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/about-suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/contact-fire-and-rescue-with-non-emergency-queries/

Call **01473 260588**, this service is available Monday to Thursday from 9am to 5pm and Fridays from 9am to 4pm.

Or write to us at:

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich
IP1 2BX

In an emergency you should always dial 999

SUFFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE