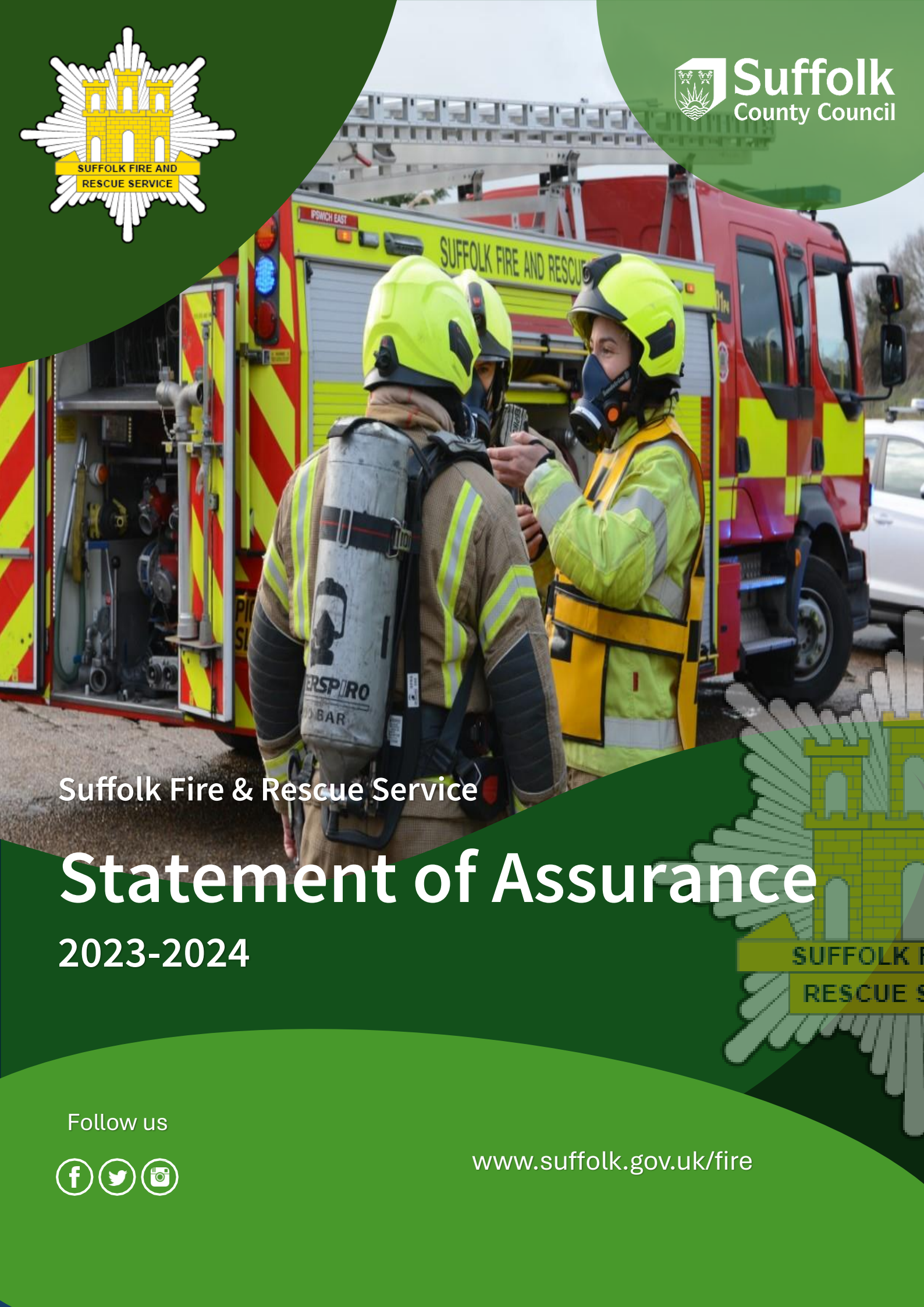




Suffolk
County Council



Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance

2023-2024

Follow us



www.suffolk.gov.uk/fire

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Welcome to our Statement Of Assurance 2023 – 2024

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service takes immense pride in safeguarding our communities. We work tirelessly to prevent fires and other risks, provide protection for residents, and offer a swift and effective response to emergencies.

This Statement of Assurance serves as a record of our performance and accomplishments throughout the 2023-2024 financial year. We are incredibly proud to present this report, as it showcases the dedication and exceptional work delivered by our exceptional staff.

Every member of our team, regardless of their role, consistently embodies professionalism, enthusiasm, and an unwavering commitment to serving the community. Their dedication to delivering outstanding service is what truly makes Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service a source of pride.

Within this Statement of Assurance, you will find a detailed look at our service's performance over the past year.

The dedication of our staff and the trust placed in us by the community are what drive us forward. We remain committed to ensuring that Suffolk is a place where people lead safe and fulfilling lives.



Annual Awards Ceremony September 2023

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 2023 to 31 March 2024. 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.'

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has established an outstanding reputation both locally and nationally for being a high-performing service that continues to provide excellent value for money for residents. 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, and 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 Steve Wiles
Cabinet member for Public
Health and Public
Protection
Suffolk County Council



Introduction

As Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2023/2024.

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 Our Values

Our Values are the qualities that we believe are the most important to us and describe the expectations the public have of us and that we have of each other.

We use them every day to influence how we work to achieve our priorities and guide the professional behaviours that we expect from our staff.



W

Wellbeing – We look after ourselves each other and the planet

e

Equality – Respecting, valuing, embracing and celebrating everyone's unique differences.

A

Achieve – We are the best we can be,

S

Support – We work as one team

P

Pride – We are passionate about making a positive difference to the people and place of Suffolk.

I

Innovate – We believe in making every penny count and every minute matter and reducing the environmental impact.

R

Respect – We give and earn respect

E

Empower – We empower, encourage and motivate.

Our Culture and Behaviours

To make sure we do our very best every day, we need to continue to build a workplace that represents our community and ensures everyone who comes to work enjoys their time with us.

Whilst this isn't always easy to achieve, if we have a happy workforce that is empowered, supported, respected and listened to, we will achieve our goals through innovation and have pride in everything we do.

To help us deliver an excellent service we should work within our WE ASPIRE values and follow the NFCC Code of Ethics. Both give clear expectations we must follow to make sure we improve diversity and make sure everyone enjoys coming to work every day.



National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics

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



3 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 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). 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 authorities Community Risk Management Plan during 2023-24.



Approved to Ride Course August 2023

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 through SCC's Cabinet.

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 and His 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.

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.

By combining expert analysis, local incident data, and national trends, we have developed a comprehensive understanding of the risks facing our community. This ongoing assessment, informed by local incidents, significant national events feedback and lessons learned, allows us to prioritise our resources and deliver effective services. Our risk profile is reviewed every year to inform our priorities, set our objectives and measure our performance.

Our operational risk team provide vital support by identifying and assessing local risks. This information is shared with our crews through mobile data terminals, enabling targeted prevention and response efforts.

- We monitor agreed performance measures 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 risk management plans (LRMP) which review the local risks and horizon scan to assess future potential risks to the local communities and county.
- Our annual Service Plan outlines key priorities for delivery against our Community Risk Management Plan. [SFRS Service Plan 2024-2025](#)
- 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

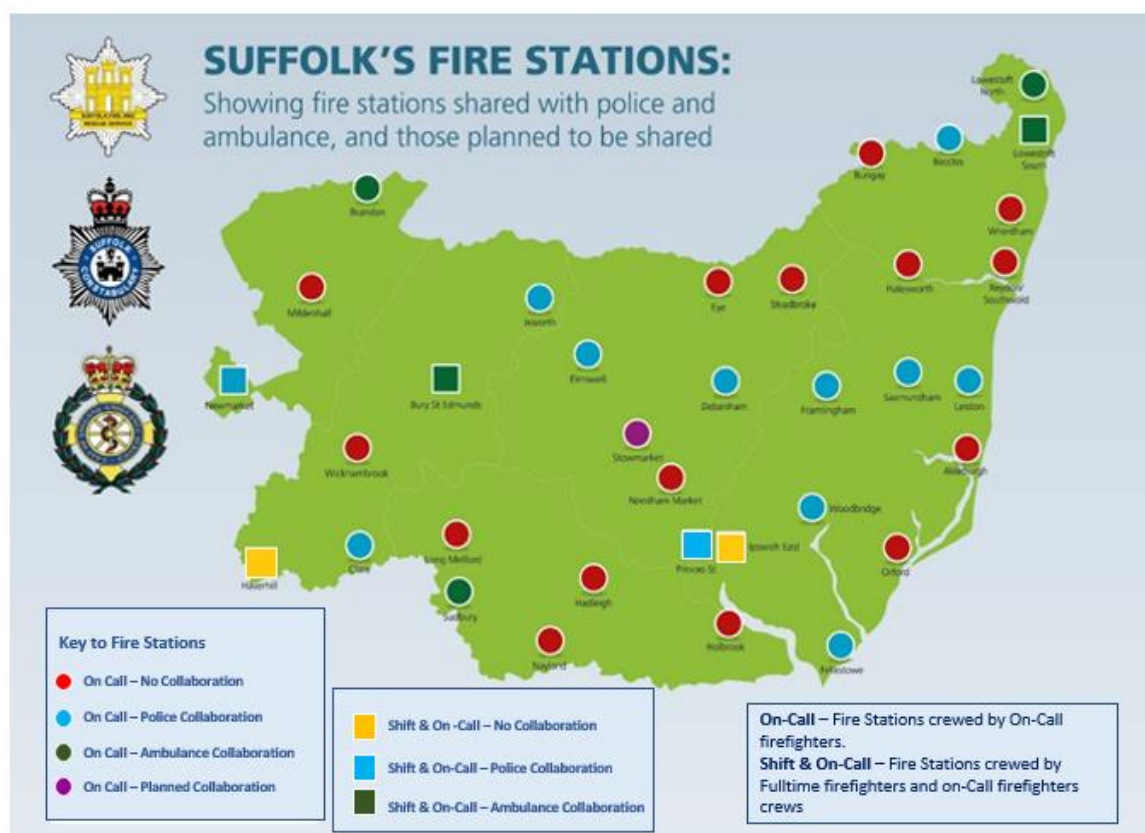


5 Your Fire and Rescue Service

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 Steve Wiles.

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 including our 24hr shift stations, situated in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft South, Ipswich East, and Ipswich Princes Street. 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 606 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 31 flexible duty operational officers who undertake daily leadership functions, providing operational response at larger and more complex incidents.

We have 104 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 157 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 2023 – 2024



35 Fire Stations

43 Fire Engines

13 Specialist Vehicles



606 Operational Staff

399 On-Call Firefighters

140 Wholetime Firefighters

31 Non-station based firefighters

36 Officers



104 Support Staff

3762

Home Fire Safety Visits

Figures are up **33%** on last year



960

Fire Safety Audits

7% increase on last year



121

Animal Rescues



120

Safeguarding Referrals

53% increase in referrals on last year



204

Ambulance assist



6056 Incidents attended in 2023-24

Our safety initiatives have led to a **6%** reduction in incidents

3057

False Alarms



3% increase

1468

Total Fires



28% decrease

318

Road Traffic Collisions



No change

1213

Special Service



9% increase

Full performance data on pages 26 - 31

6 How we serve our community

We understand the impact our work has on the community and are committed to supporting those affected by emergencies. Our service plan aligns with the Community Risk Management Plan, addresses HMICFRS recommendations, and promotes transparency and accountability. By doing the basics brilliantly, delivering effective and efficient services, we aim to improve the safety and wellbeing of our community.

Working closely with our communities, we focus our resources on preventing emergencies and creating a safer Suffolk. Our efforts are centred around four key areas of focus.



Prevention

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

- Work in a proactive, targeted, and effective way.
- Take an inclusive approach and tailor our services to meet the requirements of Suffolk's communities.
- Work to understand the risks in and to our communities.
- By focusing on education, early intervention, and risk reduction strategies, we aim to create a safer environment for all residents.

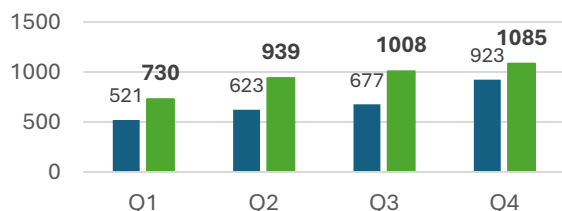


In 2023-24 we:

- Launched new Home Fire Safety Visit Policy, Guidance and Training to align with the NFCC Person Centred Framework.
- Onboarded 'Safelincs – The Online Home Fire Safety Visit' to maximise efficiency in delivering Home Fire Safety Visits to the most vulnerable.
- Aligned to the NFCC Prevention and Safeguarding Fire Standards.
- Increased the number of targeted Home Fire Safety Visits delivered by our Operational Staff and Specialist Practitioners by over 1000, totalling 3778 across the threshold visits in 23-24.
- Developed Quality Assurance and Evaluation mechanisms for all key areas of Prevention work to ensure effective, value for money service delivery.
- Championed 'STAYWISE', the free national online educational tool to help educate children in fire, water, and road safety. Accessible to the emergency services, teachers, and parents.
- 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 reduce the use of mobile phones by drivers.
- Gained Partnership access to several new Vulnerable Person Data Sets to support Operational Local Risk Management Planning and enhance our ability to target our activity towards those most in need.
- Launched new Safeguarding Policy, Guidance and Training for all staff to ensure knowledge and competence in Safeguarding Referral processes to protect the vulnerable.
- Utilised our Partnerships Manager to build relationships with Diverse Community groups to create a network and share Prevention education as widely as possible.
- Worked in partnership and collaborated with other key agencies in the county to increase our contribution to a safer Suffolk.
- Developed a new Early Intervention Strategy to refocus on Young People and Adults who demonstrate an unhealthy interest in Fire.
- Secured over 80k of partnership investment to support provision of life saving equipment fitted in home of vulnerable people in Suffolk.
- Contributed towards Suffolk's road safety as a member of the Road Safety Partnership and delivered road safety education for vulnerable road users including:

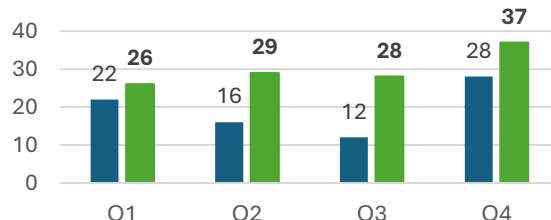
Home Fire Safety Visits

■ 2022-23 ■ 2023-24



Safeguarding Referrals

■ 2022-23 ■ 2023-24



We have collaborated with our operational teams to develop a practical plan for increasing the number of Home Fire Safety Visits. These efforts have led to significant improvements in our ability to deliver this vital service. As the following data illustrates, we've experienced growth compared to last year.

Safeguarding referrals have steadily increased since the introduction of the new training package in 2023-24. This positive trend coincides with improved staff confidence, supported by the additional guidance of the new safeguarding manager. As illustrated in the data below, referral numbers have grown significantly compared to the previous year.

In 2024-25 we plan to

- Continue delivering our CRMP and Service priorities.
- Ensure continued Specialist Prevention Team support for our Operational Staff.
- Learn from our Quality Assurance and Evaluation work to ensure continued improvement in efficiency and targeted activity.
- Continue developing our HFSV processes to ensure efficient referral pathways supported by data in a Multi-Agency Person Centred approach.
- Train appropriate Key partners to support delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits.
- Continue to use Data to effectively target our Prevention work towards the most vulnerable and support Local Risk Management planning.
- Be active partners in Multi Agency Serious Case Reviews to ensure learning and improvement.
- Continue building relationships with rural and seldom heard from communities to ensure our Prevention Services are available to all.
- Launch our new Fire Safety Intervention initiative to support young people and adults who are referred by partners due to an unhealthy interest in Fire.
- Stay active partners in national boards and networks which champion and support improvements in safety on the roads, the water, and in the home.

Protection

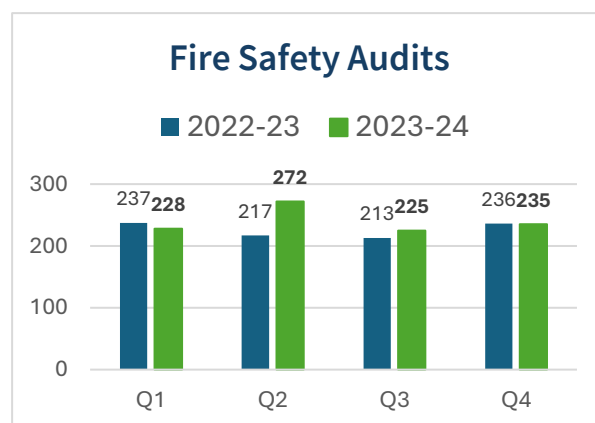
Our Protection teamwork with local businesses, authorities and individuals who are responsible for protecting people from fire in their premises, to ensure that they comply with fire safety regulations.

All commercial and many multi-occupied residential buildings require specific fire safety measures to protect employees, residents and other occupants. This legislation is used to enforce the regulations when necessary.

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

In 2023 - 2024 we:

- Continued 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. In the 2023-24 financial year we completed 960 audits and completed 534 building regulation consultations.
- More than 22% of the premises we inspected were unsatisfactory, and we issued 14 Enforcement Notices and 16 Prohibition Notices indicating we are inspecting more premises that are non-compliant.
- We continue to comply with the NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) national guidance for 'Competency framework for Fire Safety Regulators' and developed programmes for our Protection Officers to ensure they have the right skills, competency, and technical knowledge to carry out inspection audits to the highest standard.
- Invested our Protection Uplift Grant received from Government to improve the competency and consistency of our Protection team by employing a Training Manager
- We have officers engaged in the NFCC Contextualised Auditors Register, giving us the assurance that our officers meet the highest standards of auditing.
- Had 5 officers complete the Protection Level 5 Engineering qualification, ensuring our officers are amongst the highest trained in the region to support businesses and developers with their building plans.
- Used some of our Protection Uplift Grant funding to fund an intern who developed a feedback process for our inspections, so we can evaluate our activity and collect diversity data for the people responsible for the premises we visit.
- Completed implementing the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower inquiry (Phase 1).
- Held multi-agency Impact Days which involve Protection, Prevention, Police and Local Authority Housing Officers regularly targeting premises in a different Suffolk town. Impact Days' supply education, advice and support for premises owners and managers.
- Successfully taken legal action in one prosecution where building owners have not complied with the legislation, 6 more investigations are ongoing.
- Trained more officers to complete fire investigations, enabling us to learn from incidents and contribute to national statistics and trends.
- Increased our Fire Safety Audits



- Engaged our response crews more to undertake simple audits and compliance checks. Crews now also undertake Post Incident Protection Activity (PIPA) work, targeting premises similar to those that have had a fire to encourage them to take a proactive approach to fire safety.
- The service's Water function has come under the wing of Protection enabling closer working with our planning and water officers. They are supported in more complex issues such as Battery Energy Storage Systems and solar panels.
- We allocated the area of sprinklers to one of the inspecting officers, who now champions the use of sprinklers and publicises any 'sprinkler saves' we have.
- We responded to 99% building regulation consultations within the required time and followed up 94% of licencing consultations, where further intervention or guidance was required.
- Offered an inspecting officer to liaise with our equality, diversity and inclusion agenda, to ensure Protection are fully engaged with this activity.
- Employed a Firefighter as a level 3 auditor, to develop them and to assist with our work to bring Protection and Response closer together.
- Focussed activity on reducing unwanted fire signals, working with the premises, and providing guidance and advice. Data is now being used more effectively to monitor unwanted fire signals and we have an intervention strategy following NFCC guidance.
- Trained response staff to undertake initial audits, giving them added skills and increasing our audit activity.
- Focussed our attention on the night-time economy in Ipswich with response crews undertaking 'during performance' inspections during the run-up and over the Christmas/New Year period.
- We implemented new government legislation; The Fire Safety Act 2021, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Making changes to our website to give up to date information to members of the public.
- Worked with regional colleagues and the NFCC to support the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR). A Suffolk officer is the regional manager and fire engineer for the BSR and one of our inspecting officers is a regional inspector.



In 2024 – 25 we plan to

- Review and amend our Risk Based Intervention Programme, in line with the draft NFCC guidance document expected to be published during 2024-25, targeting those buildings with the highest risk.
- Enforce the requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, and the subsidiary legislation that has been released.
- Use our data on Automatic False Alarms to focus on unwanted fire signals and implement our strategy to reduce these.
- Use the response crews to conduct a 'first strike' intervention for unwanted fire signals, using especially developed tear-off pads to record the information given to responsible persons and to log our interventions.
- 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.
- Conduct business engagement events and multi-agency impact days.
- Train our officers to the highest standards, identifying a level 5 officer to be further trained to Level 6 by supporting them on a fire engineering degree course.
- Engage with developers to ensure early guidance is provided at the planning stage for a building for the fire safety arrangements.
- Support and further develop the Regional Building Safety Regulator role, working with the NFCC and regional partners.
- Continue to support the Building Safety Regulator.
- Implement our strategies to evaluate our work and impact.
- Ensure the number of Fire Investigators stays at, or above, our benchmark of 10.
- Implement the adoption of the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) form for reporting issues with products that cause, or significantly contribute, to fires starting or the propagation of fire.
- Work closer with our water function department to consult plans for Solar Energy and Battery Energy Storage Systems.
- Pursue Remediation Orders where necessary if responsible persons are not engaged in remediating fire safety issues in residential blocks of flats they are responsible for.
- Review our policies and procedures in line with the changing technologies and the built environment.
- Engage response staff in more Protection activities such as impact days, simple audits/compliance checks and PIPA work.
- Use our website and social media channels to communicate important messages about the legislation changes and to host and support NFCC campaigns for fire safety.
- Consider Primary Authority Schemes within our county, to further support local and national businesses.
- Continue our investigations of responsible persons who do not comply with the legislation and place relevant persons at risk, bringing cases to court when necessary.
- Play an active role in the NFCC consultation of guidance documents.
- Ensure we remain fully compliant with the Protection Fire Standard.
- Implement the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Phase 2) recommendations when they are published.
- Continue to pursue the upgrade of our computer systems, supporting our hydrant officers to be more efficient and effective.
- Continue to pursue our desire to have mobile devices for all our inspecting officers to be able to complete audits remotely, and to have these integrated with our systems.

Response

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is dedicated to responding swiftly, safely, and effectively to emergencies. We prepare for a wide range of incidents, including fires, floods, road accidents, hazardous materials situations, and specialised rescues. To enhance our response, we collaborate closely with other agencies like the Ambulance Service, Police, and Coastguard.

In addition to reacting to emergencies, our crews work tirelessly to improve safety in Suffolk. We engage with both residential and business communities, focusing on prevention and protection measures. Our goal is to reduce the occurrence of incidents and minimise their impact on their lives and local community.

To ensure effective emergency response, we strategically position fire stations, appliances, and specialised resources across Suffolk. These locations, supported by personnel working various duty shifts, enable efficient coverage for smaller towns, parishes, villages, and densely populated areas like Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, and Lowestoft.

Our highly trained firefighters rely on modern equipment and up-to-date risk information to respond safely and efficiently. While we prioritise vulnerable groups and high-risk situations, our commitment extends to enhancing safety for everyone in our communities.

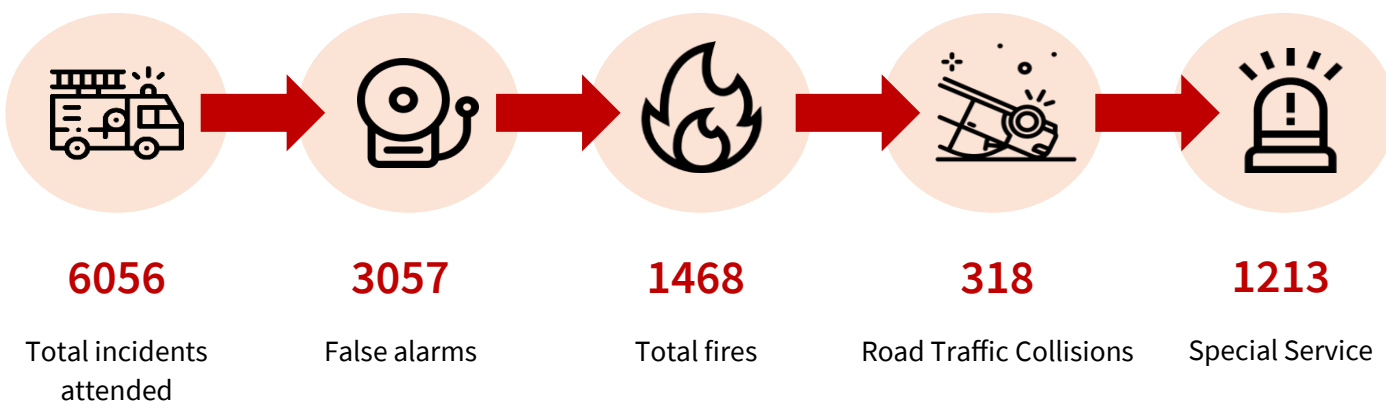
As the county's risk profile evolves, our station-based teams adapt. They actively engage in community safety and prevention efforts, emphasising education and intervention. We monitor performance to maximize impact and focus on initiatives such as:

- **Home Fire Safety Visits**
- **Fire Protection Audits for Businesses**
- **Compliance Checks and Risk-Based Inspections**
- **Specialist Public Safety Advice on Water, Ice, and Wildfires**

We're dedicated to supporting those most in need and addressing the highest risks within our community. Together, we strive for a safer Suffolk where people lead safe and fulfilling lives.



In 2023-2024 responded to:



In 2023-24:

- **Recruitment Efforts:** We've focused on recruiting firefighters for our On-Call duty system and seamlessly integrated new recruits into our wholetime crews. Thanks to these efforts, we've seen a boost in on-call station recruitment.
- **Flexible Shifts:** Our ongoing review of the On-Call system aims to create family-friendly and flexible shift patterns. The introduction of new pay bands enhances our recruitment flexibility.
- **Reviewed our Water rescue:** We have introduced new equipment for carry out rescue in Water, Mud and Ice. This will make it easier for our firefighter to carry out rescues.
- **Collaboration and Preparedness:** We've strengthened our multi-agency partnerships and cross-border exercises with neighbouring fire services. This ensures a robust response to local and emerging risks, including high-rise fires, ship firefighting, and Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Procedures (JESIP). We have introduced minimum exercise targets keep our firefighters ready for any emergency.
- **Storm Response:** When Storm Babet brought record rainfall and major flooding, we were there to assist our communities promptly.
- **Supporting our blue light partners:** We've increased our support to police and ambulance services, providing vital assistance where needed.
- **Regional Cooperation:** We continue to collaborate with our regional fire service neighbours, responding whenever required.
- **Enhanced Safety Measures:** Our operational crew has stepped up home fire safety checks by over 40% from last year. Additionally, we've introduced new fire engines and Turn Table Ladders for working at height. These upgrades ensure our firefighters have the latest equipment, enabling them to work safely and effectively.
- **Local Risk Management Plan (LRMP):** We have introduced LRMP to all our stations. These plans have been tailored to represent our local communities providing risk information based on local knowledge.



Throughout 2023 to 2024, our response team has made significant strides in enhancing delivery of our service.

Our prevention efforts: We have diligently improved our oversight of the prevention activities carried out by our crews, with a keen focus on targeting our most vulnerable Suffolk residents. This achievement has been realised through the implementation of enhanced training programs and the meticulous recording of relevant data. By prioritising prevention work and refining our approach, we are better equipped to safeguard communities and minimize the risk of emergencies.

On-call Recruitment: A key accomplishment of our response team during the period of 2023 to 2024 has been the successful collaboration with businesses and the recruitment team to bolster our on-call recruitment efforts. Through the establishment of recruitment champions at each station, we have streamlined the recruitment process and attracted qualified individuals to join our ranks. This proactive approach ensures that we maintain optimal staffing levels, thereby enhancing our capacity to respond effectively to emergencies.

Exercising with Our Blue Light Partners: An integral aspect of our operational readiness is the collaboration with our blue light partners and neighbouring brigades. In recognition of this, our response team has introduced a new policy and exercising framework aimed at enhancing our effectiveness during emergency responses. By adhering to the principles of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), we ensure seamless coordination and communication with partner agencies. Through regular joint exercises and training drills, we fortify our collective ability to respond to emergencies and mitigate their impact on the communities we serve.

Exercising with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services: Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has successfully implemented a cross-border exercise program, fostering collaboration with neighbouring fire and rescue services to enhance Cross-Border Preparedness for Safer Communities.

SFRS has proactively developed a robust cross-border exercise program, ensuring a consistent approach to training and collaboration regionally. SFRS actively engages with neighbouring fire services to conduct joint training exercises periodically. By sharing knowledge, best practices, and resources, SFRS and its counterparts enhance their collective capabilities

Maximising resource: Response engagement with the NFCC firefighter utilisation survey has prompted District reviews into the distribution of work being undertaken by Response crews. Working with Performance & Improvement identified that improved data was required to effectively identify the impact of numerous workstreams and how improvement could be facilitated. This commenced with the need to quantify both time and quality of operational training to ensure this risk critical function is carried out efficiently and effectively. Closer scrutiny of performance against the Local Risk Management plans utilising existing performance and new service measures will allow closer management of remaining hours.

Succession planning: Response identifies staffing requirements, engaging monthly with Workforce Planning and the Learning and Development team to work flexibly to achieve the needs to the Service. Quality PDR's are being embedded and utilised to nominate personnel for progression with available routes maximised whilst maintaining standards.

Digital Transformation: Response managers have been key contributors and stakeholders in how the service has evolved and innovated in response data management. The new ways of working digitally have enhanced the response ability to capture and manage response related information, to further promote continuous improvement in how we deliver the best possible service to our communities.

Training and Skill Sets: In pursuit of operational excellence, our response team has made significant advancements in training and skill development. We have implemented more efficient systems to better plan and identify areas requiring focused training. By maximising our appliance availability through strategic training initiatives, we are better prepared to tackle a diverse range of emergency scenarios. This commitment to continuous improvement ensures that our personnel possess the requisite skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties effectively.

Water Rescue Capability: During the period of 2023 to 2024, our response team undertook a comprehensive review of our water rescue capabilities. We have made strategic changes to our existing model, aligning our resources and equipment with the prevailing risks. This proactive approach enables our crews to respond promptly to incidents involving flooding and undertake rescue operations with greater efficiency. By optimising our water rescue capabilities, we enhance our ability to safeguard lives and property in water-related emergencies.

Absence management Response are represented on the Absence management meetings, ensuring that absence is highlighted at the earliest opportunity, working closely with all departments to provide a path that not only facilitates a return to their workplace but also considers their welfare requirements and, subject to an assessment, an interim role on modified duties where the individual feels valued and supported.

Tackling unwanted fire signals and non-emergency special services: Much improved data on unwanted fire signals has led to crew engagement with organisations on the management of fire safety provisions. Liaising with the Protection department allows for a joint approach and, though early days, appears key to being able to drive down calls in this area and Screening of non-emergency calls through Control and the duty Group Manager provides an additional layer of challenge to organisations wishing to discharge their duties through the Fire Service, providing the necessary scrutiny and recharging where accepted.

Response to climate-related incidents: SFRS response teams have been frontline to some of the most severe climate-related emergencies in the last few years, this includes extreme heatwaves and storms such as Storm Babet. When Storm Babet struck, SFRS swiftly and proportionately mobilized its resources to risk. Firefighters worked tirelessly for many hours to address people trapped by flood water, fallen trees, and other storm-related incidents. Their timely response helped protect lives and property across affected areas. During the heatwaves of 2023, SFRS responders worked in extreme heat, to control and extinguish fires within the county over a prolonged period. They monitored vulnerable regions, ensuring rapid response to wildfires and heat-related emergencies.



Safeguarding culture: Our staff have always had safeguarding at the heart of their day-to-day business. The increase in safeguarding concerns have created a closer working relationship, with response crews engaging with the community to highlight concerns, identify individual needs, and work with departments and leads to mitigate risk where possible. This has included using available data to recognise multiple attendance as well as maximising on scene and post incident collaboration with external agencies to facilitate action.

Budget management: Recent budget realignments and improved forecasting have provided the ability to compare expenditure between areas and better recognise trends. This, combined with improved incident data and staff tracking, has allowed greater understanding of financial impacts of appliance and staff movement including volume and length of incidents, resulting standby arrangements, and spare conditions which is key in an On Call Service where staff costs can fluctuate widely month on month.

In 2024 -25 we plan to

Emergency Response Fleet and Equipment: Our current assets will be continuously reviewed in line with emerging risks, such as severe weather events and new technologies. We'll ensure our provision meets Suffolk's requirements and national commitments.

Collaboration with Partners: We're committed to a skilled, engaged workforce that collaborates effectively with partner agencies and emergency services. Together we will be better prepared to tackle the diverse challenges our communities face.

Managing Risk: We will continue to support our teams in identifying and managing our risk, so we are prepared to advise and respond where appropriate.

Staff wellbeing and safety: We will strive to support our staff in both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Meet our commitments within the Response area of the [Community Response Management Plan 2023-2027](#)

To achieve these goals, we'll:

- Promote Inclusivity by fostering understanding and education within our community, we'll create a positive and inclusive culture.
- Our team will continue to review and familiarise themselves with local emerging risks, such as Sizewell C
- Optimise roles by reviewing firefighter roles to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.
- Engage with communities with targeted community safety and business engagement that is a priority.
- We'll allocate resources where needed to manage risks effectively.
- Measure performance with regular evaluations to gauge the impact of our work.
- Our staff will receive training to handle existing and emerging risks, while we actively manage their physical and mental wellbeing.

7 Our People

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

To best serve our communities, we are committed to fostering a workplace culture that values diversity, inclusion, and respect. By empowering our employees and providing them with the necessary skills and support, we aim to create a thriving work environment where everyone can contribute to our shared goal of enhancing community safety by doing the basics brilliantly.



606
Operational Staff



104
Support Staff

On- Call Firefighters

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.

Non station based firefighters

These fire fighters perform a number of roles including a whole time County Day Crew that work holistically around the county to increase coverage where required.

Wholetime firefighters

Wholetime firefighters are shift-based, some working days and nights and others working only day shifts.

Support Staff

Behind every firefighter is a dedicated support team. From maintaining our vehicles to managing our IT systems and ensuring our operational effectiveness, our support staff are instrumental in delivering our services to the community.



In 2023-24 we:

- Recruited a brilliant new team of Managers and Operators for our new Control Centre which is due to commence in December 2024.
- Recruited a Workforce Planning Manager to focus on Recruitment, EDI and Learning and Development which aims to enhance our joined-up thinking approach to people.
- Recruited an EDI lead to focus on, developing our culture, and to expand our staff understanding of the role they play in creating a positive and psychological safe environment.
- Recruited an apprentice from Suffolk Family Business supporting care leavers.
- Delivered a high percentage of the actions within the HMI Culture and Values report and continue to work on enhancing our culture.
- Relunched our corporate values to include NFCC core code of ethics.
- Relaunch our employee engagement group.
- Introduced SFRS speak up to enable anonymise reporting of inappropriate practice and behaviour.
- Reignited our EDI Advocate programme.
- Created a suite of leadership and management opportunities.
- Enhanced our performance management process to aid better succession planning and move from a supply led training approach to a demand led programme.
- Enhanced our learning passport to encourage and support our neurodiverse recruits and current staff.
- Significantly enhanced the quality of our management information (MI) through the use of business information (BI). PowerBI dashboards have been created which allow interrogation and forecasting of skill sets, succession, and recruitment planning.

In 2024 – 25 we plan to

- Improve our workforce planning creating a strategy for the next three years.
- Increase employee engagement by developing a 'grow our own' approach to key vacancies and use positive action where required.
- Improve the quality of our data by exploring LMS and VLE systems.
- Explore improvement to our approach to service progression focusing on quality of development and ownership by the individual.
- Create and develop clarity of the stages of the employee life cycle relating to the career pathways and the support available including retiring from the service.
- Explore direct entry to increase diversity.
- Continue to review On Call working practices to support flexible recruitment, development and retention.

Equality Diversity & Inclusion

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:

- 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.
- Increasing the diversity of applicants applying for roles across the service
- Continuous understanding of the communication needs of our Neurodiverse staff and communities.
- Improving staff's confidence and skills in engaging with different communities
- Ensuring we know how to measure our Service's culture and attitude and that we truly understand this information to continuously improve our Service.

In 2023 -2024 we:

- Appointed our EDI Lead.
- Collaborated with our EDI colleagues across the whole of SCC to promote and engage in partnership working.
- Continued our EDI working Group to ensure that our staff can continue their learning as well as driving focus groups to achieve outcomes such as training opportunities.
- Relunched the Staff Engagement Group to ensure our Staff have a voice regardless of hierarchy, feel truly heard and for those ideas and continuous improvements to be discussed and fed back appropriately.
- Launch of the SFRS Advocates who share who promote the benefits that equality, diversity, and inclusion bring to every person in SFRS and community.
- Continued our engagement and learning with the Asian Fire Service Association Summer and Winter conferences and NFCC EDI Summer Conference.
- Continued to support all our Staff Networks including Suffolk Women in Fire Together, held a Women's Day 2024 Celebration supported by allies from Suffolk Fire and Suffolk County Council.
- Completed a Staff Survey to analyse our understanding of Positive Action and how we can support and provide EDI training requirements to all staff.
- Launch of a program of engagement with all On-Call Stations and Full-Time Stations.
- Led a cascade approach to understand our current Culture and Values and to establish what we can learn to ensure each staff member is able to bring their whole selves to the workplace.

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. Proactively ensuring their wellbeing, positive morale, and purposeful engagement is vital and strengthens the service we provide to you.

Looking after our staff and enabling them to support their mental and physical health is a key priority for us.

We have a vast range of resources to assist our teams including access to Mental Health First Aiders, Mental Health Tool kits, Wellbeing Action Plans and Stress Risk assessments. Access to The Fit Business, an online exercise platform, is given to all staff groups to encourage and promote the maintenance of physical health and mental wellbeing. We continue to work with organisations and charity partners including the Firefighters Charity to provide specific health and wellbeing input to our staff and promote targeted campaigns including Mental Health Awareness Week.

The signing of the Mental Health at Work Commitment in 2023 continues to demonstrate the importance of and streamline the focus for improving mental health and wellbeing within the service.

This work is linked to Suffolk County Council's strategy and tools for wellbeing including an employee assistance program and access to the SCC Occupational Health contract, which has a specific Fire Service provision.

2023-2024 has seen the implementation of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), a model of support for all colleagues following any critical incident or traumatic exposures utilizing peer support as a mechanism for psychologically supported debriefing. CISM aims to limit and mitigate the development of longer-term mental health conditions through peer-led support processes facilitating psychological debriefing.

A team of 10 colleagues across SFRS have been trained to support this process by Professor Steven Regel and are coordinated by the Wellbeing Officer.

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

As part of National Best Practice, firefighters are required to undertake a fitness test annually. We offer this test through a variety of methods. The Wellbeing Officer provides support to help operational staff with their physical fitness to ensure the national fitness standard is met and guides non-operational staff who want to improve general fitness and health.



Health and Safety

Firefighting and responding to emergencies, training and other public safety related activities present risks to our employees. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our employees and the public that exceeds legal and statutory requirements by focusing on prevention, training, and continuous improvement.

Our dedicated Health, Safety, and Wellbeing team works collaboratively with staff and management to identify and mitigate risks. We prioritise firefighter safety through targeted investments in equipment, training, and operational guidance, while also learning from incidents to inform safer practices.

To enhance safety, we have implemented robust 'safe systems of work' for all operations, including training and non-operational activities. These systems are underpinned by national guidance and provide clear risk controls to support our staff.

Our proactive approach to safety is demonstrated by a significant 30% increase in near-miss and safety concern reporting from 168 in 2022-23 to 218 in 2023-24. This positive trend indicates a growing safety culture where staff feel empowered to report potential hazards. Additionally, we have reduced reportable accidents under RIDDOR from six in 2022-23 to two in 2023-24.

In 2023-24, 41 personal accident injuries were recorded, a 29% decrease from last year.

A staff survey on health and safety climate has also been completed, with the aim to repeat the task in three years to measure our progress in improving a positive Health and Safety culture.

In 2024-25 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 level.

In 2023-24, we reviewed our Health and Safety Policy to align with Suffolk County Council standards. This collaboration enhances consistency and reduces redundancy in policy development, paving the way for future collaboration. The revised policy is currently under review and is scheduled for publication in July 2024.

Training, Learning and Development

Operational training continues to be at the heart of our Fire and Rescue Service. Every year training is delivered, in many formats, to all our operational firefighters, officers and support teams. In 2023 after significant investment, our new training centre was officially opened. In its first year (2023/24), it has hosted over 4000 students and visitors through its doors.

Our training centre, to date, has seen continuous improvements which includes an electronic visitor 'sign in' process with a fully integrated feedback function, to inform and support improvements, enabling us to tailor our training centre and surrounding 17 acres, to further enrich the learning environment.

We have seen the development and introduction of a new laboratory facility, which allows fire 'science' training to be delivered in a more practical format, assisting all learning styles, this approach has received positive feedback and is a great addition to the site, utilising previously redundant space.

In 2023 we established a dedicated Incident command team, who have created 'continuing professional development (CPD)' content, policies and support for all those carrying out the various roles associated with incident command.

The operational training team remain at the forefront of regional development and training, supporting many working groups and blue light colleges across the fire sector, these areas include driver training, incident command, technical rescue and breathing apparatus training for local industry firefighting teams, etc. This supports our continued collaborative approach and ensures 'best practice' and 'value for money' is identified and shared.

In 2024-25 we plan to:

- Deliver 500+ courses throughout the year (24/25), to support our operational response, to incidents across Suffolk and beyond.
- Act upon feedback from those using our training facilities to further develop our 17 acre site and enrich the learning environment.
- To further develop our learning environment to support neurodiversity, which includes alternative media, supporting all to fulfil their career aspirations.
- Continue our partnership ethos of working, ensuring we are efficient, effective and integrated across the 'emergency response' sector.
- To support the introduction of new equipment, ensuring current firefighting methodology continues to be safe and effective.
- Promote active collaboration with our blue light partners, to ensure lessons learnt from 'Major' incidents and those of 'significant' interest are shared and imbedded in our training environment in a timely manner, supporting both the service and the communities we serve.



8 Our Performance 2023 -2024

Our commitment to delivering the most effective and efficient service to our community is underpinned by a robust performance assurance framework. We meticulously analyse a range of performance measures to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. This data-driven approach, coupled with a consideration of external factors, enables us to allocate resources strategically and enhance our service delivery.

Response Standards

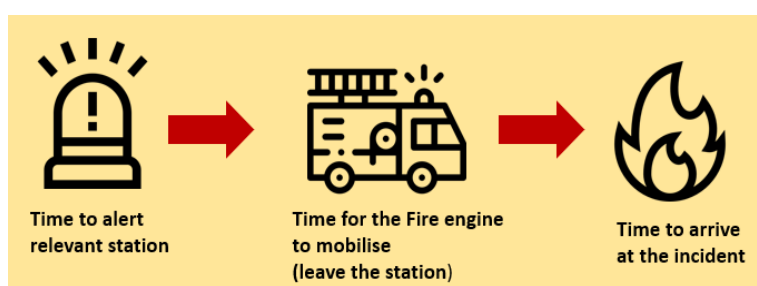
We have four performance standards for our Speed of Response, which measure how long it takes for fire crews to get to an incident. There are no nationally specified standards for fire services to respond to emergencies, and different services have various measures, response times and targets. In Suffolk,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

Current Response Standards					
RS	Description	Target	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1	First fire engine to a property fire within 11 minutes	80%	67%	69%	69%
2	Second fire engine to a property fire within 16 minutes	80%	70%	74%	73%
3	First fire engine to a road traffic collision within 13 minutes	80%	66%	64%	67%
4	First fire engine to all incidents within 20 mins	80%	N/A	N/A	95%

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



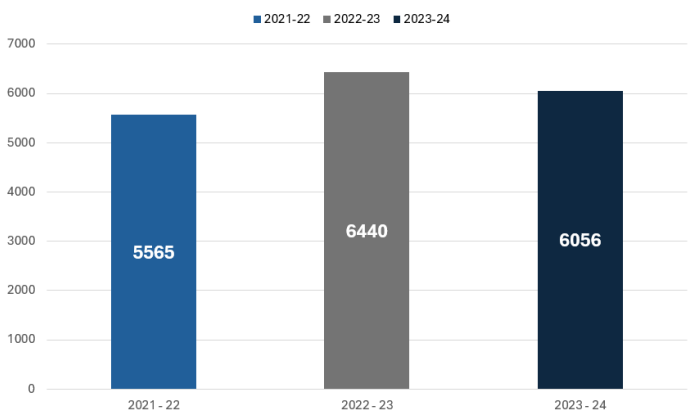
In line with the CRMP consultation and NFCC risk methodology guidance, we implemented revised response standards, including a fourth standard, at the start of the 2023-24 financial year.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Performance Measures

2023 – 2024

The following tables present our performance data for the financial year 2023 - 24. Please note that these figures may be subject to change as investigations conclude.

ALL INCIDENTS ATTENDED

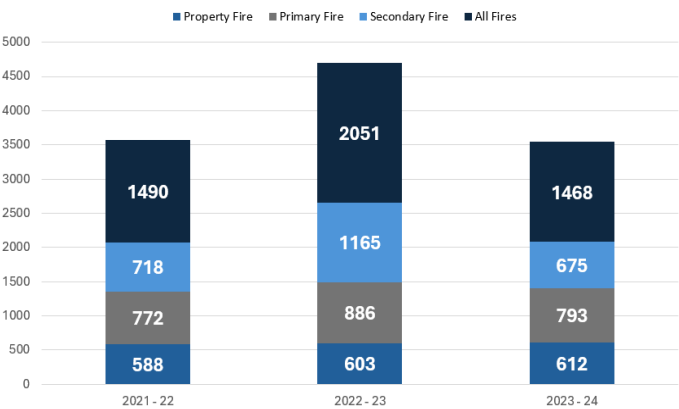


Incident numbers decreased compared to the previous year. However, we experienced significant challenges due to severe flooding in October 2023 and January.

To mitigate future risks, we have expanded our prevention work to include wildfire and water safety initiatives, particularly in rural areas.

FIRES ATTENDED

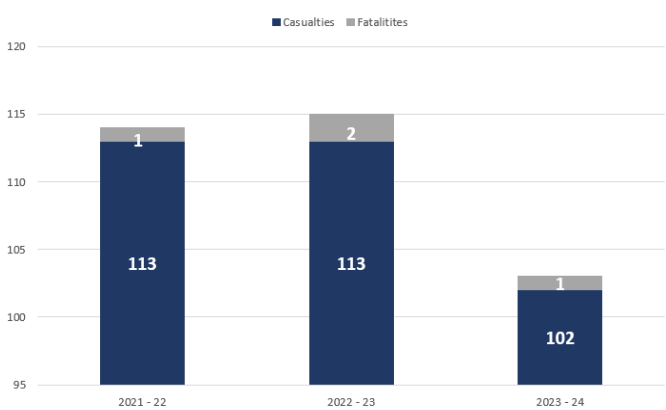
(NB: Property Fires are a subset of Primary Fires)



Overall, fire incidents have decreased by 28% compared to the previous year. While property fires saw a slight increase, this was offset by reductions in other areas. The absence of severe dry weather conditions, unlike the previous year, contributed to this positive trend.

Our ongoing prevention efforts, including wildfire and thatch safety initiatives in rural areas, have been strengthened through partnerships with organisations such as the National Farmers Union

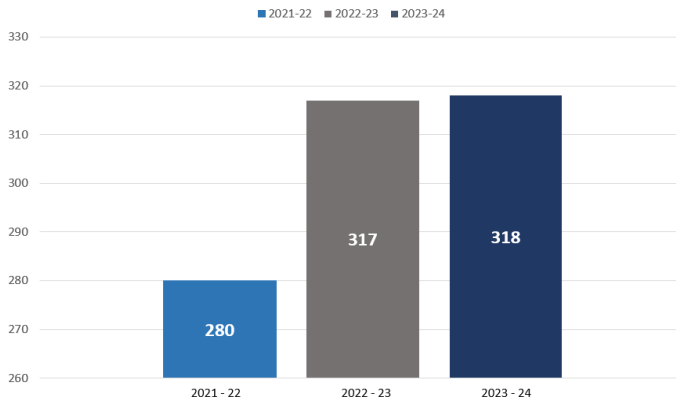
FIRE FATALITIES & CASUALTIES



The fire casualties decreased this reporting year. The majority of casualties were treated for slight injuries or first aid at scene with only 5% having serious fire related injuries. These include minor burns and smoke inhalation.

For a service, no fire fatality is ever acceptable. We have had 1 fatality related to fire

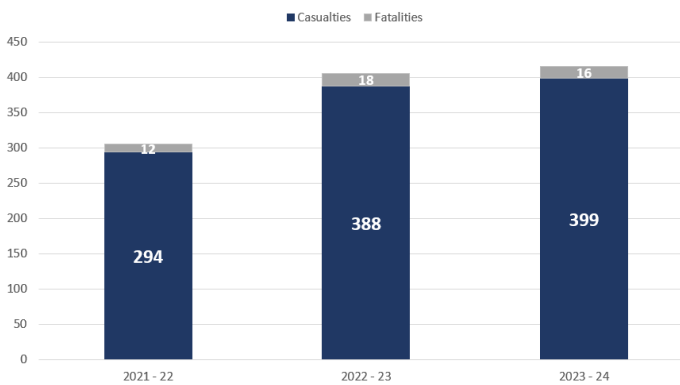
ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS



Road traffic collision numbers remained relatively stable this year despite several contributing factors. Increased traffic volumes resulting from both highway improvement projects, increased population and a surge in tourism played a role.

The post-pandemic trend of staycations, coupled with popular events like Latitude, also contributed to higher visitor numbers and increased road usage in Suffolk.

ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION FATALITIES & CASUALTIES

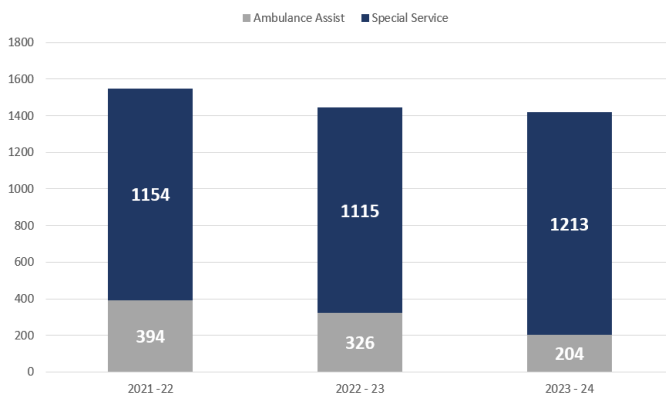


While the number of road traffic collisions remains a concern, we have seen a slight decrease in fatalities this year.

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in casualties overall. This aligns with the trend of increased road usage, particularly during peak holiday periods when we typically see higher numbers of incidents.

SPECIAL SERVICE ATTENDANCE

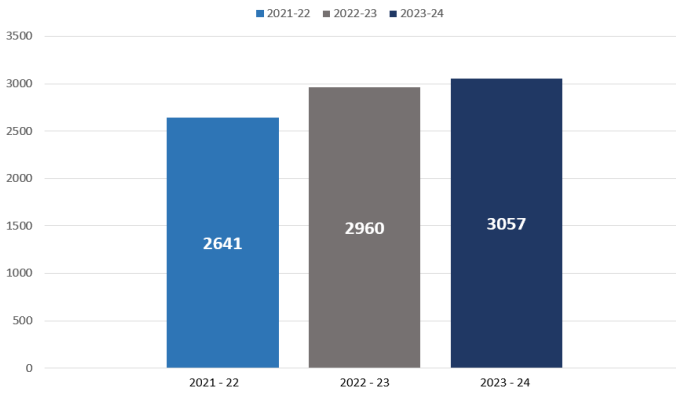
(NB Ambulance Assist is a subset of Special Service Attendance)



Our service responds to a wide range of non-fire related incidents, including water rescues, animal rescues, and supporting other agencies.

We have seen a continued decrease in ambulance assistance calls. However, the significant flooding in October 2023 highlighted our role in supporting the community, with 148 special service responses in one day, including water rescues and assisting other agencies.

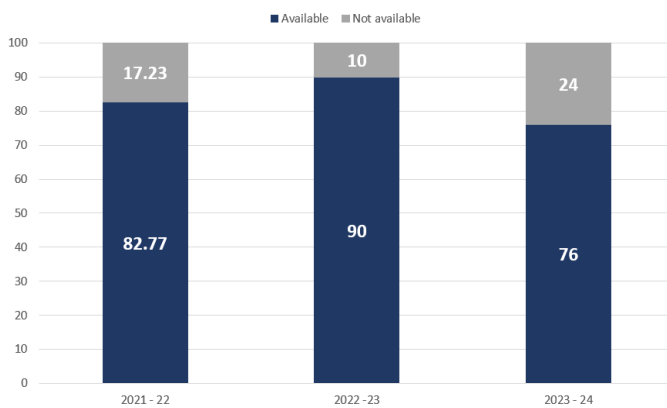
AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS



Automatic fire alarms accounted for half of all incidents in 2023-24. To address the high volume of false alarms, particularly in residential tall buildings and public service buildings, we are reviewing our policies, prevention work and implementing additional performance monitoring measures for 2024-25.

While most automatic fire alarm calls do not result in actual fires, they still require a response, impacting our overall efficiency.

ON-CALL AVAILABILITY PERCENTAGES

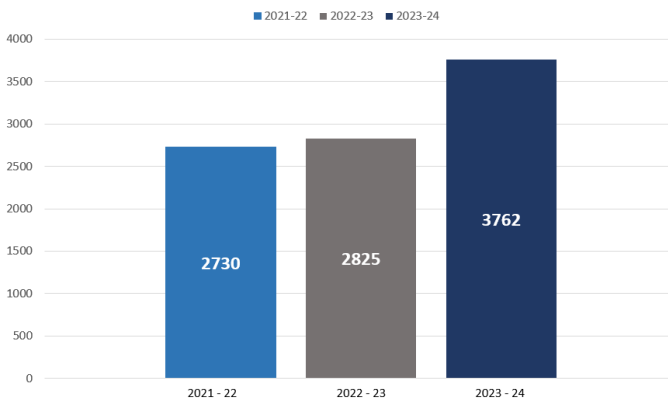


On-call firefighter availability has decreased during core working hours due to increased employment commitments.

While availability remains strong overnight and at weekends, daytime cover presents a challenge. We acknowledge the invaluable contribution of employers and businesses who support our on-call firefighters, particularly during periods of high demand, such as the October flooding.

To address this issue, we are actively exploring sustainable solutions as part of our community risk management plan.

PREVENTION HOME FIRE SAFETY VISITS

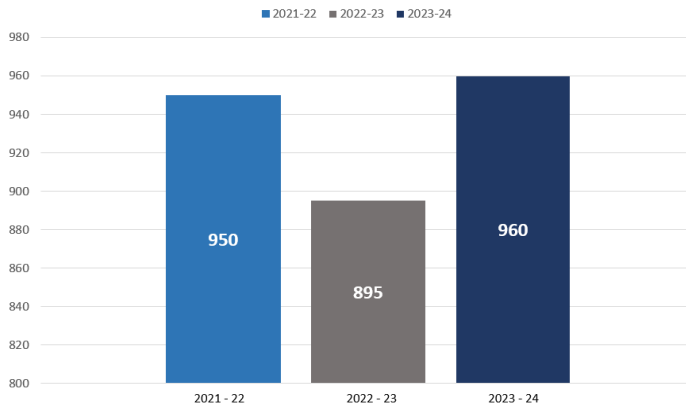


Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) have significantly increased this year.

This positive trend is attributed to increased investment, the dedicated work of a crew liaison officer, enhanced training, and the effective use of data to target high-risk communities.

Our firefighters have played a crucial role in delivering these life-saving visits

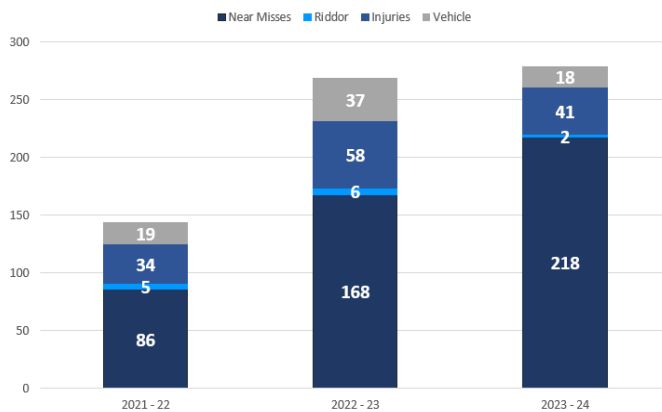
PROTECTION FIRE SAFETY AUDITS



Our protection team has enhanced fire safety by increasing the number of fire safety audits and issuing enforcement notices as needed.

This proactive approach contributes to creating a safer environment for residents and visitors.

ACCIDENTS & NEAR MISSES



The increase in reported accidents, near misses, reflects a positive shift towards a stronger health and safety culture within the service.

This proactive approach has contributed to a decrease in RIDDOR incidents, injuries, and vehicle accidents during the 2023-24 period

Effective performance management is essential for achieving our organisational goals. By clearly defining objectives and regularly monitoring progress, we can enhance service delivery, improve efficiency, and drive effective outcomes for our community.

In 2023-24 we have:

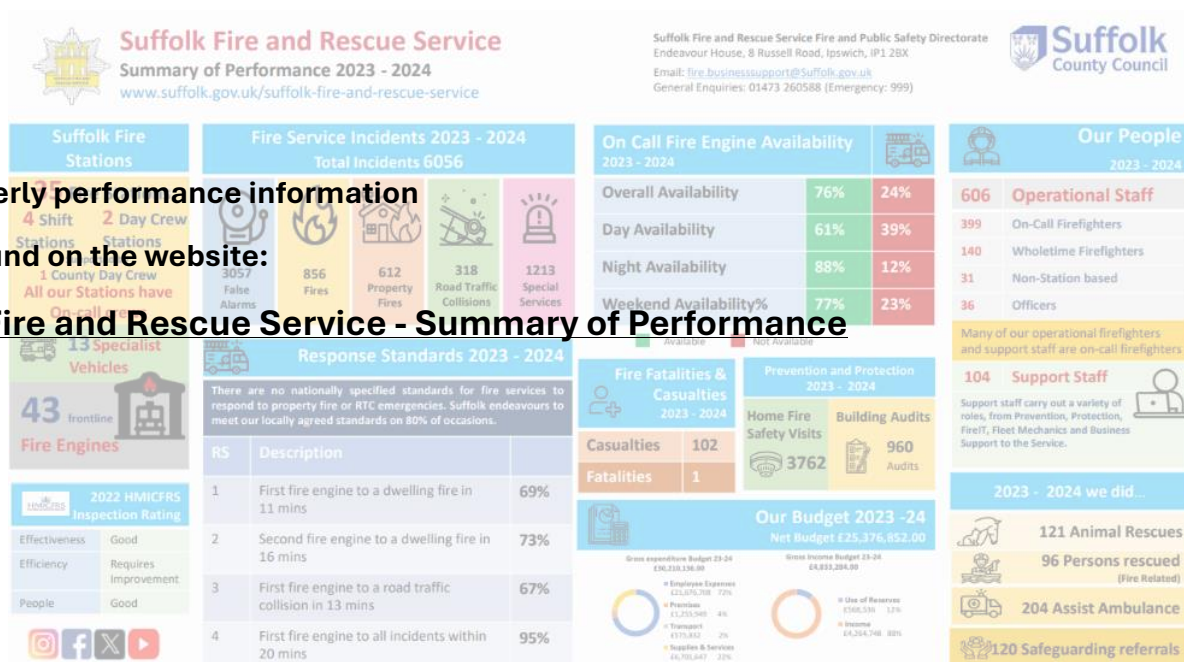
- Ensured that the Performance Assurance Board now provides governance and scrutiny to the service performance.
- Published our quarterly performance information on Suffolk Fire and Rescue web page via Suffolk County Council website.
- Improved data analysis tools for managers to support the Local Risk Management Plans and the Community Risk Management Plan.
- Ensured that HMICFRS recommendations are monitored.
- Improved our action plan recording and monitoring.
- Improved our use of PowerBi reporting.
- Completed and implemented our Data warehouse

In 2024-25 we plan to

- Improve and increase how we report our performance to our community via our website.
- Continue to conduct evaluation of performance in all aspects of the service to drive improvement and allow us to continue to keep Suffolk safe.
- Use performance to assist improved collaborative working between Prevention and Response.
- Use performance to support Stations Local Risk Management Plans, so they can target resources at the risk areas in their local community and where it is most needed.
- Use performance to support the Community Risk Management Plan and ensure we deliver the best value for Suffolk.

Our quarterly performance information can be found on the website:

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service - Summary of Performance



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.

SFRS also ensures that processes are audited internally. Findings are reported via Operational Assurance 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 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Service (HMICFRS).

Our HMICFRS inspection

His 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. The formal report was published in January 2023.

We are inspected against three areas and at the time of our inspection there were four possible outcomes of ratings: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate (serious failings in policy, practice, or performance)



Effectiveness **Score - Good**

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



Efficiency **Score - Requires Improvement**

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



People **Score - Good**

How well do we look after our people?

The Inspectorate reported that it was a pleasure to revisit Suffolk Fire and Rescue and he was grateful for the positive and constructive way the service engaged with the inspection.

It was noted that we have made improvements since our last inspection. These are most notable in how the service protects the public through the regulation of fire safety, and how it gathers risk information and makes this available.

Innovative practice was highlighted for our use of QR codes which give staff instant access to record and review lessons learned from operational incidents, training, and exercises.

The inspectorate commended the changes made to improve our culture, values, behaviours, and wellbeing, noting that staff now feel more empowered.

Improvements are needed in allocation of staff across prevention, protection, and response, including how we identify, support, and ensure our development and promotion process is open transparent and fair.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is one of the top performing County Council Fire and Rescue Services and we are commended for the changes and improvements we have already made.

9 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

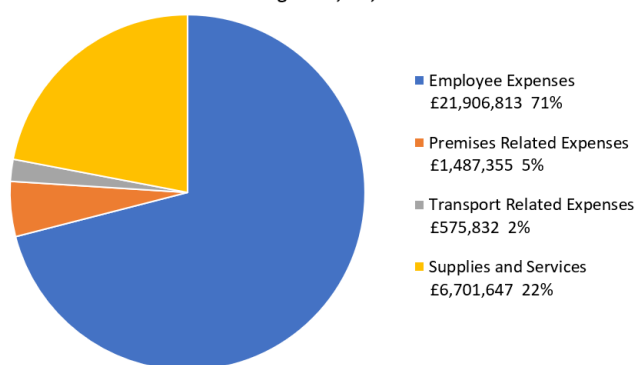
Suffolk County Council's Annual Statement of Accounts is examined by external auditors. The auditors' report also reviews arrangements to ensure the use of public resources is economical, efficient, and effective.

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

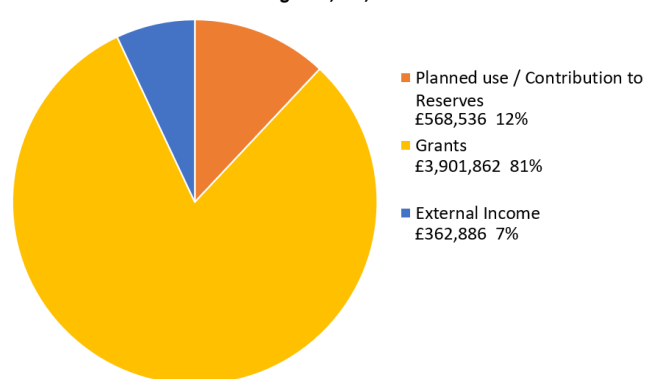
The statement of Accounts and External Auditors Letter are published on Suffolk County Councils website:

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

Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service Gross Expenditure 2023-24
Budget £30,671,647



Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service Gross Income 2023 - 24
Budget £4,833,284



Revenue position for Fire and Public Safety 2023 – 24

Service Area	2023-24 FY Budget (£m)	Outturn (£m)	Variance Over (+) Under (-) Budget (£m)	Deterioration (+) or Improvement (-) from Q3 Forecast (£m)
Joint Emergency Planning Unit	0.372	0.351	-0.021	-0.025
Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service	25.838	26.383	0.545	-0.028
Trading Standards	1.779	1.756	-0.022	-0.020
Grand Total	27.989	28.491	0.502	-0.073

For 2023-24 Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service had a Gross Expenditure Budget of £30,671,647 and a Gross Income Budget of £4,833,284 which gives a Net Budget £25,838,363.

The outturn position was £26,383,482 which was an overspend of £545,119.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service are overspent by £0.545 million in 2023-24. This is a combination of the following factors:

- a. £0.637 million overspend has been identified within Fire IT. This is a combination of the following factors;
 - i. Firstly, the reduction of the Firelink grant of £0.047 million for 2023-24 which funds the communications network between Fire Engines and Fire Control is being phased out over the next couple of years and will be nil in 2026-27. Cumulatively, the grant has now reduced by a total of £0.075 million since its withdrawal was announced but the costs that it supports continue to increase. An example of this is the annual Airwaves contract where costs have increased by 13.5% alone in 2023-24 so the gap with a reduction in grant is much more prominent.
 - ii. Secondly, there are significant increases in costs due to the increase of technology and support contracts through high inflation and global shortages of equipment. This affects all the key areas within Fire IT such as airwave, GIS and mapping, mobile data terminals software support, mobile phone, mobilising, networks, security, and software. Additionally, a review of outstanding Home Office Airwave monthly costs totalling £0.150 million has added to the overspend. Despite various mitigations, including use of reserves, vacancy management and applying careful rigour to reduce expenditure, there has been a deterioration of £0.286 million compared to Quarter 3.
 - iii. There was an overspend of £0.068 million in Command attributable to external Consultancy Fees of £0.044 million in respect of enhancements made to Oracle specifically for Fire.
 - iv. An unachieved Digital Transformation saving balance of £0.168 million. This has been resolved for 2024-25 and is therefore one-off.
- b. Vehicle Maintenance has overspent by £0.052 million for 2023-24. The overspend is a combination of:
 - i. £0.169 million overspend on maintenance to vehicles mainly arising from damage incurred to vehicles during spate conditions such as Storms Babet, Ciaran and Henke. When responding to challenging conditions such as flooding, those vehicles can require more costly repairs and maintenance than normal as well as additional fuel costs.
 - ii. Staff costs also show an overspend of £0.042 million with overtime and call outs being incurred in response to these spate conditions and budgetary vacancy savings not being met.
 - iii. The overspend has been mitigated by the sales receipts of vehicles equating to £0.128 million.
- c. Fire Combined Control overspent by £0.058 million as committed costs payable to Cambridge Fire and Rescue in 2023-24 were finalised and agreed as part of the transition to Suffolk operating its own Fire control centre.

- d. The overspends in Fire have been mitigated by underspends across various areas of the service that total £0.202 million. The most significant part of this is Operational Response (underspent by £0.134 million) arising from staffing. The service closely examining its costs throughout 2023-24 so that it could take every opportunity to mitigate overspends and improve the financial position wherever possible.

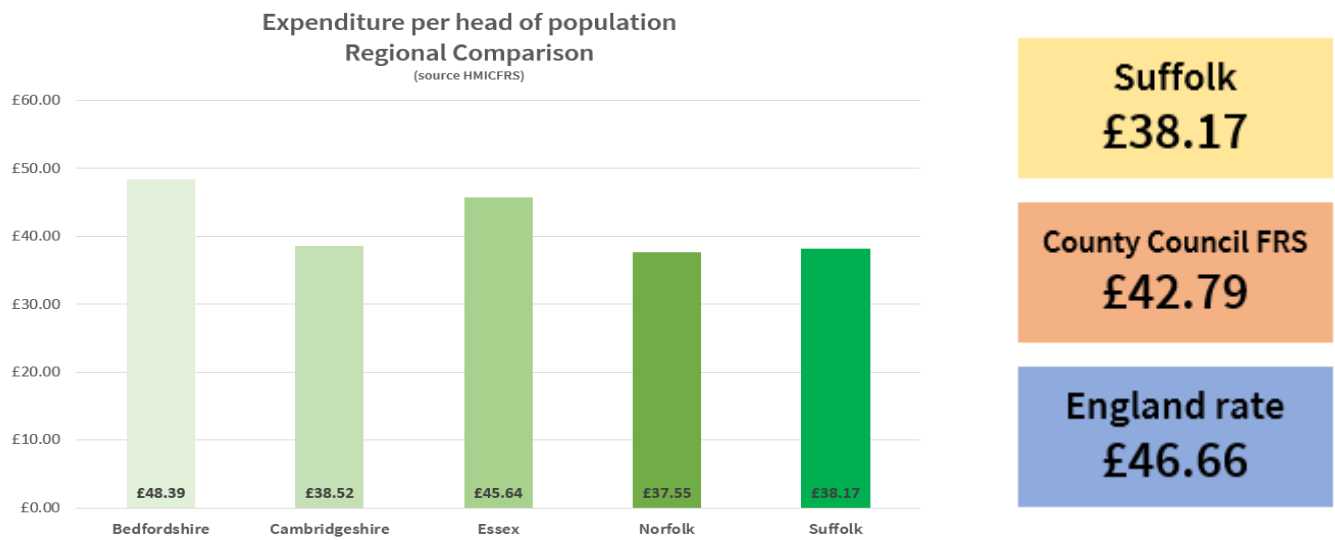
Fire and Public Safety Capital Programme Schemes

FPS 2024-25 Capital Programme Schemes

Capital Scheme	Description and how the scheme helps deliver against Directorate objectives
Operational Equipment (Rolling Programme)	An established ten-year capital replacement programme ensures the Council replaces existing equipment that is at its end-of-life. The equipment ensures firefighters can respond safely and effectively to the wide range of incidents identified in the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
Vehicle Renewals (Rolling Programme)	A fifteen-year fleet renewal programme which ensures that vehicles reaching their end-of-life are replaced in line with the fleet strategy. During 2024-28 this investment will replace twenty appliances, several operational officer response support vehicles, and vehicles for on call firefighter support and specialist functions.
IT Equipment (Rolling Programme)	An established ten-year capital replacement programme ensures the Council replaces and updates fire service-specific ICT equipment; this includes alerters, availability systems and mobilising equipment, all of which are integral to how the services are provided.
Property Improvement (Rolling Programme)	A ten-year capital renewals programme is in place to ensure the Council maintains a fit-for-purpose property portfolio. As well as fire stations, the portfolio includes the training centre at Wattisham airfield and training towers at fire stations and work otherwise out of scope of corporate property maintenance, PFI contract and blue-light collaboration property development.
Fire Control Centre	To create a Fire Control Centre in Suffolk to go live in 2024. To enable Suffolk fire service to answer 999 calls from Suffolk residents, the new centre will also facilitate the co-ordination of the Suffolk fire crews to maximise fire engine availability and therefore improve attendance times.

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 performing well.



10 National Resilience

National Resilience provides specialist capabilities, personnel and resources which enhance the ability of the sector to respond effectively to large-scale or critical incidents.

Those incidents may be natural disasters, industrial accidents, or terrorist attacks. Suffolk Fire and Rescue provides Mass Decontamination specialist teams, associated equipment and appliances that enable the Fire and Rescue Service to respond nationally to incidents requiring large numbers of people to be decontaminated following contact with a substance.

Suffolk is subjected to periodic National Assurance with the most recent being February 2024.

Local Resilience

Our ability to work with other responders delivering effective responses to Major Incident Emergencies is facilitated through working closely with the Local Resilience Forum and SCC Joint Emergency Planning Unit. SFRS is 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.

The Risk and Resilience Manager works in the multiagency environment ensuring high risk plans for sites and events are effective with a cohesive multiagency response.

SFRS undertakes programmed regional training with other fire and rescue services, and blue light responders ensuring operational readiness through Joint Operating Principles or wider response to major agency incidents.



Suffolk 
Prepared

11 Partnerships and Collaborations

Our Partnerships

We collaborate closely with key partners in community safety and wellbeing. This includes our joint fire control with Cambridgeshire, our role within Suffolk County Councils Fire and Public Safety Directorate

We forge strong partnerships to improve community safety and wellbeing. By working with Suffolk County Council, other emergency services, and safeguarding boards, we deliver vital prevention education, support vulnerable residents, and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

We are active partners in safeguarding adults and children. We collaborate closely with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and are members of key safeguarding networks, including the Multi-Agency Modern Day Slavery Network

Our Collaborations

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is committed to strong partnerships that enhance community safety. We collaborate closely with blue light services, Suffolk County Council, and other key agencies to deliver effective and efficient services. By sharing expertise and resources, we improve our ability to protect the public and enhance the quality of life for our communities.

Shared Estates Programme

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 17 stations with our blue light partners.

Cross Border Collaboration

We collaborate closely with neighbouring fire and rescue services in Cambridgeshire, Essex, and Norfolk. Through regular joint exercises, we enhance our ability to respond effectively to incidents across county borders. This collaborative approach ensures that our firefighters are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge to safeguard our communities.

Suffolk Partnerships

We collaborate closely with key internal partners, including Felixstowe Docks, Adastral Park, Mildenhall Airbase, and Suffolk Search and Rescue. Regular joint exercises ensure our ability to respond effectively to incidents within these complex environments

Combined Fire Control

The Fire Control is facilitated through Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Service and 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.

Mobilising systems enable Controllers to receive calls for help and allocate fire engines and other resources to attend to emergency incidents.

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.



Suffolk Fire and Rescue Fire Control moving forward

Following a comprehensive review, risk assessment, and approval by Suffolk County Council Cabinet, we initiated a project to invest in a new state of the art Control centre. This investment will enhance our ability to respond to emergencies, deploy resources efficiently, and improve overall service delivery.

Our new control centre will enhance our ability to deploy resources efficiently and effectively maximising fire engine availability. It will enable improvements in our response and provide greater support to our community. The new control room will also coordinate resources out of hours to provide a swifter service to our most vulnerable residents and improve our overall service delivery.

The project commenced in late 2023 and is progressing well towards its completion in the 2024-2025 financial year

12 Community Risk Management Plan

The CRMP identifies regional and national risks that are current, foreseeable, and emerging and could have an impact on our county. We aim to respond to those risks effectively and efficiently, becoming more agile and flexible in our approach to work and using our skills and experience to strengthen community safety.

We have initiated a four-year plan to implement our priorities, which includes ongoing engagement with staff and the public. Our focus remains on preventing fires, protecting lives and property, and responding effectively to emergencies.

We will prioritise our five key areas of focus to ensure our service adapts with current and future challenges. By understanding the evolving risks and expectations of our community we aim to achieve our ambition of making Suffolk a place where people continue to lead safe and healthy lives.

Our current CRMP was reviewed for 2024 with no changes to our five priorities or the Strategic Assessment of Risk for the county.

Our Five priorities are:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review our On-Call sustainability• Recruit and retain non-operational support staff• Continue to grow an inclusive and diverse workforce
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop our home safety prevention work.• Increase prevention work in rural communities• Focused prevention work for our hard-to-reach communities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide advice and guidance on new legislation, ensuring compliance and enforcement of new laws• Develop our work in the built environment• Support the National Fire Chiefs Council in establishing the Health & Safety Executive Building Safety Regulator
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement revised response standards• Ensure our emergency response fleet can mitigate emerging risks• Use our resources to meet a wide range of community needs in partnership with others• Match our resources to risk
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support SCC with the delivery of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan• Transition to a zero emissions fleet• Review our training, equipment and firefighting methodology to enable the service to adapt and respond to the effects of climate change

[Our CRMP is available on the Suffolk County Council Website.](#)

[Community Risk Management Plan 2023 - 2027](#)

13 Future Planning

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

To do this we use a risk evaluation cycle:

Risk Evaluation Cycle



Other influences on our planning are the HMICFRS inspection report and implementing the recommendations for improvements.

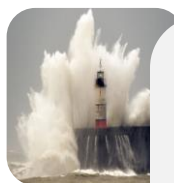
This work will enable the service to analysis and appraise emerging risks, matching our resources to those potential risks, meaning we are better equipped to serve our communities.

Suffolk's rural landscape presents unique challenges, including remote locations and specific risks associated with farms, businesses, and heritage properties. Our service is equipped to address these challenges and ensure effective incident response in these areas.

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

Storm Babet in October 2023 triggered a surge in emergency calls, resulting in our crews responding to 183 incidents within two days. These included 64 water rescues and 81 flooding-related responses

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

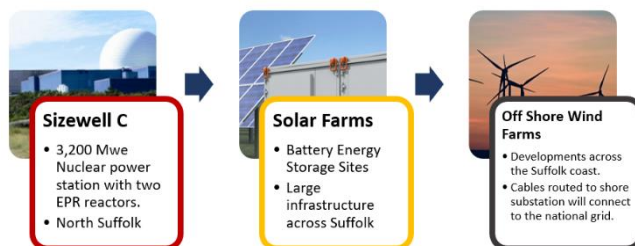
- Increasing variants in extreme temperature and weather conditions
- Supporting delivery of SCC's Suffolk Climate Emergency Action Plan



Ageing 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



14 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.

The Fire Safety Act 2021

The Fire Safety Act amends the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (The Fire Safety Order)

The Fire Safety Act clarifies the scope of the Fire Safety Order to make clear it applies to the structure, external walls (including cladding and balconies) and individual flat entrance doors between domestic premises and common parts of multi-occupied residential buildings.

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 organisations 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 Safety (England) Regulations 2022

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 implemented the majority of the recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry in its Phase 1 report which required a change in the law. The regulations seek to improve the fire safety of blocks of flats in ways which are practical, cost effective for individual leaseholders and proportionate to the risk of fire. The regulations came into force on 23 January 2023.

Building Safety Act 2022

This Act makes ground-breaking reforms to give residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections – so homes across the country are safer. It delivers far-reaching protections for qualifying leaseholders from the costs associated with remediating historical building safety defects, and an ambitious toolkit of measures that will allow those responsible for building safety defects to be held to account.

The Act creates three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products and the New Homes Ombudsman. Together these changes mean owners will manage their buildings better, and the home-building industry has the clear, proportionate framework it needs to deliver more, and better, high-quality homes.

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).

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.

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](#)

[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](#)

[The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)

[The Localism Act 2011](#)

[The Health and Safety Act at Work, etc. Act 1974](#)

[Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Suffolk Report](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Assessment of Risk 2018-2021](#)

[Home Office National Statistics](#)

[Police and Crime Act 2017](#)

15 We are Listening

Share your views and feedback

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



