



**Suffolk Fire and
Rescue Authority**

Statement of Assurance

2020 – 2021

V1.0

Follow us



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1. Forward



This Statement of Assurance details the financial, governance and operational arrangements that were in place for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority during the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. 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 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. I am particularly proud that the service has been a significant and integral part of the wider Suffolk response to COVID throughout 2020 and 2021.

On behalf of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority, I will continue to progress the matters identified under 'further plans'. I remain committed to developing the Authority so that it continues to provide an effective, efficient, and resilient fire and rescue service that looks after the people who work in, live in, and visit our great county.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Reid". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councillor Andrew Reid
Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities
Suffolk County Council

2. Introduction



As Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2020/2021.

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.

During the period of this report, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has diversified to assist with the county's response to the Coronavirus pandemic, whilst maintaining our statutory duty. I am incredibly proud of the work our teams have undertaken, including the additional duties and support they have provided to partner agencies in their time of need. This has only been achieved through the skill and dedication of our staff, who have a passion for the communities they serve. We remain committed to supporting Suffolk through the pandemic and its recovery phase.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Lacey'.

Jon Lacey
Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety

3. What is a Statement of Assurance?

Fire and Rescue Authorities carry out their functions within a statutory framework. The key legislation and Acts defining these requirements include:

- a. Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- b. Local Government Act 1999
- c. Localism Act 2011
- d. Policing and Crime Act 2017
- e. Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- f. Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- g. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- h. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- i. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (revised May 2018)

Every fire and rescue authority must have regard to the National Framework in carrying out their functions, and every authority must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance within the Framework.

The statement should outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard, in the period covered by the document, to the National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to any strategic fire and rescue plan prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to Government on financial, governance and operational matters.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is the principal legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales. It imposes upon every fire and rescue authority a duty to provide a fire and rescue service that is: equipped to extinguish fires; protect life and property from fires; rescue people from road traffic collisions and respond to other emergencies. Services must also be equipped to receive and respond to calls for assistance, ensure that staff are properly trained and equipped, and gather risk information to deliver a safe and effective service.

The Act additionally requires fire and rescue authorities to provide communities with fire safety education and advice to reduce deaths and injuries from fire. The Act permits the Secretary of State to publish National Framework requirements that set central government priorities for authorities. Fire and rescue authorities are required to pay due regard to the National Framework.

4. Governance

The Fire and Rescue Authority for Suffolk is Suffolk County Council (SCC), consisting of 75 elected councillors. Most of the Authority's daily business is discharged through the Council's Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service for the period of this report 2020/21 was Councillor Richard Rout, with Councillor Andrew Reid being appointed as the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities in June 2021.

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for ensuring the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) operates in accordance with the law. It must ensure public money is

safeguarded, properly accounted for, and is used efficiently and effectively. The Fire and Rescue Authority also have a duty to continually improve the way its functions are carried out and to collaborate with other blue light emergency services.

Governance principles adopted by the Council follow those set out in the document: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' produced by CIPFA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. SCC's Constitution sets out a commitment to good governance and describes the Council's governance framework and processes, which includes the Scheme of Delegation. It is publicly available on the Council's website:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/the-council-and-its-committees/theconstitution/>

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:

- SCC's full Council reviews performance of [SCC Priorities](#) which include fire service performance.
- SCC's Cabinet considers fire service performance as part of their role in agreeing the IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan).
- SCC's Audit Committee considers the annual Statement of Assurance. The committee also scrutinises other papers that have a fire service element; for example SCC Statement of Accounts (www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/council-and-democracy/budget-and-finance/2020-21-Statement-of-Accounts-FINAL-signed.pdf) and Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 (www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/council-and-democracy/budget-and-finance/Annual-Governance-Statement-2021.pdf)
- SCC's Joint Leadership Team (Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team) considers fire service outcomes within the SCC quarterly performance report.
- SCC Cabinet Members meet regularly with the Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Officers.
- Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Party Group Leaders meet periodically with the Chief Fire Officer.
- The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Steering Group (FSSG) consists of seven cross party Members who consider performance reports and more general fire service matters.
- SFRS Operational Assurance and Performance and Improvement Boards provide assurance regarding operational matters and drive performance improvement.
- SFRS Peer Challenges were completed in 2010, 2013 and 2017.
- SFRS were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in Spring 2019. The results of the inspection were published in December 2019 on the [HMICFRS Website](#).
- HMICFRS was commissioned to undertake a Covid thematic review of all Fire and Rescue Services in England. SFRS was inspected in November 2020. The findings from the Covid inspection of SFRS can be accessed [here](#)
- The Council's Constitution sets out the framework for political and managerial leadership.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is a member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and reports to the Chief Executive. Meetings with CLT and Cabinet are held monthly to enable the review of policy. The CFO continues to work closely with the Cabinet Member, who has a

much broader remit for Public Protection beyond the fire and rescue service, including Public Health, Trading Standards, Joint Emergency Planning and Communities.

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. This 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. The Joint Forum considers issues associated with fire and rescue service employee relations and policy development. The forum complements the daily arrangements which support effective industrial relations management.

Underpinning Organisational Values

The leadership in SCC is underpinned by the WE ASPIRE organisational values adopted by the Fire and Rescue Service. These values helped us deliver the Council's priorities for Suffolk throughout 2020 and 2021 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 difference to the people and place of Suffolk

Innovate: We believe in making every penny count, every minute matter and reducing environmental impact

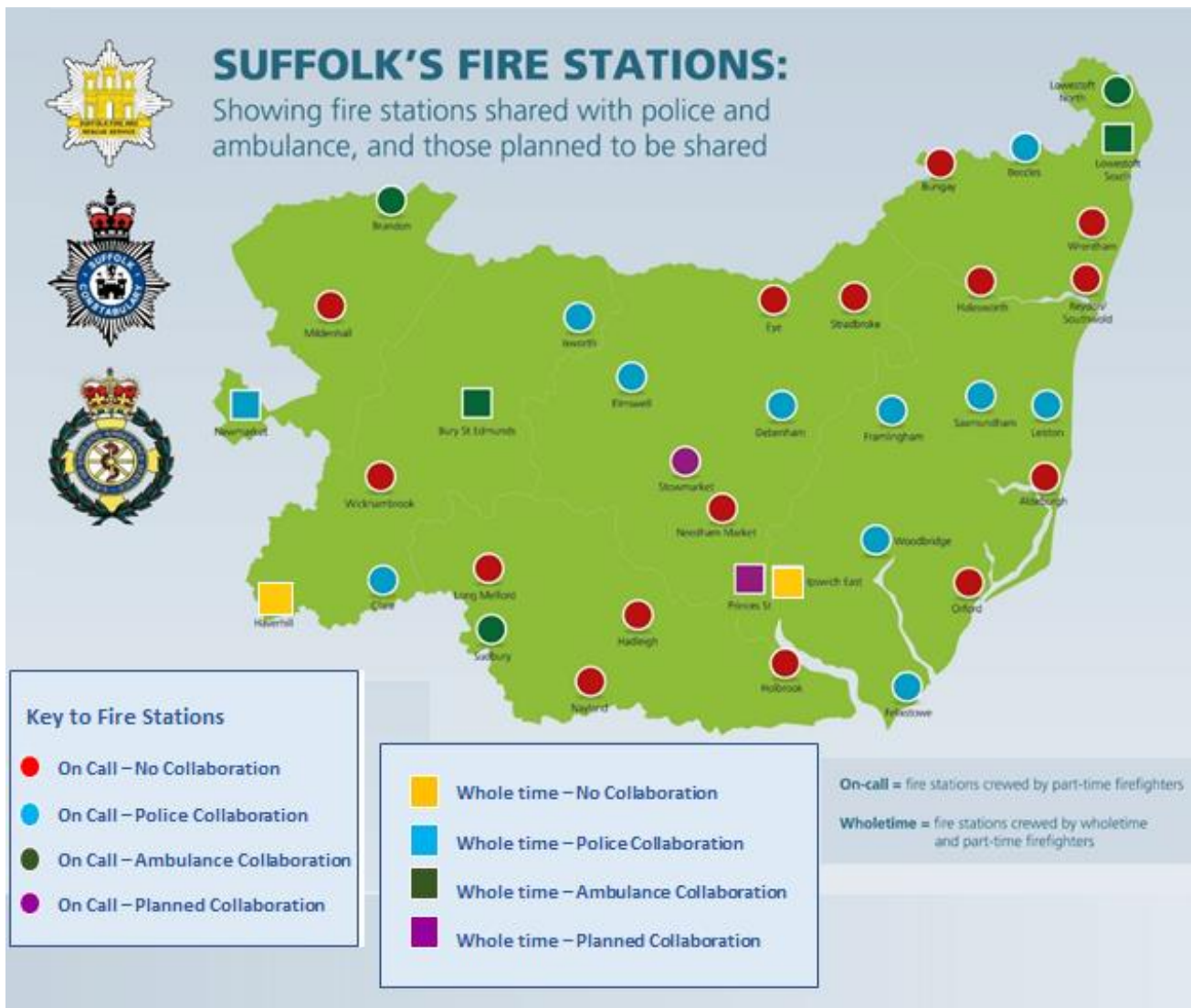
Respect: We give and earn respect

Empower: We empower, encourage, and motivate

5. Your Fire and Rescue Service

The fire service property portfolio includes 39 sites, with 35 fire stations located strategically in Suffolk's largest towns and villages (see map below). Four stations situated in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft South, Ipswich East, and Ipswich Princes Street, are crewed around the clock, seven days per week. Two additional stations at Haverhill and Newmarket, are 'day crewed' and revert to on-call crewing in the evenings and at weekends. The remaining stations are crewed solely by on-call firefighters, who respond to the station when required.

To support the on-call stations we provide an on-call crewing reserve (OCCR) now renamed County Day Crewing (CDC). This allows firefighters to be sent to any fire station to support local crewing arrangements during weekdays, when on-call firefighter availability is more challenging.



As at 31 March 2021 the Service employed 599 people, with some of these employees being on a dual contract and carrying out a number of roles across the service.

Suffolk has 29 flexible duty operational officers who undertake daily leadership functions in the fire service. They also provide operational response at larger, more complex incidents.

73 non-operational staff were employed in support functions, established in line with county council pay and grading arrangements.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service operates a fleet of 152 vehicles, including 43 front line fire engines, and a range of equipment to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergencies.

The three core activities delivered by Fire and Rescue Services are Prevention, Protection and Response, described below.

Prevention

Our prevention activities keep people safe in their homes from fire and other community risks. We also support in health, care and wellbeing activity in partnership with the County Council and other agencies.

Fire Prevention aims to reduce risk, therefore preventing fires, deaths, injuries from accidental house fires and other emergencies, such as Road Traffic Collisions and water related incidents.

The Service delivers many diverse programmes which enhance community safety, including:

- Road safety education for vulnerable road users, including a 'FireBike' motorcycle safety scheme and delivery of a safety course called Biker Down.
- 'ItCanWait' is a pre- and young driver road safety intervention, developed by SFRS Prevention Team and an externally evaluated package. This targets 15-18 year olds, and aims to reduce the use of mobile phones by drivers.
- A free 'Fire Setter Intervention Programme' which works with young people, both individually and in schools, who are demonstrating an unhealthy interest in fire.
- Working with young people in secondary education, providing role models, and offering pastoral support under the School Fire Liaison Officer scheme.
- A collaborative Emergency Services Cadet Scheme, in conjunction with our police colleagues, which promotes confidence and provides a practical and theoretical understanding of the Fire & Rescue Service for young people.
- Helping older and vulnerable people to live independently and safely in their homes, reducing the risk of fire.

Community Fire Volunteers, Prevention practitioners and firefighters carry out free Safer Home Visits for Suffolk's most vulnerable residents. They supply and fit safety features in homes such as smoke detectors and fire retardant bedding, and provide advice on safety, security, and wellbeing. Where appropriate, people can be referred via the Suffolk Information Partnerships (SIP) to partner agencies such as Adult Social Care, the East of England Ambulance Service, and other support networks), with the aim of reducing the risk of fire in our communities.

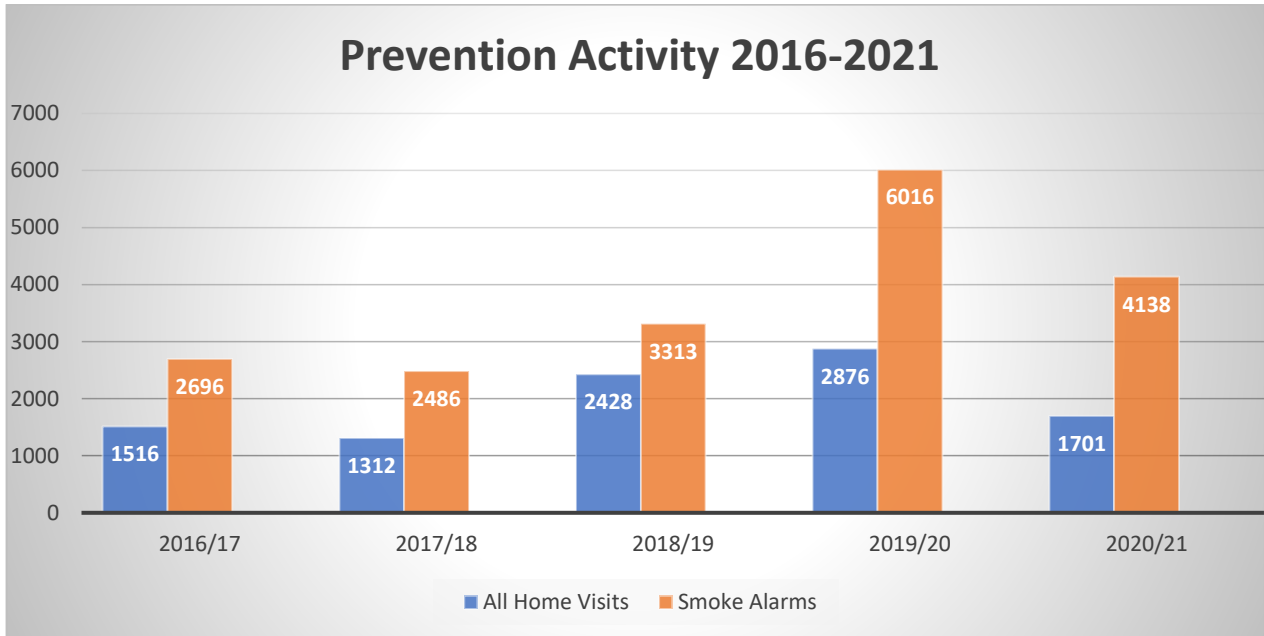
In 2020/21, our staff and trusted partners carried out 1,701 Home Visits, of which 1,318 were in households containing at least one person aged 65 years and over, and 733 were in households containing at least one person living with a disability. Home visits during the pandemic were triaged for the most vulnerable, with Safe & Well and Home Fire Safety advice being delivered over the phone, and equipment being issued remotely. Partners carried out 8 in-person visits, however, our focus area is to increase this figure following the easing of Covid restrictions.

Prevention experienced many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the delivery of in-person activity being significantly restricted by the Government for safety reasons. Many activities were adapted to be delivered virtually, enabling interaction with the community to be maintained and the continuation in communication of safety messages. Examples include virtual road safety sessions, virtual youth sessions and virtual delivery to care providers such as Adult Care Services (ACS).

Whilst our staff were unable to deliver our face-to-face activities, they supported other Suffolk County Council departments with setting up vaccination centres, assisting the Personal Protective Equipment cell and answering calls for the 'Home, But Not Alone' initiative.

2020/21 saw 39 fire prevention campaigns and initiatives delivered. These included 5 Youth Diversion activities, 4 Youth Fire Safety events and 30 other fire prevention campaigns/initiatives (e.g., road safety campaigns, partnership working).

Figure 1. Prevention Activity – Number of Home Visits and Smoke Alarms fitted



In line with national guidance, Suffolk records a home safety visit if we are able to access someone’s home and cross the threshold. The figures for 2019/20 and 2020/21 are visits where we have ‘crossed the threshold.’ We also offer advice and provide smoke alarms when we are unable to cross the threshold.

Protection

Suffolk Fire and Rescue employs 14 inspecting officers and specialist officers to work with local businesses and individuals responsible for protecting people from fire in buildings covered by the Statutory Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order 2005. We use this legislation to advise the person responsible for looking after the property to keep all those who use the building safe from fire. We also use legislation to enforce this where necessary.

To equip our staff, our Protection team follows the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators. All training and roles are mapped to this competency standard to ensure that staff receive role-appropriate training and acquire the skills they need to be effective.

Our Protection department monitors the levels of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) in buildings. We intervene when UwFS reach a threshold of 2 within a 4-week period, or 3 in a 26-week period. If the threshold is met, the Protection team works with the individual responsible for the premises to reduce the number of UwFS and help to prevent further activations. This is done through a combination of local education and advice, or Statutory Enforcement if necessary.

Officers complete audits generated through the annual Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) of buildings to establish compliance with fire safety law.

Premises are selected for audit based on the risk they may present to those who work in or visit them. Buildings where people sleep, such as high rise, hospitals, hotels and residential care homes, are considered higher risk and are audited at least every 3 years. All other types of premises types are also audited to provide a snapshot of the county risks. Audits are also undertaken where there has been a fire or if we receive information regarding poor fire safety conditions.

The number of audits carried out in 2020/21 was 462, a decrease on the previous year (783), mainly due to COVID restrictions, but still meeting the 3-year inspection period target. Many buildings that we would have inspected were closed and some, such as care homes, were locked down for safety reasons. We were still able to inspect all schools and conducted 'desktop' audits. We also used lockdown as an opportunity to train our new staff and carry out data cleansing to improve the quality of our data held within our systems this ensures that public resource continued to be used effectively despite national restrictions.

Our officers also supported the wider SCC response to COVID by setting up vaccine centres and supporting activities such as the SCC Tactical Co-ordinating Group. Despite this additional activity, we issued 5 formal notices under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order; 1 Enforcement and 4 Prohibition Notices, and we brought forward 2 prosecutions.

The time spent processing formal notices impacts the total number of audits undertaken. However, they indicate that we are targeting premises that put people most at risk. We also hold 'Joint Agency Impact Days', which involve Protection, Prevention and Local Authority Environmental Housing Officers targeting premises in a different Suffolk town each month. Our aim is to provide education, advice, and a balanced intelligence-based joint inspection programme for premises in both residential and commercial areas.

Our Protection department has also undertaken 465 Building Regulation consultations, 604 other consultations (e.g., licences or Houses of Multiple Occupation) and 291 other fire safety activities. These are full statutory Building Regulation consultations of building plans managed by Building Control. We make comment on the plans and raise any fire safety concerns. We also encourage early interaction and partnership work with district councils for building plans where possible, to head off any potential problems. It is these Building Regulation consultations that often affect the auditing capacity of some of our inspecting officers.

Response

To deliver our response activity effectively, the service is divided into three geographically district areas – north, south, and west. A Group Manager is responsible for each of the three districts and work to a service wide policy and National Guidance to ensure that a consistent approach is applied across the service. Each district hosts one of the three most populated areas of Suffolk – Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, and Lowestoft.

In addition to the operational commitment, our station-based teams fully engage with the delivery of home safety visits, protection audits and compliance checks. This work is set to continue to develop and grow, ensuring we provide the best possible service to our communities and develop the skills of our staff.

Whilst Suffolk holds its own level of urban risk, it is predominately a rural fire service due to its geographical location. SFRS is continuously striving to improve on-call station availability across

the county, and this has led to us developing some innovative approaches to maintaining our on-call fire cover.

The OCCR (now known as County Day Crewing or CDC) was established in 2016 to improve station availability levels across the county. The team and concept continue to evolve, developing skills essential for maintaining on-call station availability. Nine wholetime firefighter positions are used specifically to support station availability across the county, with the team directed by a coordinating manager to ensure key stations are available during the peak operational hours of 07:00-17:30hrs, Monday to Friday.

CDC also supports the Prevention and Protection departments with targeted fire safety advice, or within our more rural communities, and carry out fire safety audits when required. They also undertake inspections at high-risk premises across the county, ensuring up to date information is maintained and available to operational crews.

Where whole time station crewing levels permit, additional firefighters are deployed by the CDC manager to further enhance station availability across the county.

Service Support

To manage service delivery, we undertake Operational Support and Operational Assurance, and provide district teams who directly deliver the prevention, protection, and response activity. These departments work closely together to ensure we provide the best possible operational leadership, guidance, and support to our operational response at fire stations.

To keep our people safe, the operational policy team is responsible for developing and implementing our guidance and policy requirements. The team works closely with stakeholders across the service, and both regional and national colleagues, to ensure all operational guidance and policy requirements are met.

We are committed to adopting National Operational Guidance (NOG) which we seek to develop as part of an ongoing regionally supported National Operational Guidance project. This regional approach maximises the opportunity to align our procedures, whilst sharing resource and best practice. SFRS leads this regional project, which sees funding and resource shared across the six regional fire services, including Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is an integral part of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's day-to-day work and is implemented across all aspects of our service delivery. We sit as partners on both the Adults and Children's Safeguarding Boards, regularly attend the Channel/Prevent Multi-agency Panel (PMAP, part of the Government Prevent strategy) which includes training for all front-line staff and take an active role in the NFCC Safeguarding workstream.

We have completed an agreement with the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) that has put in place a formal process for information sharing, which went live in September 2021. Multi-agency services have seen an increase in complex cases of hoarding and self-neglect, with these case reviews being chaired by the Fire Service.

The Service is also a member of the Multi-agency Modern Day Slavery Network and have been fully involved in the development of training films for the emergency services and wider

professional network. These films will be used to support Modern Day Slavery training being delivered to all front-line blue-light staff in the future.

Workforce - Health and Safety

Firefighting, responding to emergencies, training and other public safety-related activities present a risk to employees. Alongside statutory and common law requirements to provide a safe and healthy environment for our employees, and those affected by our actions, SFRS continues to prioritise the development of systems and culture, as identified in the annual [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2019-22](#).

There is clear structure within SCC and SFRS to support the effective management of health, safety and wellbeing. The Health and Safety Manager role is a dedicated management post, with role responsibilities based on HSE law and Approved Codes of Practice.

‘Safe systems of work’ are established for operational incidents, training, and general non-operational work activity, based on national guidance. They 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.

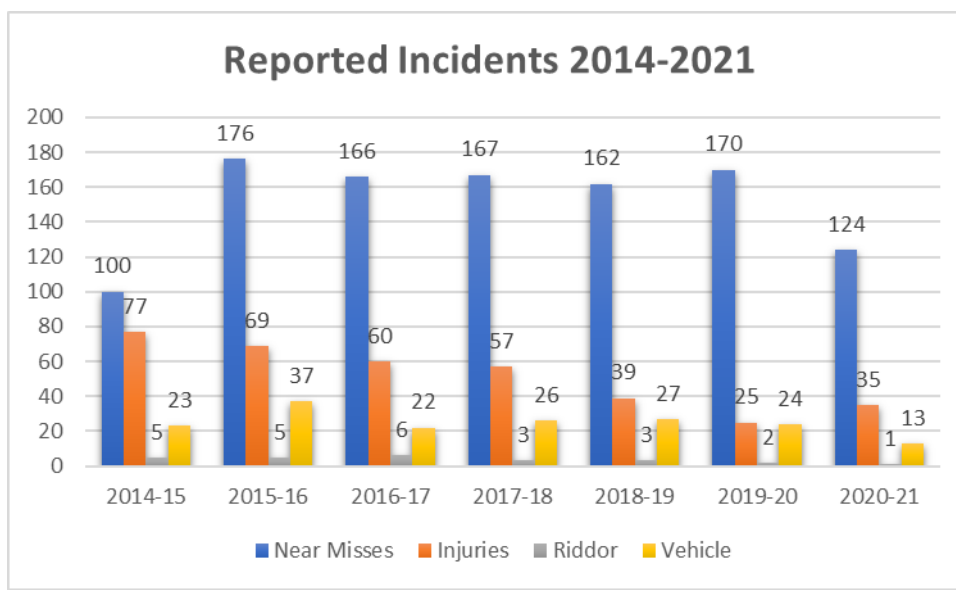
All staff are provided with health and safety training relevant to their role. This includes the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) managing safety qualifications, and health and safety workshops for managers. Selected managers are also trained in accident investigation techniques to help identify any potential failure in health and safety systems.

The Service investigates occurrences of accidents and near misses and reports on these, along with the other health and safety data it monitors and reacts to, to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office.

In 2020/2021, 29 personal injuries were recorded, an increase from 25 recorded in 2019/2020. There were 15 vehicle accidents, a decrease of 9 from the 24 reported in 2019/2020. One accident was reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) in 2020/2021, representing a reduction of 1 when compared to reportable incidents in 2019/20.

Staff reported 128 near-miss events in 2020/21, a decrease of 42 when compared to the 170 near-miss reports in 2019/20. 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. Safeguarding events are also recorded on the near-miss system but they are progressed via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by a senior duty officer.

Accidents and Near Misses 2014/15 – 2020/21:



Workforce – Fitness, Health & Wellbeing

Our approach to wellbeing is linked to SCC's Working Well for Suffolk Strategy. The Fire and Rescue Service have access to the benefits arising from the SCC Occupational Health contract, with specific FRS considerations. In recognition of emerging mental health issues, we utilise SCC's Mental Health Toolkit, which provides access to mental health first aiders and, if necessary, to specialist counselling services. A critical incident management process is in place to provide support following exposure to traumatic events; however, we are in the process of reviewing this and anticipate a transition to a nationally recognised process in 2021/22. Further wellbeing initiatives have been developed and now include a dedicated wellbeing group committed to promoting a range of mental health issues via regular updates, awareness initiatives and a quarterly magazine.

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

Mandatory annual fitness testing has been embedded to comply with national best practice. The appointment of a Wellbeing Officer in 2020/21 has been key in its promotion, developing a culture committed to health and wellbeing. Initiatives have included the use of physical training instructors, tailored development programmes and online fitness classes.

We support staff with disabilities and, wherever possible, have made reasonable adjustments to ensure staff are retained and feel supported and valued.

Workforce – Training, Learning and Development (TLD)

The training, learning and development of our personnel remains a Service priority and is 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. TLD promote an inclusive learning environment for our staff, with an emphasis on coaching and encouragement.

The importance placed on the training, learning and development of our staff is reflected in our senior management team securing dedicated significant capital funding for the ongoing modernisation and improvement to our training facilities at MOD Wattisham. These projects will include new facilities for training our staff in live firefighting, as well as the wearing of breathing apparatus for search and rescue activities. This will incorporate the use of an LPG burner unit, which will provide realistic training whilst minimising the exposure of our staff to harmful products of combustion and cutting down on traditional timber burning. This will promote a cleaner environment and forms part of our commitment to greener ways of working. There will also be a new Tactical Firefighting Rig which will allow our firefighters to train in modern firefighting techniques such as Thermal Scanning, Positive Pressure Ventilation and Ultra High-Pressure Lance attacks.

Further improvements to our site will also include a new training and welfare complex which our TLD staff will work from. The complex will have upgraded classrooms, office accommodation and welfare facilities, in addition to a dedicated Incident Command Suite. This will utilise state of the art technology to provide immersive and realistic scenario-based training to our incident commanders and officers, ensuring they have the most up to date skills to respond to and safely manage incidents.

Our Service has committed to looking at new ways of development and progression for staff, following staff surveys, our HMICFRS report, our Learning and Development (L&D) review and staff feedback from numerous assessment processes over the years. We now have a new Development and Progression Guidance Document (DPGD), informed by working groups and a consultation, which will put much more emphasis on Pathways to help develop our people before they progress. The Development Pathways will eventually replace traditional assessments and work alongside our existing Personal Development Review (PDR) process. Candidates who commence a Pathway will have access to training, internal and external courses, qualifications, and experiences to help them on their development journey and put them in a strong position when promotion opportunities arise. This new approach is in line with our Service direction and Vision and Values and is much more people focussed. The Pathways will be designed and managed by our experienced L&D team, who will both give and seek feedback, so that the Pathways remain a continuous evolutionary process, which reflect the required skills and training needed for our staff to flourish within Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Whilst providing training for its employees is a legal obligation, SFRS also recognises that staff and team development helps people to be the best they can be, leading to a motivated and skilled workforce which in turn improves the service provided. Every role and person in our Service has an impact on our vision and mission, and we aim to continue to offer a culture where all staff are supported to take personal responsibility for their own learning and development, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes to the public and each other. The right training, learning and development helps ensure the safety of all our personnel and the communities we serve, assisting our vision of ***working together to make Suffolk a place where people lead safe and healthy lives.***

SFRS training, learning and development content is informed through a variety of means including:

- As a principal customer of the training, learning and development department (TLD), the needs of fire station-based staff are mainly catered for via an annual Training Needs Assessment (TNA) process.
- The TNA process is complimented by a risk-assessed rolling programme of required training, which is covered over either a three-year cycle, or as determined by the subject qualification and best practice.
- Face to face management meetings and the PDR process.
- Recruitment needs.
- National, regional and Service operational learning or health and safety findings deemed to be high risk - these may require the alteration of training plans during the year.
- National high-profile events or major incidents.
- Local and national findings from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection.
- Cultural change – assisting to embed an inclusive culture throughout the Service.
- Changes to national guidance and legislation.
- New vehicles and equipment place demand on TLD within rollout and cascade planning.

TLD is engaged in national work-streams including:

- Contributing to the development of the new leadership framework with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)
- Development and delivery of a new firefighter apprenticeship standard as part of a national working group
- Supporting SFRS Protection department stakeholders to help develop a new fire engineering apprenticeship standard
- Sitting on the regional fire and rescue service Learning and Development board
- Being a key stakeholder in the introduction of National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP).

Collaboration with regional services and partner agencies is important to us. Areas in which TLD currently collaborates 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 take part in multi-agency exercises through our Local Resilience Forum, and work closely with the MOD, maintaining our operational training school 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.

Staff Engagement and Focus Groups

We are committed to being a continually improving organisation, as evidenced through the HMICFRS action plan, consultations, staff surveys, engagement with representative bodies and external consultants, focus groups, peer review and training and development feedback. The outcomes from this comprehensive engagement and inward reflection have been developed into a Continuous Improvement Plan. This plan is the 'roadmap' for the development of organisational culture, and many of its workstreams have already started, e.g., the Staff Engagement Group work on PDR and WE ASPIRE.

We ran an extensive consultation programme which helped identify and develop a new approach and structure for development and progression for all staff, with a clear focus on development first, and structured Pathways at all levels. Access to the Pathways is via a successful application which incorporates the National Fire Chiefs Council Leadership Framework with a clear focus on inclusion.

We are currently working with our staff and an external partner to co-design and co-deliver workshops for all staff focused on behaviours, values, culture, and inclusion. The Fire Service Standards Board's new Code of Ethics will provide the foundation for these workshops.

We are determined our Service will be a great place to work for everybody and have completely revised and improved our approach to equality and inclusion to support this. We are key partners in the National Fire Chiefs Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Board and the Council's equality and inclusion work and have also established our own Strategic and Practitioner Equality and Inclusion Groups. Over the last year, we have appointed a community engagement officer to work with underrepresented groups, businesses, and our staff. Twelve of our staff have complete an ILM L4 qualification in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), to support the principle of EDI advocates. We continue to use positive action to attract, recruit, develop and retain people from under-represented groups.

Our aim is to develop a culture of trust where people are empowered to use their own good judgement on all occasions and are supported to make decisions at their appropriate level.

6. Financial Performance

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority is required under the Local Government Act to ensure that public money is properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. As part of Suffolk County Council (SCC), the Service follows the council's financial procedures for budget setting, monitoring and the production of final accounts.

The County Council's Chief Finance Officer prepares an Annual Statement of Accounts, which includes the Fire and Rescue Service. The accounts detail the council's financial performance in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of practice. The final accounts are submitted to the Audit Committee for approval.

Suffolk County Council's Annual Statement of Accounts is examined by external auditors who independently assess if the statement presents a true reflection, and that appropriate accounting and financial systems are in place. Their report also reviews arrangements to ensure that the use of public resources is economical, efficient, and effective.

The council's Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2021 was externally audited in line with Audit Commission Act (1998) guidance. The Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 and external auditor's letter are published on Suffolk County Council's website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/council-accounts/>





National Benchmarking Data

Annual financial and performance data for all Fire and Rescue Authorities in England is published nationally, enabling comparisons to be made between each geographical area.

Financial data is collected each year by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and performance data is reported annually by the Home Office. In comparison to other Fire and Rescue Services, Suffolk is consistently presented as a low-cost and well performing service. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is in the lowest quartile of cost-per-head of population, with an expenditure of £36.73 per head of population, compared to the national average of £39.87 (mid to upper quartile).

The following tables are drawn from a more comprehensive benchmarking report, that compares Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to 39 Fire and Rescue Authorities in England (where current data is available). The data used is for the financial year 2020/21 and is net budget expenditure and not actual spend. The latest population data quoted is the mid-2020 estimates from the Office for National Statistics.

Efficiency - £ per head of population

Measure (comparison with Fire Authorities)	
Efficiency - £ per head of population (average £39.87)	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	£43.50 - £52.97
Mid to Upper Quartile 	£39.36 - £42.87
Mid to Lower Quartile 	£36.76 - £39.12
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	£32.78 - £36.73 SUFFOLK = £36.73

(Data from: LG Inform (<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>) and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics>)

The SFRS budget for 2020/21 was £22.621m with a confirmed full year spend of £22.459m, resulting in an underspend of £0.162m. The service spent an additional £0.065m on Covid related expenditure, including PPE, station cleaning, sanitizers and cleaning products, however, this was offset by underspends totalling £0.227m. This underspend was as a result of delayed appointments into posts due to the pandemic, as well as a reduction in costs relating to fuel, vehicle repairs and training which were also caused by operational changes resulting from Covid.

Earmarked reserves and grant funding continued to support projects such as an increase in blue light collaboration, Service redesign, Private Finance Initiative (PFI), enhanced fleet, more resilient on-call service, and the provision of equipment and property.

As of 1 April 2019, service specific general reserves were pooled alongside all other SCC Directorates to create one single pooled reserve which would be available for all SCC services to predominately meet one-off additional or unforeseen costs. As a result, SFRS no longer holds its own operational reserve, although can request funding from SCC reserves if needed.

Earmarked reserves held as of 1 April 2020 totalled £2.713m, with this increasing to £2.828m as at 31 March 2021. £2.224m of this reserve is held to assist with the annual PFI contract costs.

SFRS no longer holds any reserves relating to renewals or capital, as these are now part of SCC's Capital Financing Scheme, which considers all capital bids and planning.

The Fire and Rescue Programme included spend of £2.008m on new operational equipment and the replacement of emergency vehicles at end of life. The Blue Light Integration Programme is a Government initiative to bring police, ambulance, and the fire service on to shared sites, and it is hoped that this will allow cost savings and result in further efficiency for the services. Initial building works at the shared site in Ipswich (Princes Street) started in January 2021. Meanwhile, construction started on the purpose-built station in Stowmarket in April 2021, following the purchase of land and appointment of a contractor. There has been £1.433 million spent in the 2020/21 financial year across both sites, with the remaining budget being carried forward into 2021/22 to complete the work.

Of our 35 stations, 11 are conditioned to a circa £80m Private Finance Initiative scheme, resulting in facilities being completely re-provided or undergoing extensive refurbishment.

SFRS was not required to make any additional savings in 2020/21 towards the Council's savings targets but acknowledges that changes to the use of reserves and its continuation of financial support for the SCC capital financing strategy have assisted the Council in meeting its overall targets.

7. Risk Management and Improvements

Internal Operational Assurance

Internal audits are overseen centrally, focusing on fire stations and functional areas. The team review operational incidents, incident command and risk-critical support functions, such as fire workshops, engineering, and firefighter training.

Fire stations and departments are routinely audited every three years, with more regular audits undertaken where a need arises. Nine internal audits were completed in 2020/21, with their outcomes and actions monitored by the Operational Assurance Manager. Themed audits of Powered Boat Operations and licence to recruit qualifications were also completed during this financial year, along with a full review of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Response to significant emergencies is assessed through a formal debrief process, in which the main agencies, partners, officers, fire control, and crews are represented. This is an established

process, designed to highlight notable practice, identify operational learning, and promote continuous improvement of service delivery. In 2020/21, 11 formal debriefs were completed and their outcomes used to influence and improve provision of training, equipment and operational guidance.

The Service's internal audit and review arrangements supplement formal audits carried out by SCC's Audit Service, who undertake separate and independent audits to those described above. As SFRS sits within the overall governance framework of SCC, the outcome of audits carried out across other council functions has a bearing on our practices, policies, and ways of working.

SFRS is part of the National Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. The Eastern region group, of which Suffolk is a member, has a partnership agreement for regular external audit, utilising the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Quality Safety Audit (QSA) process to scrutinise safety management systems.

Operational Risk Team

Our Operational risk teams support all parts of the service. This is achieved by providing information on risks within our service area, enabling our teams to access risk information, co-ordinating risk visits and providing site-specific risk information on our mobile data terminals.

Internal and External Assurance

A Service strategy and policy is in place, ensuring that all SFRS departments and premises are audited by the Operational Assurance department and in line with policy. Findings are reported to the department and Operational Assurance Board with an action tracker activated for areas of improvement and notable good practice being identified and shared accordingly.

The Service is subject to several external audit processes including HMICFRS and SCC's audit services, to ensure compliance, whilst identifying areas requiring improvement and of good practice. Suffolk was formally inspected by HMICFRS during the Summer 2019. The final report was published in December 2019, and we received a rating of 'Good' in all three inspection pillars – effectiveness, efficiency and people. We continue on our path of continual improvement and have identified plans and actions in several areas.

Business Continuity Management is an integral part of our corporate risk management process with all fire and rescue services having to satisfy the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act and Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. SFRS is required to 'write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the authority is able to continue its functions.' The plans are reviewed and tested periodically to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

Grenfell Tower Fire and Public Inquiry.

The Grenfell Tower fire started shortly before 1am on 14 June 2017 in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, West London. The fire originated in a flat on the 4th floor and quickly spread up the outside of the building resulting in the whole building being engulfed in fire. A total of 227 people escaped the Tower, and 72 people tragically lost their lives.

The Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry (GTI) was instigated by the Government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the fire and loss of life. Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed to lead the Public Inquiry with the focus to investigate the cause and origin of the fire, how it was able to spread throughout the building and how the building came to be in a condition which allowed that to happen. Related matters, such as the response of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), the scope and effectiveness of building regulations, and the response of central and local government to the disaster also formed part of the Terms of Reference. Phase 1 of the Public Inquiry was presented to parliament in October 2019, with Phase 2 of the Public Inquiry currently underway.

Phase 1 recommendations include further guidance for fire and rescue services and SFRS are implementing the recommendations of the GTI. These are wide ranging and place requirements on Government, London Fire Brigade, all fire and rescue services, and building owners. For fire and rescue services these include:

- Fire services have knowledge and understanding of materials used in high-rise buildings.
- Fire services undertake training of personnel regarding the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings.
- Fire services are to make suitable arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purposes of extinguishing fires and develop plans of the building identifying the location of key fire safety systems.
- Buildings have a premises information box, containing relevant information regarding the layout, fire safety features, lifts and stairwells within the premises.
- Fire services have a communication link between the control room and the incident commander.
- Fire service control rooms have adequate call handling arrangements for large volumes of calls and staff receive training on the transition from “stay put” to “get out”.
- Buildings have an evacuation policy which is practiced and tested.
- The installation of sprinklers is considered by housing providers responsible for high-rise buildings containing multiple domestic premises.

Full details of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry can be found at: www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is coordinating how fire and rescue services respond to the findings of the Public Inquiry and will continue to issue detailed guidance to all FRS until the recommendations have been met. There is much we have already done regarding building safety and Phase 2 will deliver further recommendations, which will be considered once published.

The NFCC Building Risk Review (BRR) programme was completed by end December 2021. This identifies external wall systems on all tall buildings (>18m) within our county, as well as other fire safety measures and risks. This ensures that the individual responsible for a premises is aware of all associated fire risks and takes appropriate action to mitigate any such risk, thus ensuring the safety of residents through a number of interim measures including waking watches, interlinked detection, sprinklers, etc.

SFRS has a dedicated team working on the BRR who utilises the £52k government grant to address improvements. SFRS also provides up-to-date information on building risks to our operational crews and risk and resilience team. This in turn feeds into the training of operational crews, which enhances their awareness of the risks posed by these premises and strategies to deal with incidents, in line with the GTI recommendations.

8. Operational Performance

SFRS managers routinely monitor and manage performance to ensure the best possible service is being provided and that timely action is taken where any performance issues are highlighted.

Managers also complete regular Performance Development Reviews (PDRs), following the WE ASPIRE principles, and conduct annual training needs assessments for frontline operational staff. Performance issues are dealt with informally in initial stages, moving to formal performance management procedures where necessary. Personnel wishing to develop and progress within the organisation are assessed using the NFCC leadership framework and, where found suitable for development, access formal training that can lead to opportunities for promotion. Development Pathways to enable staff wishing to work towards promotion have been introduced.

Due to COVID restrictions, no annual awards ceremony was held in 2020. Instead, members of the Service Leadership Team have celebrated staff excellence by presenting awards, long service accolades, and good conduct medals at various fire stations across Suffolk. The Service also has a good record of staff being awarded through the British Honours system, with Group Manager Sally Hammond recently being one of only five fire officers across England and Wales to be awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal in the 2022 New Year's Honours

A Management Information System assists in the recording, presentation, and management of Service performance. Quarterly and annual outturn reports are submitted to the SCC's Corporate Leadership Team. These are monitored by managers, the Cabinet Member and Elected Members, providing opportunity to consider and, where necessary, improve performance.

To support transparency regarding performance, during 2020/21 we published data on response standards on our website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/about-suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/>. This is updated every six months and some key areas of our 2020/21 performance are set out in this section.

Incidents

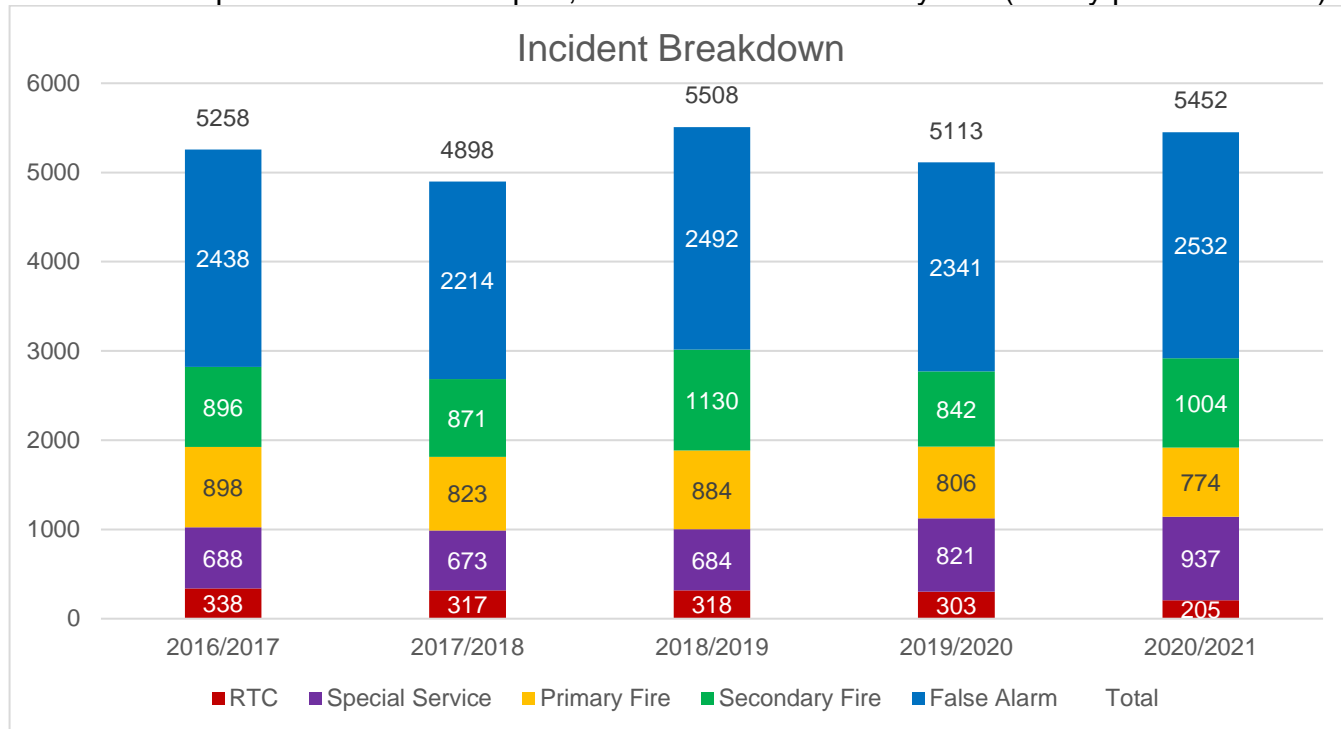
The number of incidents we attend has reduced significantly in the last ten years; but has more recently plateaued. 2020/21 was impacted by Covid, there was still an increase in the overall number of incidents compared to 2019/202. This consisted of an increase in secondary fires (fires in the open/bonfires) and Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA's) calls as a result of many premises being closed during lockdown. There was, however, a significant decrease in the number of road traffic collisions (RTC) attended, as well as a decrease in primary fires (property fires including buildings and vehicles). National fire statistics are available on the Home Office website and can be broken down by fire authority for a more detailed analysis.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

To provide the most up to date information on Suffolk incidents, Figure 2 shows locally produced information.

The information is drawn from published incident reports and captures all incidents in Suffolk, including 'officer only' mobilisations, and 'over the border' (OTB) incidents where our fire engines have attended incidents outside Suffolk.

Figure 2. Breakdown of SFRS incidents in Suffolk and in neighbouring counties (OTB's), where we completed the incident report, in the last five financial years (locally produced data).



In 2020/21, Combined Fire Control staff answered 8,589 '999' calls for Suffolk, and our crews attended 5,452 emergencies.

Primary Fires

In 2020/21 we attended 774 primary fires (fires attended by five or more fire engines, fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures, or any fire involving casualties or rescues).

Secondary Fires

Secondary fires (grassland, wasteland, derelict buildings, chimney fires etc) totalled 1,004 in 2020/21, an increase of 19.2% (162 incidents) from the 842 of the previous year. Covid restrictions impacted the number of secondary fires, with increased use of outdoor spaces combined with dry weather.

Road Traffic Collisions

The number of road traffic collisions has decreased considerably to 205 in 2020/21. Since 2016/17 the number of road traffic collisions attended by SFRS has reduced by 133 annually. This has been a steady reduction until the recent pandemic, where figures have decreased due to Covid restrictions resulting in less traffic on roads for substantial periods of time in 2020/21. Road traffic collision prevention does, however, continue to be an important element of the Service's Prevention work and during 2020/21 they remained part of Suffolk's Roadsafe Board, working closely with stakeholders and partner agencies.

Special Service

The number of Special Service incidents totalled 937 in 2020/21, an increase of 116 (14.1%) from the 821 the previous year, as shown in the graph in Figure 2 above. This increase is a combination of an increase in incidents linked to flooding and water, and the assistance of other agencies, such as ambulance service, with removal of casualties from buildings. It also reflects the change in incident recording process assisted by training, support, and quality assurance.

False Alarms

In 2020/21 we attended 2,532 calls which turned out to be false alarms. This is an increase of 191 (8.1%) from 2019/20, which can be attributed to many premises being empty due to Covid restrictions and lockdown. False alarms represented 46.4% of the 5,455 calls attended in 2020/21 and work continues to reduce the occurrences of unwanted fire signals.

Only a small number of automatic fire alarm (AFA) calls are found to be fires. Where this is the case, the call is later re-categorised as a fire. In 2020/21, 45 AFA calls were re-categorised as fires, representing 1.8% of total AFA calls received for the period.

Fatalities and Casualties

Number of fatalities and casualties at incidents attended by SFRS in Suffolk. (Data tables and information taken from National Fire Statistics from the www.GOV.UK website at 27.09.21).

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Fire Fatalities	5	6	3	4	6	2
Fire Casualties (0502b)	93	81	75	122	187	100
Road Traffic Collision Fatalities (0904a)	21	16	13	12	13	7
Road Traffic Collision Casualties (0904b)	207	235	223	219	224	194
Other Special Service Fatalities (0904a)	14	51	53	29	25	24
Other Special Service Casualties (0904b)	78	115	110	174	182	319

Fire Fatalities

In comparison to national levels, Suffolk continues to have a relatively low annual fire death rate, with an average of 4.2 deaths per year over the period 2016/17 to 2020/21. In 2020/21 there were 2 fire fatalities.

Fire Casualties

The annual average number of fire casualties (from minor injury to life-threatening burns) continues to be low, with 100 reported casualties in fires during 2020/21. In 2019/20 there were 187 fire casualties, a substantial increase from previous years caused by a coach fire which resulted in 72 casualties being led to safety before being treated by ambulance crews at the scene.

We continue to strive for zero fire deaths in Suffolk and aim to reduce the number of fire casualties in our county to as few as possible. Our Service remains focused on delivering effective fire prevention and protection advice to help make people safer from fire in their homes and when at work and provide effective emergency response to fires when they do occur.

Road Traffic Collisions Fatalities

SFRS attended 7 road traffic collision fatalities during 2020-21, a significant decrease from 13 fatalities in 2019/20.

Road Traffic Collision Casualties

SFRS attended 194 road traffic collision casualties during 202-21. The prevention of road traffic accidents continues to form an important element of the Service's Prevention work and during 2020/21 SFRS worked closely with stakeholders and agencies as part of Suffolk's Roadsafe Board.

Other Special Service Fatalities

Other Special Service is an umbrella term to cover chemical incidents, rescue, assisting other agencies (such as ambulance), unsafe structures and other incidents.

The figures for this remain largely unchanged for 2020/21, with 24 special service fatalities reported during this period, compared to 25 in 2019/20.

Other Special Service Casualties

There has been a steady increase in other special service casualties to 319 in 2020-21, this reflects the changes in recording these details, improved quality assurance and an increase in the fire service assisting ambulance incidents. Ambulance assist examples include stretcher carrying in difficult to access buildings, gaining access to a person trapped behind a door due to a fall, bariatric assistance, and first aid administered by fire service whilst awaiting the ambulance service. The Home Office definition for recording these details is "any casualty at an incident the fire service attend" regardless of whether firefighters were hands on with the casualty or not.

A new incident reporting system was implemented in Autumn 2020 which was supported by training and guidance for staff. This has improved accuracy in the recording all incidents which, coupled with the quality assurance process, has meant the overall recording of incidents has improved.

Fire Engine and Firefighter Availability

Four of Suffolk's fire stations are crewed 24/7 and a further two fire stations are crewed during weekdays by full time firefighters; there are also on-call crews at these stations. When the full-time crew of these stations is on an emergency call, on-call crews are called in, providing near 100% availability of the Service's full-time fire stations.

On-call Firefighter Availability

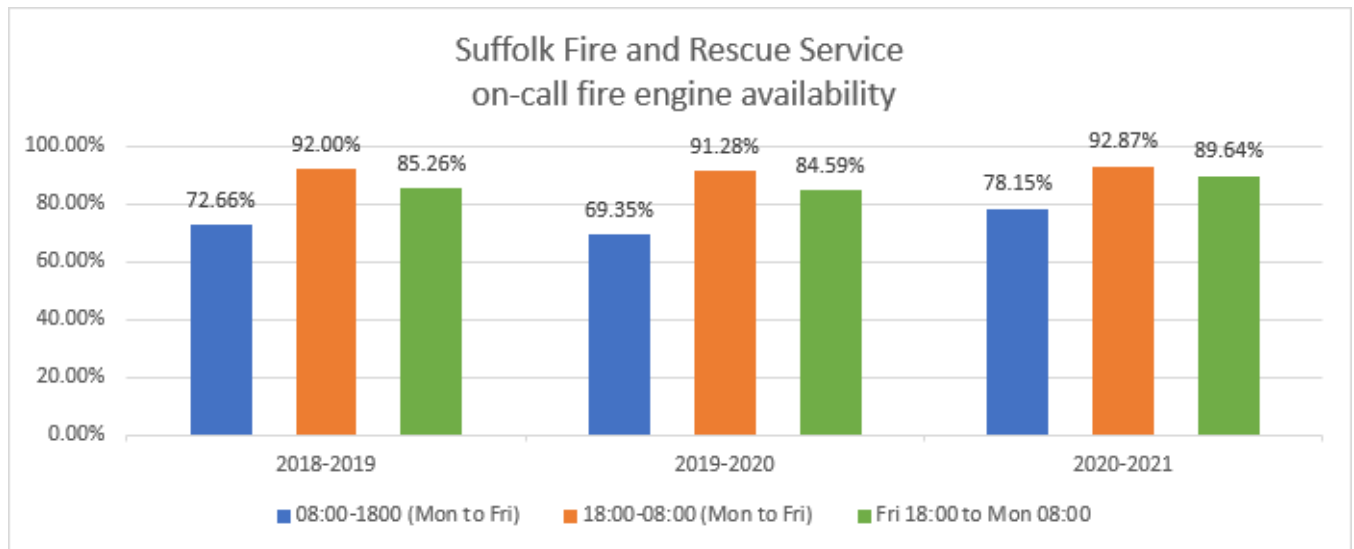
Outside of the main towns of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Haverhill and Newmarket, 29 stations are crewed solely by on-call staff. Full-time firefighters provide an immediate response to emergencies, with on-call firefighters normally responding to their station within 5-6 minutes.

On-call fire station availability (full availability) was 82.28% in 2019/20. Historically, availability improves at nights and weekends but falls during working weekdays primarily due to the employment commitments of on-call firefighters.

On-call availability did, however, improve during 2020/21 as a result of many on-call staff being furloughed or working from home during lockdown, leading to increased availability.

The availability of on-call fire engines remains a priority for the Service and work continued in 2020/21 to seek improvements to this through several initiatives. Our on-call County Day Crewing team (CDC) has made an impact on the availability of key on-call stations during the working week and this strategy will continue in future years, complementing our continued efforts to recruit and retain more on-call firefighters.

On-call fire engine availability 2018/19; 2019/20 and 2020/21:



999 Emergency Response Times

Nationally there is a trend for increased fire service response times, which has been reflected in Suffolk. This is attributed in part to traffic volume and road congestion, particularly in urban areas. Other local factors, such as the adoption of safer driving techniques (drive to arrive) and

the requirement for crews to dress in firefighting protective clothing before leaving station also contribute to increased attendance times.

Suffolk’s locally-set Response Standards

Prior to 2004, targets for response times to fires and other emergencies were based on a prescriptive national framework. In 2004 fire and rescue authorities were given the freedom to develop local standards to reflect local risk. In 2010/11 the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority agreed a revised set of performance standards for emergency response.

Performance against agreed Response Standards:

Performance Standard	Target	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Response Standard 1 - Attend 80% of property fires within 11 minutes of alert (1 st fire engine)	80%	66.5%	69.21%	69.15%
Response Standard 2 - Attend 80% of property fires within 16 minutes of alert (2 nd fire engine)	80%	72.41%	74.13%	72.7%
Response Standard 3 - Attend 80% of Road Traffic Collisions within 13 minutes of alert	80%	73%	72.03%	70.5%

9. Response to Coronavirus Pandemic

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been an integral part of the wider Suffolk response to Covid, whilst continuing to provide an effective fire and rescue service to communities. This includes delivering prevention, protection, and emergency response activities through a continual focus of matching resources for those at greatest risk.

The service adapted its working practices, and implemented effective control measures, to limit the spread of the virus – protecting protect both its staff and members of the public they came into contact with.

SFRS was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in late 2020, to assess how effective it had been in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report was published in 2021. In the words of the Inspectorate, the key findings were:

- We were impressed with how the Service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively. The efficient use of its staff was notable, utilising extra capacity and providing support and resource for remote and home working. It provided support to SCC and the LRF, including advice, resources and effective command and control frameworks to co-ordinate its response.
- The Service maintained its statutory functions of prevention, protection and response while providing additional support to the community during the first phase of the pandemic, especially to its health partners. Staff delivered essential items to vulnerable people; wholetime and on-call staff drove ambulances; and other staff supported SCC

and LRF activities. Resources were well managed, and the Service's financial position was largely unaffected. Reserves didn't have to be used to cover extra costs.

- SFRS has used platforms to improve communication and staff welfare. The Service has transformed its use of technology and is considering how virtual platforms and remote working can help it become more effective and efficient.
- The Service communicated well with its staff throughout the pandemic, including issues relating to staff wellbeing. Extra wellbeing support was provided for its workforce who are at higher risk from COVID-19, including its black, Asian and minority ethnic staff. It also made sure all staff had the resources they needed to do their jobs effectively, including extra information and technology, and it put in place additional flexible working arrangements.

The lessons learned during the pandemic and the adaptations the Service has made, are continuing to be applied, as the service starts to return to business as usual.

As has been the case for most organisations coronavirus has impacted Suffolk FRS in many ways. We have played a key role through the Multi-Agency Strategic Coordinating Group, Recovery Coordinating Group and Tactical Coordinating Group (which SFRS leads and facilitates), ensuring the resilience of our Service and the continuation of wider organisational critical activities.

In response to this we have revised our internal governance arrangements to support the management of this situation and adapt to our 'new normal' working arrangements, maintaining our operational response, and keeping our staff as safe as possible with new working arrangements and control measures. These arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure we maintain safe workplaces and enable our operational response in all situations.

The Covid pandemic has been an unprecedented situation and a long-term risk for us to manage to ensure the safety of our staff and the communities we serve. We have and will continue to provide some seconded operational staff to drive ambulances, and we played a significant role in the setting up of vaccination centres and public testing at some of our fire stations.

10. National Resilience

We work closely with the SCC Joint Emergency Planning Unit, with this arrangement ensuring that we are well prepared and joined up with the wider partnerships to help keep our communities safe and prepared.

Plans are established for responding to major incidents at sites such Sizewell B power station or for off-site emergencies. Our risk and resilience manager continually engages with wider partners to ensure we are closely aligned and are able to work effectively together.

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

We 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 recovery plans and resources to meet these risks and our duties. The plans are reviewed and exercised periodically through the LRF.

Operational Learning and Assurance

Our structure enables high levels of assurance to ensure we learn from every opportunity and review our activities appropriately. This is achieved by a structured audit process, safe person reports, debriefing and operational monitoring at all levels.

Operational incidents are debriefed as appropriate based on significance, scale and potential learning. Debriefs will include partner agencies in addition to SFRS personnel, ensuring best practice and lessons are identified, shared and progressed to enable an improved delivery of the service.

National/Joint Operational Learning (NOL)

In accordance with the Service's commitment to public and staff safety, the Operational Assurance Manager ensures that learning outcomes are considered, and relevant areas updated through the Operational Change group, who have a wide service representation and enable operational change across the organisation. SFRS uses a variety of information sources and engagement to inform organisational learning and contribute to our continuous improvement. These include the NOL platform, the Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) dashboard, Coroners Regulations releases (28/29 reports), recommendations from the Health and Safety Executive, regional FRS engagement, and internal incident debriefs. The NOL platform provides the ability to share our Service learning, with this being released to other fire and rescue services and blue light partners as appropriate, such as when we carried out a mud rescue from a tidal area in 2020.

National and Mutual Aid Arrangements

We have formal mutual assistance arrangements, sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, in place with our neighbouring Services (Cambridgeshire, Essex & Norfolk) improving resilience and capacity in border areas with assistance at larger scale incidents and emergencies.

SFRS is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid protocol and has deployed assets on a national basis in previous years with the costs being covered by the requesting Fire and Rescue Service. In addition to our declared water assets, Suffolk also hosts national mass decontamination assets.

The Authority has an agreement in place with Cambridgeshire Fire Authority for the provision of a 999 Fire Control Service. The Combined Fire Control is based in Huntingdon and serves both counties. The arrangement is governed through a formal legal agreement and performance is managed through Governance Boards.

11. Collaboration

Our commitment to property sharing has underpinned further collaboration. Examples include Emergency Services Cadet Schemes, unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles (drones), analysis of cross-service operational and non-operational demand, Prevention initiatives, and closer operational working that supports national Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Our current contract for supply and management of firefighting PPE has been in place since May 2019 and is supplied by Bristol Uniforms. The contract was awarded following in-depth technical assessment and subsequent staff consultation on their preferred PPE solution. Working alongside Bristol Uniforms, we offer a robust and seamless service in providing PPE for our staff. The contract works collaboratively alongside many other fire and rescue services and is led by Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Combined Fire Control

Our Combined 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.

The Control has a well-established suite of policies and procedures for call handling and incident support, which is developed and maintained via both services operations support teams. These are based on national operational guidance as both Suffolk and Cambridgeshire implement this as part of a regional project. The new Fire Control specific survival guidance is being adopted when available from the National Operational Guidance team accompanied by a supporting control specific 'survival guidance product pack'. Our Control guidance and mobilising procedures are subject to regular audit and review, with the opportunity for service alignment considered at every occasion. The Control operational governance group meets quarterly to consider the operational mobilising, performance, and staffing matters.

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 the resources sent being either increased or decreased, depending on the intelligence gathered during the call-handling phase of the emergency.

Our combined Control will have a new fall-back arrangement in place with West Yorkshire FRS in November 2021, following the end of a previous arrangement with East Sussex.

The combined control room venture has substantially reduced control and mobilising costs in both Services – c£400k per annum in Suffolk. Suffolk and Cambridgeshire were also awarded a £3.6 million grant from Central Government to improve resilience and secure better technology for future 999 Fire Control arrangements. The benefit of this is being maximised through the shared service arrangement.

We have now committed to a new mobilising system provided by Systel following a competitive tender process, and this is planned to go live in early 2022.

Suffolk County Council

SFRS is a service delivery area of the SCC Fire and Public Safety Directorate. As such, the Service benefits from generic ICT, Finance and Human Resource services provided through Council shared services. Other corporate functions such as Property, Procurement, Facilities Management, Communications, Democratic Services and Legal are provided through SCC or other parties.

Such provision of back-office services is cost-effective and allows access to the extensive support and knowledge afforded by a major local authority employer.

Blue Light

In June 2014 SFRS secured £4.93m DCLG grant funding to establish an emergency services shared estates programme. Our plan was to develop and share a number of fire stations with police and/or ambulance colleagues. We now share 16 stations with blue light partners, with plans for a further two collaborations.

The refurbishment of Princes Street station in Ipswich, which will see SFRS and Suffolk Police operating from a 24hr shared premises, is well underway and is due for completion in April 2022. The first new build shared station in Suffolk for us and the police has also commenced in Stowmarket and is scheduled to be ready in summer 2022. 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.

12. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS)

Suffolk was formally inspected by HMICFRS during the Summer 2019. The final report was published in December 2019, and we received a rating of ‘Good’ in all 3 inspection pillars, effectiveness, efficiency, and people.

The full report for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service can be accessed [here](#).

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="169 1637 999 1704">  The extent to which the service is effective at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks is good. <li data-bbox="169 1733 999 1800">  The extent to which the service is efficient at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks is good. <li data-bbox="169 1830 911 1897">  The extent to which the service looks after its people is good. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Effectiveness - Good</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Efficiency – Good</p> <p style="text-align: center;">People - Good</p>

HMICFRS were commissioned by the Home Office to undertake a Covid thematic review of all Fire & Rescue Services in England, focussing on service pandemic command structures and identifying any collective learning. Our inspection took place in November 2020 and the national report published in December 2020.

The findings were good with the overall summary that HMICFRS were impressed with how the Service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively. The efficient use of its staff was notable, utilising extra capacity and providing support and resource for remote and home working. It also supported Suffolk County Council (SCC) and the LRF, by offering advice, resources and effective command and control frameworks to help co-ordinate its Covid response.

The Service maintained its statutory functions of prevention, protection and response while providing additional support to the community during the first phase of the pandemic, especially to its health partners. Staff delivered essential items to vulnerable people; wholetime and on-call staff drove ambulances; and other staff supported SCC and LRF activities. Resources were well managed, and the Service's financial position was largely unaffected. Reserves didn't have to be used to cover extra costs.

The findings from the Covid inspection of Suffolk FRS can be accessed [here](#)

Following the full inspection in 2019, the Service developed an action plan to ensure that it focussed on the areas HMICFRS identified as requiring improvement. This was published on our website and provides details of how we planned to improve.

[HMICFRS-Action-Plan-Jan-2020.pdf \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

Staff from across the Service have been working hard to improve in these areas and to also build in the areas assessed as good. The progress that has been made will be assessed during the next HMICFRS formal inspection due to take place in early Spring 2022.

Accountability - Transparency of Performance Information

All performance data required by the Home Office, including response times, incident numbers and types, fatalities and casualties is available on the Home Office website; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#fatalities-and-casualties>.

Our internal 'Fire Service Manager' information system along with other data reporting systems are being continuously developed in consultation with users, to produce information internally for the whole service, Fire Strategy Group, Senior Leader Team and Councillors. This system will help us monitor, manage, and present operational and other performance information to a wide range of audiences, address any negative trends and confirm and identify positive performance and improvement.

13. Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

An integrated risk management plan (IRMP) is a requirement of Central Government, set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The IRMP must identify and assess all reasonably foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including

those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The IRMP is informed by both the established National and Community Risk Registers, linked through the LRF and Civil Contingencies responsibilities.

The IRMP must demonstrate effective consultation with the community, workforce, representative bodies, and partner organisations. The current IRMP was subject to pre-consultation engagement, followed by an 8-week public and stakeholder consultation, facilitated by Suffolk County Council Consultation and Engagement Department.

The IRMP must cover a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as is necessary to ensure fire and rescue authorities are able to deliver the requirements of the National Framework. This review must include reaction to regional or national events such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The Authority's current IRMP is available on our website: [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-22](#)

The IRMP will be reviewed and refreshed again during 2022 and will be replaced by a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), in line with new national guidance.

14. 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](#)

15. Contact Us

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