

Reading Borough Local Safety Plan

2020 - 2021



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in Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service www.rbfrs.co.uk



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* Detailed explanations to support the performance targets infographics can be found in the [appendix](#) at the end of this document.





Introduction

This Local Safety Plan for Reading Borough explains how we identify local risk, the actions we will take to mitigate and respond to that risk and how we measure our performance.

Our West Community Safety [Hub](#) manages the local fire safety resources for Reading, alongside our resources in West Berkshire, delivering services in three key areas:

- Preventing fires and other emergencies;
- Ensuring buildings conform to fire safety legislation; and
- Responding effectively to emergencies when they happen.

Although Reading has a lower proportion of people aged over 65 than other parts of the county and England, the largest long-term growth in population is predicted in this age group. Reading Borough also has a particularly diverse community when compared to Berkshire as a whole. These factors shape our approach to delivering our service.

Following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 RBFRS implemented a phased plan aimed at ensuring the safety of the residents of residential high-rise buildings (RHRBs) across Berkshire. Following initial work conducted by our Community Safety Project Team the local Community Safety Hubs now have responsibility for continuing the Service's work to manage fire risk in these buildings.

Reading has a relatively high number of RHRBs. During 2020-21 we will continue to work with the responsible people and residents of RHRBs and local authority partners in Reading to provide support and guidance and where necessary enforce fire safety legislation.

Our Local Safety Plan links directly to the [strategic commitments](#) set out in the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) [Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-23](#) and the annual objectives and performance measures published in the 2020/21 [Annual Plan](#). Each fire station in Reading has a station plan derived from the local safety plan further tailoring our delivery of services to local risk.

This Local Safety Plan was originally drafted in February 2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic. In mid-March 2020 RBFRS, in line with government guidance, stopped non-essential work in order to protect the community. Although at the time of publication restrictions are starting to be eased, it is clear that our proactive work has been and will continue to be significantly impacted for the coming year.

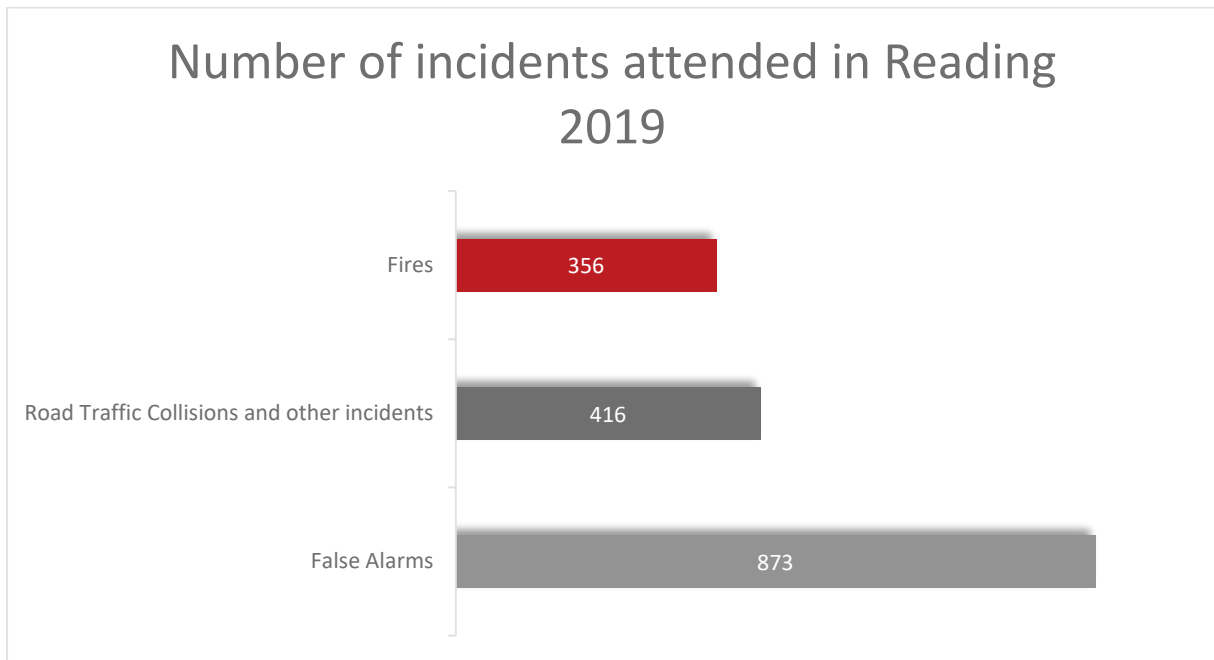
Social distancing and shielding restrictions have reduced our ability to work with vulnerable individuals in their homes, with children in schools, and with communities at events. Business closures have meant we cannot carry out Fire Safety Audits in the usual way.



Our local aims and objectives remain and we continue to deliver our services through alternate means where possible, however, due to the significant impact of Covid-19 we have been forced to acknowledge that the high targets we originally set for ourselves back in February 2020 will be difficult to achieve.

We will, through our performance management processes, track and monitor the continued impact of the pandemic on our performance against our aims. We will adapt our plans to ensure we are responding to the highest local risks.

Between January and December 2019, we attended 1645 incidents in Reading Borough. These are broken down into the following headline areas: fires, road traffic collisions and other incidents, and false alarms.



These figures help us plan our service for the next year to ensure we are correctly addressing risk in our communities.



Map

The map below shows the fire stations in Reading. A wider map of the county can be found within our [Annual Report](#).



» KEY

- On-call
- ▲ Wholetime/On-call
- Wholetime



Preventing Fires and Other Emergencies in Reading Borough

Preventing Accidental [Fires in the Home](#)

A key purpose of our prevention activity is to reduce the risk of fire. As such, we target our preventative work to those at an increased risk from fire.

Prevention of fire deaths is our number one priority. We use our programme of targeted [Safe and Well](#) home visits to make sure we are visiting the most vulnerable e.g. by virtue of their age, lack of mobility, physical or mental impairment. The relative increase of this section of the population goes hand in hand with other factors affecting the risk profile of the Reading area, including the forecasted rise in those with dementia, living alone and those with sensory (hearing and/or sight) needs or a learning disability. This has been recognised by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRRS), and we will continue to target this group in the next 12 months. These visits are predominantly carried out by our fire crews, with more complex cases being addressed by our Safe and Well Technicians.

Reading also includes a number of areas facing socio-economic challenges such as overcrowding, with some falling into the bottom 10% of areas nationally according to the [Indices of Multiple Deprivation](#). Our evidence indicates that people and communities facing health, financial and housing challenges are more likely to have fires in their homes and become injured. We will target a number of Safe and Well visits to these households. Our local area is also particularly diverse and, whilst there is no evidence to suggest ethnicity impacts fire risk, language and cultural differences can affect access to advice and education on fire safety.

Over the next 12 months we will also deliver Safe and Well visits across Reading to those at heightened risk of having a fire in the home. Not only do we focus on residents at greater risk of fire death, but also on the common causes of accidental fires in the home and related injuries. In 2019 we attended 72 accidental dwelling fires in Reading, this is similar to numbers experienced in the previous 3 years (77, 74 and 81 in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively).

The most common causes of these fires in Reading continues to be cooking and electrical, and account for the majority of fire injuries in Reading. 40 people sustained an injury in accidental fires in the home over the last four years. We are now concentrating on highlighting the dangers of these fires when undertaking Safe and Well visits with residents at greater risk of experiencing an accidental fire in the home.

A number of recent high-profile electrical product recalls associated with fire risk have highlighted the importance of registration of electrical appliances at, or after, purchase. Registering contact details with the appliance manufacturer enables the owner to be contacted and the problem rectified should a product recall be issued.



We continue to balance our resources across the county in consideration of risk and demand. This means we sometimes undertake differing levels of activity across our communities. We regularly review the targeting of our prevention work in response to any changes in community risk.



We will reduce the number of accidental fires in the home in Reading by:

- Continuing to deliver our successful programme of Safe and Well home visits to those most vulnerable and those most at risk of experiencing an accidental fire in the home, altering our delivery methods where necessary to meet Covid-19 restrictions.
- Quality assuring the delivery of our home visits to ensure they continue to be focused and effective.
- Further strengthening our work with partner agencies to ensure we are targeting those most at risk via our [Adults at Risk Programme](#), and increase the number of referrals we receive directly from other professionals working with vulnerable people.
- Working with head teachers to increase our access to schools and exploring other means of delivering fire safety education to year 5 pupils given the restrictions placed upon us by Covid-19.
- Using targeted campaigns, community based events and local social media to promote messaging intended to reduce the number of casualties from cooking and electrical related fire injuries.
- Promoting the registration of electrical appliances before or after purchase.
- Increasing the number of referrals we make to partner agencies, such as Age UK and Reading Falls Prevention Team, for additional support for the elderly.
- Providing specific advice relating to cooking and electrical fires when undertaking Safe and Well visits and at other events such as open days, car washes and blood donation sessions where possible.
- Working with representatives of minority groups to ensure that delivery of our community safety initiatives is equally accessible to all.



Performance Targets for 2019/20*

*Delivery of many of our local performance targets will be affected by the changes to our service as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.



Safe and Well visits delivered to those at heightened risk of dying in an accidental fire in the home



Safe and Well visits delivered to those at heightened risk of having an accidental fire in the home and being injured as a result



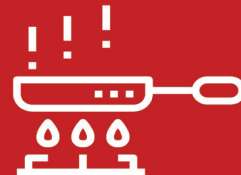
100%

of Safe and Well visits for individuals referred to us completed within agreed timescales

Zero deaths in accidental fires in the home



Offer fire safety education sessions to all school children in Year 5



Conduct events promoting fire safety in the home focusing on the main causes of fire

Increase the number of referrals for **Safe and Well** visits from other agencies



Utilise social media channels to promote the registration of electrical goods



Reducing Deliberate Fires

In 2019 we attended 94 deliberately set fires across Reading. We categorise these fires as either primary, where structures or property are involved, or secondary, usually involving less valuable material such as bins, grass and scrubland.

The most common deliberate primary fire we attended in 2019 were those related to vehicles. Of those vehicles our fire investigations indicated that a significant proportion appear to have been stolen, abandoned and then set on fire.

Refuse fires make up the vast majority of other types of deliberately set fires across Reading which, while generally are only considered a nuisance, can spread to property of value and potentially pose a risk to life. These fires are taken seriously and we work with communities, partners and schools to reduce them.

Arson can have links with other anti-social behaviour and we work in close partnership with colleagues in Thames Valley Police and the local authority to tackle these issues. Where the suspected cause of a fire may be arson, the police are informed at the time of the incident. We monitor data on deliberate fire-setting, sharing intelligence with the police to assist investigations, prosecutions and prevention. Where there is a specific threat of arson, we work with colleagues in Thames Valley Police to proactively reduce the risk. In such cases, our fire crews or a Safe and Well Technician will visit the relevant person or premises as a matter of priority to put in place additional prevention measures balancing the risk against that posed by Covid-19.

We will achieve a reduction in the number of deliberate fires by:

- Utilising multi-agency community safety forums to share information with local authority and blue light partners to address common problems.
- Continuing to react swiftly to high priority arson referrals from Thames Valley Police with a focused Safe and Well visit.
- Focusing attention on monitoring deliberate vehicle fires, and similar types of incidents, to identify trends. We will then work closely with the police and other partners to help prevent vehicle thefts, reduce the impact of fires when they do happen and identify perpetrators
- Continuing our commitment to working with fire setters in a structured programme, which has shown that early intervention and education can help to address the issues of fire-setting behaviours.
- Supporting investigation and successful prosecution of arson perpetrators.
- Erecting arson awareness boards at identified hotspots.



Performance Targets for 2020/21*

*Delivery of many of our local performance targets will be affected by the changes to our service as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.



Reduction in the number of deliberately set fires in Reading



Increase public engagement to report deliberate fires, by highlighting the issue on local social media channels

100%

Completion of Safe and Well visits where there has been a threat, or incidence of arson, within **48 hours** of being informed by Thames Valley Police





Preventing Other Emergencies

We respond to a wide range of incidents, beyond those just involving fire. These range from water rescues involving people and animals, to incidents involving hazardous substances.

One key role is to respond to Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). RTCs are a societal risk and a preventable cause of death in young adults and other groups. In the 4 years 2016 to 2019, the Service attended 202 RTCs across Reading.

Primarily we address this risk through schools education packages aimed at year 7 pupils. We have however experienced difficulty in accessing schools due to busy curriculums and this has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. We will therefore explore other means of delivery to young people. Firefighters are also involved in [Safe Drive Stay Alive](#), a road safety programme concentrated on new and prospective drivers in the age range of 15-17. Over 30,000 young people across the Thames Valley are reached by this initiative every year.

With the River Thames running through Reading and the presence of other bodies of open water, the Service attends a higher number of water rescue incidents in this area in comparison with other areas of Berkshire. Around 400 people accidentally drown in the UK per year. In the last 4 years, 44 water related incidents were attended in Reading, more than double the average for the other authority areas in Berkshire. The Service has pledged through its Integrated Risk Management Plan to support the [UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26](#), which aims to reduce drowning incidents by 50% by 2026.

We will reduce the risk presented by other emergencies by:

- Continuing to offer water and road safety education sessions to every secondary school across Reading. Acknowledging the pressures faced by schools due to Covid-19 we will amend our delivery methods where necessary.
- Exploring other means of delivering water and road safety education to young people such as giving direct advice to people swimming in open water in the spring and summer months.
- Working alongside other agencies in the delivery of the Safe Drive, Stay Alive and Biker Down campaigns.
- Delivering local road and water safety initiatives in support of national campaigns.
- Supporting the fitting of water safety boards at high risk locations along the River Thames.



Performance Targets for 2020/21*

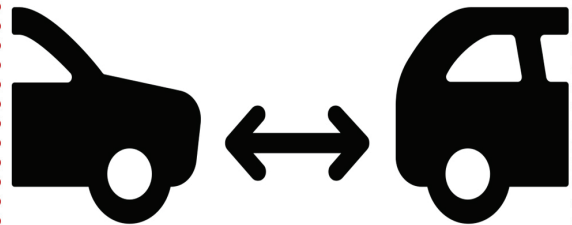
*Delivery of many of our local performance targets will be affected by the changes to our service as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.



Water and road safety education sessions offered to all school students in Year 7

Conduct events focused on water safety in the Spring and Summer months

Support initiatives promoting safety messaging around road safety



Increase engagement on local social media to promote messaging around road and water safety



Encourage community engagement with the Safe Drive Stay Alive campaign



Fire Safety Standards in Buildings

Another element of our work is ensuring that businesses in the area comply with fire safety legislation. Our specialist team of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIOs) will support local businesses in complying with the law, and will enforce such compliance where necessary.

Our FSIOs can enforce the fire safety standards under a piece of legislation called the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#). They achieve this through a range of planned and reactive work. These include inspections of premises, investigating fire safety concerns raised by members of the public, and responding to local authority building consultations and licensing requests. They will also undertake investigations following a fire where we have concerns about a breach in fire safety measures. As well as reducing the risk of fire, their work ensures that our crews are fully informed of relevant risks when responding to any incidents in commercial premises.

We proactively look at risks to identify and target premises or businesses which present the greatest risk to public safety. In 2019/20 this resulted in several successful prosecutions of the people responsible for a number of premises across Reading.

Following a fire in Bolton in November 2019, The Secretary of State for Education wrote to the vice-chancellors of universities across the country seeking assurances regarding fire safety in student accommodation. As a thriving town with a vibrant university community Reading has a high concentration of premises used to accommodate students. We are working with Reading University's management to help them manage fire safety in their premises and others used to accommodate students.

Reading has a large number of residential high-rise buildings (buildings of 6 or more floors or over 18m in height). Since the Grenfell fire in 2017 we have prioritised the highest risk of these buildings for inspections to ensure fire safety is being effectively managed. We will maintain our focus on these buildings in 2020/21 utilising a range of methods to reduce fire risk to occupants and Firefighters.

The outcomes of our fire safety interventions, which include post incident audits, responding to complaints and our risk based inspection programme will continue to be monitored to identify trends in non-compliance in other types of buildings.

Our fire safety work is impacted to varying degrees by Covid-19 restrictions but continues on a risk assessed basis.



We will improve fire safety standards in buildings by:

- Actively targeting higher risk premises such as some high-rise residential buildings, student accommodation blocks and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) for fire safety interventions. The methods we use may be adapted to meet Covid-19 restrictions.
- Conducting post fire building inspections and analysing fire risk data to identify any emerging trends which might influence our local strategy.
- Quality assuring the delivery of our Protection work to ensure it meets the highest standards.
- Responding swiftly to complaints we receive from the public regarding fire safety in buildings.
- Providing advice to business and property owners to encourage self-compliance with fire safety legislation.
- Working with other agencies to identify premises that fall under fire safety legislation e.g. Local Authority, Care Quality Commission.
- Undertaking additional seasonal activity. For example, at Christmas checking shops additional stock being stored/blocking fire exits.
- Working with the managers of student accommodation blocks to maximize fire safety measures whilst delivering fire safety education sessions to students to keep them safe in their accommodation.



Performance Targets for 2020/21*

*Delivery of many of our local performance targets will be affected by the changes to our service as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.



Delivery of risk based fire safety audits across Reading



60%

Maximum percentage of completed fire safety audits in premises found to be broadly compliant with fire safety legislation



Focus our inspections on non-compliant premises and increase formal enforcement action



Delivery of business events carried out to improve legislative fire safety responsibilities and in turn help reduce the social and economic costs of fire for businesses and local employment



95%

of consultations completed within the required time frame



Responding to Incidents

Although prevention is our priority, we recognise that fires and other incidents, such as road traffic collisions, will still occur and require a swift and effective response.

Reading is served by four wholetime fire stations, supported where necessary by fire engines from other Berkshire and neighbouring county fire stations.

In 2019, we attended 1645 emergency incidents in Reading. 22% of these were fires, 53% were [false alarms](#) and 3% were road traffic collisions with the remaining 22% including special services, such as water and animal rescues and assisting other agencies.

We continually monitor the number and types of incidents we respond to and in February 2020 we introduced a mid-range boat into our response fleet. This followed learning from wide scale flooding events with the craft now providing a faster and more versatile response to water related incidents.

Over the last 5 years we have experienced a steady increase in the number of calls we receive to fire alarms actuating which subsequently turn out to be false alarms. These calls are disruptive to occupants, businesses and tie up fire engines at incidents unnecessarily. We will continue to monitor these types of calls and where the numbers exceed pre-determined levels work with the responsible person to reduce them.

Across Berkshire, our target is to arrive at emergency incidents within 10 minutes of the initial call on 75% of occasions. The speed at which we respond and arrive at incidents is influenced by numerous factors including call handling time, how quickly our crews respond to an alert and the time it takes to travel to the incident. In 2019 our performance averaged 90% across Reading. There are however areas of Reading that suffer from vehicle congestion presenting challenges to responding crews.

In relation to the more serious or wider spread incidents such as flooding, we will continue work with the other emergency services, local authorities and other key organisations as part of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TV LRF).

We will continue to plan, prepare and train to ensure our teams can provide an effective response to all incidents and are able to work well with colleagues across all the emergency services and other organisations. Over the coming year we will enhance our assurance activity to support learning and continually improve our response delivery.



We will improve our response to emergency incidents by:

- Continuing to respond quickly and effectively when called to emergency incidents across Reading.
- Effectively managing our resources to ensure we provide an operational response at all four Reading fire stations every day of the year.
- Undertaking targeted activity to reduce false alarm calls.
- Improving the scope of our response to water based incidents by embedding our new mid-range boat into the Service's fleet.
- Working with Council colleagues and neighbourhood groups to reduce risk in some of Reading's more congested streets.
- Working with Protection colleagues to drive down the risk to Firefighters posed by fires in high-rise residential buildings.
- Continuing our programme of joint exercising with other fire and rescue and other emergency services subject to Covid-19 restrictions.
- Strengthening our operational assurance processes and learning from incidents that have occurred locally and nationally.
- Maintaining effective liaison with Highways England and other emergency service partners to minimise the impact on response times during local M4 upgrade.
- Continuing to focus on the training, development and professionalism of our Firefighters.

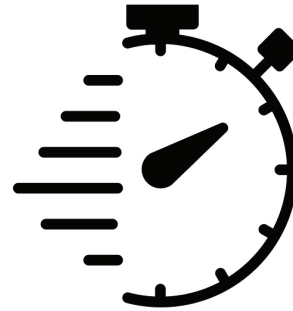


Performance Targets for 2020/21*

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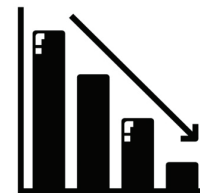


Maintaining availability of our front line fire engines 365 days a year from all 4 Reading Fire Stations

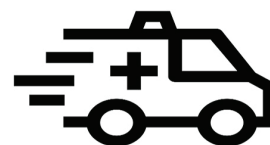


10 minutes

Maintain a response standard that exceeds the Service's target of 75%



Reduce false alarm calls using social media channels and a targeted campaign



Increase the frequency of joint training with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other blue light partners



Community Engagement

RBFRS recognises the importance and value of knowing and being known within the communities we represent. Through a range of community engagement events we will ensure that our fire stations, people and resources are a focus for activity in local communities.

The range of events that we will deliver over the next year will not only provide a great opportunity to connect with our diverse communities, but will also provide opportunities to deliver important prevention messages. Our ability to deliver against the following objectives will be impacted to a great extent by Covid-19.

During this period we will strive to:

Continue delivering Fire Cadets

Fire Cadets is a youth initiative run by staff at RBFRS, with educational support from RBFRS's Safety Education Team. Working as a team, Fire Cadets take part in practical and theoretical fire service activities, including hose drills, breathing apparatus procedures and fire safety awareness sessions. The scheme also teaches young people essential life skills such as self-discipline, confidence and leadership. For further information, please see our [website](#).

Continue to host station open days

We plan to continue to host open days at stations across the Borough. The aim of these days is to engage with the community, raise public awareness and understanding of the work of RBFRS, and to deliver key prevention messages to members of the community.

Continue to deliver charity car washes

We intend to deliver charity car washes at stations across the Borough, using this as an opportunity to engage with the community and deliver key prevention messages, whilst raising money for local and national causes.

Continue to deliver blood donation sessions

To support the National Health Service Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) service we host routine blood donation sessions at Caversham Road Fire Station. We plan to add value to these sessions by offering a range of safety guidance to blood donors.

Other community activities

Finally, we will seek to explore opportunities to deliver other community-based events and activities, in line with local and national campaigns. These events and activities will allow us to reach our diverse communities, in order to deliver targeted prevention messages in relation to areas of local need or risk.



Performance Scrutiny

It is important to us that you receive the services we have set out to deliver and that these services are delivered to a high standard.

We have a number of ways we monitor and manage our performance. You can see our Strategic Performance Report as scrutinised and approved by the Fire Authority's Audit and Governance Committee by visiting the [RBFRS website](#).

At a local level, there is a performance management structure built into our service delivery model. We have a Service Delivery Management Team, who meet monthly to scrutinise performance against the Hub-level targets set out in this, and the other, Local Safety Plans. This allows us to ensure the Service is accountable at a local level for driving performance and quality in all we do to serve the people of Royal Berkshire, whilst also allowing us to direct support to where it is needed.

During the restrictions of Covid-19 we will strive to ensure that our activities are maintained as much as possible and postponed, adapted or replaced with an alternative whenever necessary.

Contact Us

Email West Hub Team: cartern@RBFRS.co.uk

Call RBFRS and ask for the West Hub Management Team: 0118 945 2888

Website: rbfrs.co.uk



Appendix

Fires in the home

Otherwise referred to as a 'dwelling fire'. 'Dwelling' means a property that is a place of residence i.e. places occupied by households such as houses and flats, excluding hotels, hostels and residential institutions including university halls of residence. Includes non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

A document that details the plans of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service for the next four years from a high level, strategic perspective.

Hub

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service operate what is called a 'hub model', whereby the whole area of Berkshire is split into three separate hubs: East (Slough and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), West (West Berkshire and Reading) and Central (Bracknell and Wokingham). These hubs are then able to tailor their services of prevention, protection and response to meet the needs of the local area.

Safe and Well

Safe and Well visits are conducted by either firefighters or Safe and Well Technicians to the homes of people who may be vulnerable. These visits are targeted based on various factors, such as age, mobility, or sensory (hearing and/or sight) needs.

Adults at Risk Programme

A programme run in conjunction with Adult Social Care that provides free training and resources for the protection of adults at risk from fire. This training is available to anyone involved in the care of adults in the community.

At its core, this programme is training people to recognise when a referral to RBFRS is appropriate, and how to make this referral. This helps us target our prevention activity to those who are most at risk.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO)

A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a property rented by at least three people who are not from one 'household' (for example a family), but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. It's sometimes called a 'house share'.



Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO)

Sets out the fire safety requirements for all non-domestic premises. It does not apply to people's private homes, including individual flats in a block or house.

Licensed premises providing accommodation

A premises that has a license to sell alcohol and also offers accommodation. One example would be a pub with rooms to rent.

False alarm

Where we attend a location believing there to be a fire incident, but on arrival discover that no such incident exists, or existed. If the appliances (fire engines) are 'turned around' by Thames Valley Fire Control before arriving at the incident – then the incident is not classed as having been attended and does not need to be reported.

Infographics supplementary details

The number of formal and informal fire safety activities

This is the total number of formal or informal fire safety activities that have been issued one of the below:

- Action plan
- Deficiency Notices
- Enforcement Notice
- Prohibition Notice
- Alternations Notice
- Voluntary Restriction
- Formal Caution
- Prosecution Notice

Number of Safe and Well visits delivered to those who are at heightened risk of having an accidental dwelling fire and being injured as a result

Research has shown that certain groups of people are at heightened risk of having an accidental dwelling fire and being injured as a result. Safe and Well visits will be targeted towards these groups.



Number of Safe and Well visits delivered to those who are at heightened risk of dying in the event of an accidental dwelling fire

Research has shown that certain vulnerable groups are at heightened risk of dying in an accidental dwelling fire. Safe and Well visits will be targeted towards these vulnerable groups.

Number of deaths in accidental fires in the home

Referred to in the annual plan as “number of fire deaths in accidental dwelling fires”. The total number of deaths that occur as a result of an accidental dwelling fire. This includes a person whose death is attributed to an accidental dwelling fire, even when the death occurs weeks or months later.

Total number of fire safety audits carried out

This is the total number of full fire safety audits carried out in premises in Berkshire. This is calculated once the audit has been closed by RBFRS and only includes the initial fire safety audit. A fire safety audit is carried out to enforce the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) 2005, which applies to virtually all non-domestic premises and covers nearly every type of building, structure and open space.

% of statutory fire safety consultations completed within the required timeframes

Statutory fire consultations have a set timeframe in which they must be completed and include:

Licensing

Building regulations

Building regulations approved supplier



% of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes from time the emergency call was answered

This measure looks at the time taken from when the Fire Control Room Operator answers the phone, until the time the first fire engine (appliance) arrives at the scene of the emergency incident, and the percentage of occasions RBFRS does this in under 10 minutes.

