

West Berkshire Local Safety Plan

2020 - 2021





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Introduction

This Local Safety Plan for West Berkshire 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 in West Berkshire, alongside our resources in Reading, 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.

West Berkshire's 158,000 strong population is one of the most widely dispersed in South Eastern England. This means fire engines may need to travel greater distances to attend incidents. This shapes our response capabilities, and requires us to have a long term focus on prevention to reduce the risk to all those living in the area.

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 West Berkshire has a station plan derived from the local safety plan further tailoring our delivery of services to local risk.

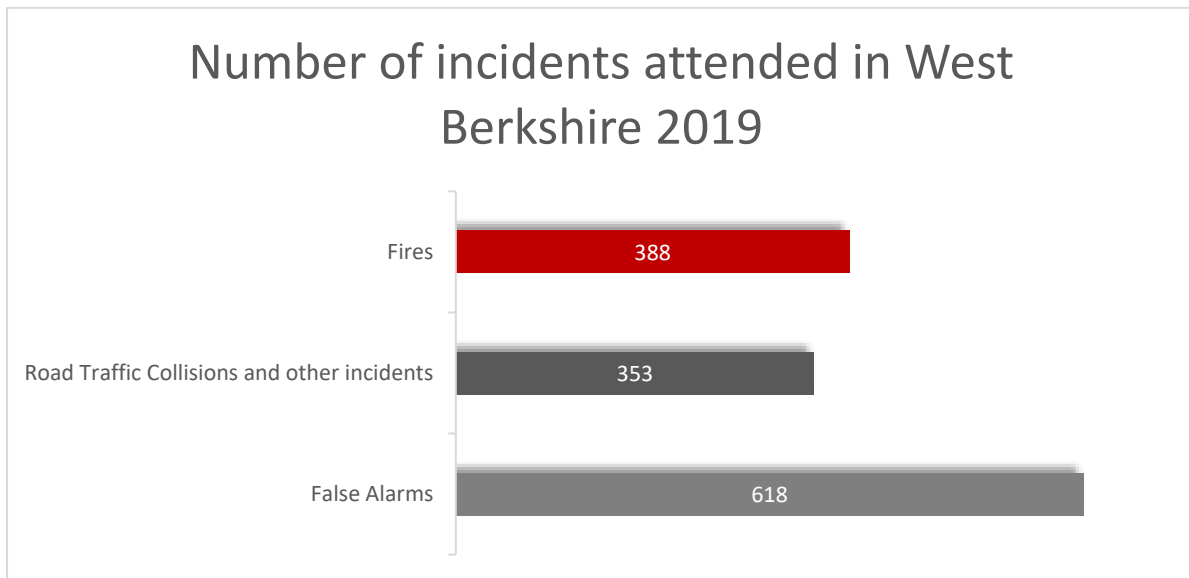
This Local Safety Plan was originally drafted in February 2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic. In mid-March 2020 RBFRS, in line with government guidance, stopped non-essential work in order to protect the community. Although at the time of publication restrictions are starting to be eased, it is clear 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.



During 2019 we attended 1359 incidents in West Berkshire. 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 West Berkshire. A wider map of the county can be found within our [Annual Report](#).



>> KEY

-
- On-call
 - ▲ Wholetime/On-call
 - Wholetime
 - ⬠ Headquarters



Preventing Fires and Other Emergencies in West Berkshire

Preventing Accidental [Fires in the Home](#)

Our priority is always to prevent emergencies from happening in the first place. We deliver a wide range of education and prevention activities and initiatives often in partnership with other agencies.

A key purpose of our prevention activity is to reduce the risk of fire in the home. As such, we target our preventative work to those at an increased risk from fire. Our data shows that those aged over 65 are at heightened risk of dying in a fire in the home. This risk is multiplied where other risk factors exist such as poor mobility and physical impairment. People that are vulnerable to fire are often known to other agencies and that is why we have developed data sharing arrangements with trusted partners in West Berkshire and take an active part in a number of community safety partnerships.

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 number of people aged over 65 is higher than other areas of Berkshire and England, and the number of people in this age range is expected to rise over the next decade. This has been recognised by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), and we will continue to target this age group over the next 12 months. These visits continue, on a risk-assessed basis, but at a much reduced level due to current restrictions. They are delivered by our fire crews, with more complex cases being addressed by our Safe and Well Technicians. As well as focusing on reducing fire risk we use these visits to signpost residents to other agencies or charities that can provide support e.g. Age UK and the West Berkshire Falls Prevention Team. Due to the restrictions placed on us by Covid-19 we are also exploring other means by which to reduce fire risk in the home.

West Berkshire also includes a number of areas facing socio-economic challenges such as overcrowding, with some falling into the bottom 20% of areas nationally according to the [Indices of Multiple Deprivation](#). Our evidence indicates that some people facing such challenges are more likely to experience an accidental fire in the home which may lead to an increased risk of injury.

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. Cooking related fires continue to be the most common cause of accidental fires in West Berkshire and this is followed by electrical fires. 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.



West Berkshire also has over three times the rate of chimney fires when compared to the rest of the county, and these types of fires can spread and involve other parts of a building. 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.

West Berkshire has a widely dispersed population with many communities located some distance from the nearest fire station. This presents challenges for us when responding to emergencies therefore there is a need to focus our prevention work on those communities to reduce the risk of fires starting in the first place.

Preventing other fires

Being a predominantly rural area West Berkshire experiences a significant number of fires associated with agriculture, fields and forestry. The number of fires is affected by seasonal weather conditions with the hot summer of 2018 resulting in a particularly high level of operational activity dealing with rural fires. These types of fire often demand a large fire and rescue service response over a protracted period.

With climate change likely to increase the frequency of extremes of weather the Service will continue to work with rural communities and businesses to reduce the risk and impact of rural fires.








We will reduce the number of accidental fires in West Berkshire by:

- Continuing to deliver our successful programme of Safe and Well home visits to those most vulnerable and therefore most at risk of experiencing an accidental fire in the home, amending 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. Continuing to be an active partner within West Berkshire's Building Communities Together (BCT) team; working with those partner agencies to identify the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Work with head teachers to increase our access to schools and explore 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 where possible 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 West Berkshire Falls Prevention Team for additional support for the elderly.
- Providing specific advice relating to cooking, electrical and chimney fires when undertaking Safe and Well visits and at other events such as open days, car washes and blood donation sessions where possible.
- Focusing attention on the more remote communities across West Berkshire for delivery of community safety initiatives.
- Working with rural businesses to reduce the risk posed by farm, field and forestry fires.



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.

 <p>Safe and Well visits delivered to those at heightened risk of dying in an accidental fire in the home</p>	 <p>Safe and Well visits delivered to those at heightened risk of having an accidental fire in the home and being injured as a result</p>	 <p>100% of Safe and Well visits for individuals referred to us completed within agreed timescales</p>
<p>Increase the number of referrals for Safe and Well visits from other agencies</p>		
<p>Zero deaths in accidental fires in the home</p>		
 <p>Offer fire safety education sessions to all school children in Year 5</p>	 <p>Deliver events supporting national campaigns aimed at reducing chimney fires</p>	
<p>Support community based events to promote safety messages to reduce accidental fires in the home - particularly cooking, electrical and chimney related fires</p>		
<p>Utilise social media channels to promote the registration of electrical goods</p>		



Reducing Deliberate Fires

Over the last 4 years West Berkshire has experienced a higher number of deliberate 'primary' fires compared to other Berkshire unitary areas (primary fires are fires that harm people or cause damage to property). A significant proportion of those incidents involved vehicles either ignited whilst in situ on the owner's property or stolen and subsequently set on fire.

The number of deliberate secondary fires, those involving material of low value, although higher than primary fires is consistent with other areas of Berkshire and commonly involves sheds, fences and refuse. These fires, although often considered no more than a nuisance, do impact the environment, can spread to property of value and potentially pose a risk to life.

Deliberate fires often have links to other types of anti-social behaviour and we recognise that a partnership approach to tackling them can yield the best results. Working with colleagues from the local authority, police and other groups in the Multi-Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) environment we aim to maximise the capability of all services and community groups. As well as taking action to prevent deliberate fires, we monitor our incident data and identify trends and common factors. This has resulted in a reduction in the impact of deliberately set fires and on some occasions identification of the perpetrator.

Specific threats of arson, although rare, present an immediate risk to life and property and are treated as a high priority. We work with colleagues in Thames Valley Police to proactively reduce the risk and in such cases, our fire crews or a Safe and Well Technician will visit the relevant person or premises 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:

- Working within the multi-agency 'MAPS' environment sharing information with local authority, blue light and other 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 and reduce the frequency and impact of fires.
- 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.



- Working with local partners on joint targeted campaigns.
- 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 West Berkshire



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). West Berkshire's size, combined with its extensive road network, means that the Service responds to a significantly higher number of RTCs compared to other areas of Berkshire. In 2019, this was 136 RTCs – nearly double the incident rate across the rest of Berkshire.

To tackle this potential risk, West Berkshire firefighters offer all schools with year 7 students a tailored Fire Safety and Road Safety presentation (subject to Covid-19 restrictions). We also participate in targeted road safety events run by Thames Valley Police. Firefighters also support [Safe Drive Stay Alive](#), a national 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.

Large animal rescues are also more frequent in rural West Berkshire. Over the last 4 years the Service attended 17 large animal rescues in West Berkshire. Our primary aim in such incidents is to prevent members of the public from placing themselves at risk trying to rescue an animal. We train all firefighters to respond to these type of incidents and have a specialist animal rescue capability provided from Reading.

Finally, the Service has pledged its support to the [UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26](#), which aims to reduce drowning incidents by 50% by 2026. Around 400 people accidentally drown annually in the UK and over the last 4 years 20 water-rescue incidents were attended in West Berkshire.

We will reduce the risk presented by other emergencies by:

- Continuing to offer water and road safety education sessions to every secondary school across West Berkshire. 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 participation in the National Citizens Service programme.
- Working alongside other agencies in the delivery of the Safe Drive, Stay Alive and Biker Down campaigns.
- Supporting and participating in national campaigns to reduce other emergencies including water-related incidents and RTCs.



- Delivering local road and water safety campaigns increasing the use of social media to do so
- Providing safety advice in rural communities regarding animal rescue whilst we work to reduce rural fires.



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 right 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 increase the safety of the people who live and work in West Berkshire by targeting our inspection, regulation and enforcement activities on those places which are less likely to comply with the law and may present a greater risk to public safety. By analysing our records we have found that accommodation linked to commercial premises and public houses and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are more likely to be non-compliant with the FSO in West Berkshire. Care homes also continue to be a relatively high risk where, due to age and infirmity, people may find it difficult to evacuate if there was a fire. We work with partners such as the Environmental Health department in West Berkshire Council to undertake joint inspections where enforcement legislation overlaps such as in flats and HMOs.

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



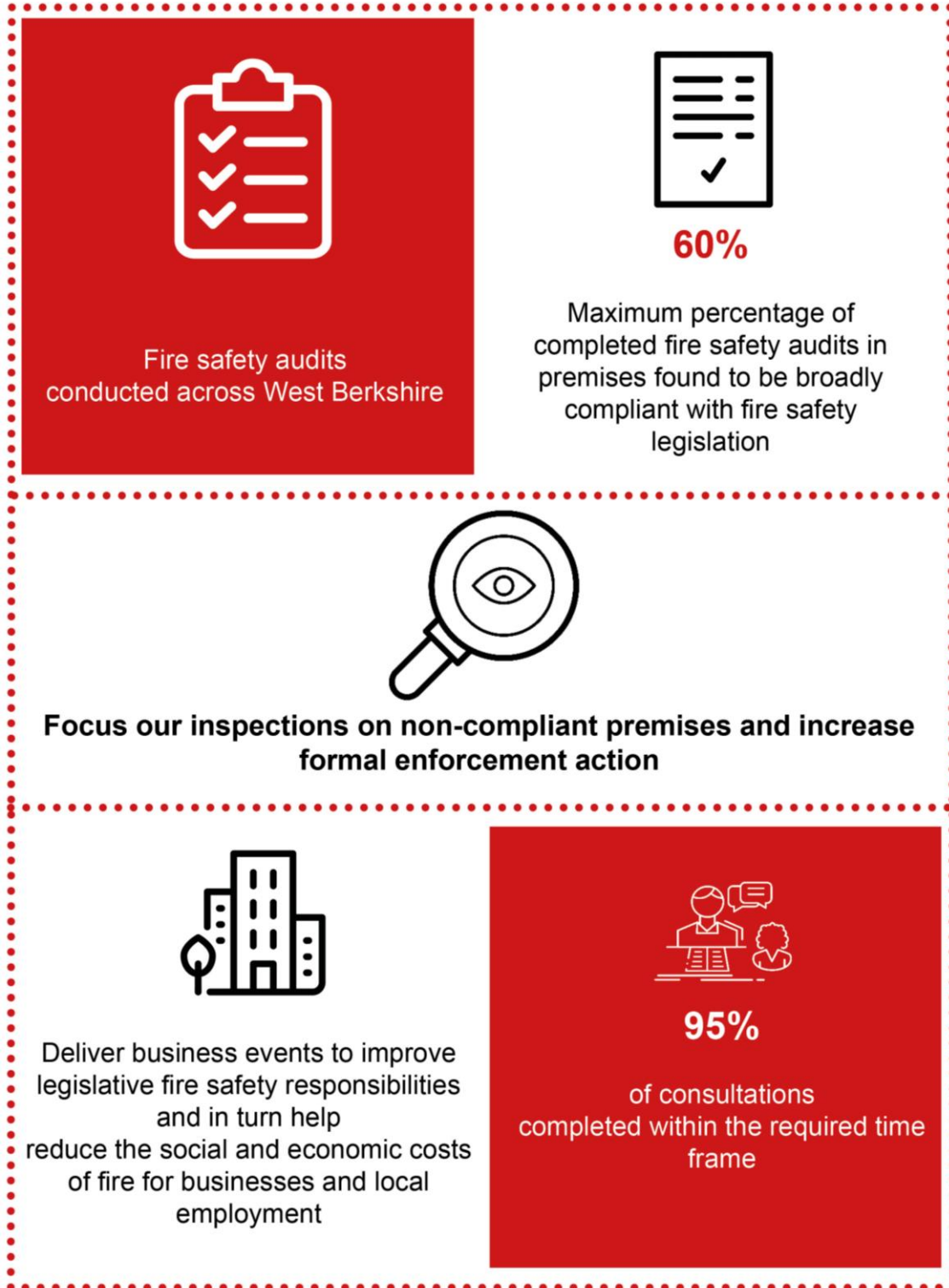
We will improve fire safety standards in buildings by:

- Actively targeting higher risk premises more likely to be contravening the Fire Safety regulations. Across West Berkshire this includes [houses in multiple occupation \(HMOs\)](#), accommodation linked to commercial premises and public houses, and care homes. The methods we use may be adapted to meet Covid-19 restrictions.
- Quality assuring the delivery of our Protection work to ensure it meets the highest standards.
- Conducting post fire building inspections and analysing fire risk data to identify any emerging trends which might influence our local strategy.
- 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, checking shops at Christmas for stock blocking fire exits.



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.





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.

Our full-time response is based in Newbury, where we have two fire engines providing 365 day a year cover. We also maintain four 'on-call' stations in Hungerford, Lambourn, Mortimer and Pangbourne. These stations are staffed by firefighters who live and work in the local community, but respond to incidents when alerted by pager. Over the last few years we have recruited and trained more firefighters for these stations, so that we can continue to support smaller communities and provide resilience across the county. If you are interested in serving as an on-call firefighter, please visit your local on-call station or visit our [website](#).

In 2019, we attended 1359 emergency incidents in West Berkshire. 29% of these were fires, 45% were [false alarms](#) and 10% were road traffic collisions, with the remaining 16% including special services such as water and animal rescues and assisting other agencies.

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

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 and 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 large area and rural nature of West Berkshire presents significant challenges to the Service when responding to incidents due to the long distances that our fire engines have to travel.

To maximise performance Thames Valley Fire Control Service always sends the fire engine that can get to an emergency in the quickest time.

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 undertake a range of assurance activity to support learning and continually improve our response delivery.



We will improve our response to emergency incidents by:

- Striving to improve the response performance at all of the fire stations in West Berkshire, reducing the time it takes to mobilise a fire crew and reach the scene of an emergency incident.
- Undertaking targeted activity to reduce false alarm calls.
- Continuing to provide an 'effecting entry' service to Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service where immediate entry to a premises is required to deal with a medical emergency.
- Focusing on training and retaining our new and existing firefighters particularly at our on-call stations.
- Continuing our programme of joint training and exercising with other fire and rescue and other emergency services in accordance with ours and our partners Covid-19 related control measures.
- Developing our successful joint ambulance/fire service RTC training and exercising programme at Newbury Fire Station subject to associated Covid-19 restrictions.
- Strengthening our operational assurance processes and learning from incidents that have occurred nationally and locally.
- Continuing to provide a co-responding function in partnership with South Central Ambulance Service from Hungerford Community Fire Station.
- Seeking support from the local community to recruit more on-call firefighters.
- Improving the professionalism of our Firefighters by continuing our focus on their training and development.



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.



60%

Increase the hours where there is adequate crewing for on-call frontline fire engines towards our Service target of 60%



10 minutes

Increase the % of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes of the call being answered



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 recognise the importance and value of knowing and being known within the communities we represent. Through a range of community engagement events we will work to 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 Prevention department. 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 host open days at stations across the area. 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 area, using this as an opportunity to engage with the community and deliver key prevention messages, whilst raising money for local and national causes.

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 hours where there is adequate crewing on retained frontline pumping appliances

This is the percentage of hours where there is sufficient minimum qualified firefighters (four personnel) on retained pumping appliances (fire engines). Retained frontline pumping appliances are crewed mainly by on-call firefighters who are based at stations in more rural locations, and are ready to leave their place of work or home when alerted by pager to attend emergencies from the local on-call station, when they receive the call.



% 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 on the percentage of occasions RBFRS does this in under 10 minutes.

