

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance 2021/22



Fire and Rescue Service

Foreword



Councillor Colin Horncastle
Cabinet Member for
Community Services and
Fire Authority Chair



Paul Hedley
Chief Fire Officer

We are proud to bring you Northumberland Fire Authority's (NFA) Statement of Assurance. Northumberland County Council are a unitary authority who are the designated fire authority for Northumberland.

The new administration of Northumberland County Council was elected in May 2021 and is committed to improving the social and economic well-being of the people of Northumberland and their surrounding environment.

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) is a critical function of the County Council and is fully committed to the Authority's strategic aims and supporting the delivery of the priorities within the NCC Corporate Plan whilst assuring value for money.

This assurance statement outlines the priorities, projects and initiatives that are in place to assure our service delivery and ensure the safety of our staff and communities within Northumberland.

We are committed to delivering risk critical 'joined up' services for NCC and to continuous improvement through new initiatives as well as building upon success of previous work to provide the best possible services delivered to the communities of Northumberland.

We will continue to invest in our locally based workforce and deploy resources in an intelligent way based on an assessment of risks across our urban and rural communities, as well as maintaining a very high level of prevention and protection work.

Central to our stated aim of 'Making Northumberland Safer' is preventing fires and other emergencies happening in the first place, mitigating harm to vulnerable people, reducing the incidence of deaths and injuries to our residents and visitors, protecting property and reducing damage caused by fires or other emergencies.

The communities we serve

Our community

Northumberland is home to around 323,820 people. The population is increasing and is forecast to increase by 4.4 per cent to 339,415 people between 2022 and 2043.

Our natural environment

Northumberland is one of the most rural counties in England and is a popular visitor destination renowned for its rural beauty covering over 500,000 hectares. The provision of additional off-road response vehicles and partnership work through the Local Resilience Forum will assist in managing the risk from climate change, adverse weather, wildfires, flooding and severe winter impact.

Our built environment

Northumberland has plans for attracting future economic and investment housing growth, with a focus on the Local Enterprise Partnership hubs. As we develop our service we will consider residential and commercial buildings/development, to ensure that we can continue to provide an excellent prevention, protection and response service to all areas of our changing county. Therefore, we will continue to engage early in any planning processes throughout the county to address any areas of concern and provide specialist advice where necessary.

Our heritage

Northumberland has approximately 5,616 listed buildings, including many sites of importance to the country's national heritage. Alnwick and Bamburgh are internationally renowned for their castles. Cragston and Wallington Hall head a list of nationally-important buildings/estates operated by the National Trust and are two of the many listed buildings in the county. Holy Island and Hadrian's Wall are also ancient sites of worldwide historical interest within the County. We will continue to work with owners and occupiers to ensure plans, risks, training and information are continuously reviewed to safeguard our heritage.

The risks we face

The [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England \(2018\)](#) (Framework) states that every fire and rescue authority must assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that affect their communities. Fire and rescue authorities must also put in place arrangements to prevent and mitigate those risks. NFRS defines risk as a **'combination of the likelihood and consequence of a hazardous event'** and this supports the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) definition and strategic risk management framework. Working with partners, and supported by comprehensive risk profiling, we have assessed fire and rescue related risks in Northumberland, and this has informed our service delivery. We have captured this in our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-26 as required by the Framework. We update our four-year plan annually and you can read our current and previous plans by following the link provided below.

<https://www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk/plans>

Emerging Risks

In addition to the range of incidents we have outlined in our CRMP, we must consider emerging risks such as an ageing population and increased vulnerability, climate change and extreme weather, pandemics and future housing and commercial developments.

Ageing population and increased vulnerability

Northumberland's population is living longer. 25.1 percent of the population of Northumberland is aged 65 and over, this is set to rise to 33 percent by 2041. Historical data shows that older people are at a greater risk from suffering serious injuries or death from accidental dwelling fires. As such, we will continue to develop our partnerships and review our risk model to ensure that we target those most at risk of fire through our safe and wellbeing programme.

Climate change and extreme weather

Climate change is bringing increased temperatures, but this is leading to multiple changes such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall and extreme weather events such as storms. These changes increase the likelihood of incidents such as flooding and storms. With our partners, we continue to monitor climate change and continuously assess our resilience in responding to this increasing risk, ensuring we have the right people in the right place with the right skills to respond effectively.

Pandemic

A pandemic, such as Covid 19, is an outbreak of infectious disease, occurring over a wide geographical area, and generally affecting a significant proportion of the world's population. We continue to adapt and respond to current and possible future pandemics as we strengthen our relationships with our partners and with our communities.

Economic risk

The county is home to a number of nationally and internationally recognised businesses, large employers and a number of strategic military establishments. NFRS continues to work closely with partners across the council to ensure we are aware of, and can plan for, emerging risk in relation to future residential, commercial and industrial developments. Our operational and fire protection personnel work with businesses to plan for emergencies and carry out fire protection enforcement/advice.

Risks beyond our borders

Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements

Through Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 NFRS has set up reinforcement schemes for securing mutual assistance with Fire Services of Scotland, Tyne & Wear, Cumbria and Durham & Darlington to provide and utilise resources such as additional fire appliances and support vehicles. Plans are also in place, through National Resilience arrangements, to provide, and receive, specialist appliances and crews for mass decontamination, water rescue, urban search and rescue & high volume pumping.

Fire Control

NFRS continues to work in partnership with TWFRS through the provision of a shared emergency fire control system. The arrangements provide high levels of resilience, enabling both services to accept calls and mobilise resources for each other. The current arrangements ensure that the nearest resource is mobilised to any life risk incident, regardless of the area in which the incident occurs. Further work is ongoing to identify other opportunities for collaboration. This work includes preparation for the future implementation of the Emergency Services Network (ESN), which will replace the current national emergency services radio system. NFRS continues to provide the out of hours call handling service on behalf of the local authority.

Overview of Fire and Rescue Service

Overview of our structure

NFRS is led by the Service Leadership Team (SLT) whose members are listed below. Full SLT meetings are held monthly with weekly meetings of the Principal Officers to discuss specific issues. The Chief Fire Officer reports directly to the Chief Executive and is a member of the County Council Executive Leadership Team.

The Service Leadership Team is as follows:

Paul Hedley - Chief Fire Officer (Chair)

Graeme Binning - Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Strategic Planning, Partnerships & Support)

James McNeil – Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Rob Clow - Area Manager - Fire Support Services

Deborah Brown – Strategic Policy, Risk and Performance Officer

Estelle White – HR Operational Lead

Natalie McDermott – NCC Business Support Senior Accountant

Our Staff

In April 2020, we had a total of 140 full-time operational firefighters (including officers) and 18 Emergency Control Room personnel. We also had 139 retained (part-time) firefighters working in and for our local communities across Northumberland. We employed 1 Apprentice, utilised 13 Community Volunteers, 37 corporate and delivery staff.

Our resources

There are currently 15 community fire stations in Northumberland which deliver services 365 days a year by utilising full-time, day staffing and retained firefighters. They offer community safety advice, education and respond to emergency calls, and in many cases act as a focal point for the delivery of community services from a wide range of partner agencies.

We have a front-line fleet of 22 fire appliances and a number of specialist vehicles. These include an incident support vehicle (ISU) providing resilient command, control and communications facilities, a specialist rescue vehicle for attending transport incident/rescues and other specialist rescues, 3 swift water rescue team vehicles/boats (SRT) and a fleet of over 20 4x4 support vehicles, some fitted with specialist cutting gear and water fogging systems.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

NFRS is an organisation committed to equality, diversity and inclusion reflecting the diverse nature of the communities we serve. We have developed a People Strategy which sets out a framework for engaging and developing employees of our service to enable cultural changes, helping the Service better deliver its vision and strategic priorities, while ensuring behaviours, values and standards are adhered to. To read our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement or to access our People Strategy please follow the link <https://www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk/people>

The Fire & Rescue Plan is NFRSs four year analysis of the county's community risk profile, together with our strategic approach to how we intend to effectively manage those risks over the period.

Each year NFRS produces an update based on the plan which sets out a number of priorities to ensure that residents and businesses are safe, whilst at the same time delivering an efficient and effective emergency response when necessary. Following NCC political approval and discussion and agreement with HMICFRS, the Fire and Rescue Plan 2017-21 was extended by an additional year to cover the period March 2021 to April 2022. We will be undertaking public consultation in late 2021 on our proposed priorities to cover our new Fire & Rescue Plan (to be re-named the Community Risk Management Plan) which will cover the four year period 2022-26. In addition the plan will describe how we intend to reduce or mitigate risks under the following headings:

- **Prevention** – eliminating or reducing the likelihood of the risk occurring
- **Protection** – reducing the impact of the risk should it occur
- **Response** – providing a rapid and effective response should an incident occur

Governance arrangements

NFRS is an integral part of NCC. NCC are responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and according to proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and that public money is used economically, efficiently and effectively. NCC is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes making arrangements for the management of risk. NCC has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. The NCC Annual Governance Statement enables the Fire and Rescue Service to demonstrate that it has fulfilled its obligations under the Framework. Full details can be found in the NCC Annual Governance Statement which is included within our 'Statement of Accounts' publication, at the end of the document. These documents are published each year on the Council's website, on the 'Statement of Accounts' page:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Finance/Statement-of-accounts.aspx#statementofaccounts>

Your Fire and Rescue Authority

NCC is a unitary authority and, as such, is the delegated Fire Authority for Northumberland. All key decisions are taken by Elected Members, either jointly as the Cabinet or as individual Members making decisions within the remit of their delegated responsibilities. Councillor Colin Horncastle has delegated responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service as Chair of the Fire Authority.

NCC Cabinet meetings are held once a month and are attended by all ten Members. The Cabinet is also responsible for preparing the budget and policies to propose to full council. The five scrutiny committees provide advice to Cabinet on major policy issues and may review its decisions. Details of how the community can attend meetings and access agendas and reports can be found at the following link:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=11058>

Our legal responsibilities

Responsibilities under the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004

The Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 sets out the duties and powers of fire authorities. Under the Act, the Fire Authority has a number of core functions:

- Fire Safety - promoting fire safety, including the provision of information and publicity on steps to be taken to prevent fires and the giving of advice on how to prevent fires and on the means of escape from buildings in case of fire
- Firefighting - extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of fires
- Road Traffic Accidents - rescuing people in the event of road traffic accidents and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents

- Other Emergencies - when necessary deal with emergencies, other than fires and road traffic accidents.

We address these core functions in our four-year Community Risk Management Plan, which identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 can be found via the following link: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents>

Responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

NFRS enforces general fire safety legislation on behalf of the County Council. The legislation the Authority enforces includes:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Sites) Regulations 1990
- The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

Our enforcement activities adhere to the principles of Better Regulation contained within the Enforcement Concordat and Regulators Code and we aim to support business and other responsible persons through education and the provision of advice and guidance.

Where it is absolutely necessary, we will take enforcement action and will only consider prosecution where it is in the public's best interest. Full details of how we discharge our responsibilities under fire safety legislation can be found via the following link:

<https://www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk/business-safety>

Responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999

NFRS operates within the County Council's management framework which incorporates the provisions of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the responsibility to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. Full details of how we discharge our responsibilities under Health and Safety legislation can be found via the following link:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Protection/Safety/Work.aspx>

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework (see link below) sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England to:

- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately;
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service;
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

A copy of the Fire and Rescue National Framework can be viewed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england>

Full details of how NFRS assesses the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that our areas face, makes provision for prevention and protection activities and responds to incidents appropriately, can be found within the Community Risk Management Plan. Updated annually, copies of the current and previous plans can be viewed on our website:

<https://www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk/plans>

Management of Risk

The County Council has a risk management strategy which aims to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the arrangements for managing risk across NCC Groups. Full details can be found within the NCC Annual Governance Statement which is included within our 'Statement of Accounts' publication, at the end of the document. These documents are published each year on the Council's website, on the 'Statement of Accounts' web page. page:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Finance/Statement-of-accounts.aspx#statementofaccounts>

NFRS risk management strategy follows the principles of the Office of Government Commerce, Management of Risk Framework. All members of staff work to identify threats and opportunities to the service and our communities. Once a risk has been identified we decide how we want to deal with the risk and it will be closely monitored. Risk registers are maintained for Strategic Risk, Operational Risk, Community Incident and Firefighter Safety Risk and a Business and Resident Profile Risk Report is kept. The nature of certain risks means that not all records will be accessible to all:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Civil.aspx>

Our Purpose

Our Vision

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is proud of the quality of the services that it delivers to the public. We have a clear vision of *'Making Northumberland Safer'* and strive to recognise and respond to key issues and challenges.

Our collaborative arrangements

We have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with a number of partner agencies including Highways Agency, Northumbria Police, North East Ambulance Service, Defence Fire and Risk Management Organisation, other Category 1 responders and the Environment Agency. We also work with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, local organisations such as RAF Boulmer, HMP Northumberland, the Northumberland National Park & North of Tyne Mountain Rescue Teams, and Forestry England.

Partnerships Arrangements

NFRS has several partnership arrangements in place. For instance, through our partnership arrangements with SureStart, we host Children's Centres within a number of our Community Fire Stations and co-locate with partners, including North East Ambulance Service, Northumberland National Park & North of Tyne Mountain Rescue Team and Northumbria Police across the county. We are actively seeking to expand our partnerships, including further co-location with organisations such as Wellbeing and Community Health Services.

Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management is a series of processes and plans which identify risk and develop NFRS resilience to ensure that adverse events cause minimal disruption to the services provided and that critical services are maintained. The Civil Contingencies Team (CCT) manages the Business Continuity process for NCC and provide support to NFRS for management of business continuity arrangements within the Service.

The Civil Contingencies Team is responsible for statutory directives coming from:

- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 1999
- The Pipeline Safety Regulations 1999

Business Continuity priorities for NFRS are:

- Identify and record risks in a Community Risk Register
- Prepare appropriate emergency response plans
- Train our staff
- Test our arrangements through regular exercises
- Apply learning to review and amend plans

Our Performance

How we performed during 2021/22

Good performance management endures NFRS effectively and efficiently discharges its duties under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and meets its responsibilities as detailed in the Fire and Rescue Framework for England (2018). To support this, we have developed a Performance and Assurance Framework (PAF), overseen by a Strategic Performance Board (SPB). With a comprehensive suite of core and service measures, we measure and monitor performance across the four key areas of service provision, corporate health, priority programmes and risk. Performance is scrutinised at Directorate Management Team (DMT) meetings and SPB, with exception reporting to Service Leadership Team (SLT). Corporate Performance is reported quarterly to Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with additional scrutiny provided by Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee where required. Scrutiny meetings are open to members of the public and details of meetings can be found by using the following link.

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=378#meetings>

Benchmarking

We use national benchmarking reports and tools. We are also part of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and benchmark against fire and rescue services of similar size and demographics and against national statistics provided by the Home Office.

National Fire Chiefs Council: <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/>

National Fire Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics>

What others have said about our performance

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

HMICFRS undertakes independent inspection of all fire and rescue services in England. HMICFRS inspects against the pillars of effectiveness, efficiency and people providing judgements of outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. In addition to the full programme of inspections, HMICFRS can be commissioned to undertake additional thematic inspections, such as that undertaken for our response to the Covid 19 pandemic. All inspection reports for NFRS can be found [here](#)

Customer Service

The Government wants services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering, with the citizen at the heart of service provision.

Lessons learnt

Coroners Regulation 28 Notices

Coroners have issued three regulation 28 notices following firefighter fatalities at emergency incidents in the UK. The purpose of a regulation 28 notice is that the coroner will inform persons or authorities that they believe a similar incident can be prevented by taking certain actions.

It is important that the Fire and Rescue Service learns from these tragic incidents and implements changes to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future. As a result, we have conducted a review of the recommendations against our current policies, procedures and training programmes and have produced an action plan for improvement:

<https://www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk/plans>

Financial Performance (Statement of Accounts)

Our Budget for 2021/22

NFRS is an integral part of NCC. NCC provides the Statement of Accounts which can be found on the NCC public website:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Finance/Statement-of-accounts.aspx#statementofaccounts>

Revenue expenditure

The budget for the Fire and Rescue service for 2021/22 was £15,977,920

Expenditure per head of population¹²

NFRS cost £49.34 per head of population in 2021/22.

The NCC Pay Policy statement can be found at the following link:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4402#objectives>

Expenditure per incident

Our overall expenditure against the number of incidents we attend is £4,528.89 per incident in 2021/22.

The above average expenditure per incident is mainly due to the success of our prevention work. By using our resources effectively to deliver prevention work we are reducing the number of incidents that occur. Therefore those incidents that do occur are seemingly more expensive. It is also to a lesser extent due to the rural nature of Northumberland. To provide a suitable response across the whole county the level of resources we require are higher than more densely populated areas. This is why our

¹ Number of incidents taken from Oracle IRS database as at 10/03/2022.

² Northumberland costs include central re-charge such as legal, HR, finance

retained firefighters are so important in delivering an excellent and cost effective service.

Auditor's findings

A summary of auditor's' reports and findings can be found in the Annual Audit Letter on the link below. The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 require local authorities, including fire and rescue authorities, to prepare an annual governance statement in support of the annual statement of accounts. Full details can be found within the NCC Annual Governance Statement which is included in our 'Statement of Accounts' publication, at the end of the document. These are published each year, on the Council's website, on the 'Statement of Accounts' page:

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Our Future Plans

Our future challenges

We regularly analyse the county's community risk profile and set out our strategic approach as to how we will effectively manage those risks. This is detailed in our Community Risk Management Plan, which can be found using the link below. The Government requires us, by law, to regularly produce and review our plan.

<https://www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk/plans>

Our Service Priorities for 2021 were as follows

- Undertake a root and branch review of the safe and wellbeing programme, including the development of a new fire and rescue service safe and well product in partnership with Northumberland County Council services and Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust.
- Undertake a health and safety review of the service and implement identified recommendations.
- Develop and fully implement a strategy for talent management in order to support robust and effective succession planning.
- Develop and fully implement a strategy for collecting, storing and sharing risk information, both internally and with partners. Explore and develop further lines of enquiry as detailed in the Improvement Action Plan.
- Undertake an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Thematic Review and implement identified recommendations.
- Develop and establish a Performance and Assurance Framework for the organisation.

Our Community Engagement

How we can help you

If you are concerned about your fire safety and would like to know if you are eligible for a free safe and wellbeing visit please call our freephone number on **0800 731 1351** or email: SWV.NFRS@northumberland.gov.uk

Access to information

Details regarding the Fire Authority's arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on the following website page:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#dataprotection>

Comments and Compliments

NFRS is passionate about delivering top quality customer service. Delivering excellent customer service benefits both our organisation and our customers. We also know that we need to continually adjust and improve because we need to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers. If you have any compliments, comments, complaints, or suggestions please contact us using whichever of the following methods is most convenient to you:

- In person at our offices
- By phone to Reception: 01670 621110
- By Freephone to: 0345 600 6400 (you may be charged if you call from a mobile)
- By fax to: 01670 713653
- By email to: ask@northumberland.gov.uk
- Online at: www.northumberlandfireandrescue.gov.uk
- By post to: Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service
Service Headquarters
West Hartford Business Park
Cramlington
Northumberland
NE23 3JP

You can also keep up-to-date with home fire safety advice, business safety advice and see what's going on within NFRS by following our social media @NlandFRS on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.