



Northumberland
Fire and Rescue Service

Community Risk and Response Strategy



Northumberland
County Council

| Making Northumberland Safer

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Preventing. Protecting. Responding.

INTRODUCTION

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) statutory responsibilities and priorities are detailed in our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-26. The plan can be found [HERE](#).

To deliver our responsibilities we must assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks and put in place arrangements to prevent and mitigate these risks (Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, 2018).

To assess risk, we define it as a 'combination of the likelihood and consequence of a hazardous event'. In the case of fire and rescue related risks, hazardous events are the emergency incidents that we attend. If we prevent or mitigate these risks, we can achieve our mission of 'Making Northumberland Safer.

This mission is underpinned by the following aims:

Reduce the number of fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in the community.

Reduce the number of deaths and injuries and mitigate the commercial, economic and social cost of emergency incidents.

Safeguard the environment and heritage sites (both built and natural).

Support communities to protect themselves from harm.

Provide value for money through the provision of a lean, efficient and resilient service.



Making Northumberland Safer.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Community Risk & Response is a core function within NFRS and is responsible for the operational response and preparedness for emergency incidents.

Community Risk & Response is also a key contributor in the coordination and conducting of proactive protection and prevention work across Northumberland.

The vision of Community Risk & Response is:

“Working with partners to identify, address and prepare for risks and provide an effective and safe Emergency Response to keep residents, and their property, safe and well.”

Community Risk & Response will contribute to the mission of Making Northumberland Safer and the NFRS aims by:

Reducing risks to life and properties by ensuring an effective and safe response to emergency incidents;

Reducing risks to life and properties by providing resources and support for prevention and protection activities;

Supporting Firefighter safety by ensuring that they have the right equipment and training in order to carry out their role safely and professionally;

Collaborating with key partners and neighbouring fire services to ensure we provide an effective and efficient service.

Community Risk & Response are responsible for the following resources:



15
Fire Stations



21
Fire Engines



7
Special Appliances



285
Personnel

The following Duty Systems are in operation within NFRS in order to provide the optimum level of cover based on local risk:

WHOLETIME DUTY SYSTEM

The Service has two ‘wholtime’ community fire stations in the southeast of the county, which is largely urban. Operational firefighters work two x 10-hour day shifts, and two x 14-hour night shifts. Cover is provided by 4 watches, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 per year.

DAY STAFFED DUTY SYSTEM

The Service has two Community Fire Stations with two watches providing ‘day staffing’ cover. Firefighters work during the day for four x 10-hour shifts between 08:00 and 18:00 and respond following pager alert during the four x 14-hour night shifts.

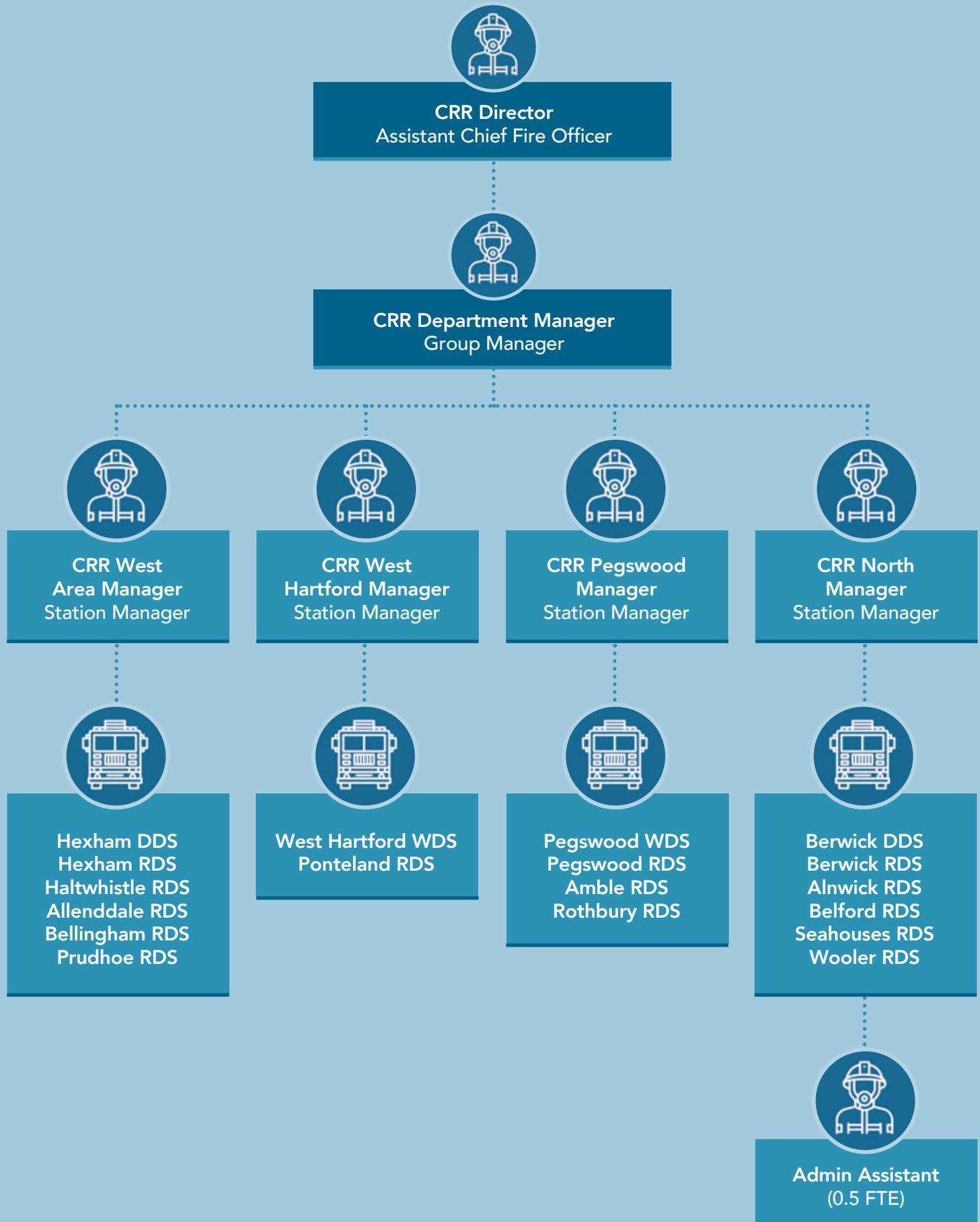
RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM

In rural areas, firefighters who live or work within eight minutes of the station will respond to a pager alert if there is an incident in their area. Albeit, not full time, these firefighters will also undertake regular training and support any prevention and protection strategies.

- Wholtime
- Retained
- ◆ Day staffed
- Garage
- * Shared services delivered from these sites



DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE



DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES AND EMERGING RISKS

Like many fire and rescue services, NFRS are facing many challenges now and into the future which will affect the Community Risk & Response Strategy. The main future challenges are:

FUNDING UNCERTAINTY

The UK economy has been in recovery since the financial crisis in 2008 and has had the added uncertainty of Brexit and now the high level of public spending for the Covid-19 response. This now means that future public sector finances remain uncertain and long-term planning based on financial predictions is now more difficult than ever.

What are we doing in Community Risk and Response?

We will look for assurances that the Service is running efficiently and effectively by analysing performance and data through the Performance Assurance Framework to become more scientific in how we provide Community Risk and Response services. We will scan the horizon for any emergent change that enables, or forces, the



Service to do things different and also think differently about how we use our assets including fire stations, fire appliances and operational personnel. Professional analysis of our Community Risk and Response model will help to better inform how we are performing and identify potential changes.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS

A large proportion of the NFRS workforce consists of On-Call Firefighters. It is recognised within Northumberland that the recruitment and retention of On-Call Firefighters is becoming more difficult, this is now being recognised on a national level and has been referenced in many national reports, including most recently, the HMICFRS State of Fire and Rescue - The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England (2021).

Recruitment issues are being compounded by the decreasing levels of trade and business in rural areas, often meaning that there are less people residing within On-Call station areas to provide cover.

What are we doing in Community Risk and Response?

On-Call firefighter recruitment is one of the main priorities for the department, as such we are facilitating regular Retained (aka On-Call) Recruitment & Retention Working Group to identify and address recruitment and retention issues including how we can more flexibly employ these personnel. Community Risk and Response are also piloting an alternative staffing model utilising On-Call Support Officers as well as implementing an expansion of Phased Response to increase availability when full staffing levels cannot be maintained.

Investments are being made into the promotional and awareness materials and events that we attend, to increase our public presence and awareness, both online and physically within communities. The Service will also be vigilant for any Government level intervention which will assist with the recruiting and retaining of On-Call Firefighters.

REDUCING LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE AMONGST OPERATIONAL PERSONNEL

As the great preventative and protection work undertaken by the Service begins to pay dividends, incident rates have seen significant reductions. This, along with the forecasting of a significant number of senior and experienced officer retirements in the upcoming years, will result in a reduction in the levels of experience amongst all levels of operational personnel within the Service.

What are we doing in Community Risk and Response?

Where possible we will forecast and prepare for potential leaver or retirements and along with our Training, Assurance & Safety (TAS) Department, we will scope, plan and facilitate appropriate training and development to advance, maintain and quality assure skills for new and existing personnel. We will also open up vacancy opportunities to external applicant which will bring a wealth, and variety, of experiences.

DIVERSIFYING EXPECTATIONS ON COMMUNITY RISK AND RESPONSE

The world in which we operate in is constantly changing, and so too are the risks that are encountered. As such, there is a need for the Service to diversify its response to align with emerging incident types (such as climate change related incidents (e.g. Flooding / Wildfires), Marauding Terrorism Attacks, etc) and the needs of the residents (e.g. an aging and increasingly vulnerable population). This also relates to the ever-changing infrastructure and developments across Northumberland.

What are we doing in Community Risk and Response?

We will be vigilant to identify, prepare for, and react to, emergent or changing requirements through performance reviews, assurance processes, and through collaboration with regional and national partners.

Community Risk and Response will review its capabilities and supplement these with development and equipment where needs are identified, this will include the evaluation and introduction of new technology where necessary.

Recent work has been undertaken to consider the introduction of an additional Wildfire Hub, the creation of a business case for a new Off-road Wildfire Vehicle and work underway to increase the Water Rescue capability and resilience across the Service. All of these work

streams are testament to this effort to meet the ever-changing needs of our residents. We will also be mindful of the Northumberland County Council Local Plans to take cognisance of growth or developments in areas and plan accordingly.

As the number of elderly and vulnerable residents increases, we must ensure that we proactively try to safeguard these through specialised prevention and protection activity and engagement with key partners.

COVID-19 IMPACT

The Covid-19 situation has severely disrupted our business as usual activities and has created an uncertainty as to how activities will be conducted in the short, medium and long term.

What are we doing in Community Risk and Response?

Community Risk & Response and the other NFRS departments are constantly reviewing our position against national guidance and the local landscape to confirm we are taking the right actions for the safety of our residents and our staff.

NATIONAL CHANGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following an inspection of all 45 English Fire & Rescue Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), a national State of Fire Report (2021) was produced with national recommendations.

Recommendations by HMICFRS or newly issued National Fire Standards, once completed by the relevant organisations, may result in a significant upheaval of the current operations of Fire Services across England.

What are we doing in Community Risk and Response?

We have a current Service Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) which was created to address the issues identified within NFRS by HMICFRS, national recommendations and internal assurance processes. This, accompanied by the NFRS Performance Assurance Framework, has enabled us to track progress, prioritise and make improvements in the most relevant areas.

As the national recommendation outcomes become clear, Community Risk and Response will work closely with NFCC and other partners to make any required improvements for the benefit of our residents.

DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

COMMUNITY RISK AND RESPONSE AIMS

Community Risk & Response will contribute to the mission of Making Northumberland Safer and the NFRS aims by:

- Reducing risks to life and properties by ensuring an effective and safe response to emergency incidents;
- Reducing risks to life and properties by providing resources and support for prevention and protection activities;
- Supporting Firefighter safety by ensuring that they have the right equipment and training in order to carry out their role safely and professionally;
- Collaborating with key partners and neighbouring fire services to ensure we provide an effective and efficient service.



COMMUNITY RISK AND RESPONSE CURRENT PRIORITIES

The current priorities for Community Risk & Response for 2022/23 are:

- Reduce the number of Fires, Road Traffic Collisions and other emergencies occurring in Northumberland;
- Review the Site-Specific Risk Information process to ensure high quality risk information is available to operational personnel;
- Quality Assure Community Risk and Response performance;
- Deliver Improvements outlined in the Service Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP);
- Apply modelling to inform and further develop our Community Risk & Response operating model.
- Explore the viability of how the Service may be able to further support residents in need through an Emergency Medical Response.

COMMUNITY RISK & RESPONSE FUTURE PRIORITIES

In addition to the current priorities, the following have been identified as requiring more focused attention going forward for Emergency Response within NFRS:

- Continuously review the impact and consider the implementation of any changes approaching as a result of local, national and environmental changes;
- Continuously review our risk-based approach to Fire Cover;
- Continuously enhance and embed a positive values driven culture within Community Risk and Response.

PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS DELIVERED TO REDUCE RISK

A RISK-BASED APPROACH

The level of Community Risk & Response resources across Northumberland have been holistically determined following a Risk Based Approach in conjunction with Operational Research in Health (ORH) Ltd. This approach considers factors including:

<p>A combination of data that identifies the most at risk areas within the county and layering information from NHS (Exeter Data - people 65+) and NCC (Council tax band A, Social Housing, Flats) to identify individual premises to target that have characteristics that align to a higher risk of a dwelling fire.</p>	<p>Area demographics including population density.</p> <p>Risk to residents, buildings (Private, commercial and heritage), and the environment.</p> <p>Historical Community Risk & Response activity.</p>
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Work will continue to ensure risks are appropriately covered by confirming that we have the correct number and level of resources to manage incidents safely and effectively, this will include specialist capabilities such as Water Rescue.

However, the service we provide is not restricted to responding to emergencies, we also deliver on

both protection and prevention activities which are incredibly impactful in reducing risk, as such these must also be factored into considerations which determine how we position and utilise resources across the Service area.

When formulating our plans, we will also be mindful of the Northumberland County Council Local Plans to take cognisance

of growth or developments in areas, such as the Britishvolt Gigaplant and the introduction of the Northumberland Passenger Train Line in the southeast of Northumberland. Each station will receive their own bespoke station plan which will recognise the local risks and identify actions to address them.

RESPONSE STANDARDS

Response standards have been established to form a benchmark for measuring our weight and speed of response to incidents. Our current response standards are:

<p>STANDARD 1</p>	<p>First fire engine to attend all property fires within 10 minutes of alerting on 80% of occasions.</p>
<p>STANDARD 2</p>	<p>Second fire engine to attend all property fires within 13 minutes of alerting on 80% of occasions.</p>
<p>STANDARD 3</p>	<p>First fire engine to attend all Road Traffic Collisions within 15 minutes of alerting on 80% of occasions.</p>
<p>STANDARD 4</p>	<p>Second fire engine to attend all Road Traffic Collisions within 20 minutes of alerting on 80% of occasions.</p>

Further work will be carried out on these standards with a potential review to be considered by the Performance Assurance Framework. As NFRS operates a "global" fire cover model, we often use on duty whole-time

personnel to supplement staffing at On-Call stations to maximise the fire cover across Northumberland and to ensure that we can have as many fire engines as possible 'on the run'.



EMERGENCY RESPONSE ASSURANCE PROCESSES

We will endeavour to provide operational assurance which aims to deliver a safe, effective and efficient operational response. Assurances of the phases before, during and after an incident may include active operational monitoring, operational training and exercising, incident debriefs, performance reviews and pre planning activities such as station inspections.

We will have effective operational policies and procedures which consider relevant legislation and fire sector guidance including National Operational Guidance (NOG). This will assist us in identifying any emergent trends to allow us to be better prepared moving forward. Several Service measures will be monitored and reviewed within the Performance Assurance Framework to identify areas where intervention is required.

FIRE APPLIANCES, EQUIPMENT, PPE & NEW TECHNOLOGY

Investing in the latest technology will improve our ability to respond effectively to emergencies. Working with Training, Assurance and Safety and Fire Support Services, we will use the latest research and developments in technology and tactics to better equip our firefighters to deal with incidents more effectively and safely.

Potential new technologies will be highlighted within the service for consideration for trial and subsequent business case for procurement. Current items within scope are misting technologies, new fire appliances, a review of all the regional specialist appliances and also the introduction of the new national mobile data communication network once it becomes available.

PREPLANNING, TRAINING AND EXERCISING

To ensure that operational personnel are always ready and competent to deal with any incident that they may face, Community Risk and Response will work with the Training, Assurance and Safety Department to plan and provide appropriate training for operational personnel to maintain a safe and competent workforce.



There are a number of Training Policies in place for the core competencies including: Breathing Apparatus, Water, Working at Height, Animal Rescues, Driving, Incident Command, etc, these provide a framework to plan the future workforce requirements. Incident Command is an integral part of the response strategy and a focus for much investment, this is seen as the keystone to ensuring that the response is effective, and safety is maintained.

Community Risk and Response will also ensure that it proactively gathers information on risks in the county. The Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI) will then be available to all personnel to inform any response or actions required to reduce the risks at these locations to as low as possible.

In addition to this, Community Risk and Response has an Exercise Policy which covers a range of exercise levels from small two pump exercises, to multi-agency exercises all the way to national level exercises. In conjunction with the SSRI, exercises will assist personnel in preparing for low frequency and high-risk major incidents.

COLLABORATION AND WIDER ENGAGEMENT

It is rare that NFRS will respond to incidents on our own, we are working more closely with other emergency services and category 1 and 2 responders on a more frequent basis. We will review our support and partnership arrangements to ensure that we keep all of our communities safe and provide an effective and efficient service.

As we undertake more training and exercising with

our partners, we will also look to develop cross border information sharing arrangements to ensure that, for our staff working in other service areas, and for those Services working within Northumberland, all have access to appropriate information and guidance available to support safe and effective operations.

We will also cooperate and collaborate with other services and agencies to establish, maintain and enhance working relationships, this will take place through local forums and meetings.

We will also engage with organisations at a national level which will also include organisations such as the National Fire Chiefs' Council, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, and the Home Office.

PEOPLE

People are at the heart of everything Community Risk and Response is and does. The service recognises the importance of having the right people in the right positions in order to perform effectively to high standards and meet the needs and expectations of our residents. This starts from recruitment of the right individual, with the right values and skills aligned to the service needs, and continues with investment of time, effort and resources into their health, wellbeing and development.

The 12 guiding principles and six key commitments within the Services new People Strategy will provide the foundation in all that we do. We will review and consider our promotion and development processes, staff engagement sessions and firefighter recruitment and retention.



PERFORMANCE AND ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Good performance management and assurance ensures Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service 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 National Framework for England (Home Office 2018)**.

The service has developed a Performance and Assurance Framework to ensure that it is evidence and intelligence led, and this is overseen by a Strategic Performance Board. This provides the opportunity for the service (and fire authority) to:

Be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions.

Have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect from an important public service (Fire and Rescue Service National Framework, 2018).

For further information on our Performance and Assurance Framework, and on our Continuous Improvement Plan, please see our Policy, Risk and Performance Strategy (*link to be added*)



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