



Northumberland  
Fire and Rescue Service

# Prevention Strategy



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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 arrangements 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.



## PREVENTION OVERVIEW

Through the combined NFRS’ prevention, protection and response capabilities, NFRS has arrangements in place to prevent or mitigate foreseeable fire and rescue related risks. These risks incorporated into the five overarching aims outlined above. **This strategy, whilst supporting and contributing to all five aims, has strong links with:**

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.

Support communities to protect themselves from harm.

Research has indicated that there are inequalities in the way fire is distributed. There is considerable evidence of a social gradient in the distribution of fire, with poverty deprivation being linked to increased number of incidents (*Hastie and Searle, 2018*). It is therefore imperative that this is taken into account when developing service delivery priorities.

This strategy is premised upon ensuring that prevention activities are targeted to those members of the community who are most at risk. In order to identify those most at risk the service uses the NFRS Risk Profile and works closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sector.

The NFRS Risk Profile was developed by a specialist external company, by commission, and was received into the service in February 2020. It informs this strategy by affirming the understanding of the likelihood of incidents occurring, the likely severity of the incidents and the drivers behind them.

In addition, NFRS Incident Profile indicates that the 10

most frequently attended incident types in the last five years account for **91 percent** of all attended incidents, **86 percent** of casualties and **66 percent** of fatalities. In consequence, this prevention strategy will focus on the ten most commonly occurring incidents and detail prevention programmes delivered with the intention of reducing; outdoor fires, accidental dwelling fires and road traffic collisions using the empirical data sources detailed herein in addition to community intelligence.

Finally, cognisance will also be taken of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) National Community Risk Programme including the resultant NFRS CRMP which aims to support FRSs to reduce risk and vulnerability in communities by focusing resources where they will have the biggest impact through:

Better targeted services.

More efficient and effective services.

National consistency (produce fire standards to support this).

Creating future focused risk management plans;

Better informed and defensible decision making

Building trust and confidence of FRS staff and communities..

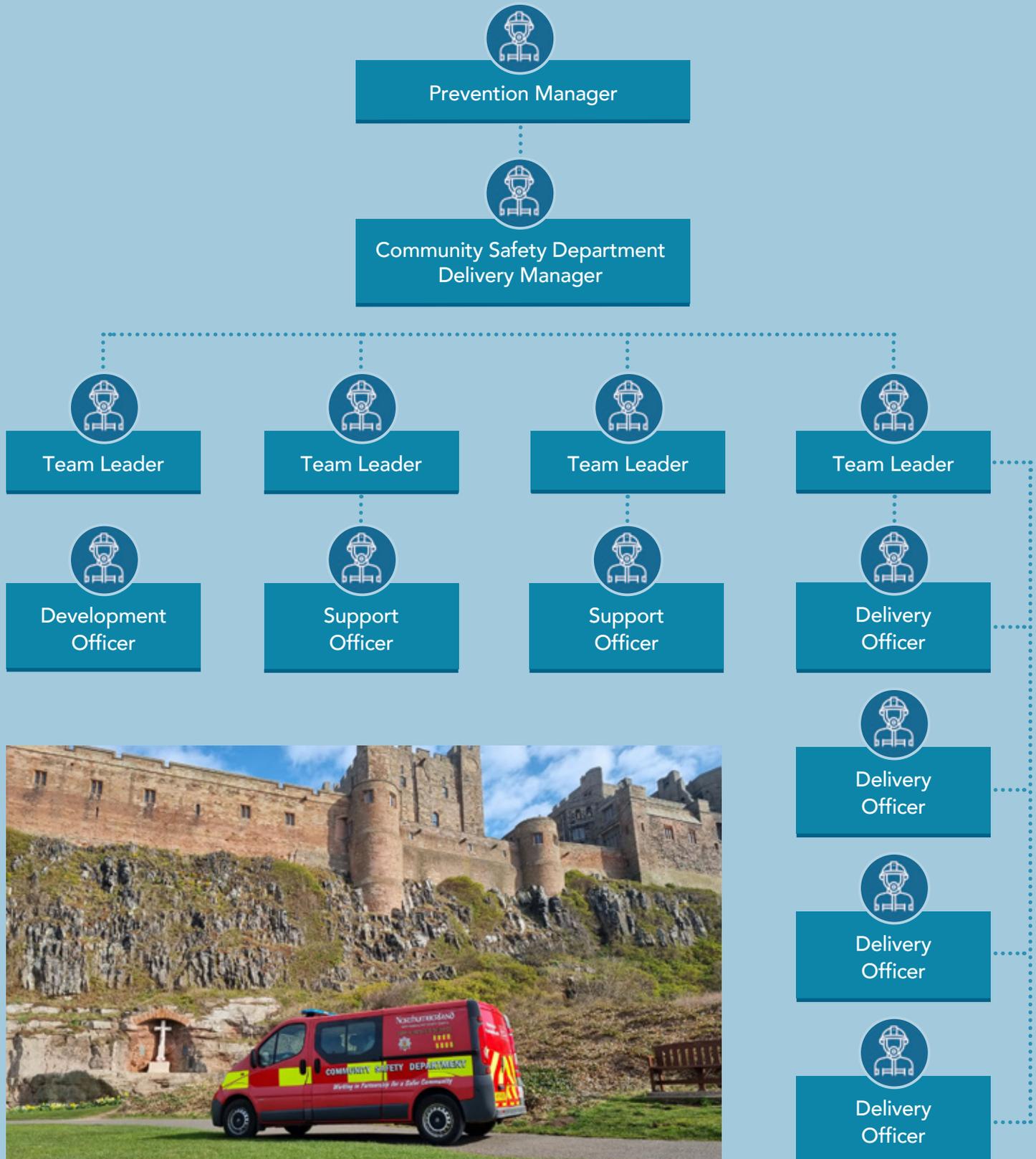
Prevention programmes identified in this strategy will be delivered, quality assured and evaluated by Community Risk and Response staff and central Community Safety Department personnel. These programmes are educational in nature since the benefits of education in poverty reduction are widely recognised and poverty deprivation is linked to increased number of fire and rescue service incidents.

# DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

The three main functions of FRS are expressed as Prevent, Protect and Respond.

Although all staff are involved in prevention work to varying degrees, we also have a central team; the Community Safety Department that provides some specialist interventions.

The Community Safety Department structure is as follows:





## CHALLENGES AND EMERGING RISKS

### CENTRAL COMMUNITY SAFETY DEPARTMENT TEAM

The team is relatively new and inexperienced. Some members of the team joined under atypical conditions during a global pandemic. These conditions have not provided the opportunity to build experience that reflects more usual service delivery and develop the skills sets that support this.

In addition, capacity deficits at the time of writing this strategy due to secondments and staffing arrangements could impede the progress of prevention work.

### COMMUNITY RISK AND RESPONSE (CRR)

CRR staff represent the largest internal stakeholder in the delivery, quality assurance and evaluation of prevention work. It is important therefore that prevention work has parity with other aspects of fire and rescue-related service deliver. Fulfilment of this strategy will require prioritisation by CRR.

## PREVENTION STRATEGIC AIMS AND PRIORITIES

### PREVENTION AIMS:

In order to contribute to the mission of Making Northumberland Safer and the NFRS aims, the service's prevention strategic aims are:

Be instrumental in embedding a values-based culture.

Actively promote a positive prevention culture across the whole service; where the support of those individuals and communities that are most at risk is at the heart of everything we do.

Reduce the risk to life and property by ensuring a standardised, good quality and effective delivery of prevention activities using the Prevention Standard developed by the NFCC Standards Board as a framework.

### PREVENTION PRIORITIES:

Ensure that the Safe and Wellbeing programme is fully embedded across the whole service.

Ensure that a risk-based approach underpins prevention work to provide assurance that interventions are targeted towards those residents most at risk.

Ensure good practice through the application of the professional standards for prevention work as set out by the Fire Standards Board in the Prevention Fire Standard.

Establish a standardised delivery of prevention work across the service using the Fire Standards Board Prevention Standard.

Ensure rigorous evaluation and quality assurance processes are administered across the service.

Ensure effective use of communications to provide fire prevention information and promote community safety.

# PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS DELIVERED TO REDUCE RISK

## SAFE AND WELL-BEING PROGRAMME

Dwelling fires (including chimney fires) are the fourth most frequently occurring incident type and have a significant number of casualties. The majority of these casualties tend to be slight in severity.

On average, dwelling fires are most likely to occur from the beginning of December through to the end of March and are most likely to happen in the evening. (NFRS Incident Profile, 2019)

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Risk Profile identifies the characteristics that are the strongest indicators of the likelihood of a fire occurring in the county.

In the case of dwelling fires, profiling suggests that the service targets its prevention programmes with consideration of the following:

- Council Tax 'Band A' Properties.
- Social Residential Properties.
- Properties in Areas of Deprivation.

In terms of severity, the profile also identifies the type of dwelling, for example a flat, as a factor in relation to severity of injury resulting from a dwelling fire.

It is important therefore, that NFRS target intervention work by prioritising individual properties in specific geographical areas considered to be at high risk of dwelling fires, as identified in Northumberland Fire and Rescue Risk Profile.



Whilst the profile guides the targeting of geographical areas, it does not provide sufficient detail to allow the targeting of individual properties, therefore, NFRS has developed a dwelling fire risk model. NFRS has drawn on additional relevant data sources to develop this model, including data sources shared by partners such as the NHS.

Whilst NFRS delivers a number of intervention programmes to address dwelling fire incidents, the most significant of these is the delivery of a Safe and Well-Being Programme. This programme is delivered by Community Risk and Response and Community Safety personnel and involves, where possible, visiting a property to:

- Identify potential risks within the home.
- Provide advice in order to reduce the identified risks.
- Install working smoke alarms where required.
- Provide advice on escape plans, should a fire occur in the home.

When considering severity of injury from a dwelling fire, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Risk Profile indicates that the probability of someone being injured increases if the ignition source is smoking related, and where the occupier is under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the fire occurring.

Therefore, additional lifestyle information is gathered during the visit and, where appropriate, the occupier is offered the opportunity to be signposted or referred for further support relating to these lifestyle risk factors.

Further information on this programme can be found in NFRS Safe and Well-Being Policy.

## EXTINGUISH

Outdoor fires are typically smaller fires involving rubbish or rubbish storage but also include grass and woodland fires. They are the most frequently occurring incident type in Northumberland, making up almost 28 percent of all incidents. However, these incidents typically have a very low casualty rate and no fatalities. Nonetheless, there are significant financial and environmental costs associated with these incident types. The majority of outdoor fires (75 percent) have been caused deliberately. (NFRS Incident Profile, 2019)



A recent report by the Home Office; 'Fire and Rescue Service data: measuring prevention, response and protection' (Home Office, 2020) highlights the higher levels of deliberate outdoor fires in northern fire and rescue services (including Northumberland) when compared with fire and rescue services located in the south of the country.

In addition, it is recognised that the prevalence and spread of deliberate outdoor fires is affected by the weather (e.g. levels of rainfall and high temperatures).

As stated previously, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Risk Profile identifies the characteristics that are the strongest indicators of the likelihood of a fire occurring in the county.

In the case of outdoor fires, profiling suggests that the service targets its prevention programmes with consideration of the following:

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD):  
Crime Ranking.

Total population of under 19 years of age.

Therefore, NFRS must prioritise geographical areas considered to be at high risk of outdoor fires, as identified in Northumberland Fire and Rescue Risk Profile, targeting education activity at under 19 year olds.

Whilst Community Risk and Response crews are well placed to deliver prevention education within schools in high risk areas such as these, the Community Safety Department is able to deliver a programme developed specifically for young people who are at risk of or already involved in criminal activity. This is due to staff having additional qualifications, training and experience.

The reasons why children and young people find fire interesting are complex and require a specialist programme. The 'Extinguish' programme is a fire awareness programme which is managed and delivered

by the Community Safety Department. It is a specific education intervention package delivered to children and young people up to the age of 18 who play with, or have a fascination with fire.

'Extinguish' plays a significant part in NFRS' commitment to supporting wider community development, engaging with children and young people to reduce the number of deliberate fires, fire-related crime and anti-social behaviour within the county of Northumberland. Currently, around 16 percent of referrals to 'Extinguish' are jointly received from the Youth Justice Service and Northumbria police with NFRS continuing to develop and build on these partnerships and future referral pathways.



## SCHOOLS EDUCATION

Schools play a key part in our communities. One of the most important things society can do is protect its children by educating them about personal safety.

Teaching children simple strategies about keeping safe can help them build confidence, resilience and empower them to be safe in a variety of situations.

Teaching children about safety does not only improve their chances of staying safe, but can support them in making the right choices in life. Making the right choices directly impacts on the communities in which they live.

Using the data and risk profiling, the service has produced a scheme of work for educating children of school age for delivery by Community Risk and Response personnel. The scheme of work then prioritises the age of children/ young people and identifies the most age relevant risk.

Further information on this programme can be found in station profiles and plans.

## ROAD SAFETY

Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) is the fifth most frequently occurring incident type. However RTCs have by far, the greatest number of fatalities and casualties with 642 casualties per 1,000 incidents (Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Incident Profile, 2021).

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Risk Profile indicates that 78 per cent of all road traffic collisions involve at least one driver from Northumberland, therefore it is necessary that the service considers this incident type in its prevention activity.

Road Safety is currently incorporated into all Community Safety Department programmes for young people and Community Risk and Response personnel deliver road safety programmes in accordance with their local risk profile and associated station plan.

## FIRE CADETS

As with the other education programmes delivered by NFRS, the Fire Cadets programme contributes to reducing inequalities, community risk and vulnerability for our young people. This provision is aimed at under 18-year-olds and is widely recognised as having a positive impact on reducing antisocial behaviour and promoting positive outcomes for the cadets involved.

NFRS has delivered a fire cadets programme for well over a decade and is now a member of the National Fire Cadets Programme delivering branches across the county.

The National Fire Cadet Board is an educational youth organisation run by Fire and Rescue Services in partnership with the National Fire Chiefs Council. The aim of the scheme is to create safer, stronger communities through developing an individual's knowledge and awareness of their community and enhance citizenship skills.



The nationally recognised programme offers young people aged 13 to 17 the opportunity to gain essential social, life, work, and wellbeing skills, as well as developing their confidence in firefighting drills and equipment. In addition to the benefits outlined above, work has commenced on strengthening a development pathway from fire cadets into retained firefighting opportunities and, in doing so, improving employment prospects.

## PRINCE'S TRUST TEAM PROGRAMME

The link between deprivation, poverty and inequalities in the way fire is distributed has been identified through empirical research and has been cited throughout this strategy document.

### In Northumberland:

17.6% children live in poverty.

13.2% live in one of the 10% most deprived areas of England.

The most deprived area in Northumberland is located in the town of Blyth

Unemployment is greater than the national average.

The Prince's Trust 'Team' programme is a well-established and successful personal development programme which aims to improve employability and, in doing so, reduces the likelihood and impact of poverty. **It is aimed at:**

16-25yrs old.

Young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

**70 percent** of those joining Team programme have a background of homelessness, substance misuse, offending behaviour, educational disengagement or mental health needs.

The success of the programme is measured across a number of national indicators, for example achievement, retention and progression of learners into education, employment or training. Currently, NFRS learners' achievement stands at **100 percent**, all learners achieve a qualification. Retention stands at **76 percent** and is above the national average for this programme and progression stands at **78 percent**. NFRS has delivered the Team programme for over a decade and has supported almost 1,000 young people.



## SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. All employees and volunteers of NFRS have a responsibility to share safeguarding concerns. It is a 'duty of care'. The term 'employee' refers to all members whether paid or not, in all aspects of their work. All employees are responsible for reporting allegations, disclosures, suspicions or concerns. This is known as 'raising an alert' and there are internal procedures in place to support this process.

As a member of the Northumberland Safeguarding Board, NFRS has agreed to:

1. Act in the public interest
2. Consider all the governance around the sharing; and
3. Adhere to all associated legal framework

NFRS works within this framework to promote an individual's human rights, their capacity for independence, ensuring each person is treated with dignity and respect. NFRS works as part of a multi-agency approach as information sharing between partner agencies is essential to protect adults and children at risk of harm.

Information sharing is supported by the Northumberland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) upon which safeguarding decisions in relation to adults and children are made by numerous statutory and non-statutory agencies. To deliver the best safeguarding decisions and to ensure timely, necessary and proportionate

interventions are provided, decision makers need comprehensive and accurate information. This provides a fuller understanding of the situation, the individuals involved and their circumstances and ensures a robust assessment or risk.

Across all aspects of service delivery, NFRS takes cognisance of the Fire and rescue national framework for England 2018, which states:

"Given the wide range of roles that fire and rescue personnel undertake, including with people with complex needs and vulnerabilities, fire and rescue authorities will need to ensure that all their staff in public-facing roles have the necessary skills and training to meet such demands.

They also should have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place – including ensuring staff have appropriate vetting clearance - to provide the public with the reassurance and confidence that they have every right to expect" (pp 6-7).

NFRS has robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and training in safeguarding is mandatory for all employees. Safeguarding referrals made by NFRS are evaluated and, to date, over 90 percent of referrals have led or contributed to positive action to improve the lives of at-risk residents of Northumberland.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

We need to ensure that everything the service does, including prevention delivery is of a high quality and is effective therefore quality assurance and evaluation is an integral part of the service's work.

Some programmes have robust quality assurance and evaluation processes in place, for example, The Prince's Trust Team programme. In 2018, NFRS was awarded 'Direct Claim Status' for this programme by the Prince's Trust Qualifications Team. This is awarded to those delivery partners who have consistently demonstrated high standards of internal quality assurance processes. This was successfully renewed in February 2020 following a Direct Claim Status Review by the Prince's Trust Qualifications Team.

In addition, the Community Safety Department has been awarded the Matrix quality standard in relation to information, advice and guidance across all programme delivery.



## 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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