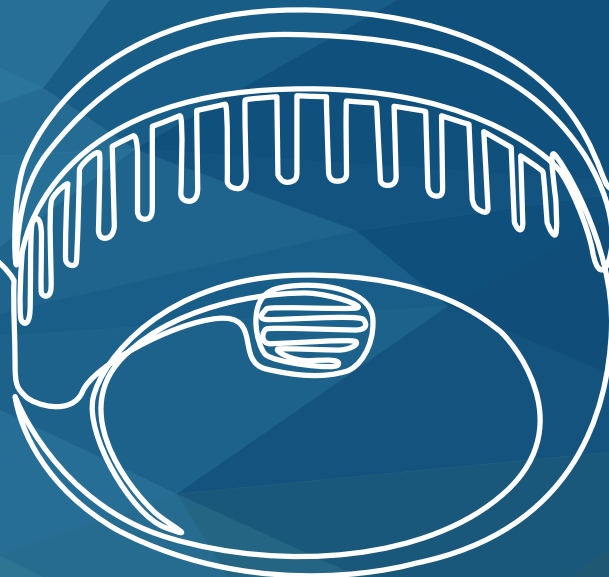




Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

Community Risk Management Plan

Making Essex safer together



CRMP Consultation
Supporting information

Introduction

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) is consulting on behalf of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (EPFCCFRA).

We are seeking feedback from stakeholders on proposed changes or initiatives that will form part of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025 – 2030.

Our stakeholders include:

Our public. Our communities who live, work, visit and travel in Essex.

Our partners. Our businesses and local partner organisations including our emergency services partners, our political stakeholders and our neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Our people. Our staff, including our volunteers and representative bodies.

Under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, a CRMP should identify risks facing the community and describe how a fire and rescue authority will address those risks and prevent and respond to fires and other emergencies.

When finished, it will serve as our organisation's plan (our corporate plan).

Our consultation is asking for feedback against 13 proposals.

Our proposals will:

- Enhance our ability to manage sustained high demand while making sure we're still engaging with our communities.
- Improve our response times to those critical life risk incidents and improve availability.
- Prevent the impact of a changing society with an older population, alongside the risks posed to young adults from road and water, reducing the risk by delivering more work with those most at risk of harm.
- Protect the built environment, making sure public safety is prioritised in the building, refurbishment and maintenance of premises and sites that fall under the Fire Safety Order 2005.
- Respond to the challenge and needs of a changing workforce, through planning for the future, attraction and investing in our highly skilled people.

Message from the Chief Fire Officer and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

Our goal is to be one of the best Fire and Rescue Services in the country. This means we are providing our residents, businesses, and visitors with a service they deserve.

To do this, we need to work with our partners and public to help make Essex safer together.

We do this through our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This is our strategic plan, setting out how we will develop and continue to prevent emergencies and harm from happening in the first place.

Through the CRMP development process, we have looked at things like the range of the incidents we attend, our changing population, an evolving environment (such as hot weather, wildfires and flooding), and new technology. We assess current and emerging risks, and review how we can support our communities and make them more resilient against these risks.

We have also listened carefully to the views of our people, our public and our partners. We are continuing to listen and engage with these audiences, to strengthen our final Community Risk Management Plan.

Your input is important to us. Your feedback helps to build safe and resilient communities, helping to make Essex safer together.

Our CRMP is also a plan that will deliver against the priorities of the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024. The Fire and Rescue Plan is the strategic plan set out by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. It provides the focus and direction for our Service, with key priorities and objectives that have been developed in consultation with Essex public and key partners.

Our proposals aim to:

- Deliver against the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 - 2028
- Strengthen our prevention and protection work and activities
- Have more fire engines available during peak hours
- Respond to life-threatening incidents as quickly as possible
- Provide our people with the equipment, training, and development opportunities so we can provide excellent services to our public and each other
- Provide modern buildings and facilities for our staff
- Be a safe, supportive and inclusive employer
- Deliver value for money.

We hope you will help us in shaping our five-year strategic plan by taking part in our consultation.

Rick Hylton
Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Consultation Proposals

The consultation is asking for feedback against 13 proposals.

Our proposals will:

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- Protect the built environment, making sure public safety is prioritised in the building, refurbishment and maintenance of premises and sites that fall under the Fire Safety Order 2005.
- Respond to the challenge and needs of a changing workforce, through planning for the future, attraction and investing in our highly skilled people.

All supported proposals will go through the necessary consultation process if needed.

Proposal 1

Page 6

The proposal to further invest in the way we manage our resources – our systems and people – so we're in the right place, with the right people, providing services to our communities.

Proposal 2

Page 8

The proposal to explore how we can increase the number of available fire engines and firefighters to deliver prevention, protection and operational response activities at peak times. For example, through introducing a day duty system.

Proposal 3

Page 10

The proposal to develop greater flexibility in how we use our people to optimise operational capacity and resilience, such as through an on-call tiered availability model.

Proposal 4

Page 12

The proposal to protect frontline fire engine availability by reviewing how we respond to non-emergency or non-time critical incidents.

Proposal 5

Page 14

The proposal to consider amending our approach to how we respond to automatic fire alarms (AFAs).

Proposal 6**Page 16**

The proposal to review the measures and targets for operational response attendance times.

Proposal 7**Page 18**

The proposal to continue our work with East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) and Essex Police, and explore further opportunities with partners to reach our more vulnerable communities.

Proposal 8**Page 20**

The proposal to increase the time we spend with our communities, with 80% of our community engagement being targeted to those most vulnerable and at risk.

Proposal 9**Page 22**

The proposal to increase the number of working smoke alarms across all households in Essex.

Proposal 10**Page 24**

The proposal to strengthen community resilience and preparedness through targeted community engagement. We want to work with communities that are at higher risk of harm from water and road incidents, flooding and outdoor fires.

Proposal 11**Page 26**

The proposal to work with partners to reduce the harm and impact associated with emerging technologies such as lithium-ion batteries, battery energy storage system (BESS) sites and solar farms.

Proposal 12**Page 28**

The proposal to deliver an ambitious capital investment programme to develop new training facilities for all our firefighters, a new Fleet Workshop in partnership with Essex Police and improve places of work across our fire station and site modernisation programme.

Proposal 13**Page 30**

The proposal to invest in our people, empowering all to focus on delivering excellent results, to deliver better for each other and for our communities.

Proposal 1

The proposal to further invest in the way we manage our resources – our systems and people – so we're in the right place, with the right people, providing services to our communities.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should further invest in the way that we manage our resources so that we can improve fire engine cover and availability?

For us to respond more effectively to community needs, we need to use data and improved systems to review past events and predict future risks.

Through systems and availability management tools, we can make sure our people and appliances are in the right place, providing services that meet the needs of our communities.

Our goal is to increase our use of data and business intelligence tools through secure and resilient systems. This will help us better understand and respond appropriately to the risks we, and our community, face.

This would mean that we could improve fire engine cover and availability, make forward planning decisions, and review historical coverage positions for audit and inquiry purposes.

We want to use data and evidence to make better decisions about how we use our resources and reduce unplanned overtime. This would help us improve how we respond to emergencies and manage resources more effectively.

We also want to explore better efficiencies through more flexible crewing models. These are outlined in proposal 2 and 4 (pages 8 and 12 in this document).

To do this, we need to invest in better resource management tools and systems.

Rationale

In the last financial year, we made 4,855 fire engine movements to standby at strategic stations.

A total of 810 incidents were attended from a standby.

Standby means that a crew of firefighters travelled to wait at another fire station where that fire engine wasn't available to be mobilised in an emergency.

Our strategic stations are fire stations that we look to make sure have availability, as they are located across the county in key areas to mobilise from, or due to level of risk in that local area.

These strategic stations have been designated through previous Integrated Risk Management Plan cycles. However, we know that risk is not static and using available technology we could be smarter in how we reduce these risks.

Impact and benefits

- Fire engines would be in the areas of greatest risk according to the time, day and season.
- There would be an increase in the number of available fire engines.
- There would be an improvement in learning opportunities for operational response.



Proposal 2

The proposal to explore how we can increase the number of available fire engines and firefighters to deliver prevention, protection and operational response activities at peak times. For example, through introducing a day duty system.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should explore introducing an extra duty system - day duty - so that we have more fire engines with guaranteed availability during the day.

We currently have a wholetime system – where firefighters work 42-hours across four days from a station which provides cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Alongside this we have an on-call duty system – firefighters who live or work within five minutes of a fire station and respond on a pager.

We are proposing to explore the benefits of introducing a third duty system - a day duty system. The objective will be to carry out more community engagement work across the county while also improving operational availability and response times during peak times.

This proposal would provide a guaranteed increase in availability of appliances during the day, allowing firefighters to deliver additional prevention and protection activities focusing on the people in local communities who are most at risk.

Rationale

On a daily average, our fire engine availability is lowest when the demand for our services is at its highest.

We know that this is primarily due to the number of on-call firefighters available during the day. On-call colleagues are not based at their fire station but are instead alerted to respond through a pager.

During the day, our availability reduces as many of our on-call colleagues are in their primary employment.

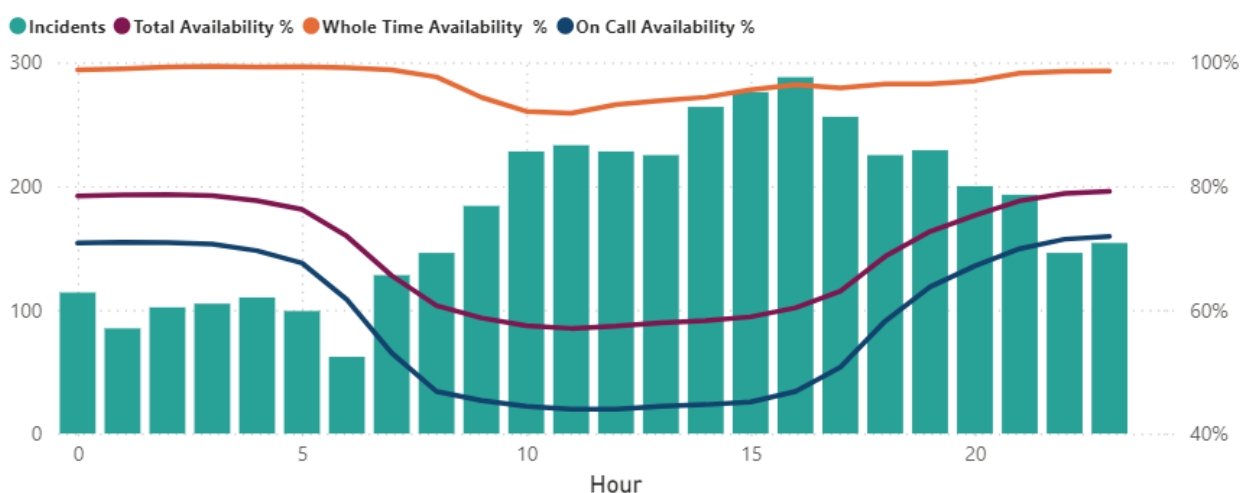
Impact and benefits

- There would be no change to the number of fire engines across Essex.
- There would be more fire engines guaranteed to be available during the daytime.
- There would be more community, prevention and protection activities.
- There would be more Crew and/or Watch Manager role opportunities.
- There would be better management of resource aligned to our risk.

Availability

The graph below shows the total number of incidents between 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024 (the last financial year).

The graph shows that incidents are more likely to occur in the afternoon, when our availability is at its lowest.



Proposal 3

The proposal to develop greater flexibility in how we use our people to optimise operational capacity and resilience, such as through an on-call tiered availability model.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should develop an on-call availability system?

This could mean that on-call colleagues may provide a response that is delayed (planned) or respond from an alternative fire station that is not their closest one.

60% of all UK fire engines are crewed by on-call firefighters. In Essex, 48 of our 66 appliances are crewed by on-call firefighters.

Right now, our on-call colleagues are either “available” or “not available”. If you’re available, this means you are within five minutes of your local fire station and available to respond to emergencies. We think that we should be more flexible than this.

We’ll always be there in an emergency, but a tiered availability on-call response model could mean that we have a more robust approach to dealing with incidents of varying types and durations. It could mean that we have reserve resources for dealing with high periods of demand.

A tiered availability system could provide greater flexibility in how our on-call firefighters deliver prevention, protection and response by:

- Providing on-call firefighters with the ability to plan future availability jointly as a station to improve their operational response capabilities.
- Allowing our resource management team to deliver future planning for prolonged incidents by identifying on-call firefighters who are available to support relief patterns.
- Supporting on-call firefighters to respond to non-emergency incidents through a delayed turn out, maintaining and protecting firefighters for life risk incidents.
- Providing opportunities for on-call firefighters to maintain skills and develop experience through greater flexibility in crewing patterns.

This approach could see on-call firefighters who are immediately available to respond to emergencies and also offer further flexibility for on-call firefighters to provide a response that is longer than five minutes.

This would need to be prearranged. It could also mean combining the crew of two or more stations that would otherwise both be unavailable.

An example of an on-call tiered availability model. *(NB: this is for explanation purposed only. Is it not the model that is proposed).*

Tier one: first line availability on-call firefighters will provide a response from their nearest fire station within five minutes. For this tier, colleagues could also provide agreed cover at an alternative location on a delayed response. For example, to provide relief from an incident that is ongoing / of a long duration.

Tier two: second line availability on-call firefighters will provide a response from their nearest fire station within 20 minutes.

Tier three: third line availability on-call firefighters will provide a response from any fire station (this could also include from work or home) within 60 minutes.

Tier four: fourth line availability on-call firefighters will provide a response to any fire station within three hours.

Rationale

Nationally and locally, current data shows an ongoing year-on-year decline of on-call firefighter availability.

Equally, on-call firefighter recruitment and retention are challenging both nationally and locally in Essex.

Across Essex, our availability fluctuates throughout the day. Our systems mean that on-call fire stations and on-call fire engines are either available or not available. This means that we make decisions to move other fire engines around the county to reduce the impact of risk.

Introducing an on-call tiered availability status system could mean greater flexibility for on-call personnel and provide clearer visibility of their availability to improve performance standards.

It could offer better options for many firefighters and their primary employers, leading to improved recruitment and retention.

Impact and benefits

- Improved overall availability.
- Improved on-call recruitment.
- Improved on-call retention.
- Efficiency in resource scheduling, and reduction in unplanned overtime costs.
- Better transparency of availability for Control Operators.

Proposal 4

The proposal to protect frontline fire engine availability by reviewing how we respond to non-life risk incidents.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should review how we respond to non-time critical and non-emergency incidents? This review could include trialling responding to non-emergency incidents in smaller vehicles, or with reduced firefighter numbers*.

In the last financial year our overall incident demand has increased. This is largely due to secondary fires in the summer months or special services.

A secondary fire is an outdoor fire that does not involve people or property. They are most commonly small outdoor fires that involve items like wheelie bins, discarded items and rubbish. We see these types of fires increase in the summer months.

A special service is where we respond to an incident that is not a fire. These could be things like rescuing an animal that is trapped, supporting health colleagues to gain entry into a property, and water rescues. These are just a few examples.

We are not proposing to change how we respond to primary fire and life-risk emergency calls.

In the last financial year (2023/2024) most initial calls for special services and secondary fires occurred between 12pm and 8pm, with most demand at 5pm. This is during the daytime, when our fire engine availability is at its lowest.

We would like to review how we respond to different incidents, so we can make sure that our fire engine availability is protected during our peak times (daytime) for bigger emergencies or incidents where lives may be at risk.

This could include exploring using smaller vehicles or responding with fewer firefighters for incidents like gaining entry on behalf of the ambulance service, attending bin fires or small fires in the open.*

* In accordance with safe systems of work

Rationale

On average, a quarter of all our incidents we have responded to in the last five financial years have been to provide special services.

The most common special service we attend is effecting entry. This is primarily in support of the ambulance service, accounting for 23% of all special services provided on average over the last five financial years. For these incidents we attend, gain entry, and then leave the incident for the ambulance service to manage.

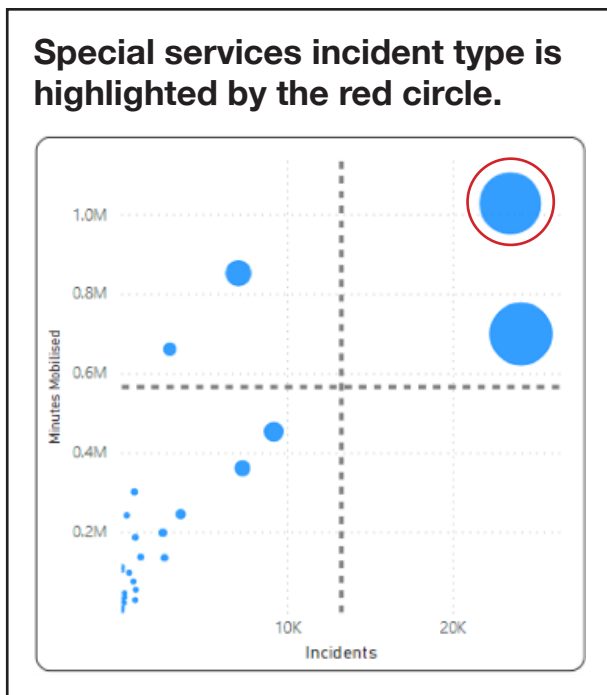
Over the last five financial years, calls to assist other agencies (Essex Police, East of England Ambulance Service Trust) have increased by 28%, while calls to flooding have increased by 33% (2019/2020 - 2023/2024).

In the last financial year (2023/2024) most initial calls for special services occurred between 12pm and 8pm, with most demand at 5pm. This is during the daytime, when our fire engine availability is at its lowest. We would like to review and explore how we respond to these incidents, while making sure we still follow our safe systems of work policies.

It's important to us to keep our availability highest during our peak times (daytime), so that we can respond quickly and efficiently to life risk calls. This could mean adapting how we respond to non-emergency calls through different vehicles or different firefighter numbers.

Impact and benefits

- Improved availability to respond to life risk incidents.
- Improved career development for our people.
- Improved partnership working.
- Improved support for Safeguarding Officers.



Proposal 5

The proposal to consider amending our approach to how we respond to automatic fire alarms (AFAs).

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should review how we respond to automatic fire alarms (AFAs)?

We will still always maintain our emergency response to 999 calls.

An automatic fire alarm (AFA) is an alarm that, when it sounds, will automatically alert the occupants of the building, who should manage the response to the alarm. It may also notify a remote Alarm Receiving Centre depending on the local arrangements. Often, the Alarm Receiving Centre will contact the Fire Service Control Room that there is a fire alarm activating.

Building owners must make their buildings safe. They are called Responsible Persons (RPs). Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 the RP is responsible for the safety of occupants in the event of a fire. This also includes defining actions to be taken if the AFA system activates.

For more details about fire safety, visit [GOV.UK "Guidance for those with legal duties"](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-those-with-legal-duties).

In 2023-2024, AFAs accounted for

4,476 calls, which made up 26.9% of all incidents.

Commercial buildings where these systems are installed have identified responsible individuals who have a duty to maintain their fire alarm system and make sure there are measures in place to reduce false alarm incidents.

We are proposing to review how we respond to automatic fire alarms in buildings within Essex.

Rationale

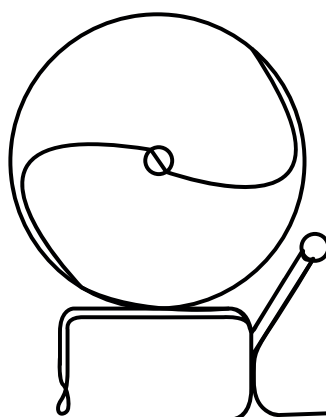
We would like to explore how we respond to AFAs. This could mean responsible individuals confirm there is no fire, so that we can maintain fire engine availability for life risk incidents.

Our current policy on how we respond to reports of an AFA activating is shown in the table below.

Impact and benefits

If we look to reduce the number of times a fire engine responds to automatic fire alarm calls, we could:

- Make sure fire engines and firefighters are available for other emergencies across the county where lives are at risk.
- Free up more resources for critical fire and rescue activities, such as delivering fire safety advice to our communities and firefighter training.



	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3*
Type of premise	Sleeping risk, residential homes.	Community properties, medical, education (non-residential).	Commercial (non-residential), Entertainment, Stadiums.
How we respond	Immediate response to AFA calls and full pre-determined attendance.	Immediate response to AFA calls and full pre-determined attendance.	No immediate response is to be made to these premises unless a fire is confirmed via call with control operators. A confirmation call will initiate a full attendance.
Detailed premise examples	Private residential including common areas, hotels, guest houses, B&Bs, hostels, residential training, holiday accommodation, places of custody, nursing homes, sheltered housing, hospitals, healthcare with general anaesthesia facilities or dependent patients, residential care.	Top Tier COMAH Sites, Grade 1 or 2 listed heritage premises, confirmed high risk premises and premises where two paired fire alarms activate (sometimes known as a “double knock” fire system).	These are premises that are not specified in level 1 or 2. This includes factories, warehouses, small and medium places of assembly, offices, shops, theatres, cinema, transport premises etc.

*Currently we do not send an immediate response to Level 3 premise category.

Proposal 6

The proposal to review the measures and targets for operational response attendance times.

Have your say!

As an Essex resident, to what extent do you agree that it is important for you to understand our response measures and targets?

To what extent do you agree that it is important to you that we share how we're performing against these targets?

When you call 999, our Control Operators dispatch the quickest available fire engine to get to you. This means from the time we pick up the call, to the time it takes for our fire engine to arrive at the incident location is defined as our response time.

Our goal will always be to respond to emergencies in the most effective and safe way, prioritising the protection of, and limiting damage to, life, property and the environment.

While there are no national response standards for fire and rescue services, it is important that we set targets that we can hold ourselves accountable to and keep our communities as safe as possible.

We do benchmark our response times with other services. In the year ending 31 March 2023, our average response time to primary fires was 10 minutes and 30 seconds. This is in line with the average for significantly rural services across England.

Response standards provide an indication of performance. The speed of response to an emergency is impacted by several factors, such as the location of the incident, location of the nearest and most appropriate fire engine at the time of the incident, traffic conditions and weather conditions.

Response standards could also include "weight of attack". This is the amount of fire engines or special appliances that we want to reach a specific incident within a certain time.

We want to make sure that the most vulnerable people and places in areas outside the response standards are as safe and prepared as possible through targeted activities by our firefighters and community safety colleagues.

Rationale

Our current response standard is to arrive at potential life-risk incidents on average within ten minutes, and all incidents within 15 minutes on 80% of occasions.

Despite Essex being a county of contrasts – 72% agricultural land, major urban areas including Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Southend and Thurrock, one of the largest sections of coastline (400 miles) in the country and various conservation areas and over 14,000 listed buildings – we have set one response standard for the whole county.

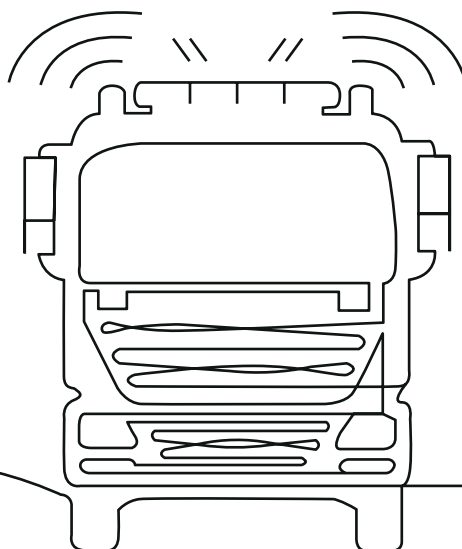
We want to improve the way we report on the time it takes our firefighters to get to incidents across the county.

This means understanding better the areas of the county where it may take us longer to get to because of factors like rurality or road networks.

From our risk analysis work we have identified that the most significant calls to life risk are road and water related incidents and fires within a property. We want to make sure that we prioritise these incident types and hold ourselves to account to reach these as quickly as we can.

Impact and benefits

- Improved understanding of how we can resource to risk.
- Increased prevention offers to those communities who it takes longer to reach in an emergency.
- Transparency of data reporting.



Proposal 7

The proposal to continue our work with East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) and Essex Police, as well as exploring further opportunities with partners to reach our more vulnerable communities.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should continue to work with our emergency partners to make our high-risk communities safer?

To what extent do you agree we should lobby for greater data sharing between health partners and emergency services?

We regularly work in partnership with the Police, Ambulance, Coastguard, the NHS, and other stakeholders in our work to make Essex safe together.

By working together, we can be more effective, efficient, reach more people, save lives and reduce harm.

For example, through our work with East of England Ambulance Service Trust, our Community Wellbeing Officers have carried out 199 Home Fire Safety Visits with people who we classify as high or medium risk (97% of visits), or very high (73% of visits) where they have multiple indicators of vulnerability.

We know people who are most at risk from fire and rescue incidents are also at greater risk relating to their health and wellbeing. Without this partnership work with EEAST, we would not have reached these individuals.

The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) requires Fire and Rescue Authorities, Police, Justice agencies, Health, Education and Local Authorities to collaborate and plan together to reduce and prevent serious violence in their local areas.

We engage with our local communities to promote fire safety and to support vulnerable individuals, meaning we are well positioned to play a key role to collaborate with partners to reduce violence.

Safeguarding is a core function for ECFRS, supporting and in some cases leading in risk reduction activities to those identified as being vulnerable and at risk from serious violence, exploitation or abuse.

We want to explore other opportunities to reduce demand on the NHS and ambulance service while also enabling us to reach our more vulnerable communities and supporting violence reduction partnerships.

Rationale

We know that fire fatalities share common contributing factors. These factors usually mean that the resident is engaged with a partner agency, like our health care providers.

These factors include:

- People who live alone
- Older people
- People living in private property
- People who have recently experienced a major life event
- People who are living complex lives when it comes to their health and wellbeing
- Challenge in their physical health and wellbeing
- Challenge in their mental health and wellbeing
- Challenge with their home environment

Strong indicators of risk of fatal fire:

- When an individual has both a decreased likelihood of escape, and an increased likelihood of ignition
- Challenge in more than one area simultaneously

Nationally (and locally in Essex) on average over the past five financial years fatal fire inquiries have shown that:

- 57% were known to be experiencing challenges with their mental health and wellbeing
- 71% were known to be experiencing challenges with their physical health and wellbeing
- 71% were known to be experiencing challenges with their home environment

This tells us that each of the individuals who experienced a fatal fire incident were known to our partner organisations, such as health care providers.

Impact and benefits

- Greater opportunities to provide targeted prevention and protection support for those most at risk of fatal fires.
- Greater opportunities to reduce fatal fire incidents and seriously injured fire or road related incidents.
- Improved awareness of partnership referral processes and support mechanisms.
- Improved pathway of referrals from partners into the fire service.
- Improvements in our understanding of vulnerabilities and how we can play our part to reduce harm.
- Increased ECFRS support of the Serious Violence Duty.
- Continual emphasis on safeguarding.

Proposal 8

The proposal to increase the time we spend with our communities, with 80% of our community engagement being targeted to those most vulnerable and at risk.

Have your say!

To what extent do you think it is important we spend time within our communities when we are not at incidents?

To what extent do you agree we should look at how we could expand our post incident response work to better understand and better engage with our communities to deliver prevention advice?

We want to spend most of our time in and with our communities.

In the financial year 2023-2024, we carried out 10,119 Home Fire Safety Visits. That is nearly 50% more than the previous year. But we still want to do more.

This proposal will focus on continuing to reduce the risk of fires and other incidents in our communities through targeted prevention and engagement activities.

To do this we will increase the amount of time we spend interacting with our communities, particularly with those most at risk, and increase the number of Home Fire Safety Visits carried out by our Prevention Team.

Our people will actively participate in Community Engagement activity, including working with educational settings, community groups and partners with the aim of keeping our community safe through information, advice and guidance.

In the UK, there were 259 fire-related fatalities in 2023, and someone is 10 times more likely to die in a fire if there is no working smoke alarm in their home. Currently, if there is a fatality at an incident we attend, we carry out an after-incident response to identify ways we can learn and improve our prevention activity to reduce future fatal incidents occurring.

We would like to expand our after-incident response work to reach those who have been affected by fires in the home to increase our understanding of risk factors in our communities and how we can help to prevent future fires in the home from occurring with significant impacts.

Rationale

Prevention saves lives, is cost-effective, and benefits reach far beyond our Fire and Rescue Service.

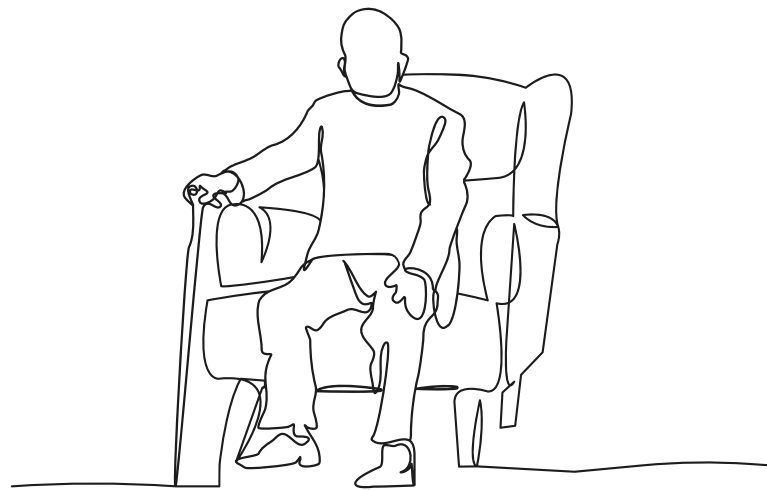
Targeting prevention activity is an established strategy within Public Health, which offers numerous examples of successful evidence and outcomes. Similar to Public Health, we understand what makes people at risk of being killed or seriously injured in incidents. This often means they are vulnerable in other ways, including health.

To fully understand community risk, particularly in relation to seldom heard groups who may not readily engage with services, we work with partners and stakeholders to build trust and relationships with different groups.

We do this through our prevention activity at a local, regional and national level, as well as embedding prevention activity within station plans and service objectives. This helps us to deliver targeted engagement activities to provide information, advice, and services to groups and people within them, in the most appropriate and accessible way.

As part of our commitment to the Equality Duty, we strive to ensure our universal offer of prevention advice is accessible and inclusive by design.

Targeting our prevention activity using the same frameworks that have been successful for health, will offer the best outcomes for communities in Essex.



Impact and benefits

- Reduce the likelihood of severe injury or fatality from fire or road collision.
- Reduce the frequency of domestic fires.
- Increase the visibility of the Fire Service in the local community.
- Increase the awareness of the wide number of roles within the Fire Service.
- Increase positive action and applicants who are currently under-represented in roles across our Service.

Proposal 9

The proposal to increase the number of working smoke alarms across all households in Essex.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that we should work with communities, partners, companies and voluntary organisations across Essex to increase the number of households with working smoke alarms?

Statistics show that a person is at least four times more likely to die in a fire in the home if there are no working smoke alarms. In the event of a fire, working smoke alarms give people the vital early warning that could allow them to escape from the property and call the emergency services.

We want to make sure that every single home in Essex has a working smoke alarm across all levels. But we can't do this alone.

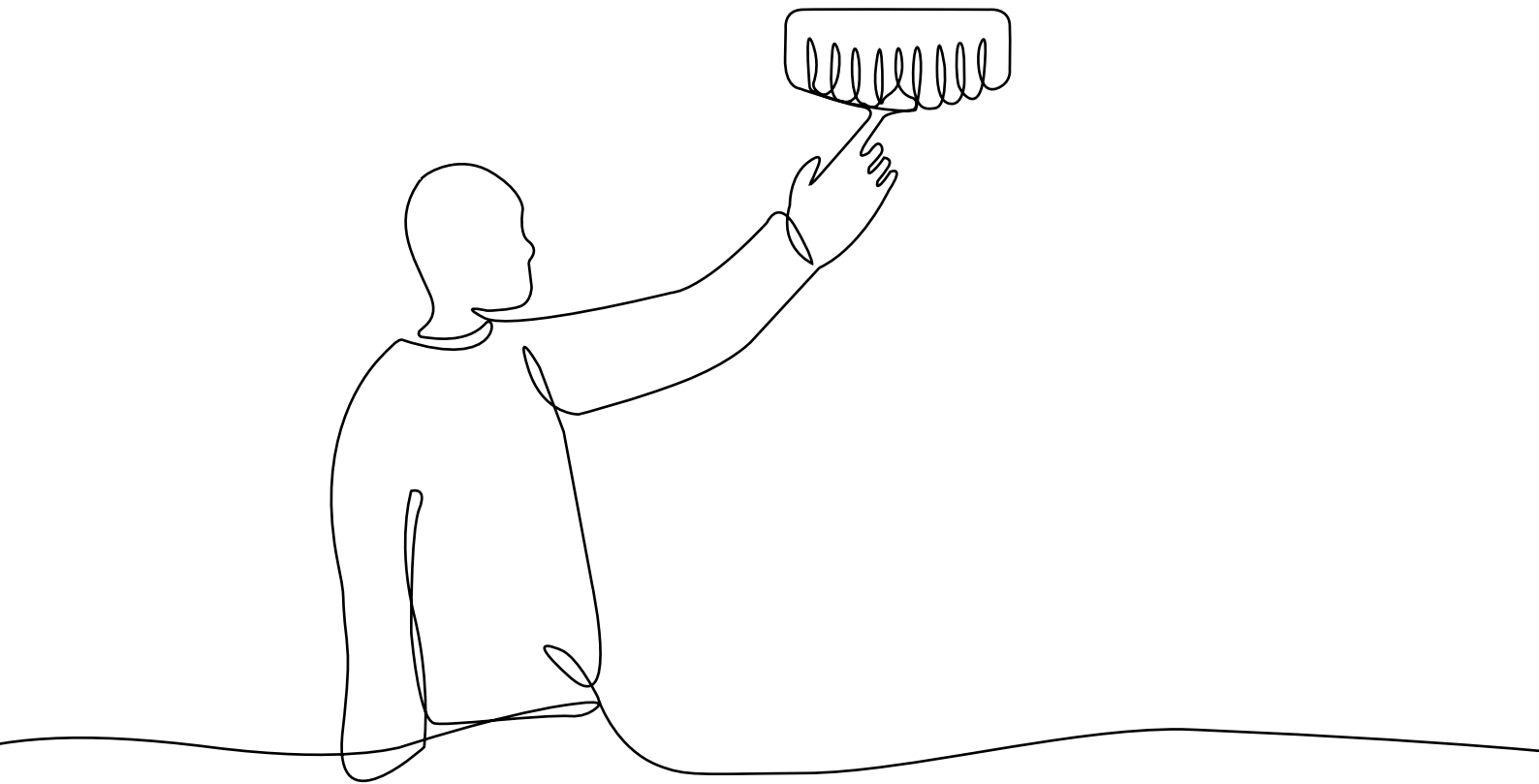
Right now, we offer a free service to all Essex residents called a Home Fire Safety Visit. During this visit we'll talk to you about fire safety advice including your individual needs and safety concerns. We also fit battery-operated smoke alarms free of charge.

While educating all our residents about the importance of working smoke alarms is important to us, we want to prioritise those who need us most.

This means we need to work with communities, partners, companies and voluntary organisations across Essex who can help us increase the number of residents who have working smoke alarms and receive our advice.

We also need to work with our partners and share information and data so we can actively reach those communities who are most at risk.

We want to spend our time with our communities who need us the most, while empowering other households to make themselves safe and make sure they have working smoke alarms.



Rationale

There are 771,200 households in Essex (2021 census). We carry out an average of 12,000 Home Fire Safety Visits each year. We simply cannot get to every household. Across the UK, 70% of people who died in house fires did not have working smoke alarms.

Smoke alarms are the first level of protection when it comes to making residents aware of a fire in their home.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 requires all relevant landlords to make sure at least one smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of their homes where there is a room used as living accommodation.

Impact and benefits

- Reduce the likelihood of severe injury or fatality from domestic fires.
- Reduce the frequency of domestic fires.
- Widen our partnership and business engagement opportunities.
- Increase awareness of the risks of fire.
- Normalise prioritising safety in the home and fire risk.

Proposal 10

The proposal to strengthen community resilience and preparedness through targeted community engagement. We want to work with communities that are at higher risk of harm from water and road incidents, flooding and outdoor fires.

Have your say!

To what extent do you think that we are doing enough to promote safety advice?

The nature of the way we live means we're often faced with risk. With more education and information around risk and how to avoid it or lessen it, we believe people can help themselves to prevent many incidents happening in the first place or make them less impactful to their lives.

In Essex, many of these preventable risks fall into the areas of water safety, flooding risk, road safety and indoor fires. Alongside this, Essex has 250,000 hectares of farmland which increases outdoor fire risks.

We already focus much of our efforts on prevention work, but we know we can do more, and we think everyone can play a part.

Road traffic collisions, water safety incidents and accidental fires can devastate lives, destroy families and shatter communities.

Vulnerability is complex in nature; the presence of some situational or environmental factors combined with personal vulnerability can result in a person possibly being both a victim and/or susceptible to a range of harm. Focusing on education and collaboration to strengthen resilience in our higher-risk communities, alongside consideration of the wider social determinants of health is vital for reducing the impact of these risks.

To build community resilience and community preparedness, we need to make sure that our safety messages are being accessed, understood, followed and shared with your contacts.

Our Service actively seeks opportunities to collaborate, and enable partnerships across different sectors, to tackle the wider risk in communities.

We focus on and prioritise preventive measures to make sure that inclusion and equity is at the core of our initiatives.

Rationale

Road Safety

In the UK, in 2022:

- 75% of fatalities and 62% of casualties of all severities were male
- 3% of fatalities and 10% of casualties were 16 years and under
- 25% of fatalities and 29% of casualties were aged 17-29 years old
- 23% of fatalities and 7% of casualties were 70 years and over

Weather

Using Met Office data, we know that in Essex we expect to see:

- Warmer and wetter winters
- Hotter and drier summers
- More frequent and intense weather extremes

More rainfall could happen in winter storms, too. While the temperatures may be milder, winters will tend to be wetter, with more potential for flooding.

Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Social determinants of health include factors like socioeconomic status, education, neighbourhood and physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care.

Rural and Farm Fire Safety

Around 72% of Essex is rural with 350,000 residents, 22,500 businesses and 250,000 hectares of farmland.

Farms are at a high risk of fire because there are often lots of combustible materials stored in or around agricultural buildings. Farms are also often in isolated locations which may have poor water supply. This makes farms much more vulnerable to a fire getting out of control, especially in summer when hot and dry weather increases the risk of wildfires spreading.

Farms are particularly vulnerable to deliberate fires and arson due to their isolated location, open boundaries, readily ignitable hay and straw stacks often making them easy targets.

Impact and benefits

- Reduce the likelihood of severe injury or fatality from fire or road collision.
- Improve the outcomes for communities in Essex.
- Improve community resilience among and between the most vulnerable groups.
- Increase risk awareness for accidental drowning.
- Increase how ECFRS works with other partners, to influence in areas outside of our authority.

Proposal 11

The proposal to work with partners to reduce the harm and impact associated with emerging technologies such as lithium-ion batteries (and their disposal) and battery energy storage system (BESS) sites.

Have your say!

To what extent you agree that we should be more proactively involved in understanding emerging technologies and the impact of emerging risks?

We're seeing emerging fire risks that involve using alternative fuels.

There is an increase in the use of lithium-ion batteries for everyday items in domestic settings including to charge mobile phones, e-scooters, bikes and cars.

As numbers of end-of-life electrical vehicles increase, it presents a new and significant challenge to fire safety in the waste and recycling industry with further risks of unlawful disposal through organised crime.

It's important that we provide our firefighters with the right training, skills and equipment to deal with these incidents when they happen. But it's also important that we work with our communities and identify those groups who are most at risk from these types of fires to prevent them happening.

Incidents involving lithium-ion batteries is a risk that is growing. And as more and more items within the household contain lithium batteries the risk to our public increases.

In addition to household batteries, to meet net zero by 2050, the UK Government has committed to decarbonise the electricity system by 2035. Wind turbines only generate power when it is windy and solar farms when there is enough sunlight. That's why Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have become a key enabler to achieve this.

In the UK, fire services are currently not statutory consultees of BESS developments. ECFRS is going above and beyond to engage with developers to improve the fire safety of the site, firefighters and the community, but we want to do more.

Rationale

UK fire services attended 46% more fires linked to lithium-ion batteries in 2023 than 2022.

Lithium-ion batteries used to power equipment such as e-bikes and electric vehicles are increasingly linked to serious fires in workplaces and residential buildings, as well as at recycling and waste sites.

Fortunately, lithium-ion battery failures are relatively rare, but in the event of a malfunction, they can represent a serious fire risk.

Battery fires in bin lorries and at waste sites in the UK have reached an all-time high - over 1,200 in the last year, an increase of 71% from 700 in 2022.

On average there was a fire from a lithium-ion battery in an e-bike or e-scooter every two days in 2023 in London.

The location of Essex and the geographical make up of our county has meant that it is becoming a popular county for Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) sites. A battery energy storage system is a technology designed to store electrical charge for use later, using specially designed batteries – usually lithium-ion batteries.

ECFRS is aware that large scale BESS is a fairly new technology and as such risks may or may not be captured in current guidance in pursuance of the Building Regulations (as amended) and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Impact and benefits

- Reduce the likelihood of severe injury or fatality from emerging technology related incidents.
- Increase partnership working with key stakeholders engaged in emerging technologies.
- Widen the knowledge and skillset of our people to identify, prevent, protect and respond to emerging technologies.
- Increase the awareness and preparedness within our communities.
- Support a safe UK journey towards carbon net zero by 2050.

Proposal 12

The proposal to deliver an ambitious capital investment programme to develop new training facilities for all our firefighters, a new Fleet Workshop in partnership with Essex Police and improve places of work across our fire station and site modernisation programme.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree with supporting long term investment in the Service through capital funding in training and facilities?

Training Facilities

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service must deliver against statutory training requirements, and make sure firefighters have the appropriate skills to carry out their role.

There is a requirement to relocate from the site where we currently deliver our training facilities. Our proposal is to move some training services to our Service Headquarters at Kelvedon Park. This project will improve training facilities and offer learner experiences that better replicate live scenarios.

Fleet Workshops

Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Fleet Workshop sites both require major investment. We are seeking to maximise efficiencies and operational

effectiveness through investing in and building a joint fleet workshops facility.

Site Modernisation

We will establish a property standard across our estate to make sure our buildings are fit for purpose and meet health, safety and wellbeing requirements for our people.

Our fire station and site modernisation programme will mean we update our buildings, so they meet the needs of a modern fire and rescue service. This includes providing spaces that prioritise health and safety needs to keep our colleagues safe.

To achieve these programmes, ECFRS will have to take out long-term borrowing and manage through our Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Rationale

Training Facilities

The training facilities project initiation is driven by a future change to the training arrangements at a site owned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

In May 2022, the MoD communicated their intent to dispose of this site. ECFRS subsequently classified this as a red risk as it would impact on our ability to provide essential training to staff. ECFRS agreed with the MoD to remain on site until 2026 which has provided some initial risk mitigation allowing ECFRS to initiate a project to identify a suitable site for the relocation of their training facilities.

Joint Fleet Workshops

Both ECFRS and Essex Police current fleet workshop sites require either considerable refurbishment or rebuilding their respective premises to bring them to a good standard to meet future needs.

Impact and benefits

- Release of capital funds for future asset investment.
- Improved facilities for our Fleet Workshops.
- Partnership working with Essex Police to improve efficiency and effectiveness of fleet services.
- Improved training facilities to support wider career development of our people in a positive environment.
- Improved facilities across all our site locations to support our people now and into the future.

Proposal 13

The proposal to invest in our people, empowering all to deliver excellent results for each other and for our communities.

Have your say!

To what extent do you agree that ECFRS could improve the services we provide through further investing in resources*?

* resources are people, skills/ training, buildings, equipment and technology.

The strength of our Service comes from our people. We want to make sure that wellbeing for our people is prioritised, and they are empowered all to be professional and ambitious in serving our communities.

Investing in our people means leadership and skills development, and it also means providing our people with modern technology, systems and equipment so they can provide a better service to our public.

It is important that our people have the right skills to be able to do their role. It is also important that maintaining and developing those skills is easily accessible.

We need to focus on our operational training provision, making sure it meets the emerging risks and changes across our county.

We want to maximise the health, safety, and wellbeing of all our staff by investing in personal protective equipment and resources that keep our people safe and protected from harm. This could be using emerging technologies like live incident feeds into our control room, or more practical and efficient equipment for gaining entry.

We also need to focus our work on our development pathways and leadership programmes, as well as succession planning to make sure we have the right skills for today and for leadership in the future. We want to continue to develop and diversify our people and our talent from within our Service, helping people to reach their full potential and supporting those who aspire to progress as leaders.

This proposal will make sure that essential resources, equipment, systems and trained personnel are strategically available and align to our risks.

Rationale

We will continue to prioritise recruitment and retention to maintain fully established teams equipped with the necessary support and skills to fulfil the needs of the communities we serve.

We know that by investing in training, resources, and collaborative partnerships, we can improve how we protect communities, mitigate risks, and respond effectively to all incidents.

Our training provision needs to adapt to changes in work practices and new technologies.

We want to review how we develop and diversify our people and our talent from within our Service, helping people to reach their full potential and supporting those who aspire to progress as leaders.

To do this well, we will need to understand the barriers that may stop people who wish to progress in our organisation, providing them with opportunities to broaden their skills and take on new challenges.

Impact and benefits

- Increase the retention of positive, motivated staff within our Service.
- Increase the diversity of thought our people can bring to Service improvements.
- Improve the knowledge and skillsets shared across all areas of our Service.
- Make sure our people have the right skills to meet the needs of our communities and respond to emerging and new risks.
- To provide our people with resources - technology and equipment - to provide a service that our communities deserve.



Thank you for your time

For more information about Essex County Fire and Rescue Service sign up to essex-fire.gov.uk/signup or search ECFRS on Facebook, X and Instagram.

www.essex-fire.gov.uk/TellECFRS