



Protection and Business Support Strategy

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

2024-2028



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Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding



The Protection and Business Support Strategy

This Protection and Business Support Strategy defines how Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) Protection Teams and wider Service are achieving the strategic priorities of:

Prevention and early intervention

Protecting Staffordshire and its communities

Public confidence

Service reform

Our strategic priorities are detailed in our Safety Plan (Soon to be Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)) which identifies how the organisation plans to achieve its goals.

This Strategy is part of a suite of documentation which support the delivery of the Safety Plan and explains the direction of the Service in relation to Protection and Business Support.

Introduction

SFRS has a library of policies which set out the way by which SFRS will work to reduce the risk in the built environment, by using a targeted, evidence-based approach to our Protection and Business Support activities, it will achieve its organisational objectives.

SFRS uses a collaborative approach to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to support, guide and educate our communities, as well as where necessary enforcing fire safety legislation on those who are deemed to be in clear breach of the regulations.

Summary

Our vision is to make Staffordshire the Safest Place to Be with an aspiration of zero preventable deaths occurring through the delivery of effective prevention and protection activity delivered through education, engagement, early intervention and enforcement.





Core Code of Ethics

The Core Code of Ethics is of paramount importance to our teams, which include Protection and Business Support Teams. This code sets out guiding principles and values that uphold the integrity, professionalism, and ethical conduct of all personnel within our organisation, including the teams that work in various locations across the County and City of Stoke on Trent.

Firstly, the Core Code of Ethics fosters a culture of trust and accountability for all to follow. Our teams are custodians of sensitive and sometimes legal data and information and support some of the most vulnerable members of our community in their work or care environment.

This can be by conducting a fire safety audit, responding to a complaint from a member of the public, carrying out a post fire inspection or building a case for prosecution because of a serious breach of fire safety legislation which has led to somebody being at serious risk of death or injury. Because our teams play a vital role in ensuring any data held is managed by adhering to the code, personnel are reminded of their responsibility to maintain the highest standards of honesty, confidentiality and integrity when handling sensitive information. This creates an environment where colleagues can rely on one another, enhancing teamwork and co-operation, which ultimately translates to improved service delivery.





The Core Code of Ethics encourages our colleagues to pursue relevant training, qualifications and certifications, thus ensuring that the team are well-equipped to help them perform their role effectively. This includes adhering to the Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators and always working within our own level of responsibility.

The Service has a responsibility for ensuring the relevant accredited training is delivered to all members of Protection therefore protecting both the individual and the organisation, but ultimately allowing us to deliver a service that is enforced by highly qualified, highly competent staff.

The Core Code of Ethics also encourages that our colleagues act with integrity and put our communities first. This is further supported by the Regulators Code and Enforcement Management Model which ensure the regulation of fire safety is carried out in a fair and consistent manner, but also reinforces the requirement to use the full powers of the legislation for Enforcement and Prosecution where breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 have put members of the community at serious risk of death or serious injury.

Furthermore, the Core Code of Ethics fosters a sense of duty and dedication to SFRS's strategic priorities. The Central Prevent and Protect Department is an integral part of the organisation's operations and its efficient functioning directly supports those most at risk. By aligning the teams actions with the values outlined in the code, our teams are motivated to perform their duties diligently helping them to prioritise service delivery to our customers, reinforcing the organisations commitment to saving lives and protecting communities and the built environment.

Additionally, the Core Code of Ethics highlights the significance of confidentiality and data protection. Due to the sensitive information our teams handle they must exercise the utmost care and diligence in safeguarding data against unauthorised access or breaches.

Adhering to the code ensures that personnel follow strict data security protocols, minimising the risk of data breaches and preserving trust in SFRS aligned to the 'Public Confidence' strategic priority.

These include:

- **Putting our communities first:**
We put the interest of the public, the community and service users first.
- **Integrity:**
We act with integrity including being open, honest and consistent in everything we do.
- **Dignity and respect:**
Making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
- **Leadership:**
We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexibility and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and will challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI):**
We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI both within the FRSs and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, we support and promote equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations and celebrate difference.

The full **Core Code of Ethics document** is also available for reference and guidance, these ethical principles will help to improve organisational culture and workforce diversity ensuring that communities are supported in the best way.

They will be embedded in everything our employees do and be at the heart of day-to-day activity, guiding individual behaviours, particularly when faced with difficult, challenging and unclear situations.



Strategic Vision

Our Strategic Vision is to “Make Staffordshire the safest Place to Be” with an aspiration of zero preventable deaths occurring through the delivery of effective prevention and protection activities delivered through education, engagement, early intervention and enforcement and where necessary prosecution. We will use a targeted and evidence-based approach in the delivery of protection activities to enable the organisation to achieve its vision which will be fundamentally driven by the Risk Based Inspection Programme.

The following will all be considered as part of this strategy:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire Safety (England) Regulation 2022
- Fire Safety Act 2022
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Licensing Act 2003
- Building Regulations 2010
- The Regulators Code 2014
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018
- NFCC Core Code of Ethics
- NFCC Leadership Framework
- NFCC Protection Fire Standard
- NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators
- SFRS Environmental and Sustainability Strategy
- SFRS Performance Management Framework
- NFCC National Operational Guidance to support our activities

Our vision over the next 4 years is to empower personnel within the organisation to deliver excellent performance.

As a public sector organisation, the vision for our Teams and wider Service is to deliver community centric services, promoting and maximising the social impact that our interventions can make and ensuring the effective and responsible use of public resources, in both finances and personnel.

Pre-Strategy Position

In 2023 the Service embarked on a transformation journey regarding our Protection offer. As part of this work a review was established to allow the service to understand what would be required and to make improvements.

- Protection Delivery
- Business Support Delivery (Review ongoing)

Whilst changes started to take effect in March 2024, the full outcomes of the Protection Review will take effect in June 2024. There will be an evaluation after 12 months to ensure we are meeting our Strategic Objectives for Protection and to consider if any more changes are required.

We will continue to identify areas of improvement and capitalise on opportunities for innovation, prioritising as appropriate.





Goals and Objectives

This Strategy establishes ambitious goals and objectives that embrace and promote progressive thinking to include rationalising our offer. We aim to streamline and prioritise our offer, ensuring Staff wellbeing is at the core of our thought processes.

We will ensure learning outcomes are shared following any case file being brought together for prosecution or where a fatal fire has occurred in a premises subject to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. We will also share national and local learning on new and emerging risks as well as ensuring any changes to fire safety legislation are clearly communicated and implemented.

We will look to strengthen how we will scrutinise our performance management for all, by establishing and sharing performances measures. This will include but are not limited to our performance in responding to building regulation consultations in the required timeframe, the number and severity of fires in commercial premises, the services performance with regards to unwanted fire signals, the qualifications of protection staff, the numbers of operational staff trained to carry out compliance checks and then the number of these checks being carried out and outcomes and the performance of the risk based inspection programme – including numbers of audits and the percentage leading to formal enforcement. A robust quality control process will be embedded ensuring we seek feedback both internally and externally on our performance to provide an understanding of the effectiveness of our interactions and allow us to understand what may be required for any future improvement of our offer.

We will also consider the impact any changes or improvements we make and ensure they are consistent with our Environmental and Sustainability Strategy, seeking to reduce and minimise our carbon footprint in all that we do. This will be considered and implemented through our Annual Service Delivery plan milestones.

We will ensure our work aligns to our Community Engagement Strategy as well as NFCC national campaigns and alongside our Media and Communications Teams promote our safety messages and campaigns ensuring that a variety of platforms are used, to include; Community Magazines, TV, Radio, Newspapers and various social media outlets enabling us to reach our communities.





Our Protection and Business Support Strategic Objectives inc:

1. Optimising Protection Activity across the Service, ensuring focus on the highest risks:

As the new structure is implemented and embedded, we will look to adapt our ways of working to ensure a consistent and methodical approach to our Protection activity, maximising time for our Fire Safety Inspecting Officers to engage in Risk Based Inspection Programme audits, ensuring focus on the highest risk as defined by the latest guidance from NFCC. We will also engage operational crews in Protection activity, giving them the ability to identify Fire Safety deficiencies and take necessary action at medium and lower risk premises that may not be conforming to legislation presenting an increased risk to the communities of Staffordshire. Our findings will dictate our approach to the action we will take to rectify Fire Safety deficiencies (Linked to SDG Plans).

2. Risk Based Inspection Programme:

We will embed and maintain the Risk Based Inspection Programme, ensuring it remains live and current and that we understand and address the risks in a timely and proportionate way. Whilst we do not have capacity to audit every building across Staffordshire subject to Fire Safety legislation, we will ensure we are focussed on those that present the highest risk in term of Societal, Community, Firefighter Safety, Environmental and Heritage impacts.

We will sample medium and lower risks to ascertain fire safety compliance across the area, with a view to engendering a positive fire safety culture across the built environment of Staffordshire. (Linked to SDG plans).

3. Provision of workforce with the right skills, qualifications and competence:

We will prioritise recruitment and retention ensuring we maintain fully established teams with the right support and skills to fulfil this strategy. We will focus on staff development and ensure personnel have access to the courses they need and gain qualifications in line with the NFCC Competency Framework to be able to fulfil their roles effectively. Where applicable we will also ensure competence, including inclusion on appropriate auditors registers. (Linked to SDG plans).

4. Software and Hardware:

We will work with our colleagues from the Strategy and Intelligence dept regarding moving to an updated version of CFRMIS provided by Civica, providing a fit for purpose and modern management of information system for Protection. Alongside this we will modernise our approach to utilise available technologies to improve efficiency and effectiveness EG completing audit documents electronically in the field.





5. NFCC, National Guidance, new or changing legislation and emerging technology:

We will continue to horizon scan and maintain awareness of national trends and issues, including emerging technologies affecting Protection, such as new guidance and legislation which is planned, ensuring we are prepared to adopt and implement new procedures and practices in a timely fashion. This will include sharing necessary information with key stakeholders across Staffordshire.

6. Unwanted Fire Signals:

We will continue to minimise and reduce unnecessary mobilisations and attendance to false alarms caused by unwanted fire signals, ensuring resources remain available for genuine emergencies. We will monitor occurrences and trends and act to address unacceptable levels of activity. (Linked to SDG Plans).

7. Evaluation:

We will conduct the necessary evaluation to validate the approaches and activity we have adopted to deliver Protection Activity at the appropriate time. Where possible this will be based on outcomes rather than outputs. We will present these evaluations to the relevant governance boards for scrutiny, as per the Performance Management Framework, ensuring full organisational oversight is given for assurance and governance purposes.

8. Delivery Groups:

We will ensure that this strategy is included in Delivery Group plans, primarily those objectives identified above. This will ensure that Delivery Groups Leads, Managers and staff have a sound understanding of our priorities and to ensure that CPP is guiding Delivery Group personnel on the expectations required of them to support these priorities. Guidance will be provided around targeted activity such as Post Fire Activity, Unwanted Fire Signals and carrying out compliance checks.

By pursuing these objectives, we will position ourselves as a progressive and community focussed public sector organisation that delivers supportive, efficient, transparent and effective services to our staff and our communities.





Deliverables:

To realise our vision, we will build on existing working arrangements and procedures, and seek improvements in all areas of protection. We will support the ongoing development and delivery of the Safety Plan through understanding local, national and emerging risks and how our activities and resources deliver the required outcomes to our communities. We will continue to support other regulatory bodies to ensure that our activities and initiatives contribute to the objectives of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Strategic Partnerships. We will ensure that work activities are connected to the Fire Standards for Protection.

Specific Strategic Targets include:

1. We will action the Risk Based Inspection Programme ensuring those premises deemed as Very High and High risk are audited as per the timescales set out in policy.
2. We will carry out sampling of Medium, Low and Very Low risks contained within our Risk Based Inspection Programme. This will be achieved by operational crews completing 'Compliance Checks'. As the workforce is trained they will commence compliance checks, with appropriate targets being set. This will be reviewed as the implementation of this project progresses. Where capacity exists Fire Safety teams will also undertake audits in these risk categories on a sampling basis. (Linked to SDG and Station Plans).
3. We will respond to all requests from partner agencies and members of the public reporting fire safety concerns within a given premises. We will endeavour to investigate complaints within 72 hours of them being received.
4. We will ensure we meet the targets of our statutory requirements for building regulation consultations.
5. We will prioritise 'other building fires' and where appropriate conduct post fire inspections to ascertain if any breaches in Fire Safety contributed or exacerbated the fire (Linked to SDG and Station Plans).
6. When completing audits, dependant on the level of non-compliance we will take the necessary action in terms of enforcement, prohibition or prosecution in line with the enforcement management model.
7. We will quality assure our Protection activity in line with policy and report to relevant boards, using the findings to make necessary improvements.
8. We will ensure our teams are fully established, with the right qualifications or working towards them, with the necessary support to perform their role to a high standard and in compliance with the NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators. (Linked to SDG and Station Plans).
9. We will continue to drive and lobby for sprinklers to be fitted in those premises deemed suitable via the Community Sprinkler Project. This includes lobbying at a national level for their inclusion in domestic dwellings including tall buildings.
10. We will seek to influence new and emerging risk, doing what we can to ensure they are built in line with relevant guidance to minimise risk. E.g. Battery Energy Storage Systems.
11. We will continue to manage unwanted fire signals to maintain or reduce the current levels, through active monitoring and action. (Linked to SDG and Station Plans).

Our strategic initiatives will maintain focus on improving service delivery, enhancing engagement and promoting the efficient use of public resources.



Governance and Organisational Structure

To help foster a culture of innovation and progressiveness, this Strategy encompasses a robust governance framework and an adaptive organisational structure.

This structure will empower cross-functional teams to work together more effectively and help to break down silo working practices. Through effective governance and meeting structures, we will ensure that our Protection functions are aligned with business objectives, adhere to best practices and deliver sustainable value. As a public sector organisation, our governance and organisational structure will also prioritise transparency, accountability and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Specific aspects of our governance and organisational structure include:

- **Leadership and Accountability:**
We will assign clear roles and responsibilities for overseeing the implementation of this Strategy, ensuring that leaders are accountable for driving innovation and projects, managing risks, and delivering results.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:**
We will establish multidisciplinary teams comprising representatives from different departments and stakeholders, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing with various organisations and the exchange of best practices locally, regionally and nationally.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
We will actively engage with our customers, soliciting their input, feedback, and ideas through our CRMP Consultations and Community Engagement Strategy to inform our Protection initiatives and ensure that our services align with their needs and appropriately manage expectations.

- **Compliance and Risk Management:**
Our governance framework will include robust mechanisms for ensuring compliance with relevant regulations, standards, and policies related to data security, privacy and financial management. We will also implement risk management processes to proactively identify and address potential risks associated with our day to day activities and align them to organisational risk.
- **Continuous Improvement:**
We will establish mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and continuously improving our Protection initiatives. Regular assessments, performance reviews and feedback loops will enable us to adapt to changing circumstances, seize emerging opportunities and deliver ongoing value to our communities. This will encapsulate the relevant key components of the services Performance Management Framework.

By adopting an effective governance framework and an adaptive organisational structure, we will create an environment that nurtures innovation, promotes progressive thinking and ensures the successful implementation of our range of Protection initiatives.





Implementation Plan

To put this Strategy into action, we will develop a comprehensive Annual Service Delivery Plan that outlines the specific steps, timelines, resource requirements and key performance indicators for our strategic intentions. This plan will prioritise initiatives based on their potential impact, feasibility and alignment with our organisational goals.

Continuous monitoring and periodic reviews through established meeting structures will enable us to track progress, address challenges and make necessary adjustments to ensure successful implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness of this Strategy and its alignment with our objectives, we will establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Regular reporting, stakeholder feedback and independent audits will enable us to measure the impact of our initiatives, identify areas for improvement and demonstrate value for money. As a public sector organisation, our monitoring and evaluation processes will prioritise transparency, accountability and customer satisfaction, providing insights that inform our decision-making and drive continuous improvement both locally within the department and informing the wider organisation.





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