

LEICESTERSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY BOARD

18th MARCH 2022

LSCSB UPDATE: LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to the Board on the work that is currently being undertaken by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS).
2. LFRS has a dedicated Community Safety department within the organisation. The department focuses on two main areas of Protection (buildings) and Prevention (people).
3. The Protection element allows for community and business engagement. This is a statutory duty of fire and rescues services and LFRS is the local enforcement agency of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2004. This applies to commercial premises and buildings where members of the public may gather. It does not apply to single private domestic dwellings.
4. The Prevention element engages with a wide community audience across Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland and uses a blended approach of dedicated Community Educators and operational firefighters. This includes entering people's homes and providing them with specific advice or equipment relative to their needs.

Notable developments and challenges:

Past Year 2020 - 2021

Protection

5. LFRS have an annual Risk Based Inspection Programme. The premises that are highlighted within this programme receive a fire protection visit where an audit of the premises fire safety arrangements is undertaken. As a result of this audit, a number of outcomes are possible, these range from delivering advice to the Responsible Person, through to informal and formal enforcement action. This follows the 3 E principles to fire safety which are, to Educate, then to Encourage, and if necessary to Enforce the legislation. LFRS have the powers to immediately prohibit the use of a building, if the fire safety arrangements are so lacking.
6. In the 2020/21 financial year, LFRS completed 703 fire safety audits. This resulted in 37 action plans and 17 enforcement notices being issued, with 39 premises receiving prohibition notices. These premises/businesses were all supported so that they had the correct information and advice to comply with the legislation.

Prevention

7. Prevention activities include: Home Fire Safety Checks, which is expanded to cover health related issues and not solely fire safety; a school's education programme; road safety initiatives including Fatal Four and Biker Down; youth engagement through the Fire Cadets and FireCare schemes; partnership referrals for vulnerable people, enabling greater support to be provided and a range of other community focussed activities.
8. As a result of these activities throughout 2020/21, LFRS carried out around 18,700 visits to homes which resulted in 8,867 Home Fire Safety Checks being completed.
9. To enable greater confidence that these activities are suitable and well received by communities, and to assess if the outcomes changed behaviours, LFRS introduced an evaluation tool to measure customer satisfaction, and determine what positive life style habits were being adopted.
10. LFRS attend regular Community Safety Partnership (CSP's) and Joint Action Group Meetings (JAG) which allow for a multi-agency awareness and proactive approach to any local issues that are highlighted. Inclusion also allows for any known future issues arising to be discussed.

Coming Year 2021 - 2022

Protection

11. LFRS intends to expand its Risk Based Inspection Programme, which in part is driven by the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) inspection. The HMICFRS highlighted that there was a national issue around the historical reduction in size of Fire Protection teams leading to reduced output, which we have addressed locally.
12. LFRS has reallocated its resources and increased the number of Fire Protection Officers available to perform inspections, whilst also training operational firefighting staff to better appreciate fire safety issues within higher risk buildings. Additional funding received from central government to increase activity associated with the outcomes of the Grenfell enquiry has supported an increase in fire inspection activity.
13. Driven by the Home Office's desire to 'significantly increase the pace of inspection activity across high-rise residential and other high-risk buildings' following Grenfell, LFRS were committed to ensure that all high-rise residential buildings had been 'inspected or assured by the end of December 2021. This resulted in a review of 154 buildings over 18 metres in height, which included community engagement and safety advice being given to occupants in these buildings where necessary.
14. The additional resource funded by central government will support the Risk Based Inspection Programme and the delivery of any additional requirements associated

with the implications relating to external cladding.

15. Since April 2021 to the end of January 2022, LFRS has completed 693 fire safety audits, resulting in 92 action plans and 24 enforcement notices with 32 premises receiving prohibition notices.
16. A series of physical and practical Fire Protection Business Workshops has attracted people responsible for fire safety within non domestic residential and commercial properties, with the virtual event in February attracting almost 100 participants. The locations of the quarterly sessions include City Halls, Fire Headquarters in Birstall, or virtually, providing a general overview of fire safety responsibilities allowing measures to be put in place prior to regulatory audits being carried out.

Prevention

17. LFRS has increased engagement with communities and between April 2021 and the end of January 2022, around 15,000 visits to homes were undertaken resulting in approximately 7,126 Home Fire Safety Checks being completed.
18. There are challenges associated with engaging with people within their homes. The impact and the restrictions associated with Covid-19 has led LFRS to review how we approach this activity, which traditionally is knocking on the door with the expectation someone is home.
19. LFRS has used the data gathered through the evaluation process and learned that the most successful approach to delivering a successful Home Fire Safety Check is via telephone consultation, albeit a physical visit is preferable. This innovative approach will be used to maximise efficiencies and be expanded to ensure that we offer the public of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland the best possible service.
20. There is an aspirational target to increase Home Fire Safety Check figures through improved partnership activity, enabling housing providers and other agencies to undertake Home Fire Safety Checks on behalf of LFRS.
21. LFRS deliver road safety initiatives with the support of the Leicestershire Road Safety Partnership. Funding provided through the partnership assists LFRS focus on young drivers, although additional initiatives are delivered aimed at motor cyclists through the Biker Down scheme and pedestrian safety. The innovative and immersive Hazard Express vehicle was launched this year which should enhance our ability to engage effectively with younger people.

Key issues for partnership working or affecting partners

22. The ability for LFRS to increase the delivery of Protection and Prevention activities will support both the business community and vulnerable individuals within society. To achieve both elements LFRS require support from partner agencies.

Protection

23. LFRS continue to work with a number of partners and have delivered fire safety problem spotting training to them. This input is a simple one-hour session from a Fire Protection Officer. This is aimed at those that will enter commercial premises or buildings where members of the public gather. By being able to understand and identify basic fire safety issues, it enables partners to feel confident in referring issues for LFRS to address.
24. This enables LFRS to adopt a better risk targeted approach to fire safety rather than applying a scatter gun approach, reducing the time consumed for inspecting premises that are already complying to the fire safety requirements. To support this, an internal process is in place that prioritises fire safety referrals.
25. LFRS seeks partnership expansion of this scheme and welcomes contact from those willing to receive this input.

Prevention

26. LFRS want to build on existing partnerships to ensure that referrals are received for those that are regarded as being vulnerable from fire can receive individually tailored support services, in the knowledge that secure and effective mechanisms are in place to keep individuals and their data secure.
27. The ability for partners to deliver Home Fire Safety Checks on behalf of LFRS is already established, in part, with the expansion of this scheme identified as being a significant way of improving the number of visits completed. This can be achieved alongside existing visits to people's homes, perhaps as part of a welcome meeting with a new tenant or when undertaking a gas safety check.
28. The risk and costs associated with property fires reduces where occupants have good fire safety knowledge and regularly test smoke detectors, as there is greater chance they will report faulty or unsafe equipment.
29. LFRS can train partners to deliver Home Fire Safety Checks and provide materials needed to achieve and report outcomes at no cost. The training not only supports partners' tenants; it also provides greater skills to employees who can then apply them within the workplace further reducing risk.
30. Please contact LFRS for further information of the services we are able to offer to members of all communities and those to partner agencies.

Recommendations for the Board

31. It is recommended that the Board:
 - a. Note the content of the report.

- b. Consider how they can promote, support or actively participate in the delivery of protection and prevention activities

Officer to contact

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