

LEICESTERSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY BOARD

30th JUNE 2023

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) in relation to community safety.
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 2022 - 2023

Protection

5. LFRS have an annual Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP). The premises that are highlighted within this programme receive a fire protection audit of the premises fire safety arrangements. As a result of this audit, several outcomes are possible, these range from delivering advice to the Responsible Person, through to informal and formal enforcement action. LFRS have the powers to immediately prohibit the use of a building if there is an immediate risk of harm or death. In 2022/23 there were 22 prohibition notices issued.
6. In the 2022/23 financial year, LFRS completed all RBIP identified premises totalling 976 fire safety audits. This resulted in 190 action plans or enforcement notices being issued. Continued partnership support is vital in managing displaced members of the community, engaging with Housing Association officers and Local Authorities to engage with landlords/managing agents and support LFRS where prosecution is sought.

7. The Fire Safety England Regulations came into force on 23rd January 2023. Fire Protection now receive information from in-scope high-risk buildings (e.g., high-rise premises) providing LFRS with more accurate, relevant, and timely risk information. The process also allows the Responsible Person to notify of faults that may affect operational response. This ensures audits are up to date and we send the most appropriate response to any incidents.

Prevention

8. Prevention activities include Home Safety Checks, which is expanded to cover health related issues and not solely fire safety: a school's education programme which reached over 20,000 children and young adults in 22/23: 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.
9. As a result of these activities throughout 2022/23, LFRS carried out 13,379 Home Safety Checks across LLR. LFRS have also completed over 1400 community safety activities.
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.
11. Community Educators delivered several Fire Safety talks to refugees and asylum seekers in collaborative work with Leicester City Council and Hotel management. In total 47 refugees were engaged with during these sessions. This is one example of the engagement required in a partnership approach to support increasing refugee/asylum seekers into our communities.

Coming Year 2022/23

Protection

12. LFRS continue to support auditing more premises through the RBIP and have a target of 1040 premises for 2022/23. LFRS will complete a full review of the RBIP to provide continued assurance that the most appropriate premises are identified for inspection.
13. Engagement with business owners / Responsible Persons (RP) is a proactive control measure. A quarterly Business Engagement Programme to educate and inform business owners / 'Responsible Persons' will run alongside the 'Better business for all' meetings with local partners. The outcome of this work is the increased sharing of relevant information to LFRS to ensure safer places for communities.
14. The introduction of the Health and Safety Executive led Building Safety Regulator (BSR) will see LFRS lead the regional management of the new gateway process for managing buildings including planning permission. A Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

approach within LLR will require new ways of working as the BSR, established post Grenfell Tower inquiry, develops, and evaluates building construction safety.

Prevention

15. Partnership referrals to LFRS for Home Safety Checks (HSC) in 2022/23 totalled 2811. By reviewing the referral pathway and providing partner training to ensure high quality referrals are received which target the most vulnerable, it is anticipated that person-centred outcomes will be improved. Within LFRS, staff training is being provided on how to refer out to the partner agencies. This is crucial in ensuring the person-centred approach is provided.
16. To support the approach above, a Quality Assurance process is required, and this will allow organisational learning to develop training moving forwards. It will also provide both qualitative and quantitative data to evidence not only the number of engagements but also the impact.
17. LFRS community safety activity related to road, water, home, and fire safety has evolved to include emerging hazards, e.g., lithium-ion powered devices in the home and climate change presenting wildfire risk. LFRS will engage with partners to continually evaluate our prevention activity to understand what works and where improvements can be made.

Key issues for partnership working or affecting partners

18. 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.
19. Currently there are very little public legislative requirements on the storage and use of lithium-ion batteries. Several incidents have occurred nationally and internationally including fatalities where, for example a lithium-ion powered scooter has been the cause of the fire. In the absence of legislation, the education of the public and partner agencies that hold housing stock needs to be increased, and local rules need to be put in place, to reduce the risk of fire in the community.
20. Working with housing association partners to increase their housing officer's knowledge on fire safety would continue to build on existing relationships. The intention is this joint working can improve the fire safety referrals into LFRS for actions plans or where enforcement action is necessary.
21. LFRS seeks partnership expansion of this scheme and welcomes contact from those willing to receive this input.
22. LFRS want to build on existing partnerships to ensure that referrals are received for those that are regarded as being vulnerable from fire and so those individuals can receive individually tailored support services, in the knowledge that secure and effective mechanisms are in place to keep individuals and their data secure.

23. The ability for partners to deliver Home Safety Checks on behalf of LFERS is already established. 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.
24. 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 and change behaviours.
25. LFERS can train partners to deliver Home 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.
26. Please contact LFERS for further information of the services we can offer to members of all communities and those to partner agencies.

Recommendations for the Board

27. 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

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