

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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Title of Report 2020/21 Annual Performance Outcome report

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Background Papers None

Appendices Appendix A – Annual performance outcome report 2020/21
Appendix B – Plain English indicator definitions

Implications

CORPORATE RISK		LEGAL	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
FINANCIAL		POLITICAL	
HEALTH & SAFETY		OTHER (please specify)	
HUMAN RESOURCES		CORE BRIEF	

PURPOSE OF REPORT To present the annual performance results for 2020/21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY This report provides the Fire Authority with details of East Sussex Fire Rescue Service's performance for the period April – March 2020/21. In total there are 21 indicators, but only 16 have comparable data due to the national pandemic as the service had to adapt models of service delivery including telephone home safety visits and business safety audits. Eleven of the top level indicators improved or met the target set in 2020/21 (69%), two indicators stayed the same and three declined against the previous year.

RECOMMENDATION The Fire Authority is asked to:

1. Consider the performance results and progress towards achieving the Service's purpose and commitments.

2. Consider the performance results and remedial actions that have been taken to address areas of under performance in the Fire Authority's priority areas.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report summarises the 2020/21 performance outcomes for East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. The report aims to provide a single view of information which allows Elected Members, Auditors and members of the public to hold the Service's senior managers and staff to account in terms of the provision and performance of their Fire & Rescue Service for 2020/21.
- 1.2 The report provides a comparison against last year's performance, whether or not the target was achieved, where one has been set, and the direction of travel from the previous year for example, improved, stayed the same or declined.
- 1.3 Due to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions ESFRS has continued to find other ways of undertaking home safety visits, business safety audits and engagements. Hence, as per the previous performance reports this year, the standard PIs do not reflect this additional work and the direction of travel has not been reported against these areas. Therefore this report includes all indicator results, but only shows the previous year comparison against 16 of the total 21.
- 1.4 East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service results are compared against the results for Fire and Rescue Services in the rest of England on a scale of best to worst performance based on the 2019/20 national data sets which are the latest available.
- 1.5 The report highlights almost no change on last year's performance as 69% of indicators improved or met the target as opposed to 70% the previous year. Although 16 were reported on in 2020/21 and 21 in 2019/20.

2. Main issues

- 2.1 The Scrutiny and Audit Panel set seven priority areas for the Service to concentrate on. This report provides detailed commentary against those areas. Additional commentary is also provided for other areas of interest.

The Fire Authority priorities areas are:

1. Reducing accidental dwelling fires
2. Confining the fire to the room of origin
3. Reducing attendance at false alarm calls
4. Increasing the number of home safety visits to vulnerable members of our community
5. Reducing sickness
6. Numbers of home safety visits
7. Increasing inspections in high risk premises

2.2 Reducing accidental dwelling fires

2.2.1 Accidental dwelling fires have been a priority area for the Service for a number of years. Accidental dwelling fires have reduced by 50% from 2000/01 overall and have plateaued in more recent years. However in 2020/21 ESFRS recorded the lowest number of accidental dwelling fires ever with 443. This is a further 2% reduction against the previous year when 453 were reported. 55% of the accidental dwelling fires occurred in the kitchen, with cooking appliances responsible for 202 (82%) of these.

2.2.2 The accidental dwelling fire reduction group continues to proactively engage with our communities and COVID-19 presented a new challenge when approaching communications around accidental dwelling fires. The service used a range of digital channels to target key demographics, asking them to pass on messages to those who may not be linked up with the internet. Key messages were available on the website and people were signposted to this area: <https://www.esfrs.org/keeping-you-safe/>

2.2.3 Social media was used, both supporting the NFCC's Ready Willing Able campaign and our own ESFRS branding. Traditional media was used too, which helped us reach those who would not normally engage online. This primarily focused on encouraging the uptake of virtual home safety visits. <https://www.esfrs.org/news/2020-news/virtual-home-safety-visits-and-covid19-support-calls/>

2.2.4 During the Christmas period, we ran a short social media campaign 'Memeing of Christmas' which consisted of a series of memes from popular Christmas films tied in with home fire safety messages. Examples of the memes can be found here:
<https://twitter.com/EastSussexFRS/status/1342062748457455617>
<https://twitter.com/EastSussexFRS/status/1341700354929471488>
<https://twitter.com/EastSussexFRS/status/1341337961707802633>

2.3 Responding quickly to a fire to stop it spreading from the room it started in

2.3.1 There was a decrease in performance in comparison to last year, with 92.7% of fires confined to the room of origin in 2019/20 compared to 90.5% in 2020/21 we consistently perform well in this area. In real numbers this means that out of 443 fires attended we contained 401 to the room of origin.

2.4 Reducing false alarm calls, especially in properties with a previous history of this

2.4.1 46.8% (4,513) of our total incidents in 2020/21 were to false alarm calls. 32.3% (3,117) were attributed to automatic fire detector systems. We are undertaking more targeted work to ensure that we continually review and improve efficiencies across the Service. A demand management review was agreed as part of the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan in September 2020.

2.4.2 Work is now underway to propose that ESFRS will not attend Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) from automatic fire alarms in commercial premises between the hours of 0900 and 1700, Monday to Friday. This strategy was agreed by Scrutiny and Audit in July 2021 it is hoped this will be fully implemented by 31 March 2022.

2.5 Increasing the number of home safety visits that we complete with the more vulnerable members of our community

2.5.1 We delivered 95.7% of our home safety visits to vulnerable people within our community 2020/21 which is a slight increase on last year (92.2%). Although a different delivery module was in place this year due to COVID-19 so these were completed over the telephone.

2.6 Reducing the number of absences of our employees due to sickness.

2.6.1 Sickness absence is another priority area for the service and performance has improved from the previous year, with 6.6 shifts lost against 10.0 in 2019/20. An element of this is due to COVID-19 and the fact that many employees are working from home and operational crews have changed their ways of working on station to minimise unnecessary contact and contamination. Also there has been a change in the way that COVID-19 symptom related illnesses are recorded, so currently these go under an 'other absence' code.

2.6.2 Of the 6.6 shifts lost per employee at the end of 2020/21, 4.6 of these are due to long term sickness, 0.8 due to medium term sickness and 1.2 due to short term sickness. By the end of 2020/21 Wholetime had lost 6.7 shifts per employee, Control 6.5 shifts per employee and support staff 6.2.

2.7 Number of Home Safety Visits

2.7.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic ESFRS has had to adopt new models of service delivery so the majority of the prevention and protection work in 2020/21 was undertaken over the telephone. In total 2,069 properties were visited. In total 7,178 telephone home safety visits were conducted by community safety staff and operational crews. This cannot be compared with the previous year.

2.8 Inspections of high risk premises completed

2.8.1 This priority area was introduced in 2017/18 and deemed critically important following the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017.

2.8.2 A new delivery model also needed to be introduced for Inspections of high risk premises and the operational business safety visits due to the COVID-19 restrictions. As happened with the home safety visits these were also completed over the telephone. 330 telephone high risk inspections were recorded and 82 operational business safety visits, this work cannot be compared with the previous year.

2.8.3 The Service is reviewing the current national Risk Based Inspection program and has introduced Business Safety checks/audits by operational personnel. There are a number of areas that will help improve performance in this area including:

- The upgrade of the Customer Relationship Management database to help staff record audits quickly and effectively and it will be developed to deliver a qualitative risk based inspection program. The project will deliver a mobile digital platform to support efficiencies in the audit process.
- We will continue to identify and inspect premises at higher risk of fire
- We will provide all premises where the Fire Safety Order applies with a qualitative relative risk rating
- There are plans to use the inspection program to collect enhanced firefighter risk information

2.9 Other commentary

2.9.1 Number of RIDDOR incidents

2.9.2 The majority of the RIDDOR notifications to HSE are for incapacitation over 7 days. There has been a decrease of 50% when compared to the previous year (6 against 12).

2.9.3 2020/21 recorded a decrease in the total number of safety events submitted to fewer than 200, for the first time in 4 years. This is a 17% decrease in safety event reports from the previous year. This could be as a result of greater limitations on the Service's normal activities due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and will be monitored throughout 2021/22.

2.9.4 Compliments and complaints

2.9.5 The annual outcome report contains a summary of the complaints received against the Service. Effective complaint management is an important element of maintaining the Service's reputation. Complaints are also a valuable tool in helping to understand resident's expectations of service delivery and should be an essential part in identifying improvements across the organisation.

2.9.6 Complaints received are formally recorded by the Service Complaints Officer (SCO) and, as far as possible, dealt with immediately. Where this is not possible, complaints are:

- acknowledged within three working days
- responded to within one month of the complaint being received by ESFRS
- kept under review and the complainant kept informed of progress or any reasons which are causing a delay
- monitored by the SCO to identify problem areas.

2.9.7 There were 31 complaints received in 2020/21, one more than in the previous year. Of the complaints, three were considered justified, one partially justified and thirteen unjustified. A further nine were logged for recording purposes, one was closed as no further information was received to pursue it, three were dealt with as HR matters and there is one that is on-going.

2.9.8 Upon analysis, employee conduct were the highest causes for complaints in 2020/21. Poor driving standards of which one was justified. On a positive note the majority of complaints received were proven to be unjustified after a full investigation

2.9.9 During the year we received 91 “thank you” letters from various members of the public as opposed to 194 received last year. Compliments are circulated to staff through the service brief on a weekly basis and cover all aspects of our service provision including home safety visits, incidents attended, school visits, education events etc.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Complaints received	30	30	31
Compliments received	214	194	91

2.10 The performance outcome summary is set out in Appendix A attached as a separate document.

2.11 A list of useful definitions is attached at Appendix B.