

## EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

**Date** 8 September 2022

**Title of Report** 2021/22 Annual Performance Outcome Report

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**Background Papers** None

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**Appendices** Appendix A – Annual performance outcome report 2021/22  
Appendix B – Plain English indicator definitions  
Appendix C – Every Contact Counts 2021-2022

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### Implications (please tick ✓ and attach to report)

*Any implications affecting this report should be noted within the final paragraphs of the report*

<b>CORPORATE RISK</b>		<b>LEGAL</b>	
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>		<b>POLICY</b>	
<b>FINANCIAL</b>		<b>POLITICAL</b>	
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b>		<b>OTHER (please specify)</b>	
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>		<b>CORE BRIEF</b>	

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**PURPOSE OF REPORT** To present the annual performance results for 2021/22

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** This report provides the Fire Authority with details of East Sussex Fire Rescue Service's performance for the period April – March 2021/22.

In total there are 21 indicators, but only 16 have comparable data due to the national pandemic.

Eight of the top-level indicators improved or met the target set in 2021/22 (50%) and eight have declined against the previous year.

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**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 priority areas.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report summarises the 2021/22 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 2021/22.
- 1.2 The report provides a comparison against last year's performance, whether 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 during 2020/21 ESFRS continued to find other ways of undertaking home safety visits, business safety audits and engagements. Then on 19 July 2021, in line with the lifting of Government restrictions, the Service began face to face engagements. 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 2020/21 national data sets which are the latest available.
- 1.5 The report highlights a decrease in performance against the previous year with 50% of indicators showing an improvement or met the target as opposed to 69% the previous year. The same 16 indicators were reported in 2021/22 and in 2020/21.

## **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 2021/22 ESFRS recorded the lowest number of accidental dwelling fires ever with 433. This is a further 2.5% reduction against the previous year when 444 were reported. 53% (55% in previous year) of the accidental dwelling fires occurred in the kitchen, with cooking appliances responsible for 177 (78%) 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. Key messages were available on the website and specific incidents are highlight and link to specific safety messages:

<https://www.esfrs.org/news/2021-news/smoke-alarms-give-early-warning-at-lewes-incident/>

<https://www.esfrs.org/news/2022-news/candle-safety-warning/>

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

2.3.1 There was a very slight decrease in performance in comparison to last year, with 90.5% of fires confined to the room of origin in 2020/21 compared to 90.1% in 2021/22 we consistently perform well in this area. In real numbers this means that out of 433 fires attended we contained 389 to the room of origin.

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

2.4.1 45.7% (4,807) of our total incidents in 2021/22 were to false alarm calls, of these 33.2% (3,499) were from automatic fire detector systems. An unwanted fire alarm signal is where an automatic fire alarm (AFA) system activates and initiates a response from the fire service and on attendance it is found to be a false alarm.

2.4.2 From 1 April 2022 ESFRS no longer attends Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) from automatic fire alarms in commercial premises between the hours of 09:00 and 17:00, Monday to Friday. The results of this change will be monitored throughout 2022/23.

## **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 95.1% of our home safety visits to vulnerable people within our community 2021/22 which is a slight decrease on last year (95.6%). A different delivery method was in place during 2020/21 and up until 19 July 2022 due to COVID-19, the majority of home safety visits 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 declined against the previous year, with 10.5 shifts lost against 6.6 in 2020/21. The results are not comparable as the previous year's figures were recorded as the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that many employees were working from home and operational crews had to change their ways of working on station to minimise unnecessary contact and contamination throughout 2020/21.
- 2.6.2 Of the 10.5 shifts lost per employee at the end of 2021/22. 70% of sickness is classed as Long Term (more than 28 days), 12% of sickness is classed as Medium Term (8 to 27 days) and 18% of sickness is classed as Short Term. By the end of 2021/22 Wholetime had lost 10.8 shifts per employee, Control 12.8 shifts per employee and support staff 9.3.
- 2.6.3 During covid we saw a marked reduction in other sickness categories, the sickness figures for 2021/22 signify a return to pre covid sickness figures. The causes of sickness absence fluctuate between staff groups, but the biggest categories are muscular skeletal and mental health absences. During the last year we have had issues accessing physiotherapy services due to a nationwide shortage. We have also experienced delays in our internal occupational health provision due to staffing levels.
- 2.6.4 In order to address sickness absence we have regular meetings with our Occupational Health team to ensure patterns and emerging trends are acted upon. The wellbeing team are aligned to intelligence to ensure they can respond as needed. We continue to provide a Wellbeing hub and we have launched mental health first aiders and wellbeing champions. We have also renewed the provision of manual handling training to reduce impact of these types on injuries.

## **2.7 Number of Home Safety Visits**

- 2.7.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic ESFRS had to adopt new models of service delivery so until COVID restrictions were relaxed home safety visits were undertaken over the telephone. In 2021/22 2,599 were conducted over the phone by community safety staff and operational crews. When restrictions were lifted on 19 July 2021 the Service reverted to face to face visits and a further 6,778 properties were visited.

## **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 Once the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted the Service reverted back to face to face business safety audits and business safety visits. The protection inspection team completed 470 audits and the operational crews 998 business safety visits.

## 2.9 Other commentary

### 2.9.1 Number of RIDDOR incidents

2.9.2 The majority of the RIDDOR notifications to the Health and Safety Executive are for incapacitation over 7 days. There has been a decrease of 17% when compared to the previous year (5 against 6).

2.9.3 2021/22 recorded a decrease in the total number of safety events submitted to 150, down from 195 in the previous year. This is a 23% decrease in safety event reports from the previous year.

### 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 36 complaints received in 2021/22, five more than in the previous year. Of the complaints, seven were considered justified, three partially justified and twelve unjustified. A further eleven were logged for recording purposes, one was withdrawn and there are two that are still under investigation on-going.

2.9.8 Upon analysis, use of service vehicles and driving were the highest causes for complaints in 2021/22. 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 105 "thank you" letters from various members of the public as opposed to 91 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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Complaints received	30	31	36
Compliments received	194	91	105

2.9.10 The Scrutiny and Audit Panel had previously requested more detail around compliments that are received in the Service. To support this from April 2022 compliments are collated against the following category headings:

- Incidents
- Community Safety (Home Safety Visits, Education, Fire bike and Fire cadets for example)
- Volunteers
- Commercial training
- Other (Switchboard, Protection etc)

2.9.11 Further detail regarding compliments can also be found in Appendix C Every Contact Counts 2021/22. This impact report gives a flavour of the communications that the Service has received from members of the public and our own staff whilst also highlighting the work undertaken to support our local community in a wide variety of ways.

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