

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Date: 7 September 2023

Title of Report: 2022/23 Annual Performance Outcome Report

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Background Papers: None

Appendices:

1. Annual Performance Outcome Report 2022/23
2. Every Contact Counts 2022-2023

Implications (please tick ✓ and attach to report)

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 2022/23.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY This report provides the Fire Authority with details of East Sussex Fire Rescue Service's performance for the period April – March 2022/23.

The year end results for 2022/23 demonstrate an improvement of performance across a number of areas with twelve indicators showing an improvement in performance against the previous year and nine showing a decline.

RECOMMENDATION The Fire Authority is asked to consider the performance results and progress towards achieving the Service's purpose and commitments as contained in Appendix 1.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report summarises the 2022/23 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 2022/23.

- 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 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 2021/22 national data sets which are the latest available.
- 1.4 The report highlights an increase in performance against the previous year with 57% of indicators showing an improvement or have met the target as opposed to 50% the previous year. Although due to the ongoing COVID restrictions in 2021/22 only 16 indicators were reported against at this time, against 21 in the latest year.

2 MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The Fire Authority set five priority areas for the Service to concentrate on. This report provides detailed commentary against those areas.

The Fire Authority priorities areas are:

1. Reducing accidental dwelling fires.
2. Undertake 10,000 home safety visits of which 95% to be delivered to vulnerable members of our community.
3. Reducing sickness.
4. Reducing attendance at false alarm calls.
5. Increasing inspections in high-risk premises.

2.2 Priority 1 - 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 52.5% from 2000/01 overall and have plateaued in more recent years. However, in 2022/23 ESFRS recorded the lowest number of accidental dwelling fires ever with 412. This is a further 4.8% reduction against the previous year when 433 were reported. 55% (53% in previous year) of the accidental dwelling fires occurred in the kitchen, with cooking appliances responsible for 178 (78%) of these.

2.3 Priority 2 - Undertake 10,000 home safety visits (HSVs) of which 95% to be delivered to vulnerable members of our community

- 2.3.1 In 2022/23 the community safety teams and operational crews undertook 10,483 home safety visits. This has exceeded the Service target of 10,000 in the year and is 8% more than the 9,461 undertaken in the previous year. 92.9% of these were to vulnerable members of our community which is a small decline from 2021/22 when 95.1% were provided (for vulnerable members of our community).

2.4 **Priority 3 - Reducing the number of absences of our employees due to sickness**

2.4.1 Sickness absence is another priority area for the Service and performance has slightly improved against the previous year, with 10.2 shifts lost against 10.5 in 2021/22.

2.4.2 Of the 10.2 shifts lost per employee at the end of 2022/23 54.6% of sickness is classed as Long Term (more than 28 days) previously 70%, 19.4% of sickness is classed as Medium Term (8 to 27 days) previously 12% and 26.0% of sickness is classed as Short Term (previously 18%). By the end of 2022/23 Wholetime and Logistics Control support had lost 10.4 shifts per employee, and support staff 8.8.

2.4.3 The Service has continued to focus on sickness absence with the HR Strategic Committee and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee undertaking a deeper review of sickness at ESFRS. The cause of absence still fluctuates between staff groups but the two main categories of reported sickness are musculoskeletal related (40% of reported sickness) and mental health related (40% of reported sickness). This situation continues to be affected by the increases in NHS waiting times that staff are experiencing and particularly the lack of availability of support for mental health issues / referrals.

2.4.4 It is suspected that the ageing workforce is now starting to impact sickness levels. However, as the majority of the Service's operational workforce can still retire aged 50-55 the impact may become much more significant in future years when the retirement age of operational staff is 60. The Service has also seen an increase in complex cases, whereby people are presenting with multiple or simultaneous issues.

2.4.5 Actions to improve sickness levels continue as follows:

- The HR team have regular meetings with the Occupational Health team to ensure patterns and emerging trends are realised and acted upon.
- The Service has moved to a new provider for physiotherapy and will monitor and evaluate the impact of this.
- The Service has invested in mental health first aiders (MHFAs).
- There has been a renewed provision of manual handling training to reduce the number of injuries.
- There are quarterly complex case meetings to address and support individuals affected.
- A pilot of the Benenden Health care scheme to support staff has been approved.

2.5 **Priority 4 - Reducing attendance at false alarms**

2.5.1 44.0% (4,601) of our total incidents in 2022/23 were to false alarms of these 31.2% (3,266) were from automatic fire detector systems. This is an improvement against the previous year as 233 less incidents were attended from automatic fire detector systems (previously 3,499).

2.5.2 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. 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.

2.5.3 The results of this change were monitored throughout 2022/23 and in January 2023 the Scrutiny & Audit Panel agreed to a nil-response to attending low risk commercial premises AFA incidents. The service will continue to attend AFAs at high-risk sites that includes COMAH and heritage sites.

2.5.4 The service will also continue to attend schools and colleges when they are closed over the evenings, weekends and school holiday periods.

2.5.5 A task force has been stood up to implement these changes and will go live later in 2023/24.

2.6 **Priority 5 - Inspections of high risk premises completed**

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

2.6.2 The protection inspection team completed 506 audits and the operational crews 1,523 business safety visits during 2022/23.

2.7 **Compliments and complaints**

2.7.1 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.

2.7.2 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.

2.7.3 There were 36 complaints received in 2022/23, the same as in the previous year. Of the complaints, six were considered justified, two partially justified and seven unjustified. A further twenty-one were logged for recording purposes.

2.7.4 Upon analysis, employee conduct/behaviour were the highest causes for complaints in 2022/23. On a positive note the majority of complaints received were proven to be unjustified after a full investigation.

2.7.5 During the year we received 138 "thank you" letters from various members of the public as opposed to 105 received in the previous year. Compliments are circulated to staff and Members 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.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Complaints received	31	36	36
Compliments received	91	105	138

2.7.6 The Scrutiny & 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 – Responding to Emergencies
- Community Safety (Home Safety Visits, Education, Fire bike and Fire cadets for example)
- Volunteers

2.7.7 Further detail regarding compliments can also be found in Appendix 2 Every Contact Counts 2022/23. 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.

2.8 The performance outcome summary is set out in Appendix 1 attached as a separate document.