

## Community Safety

### Review of the year

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's mission is to serve the people of Royal Berkshire. To support this, through its Corporate Plan, the Authority has made three strategic commitments to the people of Berkshire relating to Community Safety:

- We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
- We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
- We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.

Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 a fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 fire and rescue authorities must enforce the provisions of that Order and any regulations made under it in relation to premises for which it is the enforcing authority. This report will provide an overview of community safety activity undertaken by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in 2019/20.

The Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-23 has cemented the IRMP Service redesign decisions taken by the Authority in 2017. Our Hub model continues to mature and has created harmonised and locally co-ordinated prevention, protection and response activities that actively identify and reduce risk across each hub area.

### **Prevention**

*We will reduce the number of vulnerable people dying due to accidental fires in the home by targeting those at greatest risk:*

Safe and Well visits include the targeted delivery of appropriate home fire safety advice and information, assessment for provision of appropriate fire safety

equipment. We identify and discuss wider health and wellbeing issues and signposting to partner agencies, where appropriate.

RBFRS receives a number of high quality referrals from partner agencies such as South Central Ambulance Service and Thames Valley Police. We recognise that these referrals are rich in information and will signpost us directly to the most vulnerable people living in Berkshire. As such, we continue to train staff from other agencies, widening the reach of our Adults at risk programme. Despite the impact of COVID 19, RBFRS exceeded our target of 7000 visits.

*We will reduce the volume of fires occurring in homes and the injuries that result from them by targeting only those most at risk:*

Applying local knowledge, working with partners and utilising the MOSAIC database, Crews identify and target visits to this risk group. Despite the impact of COVID 19 at the end of the year, RBFRS exceeded our target of 2500 visits.

*Working with our partners we aim to reduce road deaths and injuries by 20% in Royal Berkshire over the next five years:*

Our Fire Safety Education Team support our operational crews to deliver road safety lessons to year 7 pupils across Berkshire. In addition, RBFRS supports the Safe Drive Stay Alive (SDSA) scheme - this is a multi-agency initiative for key stage 5, year 12 and 13 students. RBFRS also deliver Biker Down across the Thames Valley in partnership with other agencies.

*We will align to the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016–26, with the stated aim of a reduction in the number of drowning incidents by 50% by 2026:*

To help to achieve this, we undertake fire safety education in schools delivering water safety lessons to year 7 pupils across Berkshire. Additionally, through the Local Safety Plans, crews undertake targeted activity to make interventions and educate people on the dangers associated with open water swimming.

## **Protection**

*We will focus our audits in the places people are most at risk and where fire safety standards are not being met:*

Our risk-based inspection methodology is in place and being delivered by the Service Delivery hubs. The success of our targeted approach is starting to be seen through the service performance reporting mechanisms.

*We will consider the impact of major infrastructure projects and developments planned in Royal Berkshire so we are able to meet the additional demands placed on our service:*

Work is underway to identify the major growth plans across the six unitaries of Berkshire for the next 10 years and to determine the implications for RBFRS. In 2020, the Service have created a programme to co-ordinate our planning and activity in relation to the built environment. This programmatic approach will enable us to remain agile to managing legislative changes and also developments within Berkshire.

### Ongoing and looking forward

#### **Prevention**

In 2019, Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services found that RBFRS is good at preventing fires and other risks. In order to maintain or improve on a good service, and subject to the outcome of the IRMP consultation RBFRS intend to refine our Prevention Strategy with the following areas of focus:

- Introducing a risk-based programme of follow-up Safe and Well Visits for the most vulnerable cases;
- Renaming our target groups for Safe and Well Visits to better reflect the type of risk posed to 'Risk to Individuals' and 'Risk to Households';
- Within our Road Safety Programme include targeted activity for motorcyclists based on risk;
- Focus our activities in support of Children and Young People through our road and water safety education programmes, Fire Cadets and Fire Safe; and

- Continue to pilot an Adult FireSafe programme to fully understand the implications and potential benefits of this activity.

Delivery of the above will predominantly be through our Hub model, which is now enhanced with the introduction of dedicated Prevention managers.

Whilst we are confident of the effectiveness of our prevention activity, it was highlighted in the HMICFRS report, that there are potential improvements to be made in how we evaluate and quality assure. As such, work is underway to strengthen those areas.

COVID 19 will no doubt continue to present some significant challenges to the Service, not least our ability to engage the most vulnerable in our communities. The teams will continue to look at innovative and pragmatic ways in which we can deliver against our commitments and the targets within our Local Safety Plans.

## **Protection**

In 2019, Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services found that RBFRS is good at protecting the public through fire regulation. In order to maintain or improve on a good service, and subject to the outcome of the IRMP consultation, RBFRS intend to refine our Protection Strategy with the following areas of focus:

- Develop our Risk Based Inspection methodology to look at both risk of property and risk of compliance; and
- Continue to respond to changes in legislation and guidance related to building regulation and fire safety and ensure this is reflected in our policies, processes and ways of working.

In recognition of the challenges relating to Protection, the Authority have shown the foresight to make a significant investment in resource since the Grenfell tragedy. This will support our ability to plan for and respond to legislative changes. RBFRS have recently created an investigation and enforcement hub which will support the service delivery protection teams, but also undertake specialist activity in areas such

as enforcement and fire engineering. Additionally, this hub will develop and oversee a quality assurance framework for the Service.

As with Prevention, COVID 19 will continue to challenge our ability to deliver some of our Protection activities. In line with Government guidance and NFCC advice, the teams will continue to look at innovative and pragmatic ways in which we can deliver against our commitments and the targets within our Local Safety Plans.

## Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The HMICFRS report reflected that RBFRS takes the wellbeing of its workforce seriously and specifically referenced counselling, trauma support, Blue Light Champions and the Benenden scheme. Of the staff who responded to the HMICFRS staff survey, an overwhelming number agreed that they were satisfied that their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work. RBFRS were rated Good for the question 'how well does the Service look after its people' and in the sub-section; promoting the right values and culture, which specifically includes workforce wellbeing and health and safety.

Health Safety and Wellbeing performance continues to be monitored at Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee, which meets three times per year.

The number of injury accidents in 2019/20 was 59 compared with 67 in 2018/19, which is a decrease of 12%. The number of RIDDOR\* reportable injuries in 2019/20 was two, compared with 7 in 2018/19. Trend analysis is routinely undertaken. Trend analysis of all safety events is routinely undertaken and measures taken to address any measures that may be required.

The sickness working group continue to monitor absence data and identify trends that can be addressed through various avenues such as training, health promotion or policy revisions. The group also analyses external information on workplace health to identify best practice.

A number of considerations and initiatives continue in the health and fitness area in an attempt to reduce sickness absence and improve health and fitness some highlights include:

- ✓ Provision of flu vaccination vouchers to 30 TVFCS staff (75%), the absence data showed a marginal decrease in respiratory sickness. In 2019, five Safe and Well Technicians were also provided with vouchers on the basis of a risk assessment.

- ✓ Continued investment in fitness equipment to facilitate the trial of strength tests for grey book staff and ongoing replacement of the existing cardiovascular equipment inventory.
- ✓ Some initial training on the menopause, which intended to raise awareness of why it is important to talk about the topic in the workplace, improve confidence of managers and colleagues to discuss symptoms and the impact they are having.
- ✓ Two opportunities to join the Cycle to Work scheme, which attracted 32 applications. The limit has increased to £2,000, this opens up the scheme for quality electric bikes, which may encourage more people to take up cycling.
- ✓ Communications campaigns have included Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, Cervical Screening, Men's Health Week, sun protection and Know Your Numbers (blood pressure).

Fitness testing is due in April and October each year and high performance continues to be maintained. 99.3% pass rate was achieved in April 2019, and 98.3% in October 2019. Individuals not achieving the standard are supported by the Fitness and Health Adviser to improve their fitness within set timeframes.

The Benenden Employee Healthcare scheme has been in place for three years. 462 employees are currently members of the scheme, which provides quick access to diagnostic services, treatment and physiotherapy when the waiting list on the NHS is too long. Significant effort has been made in promoting the ways Benenden can help employees - physiotherapy and diagnostic services continue to be the most well utilised services.

Duradiamond Healthcare have been delivering Occupational Health for RBFRS since March 2017. Contract meetings are held every quarter to review management information and identify trends that can be addressed through health promotion campaigns.

The Employee Assistance Programme delivered by Health Assured provide information and advice through a number of routes; telephone, online health portal, mobile phone app and employee newsletter. Each of these along with the wide range of subjects covered continue to be promoted to raise awareness and increase usage. There have been some peaks in usage across the year, which could be related awareness campaigns, which promote the service.

The HR Case Officer promotes all of the supports available to managers and ensures that they are being used effectively to manage sickness absence.

Manager guides along with Core Skills training continue to be available to empower managers to reduce sickness absence in their areas.

Mental health continues to be an area of focus for the Service and implementation of the mental health action plan is well underway. Achievements to note are:

- ✓ Recruitment and training of six new trauma support team volunteers. The total number of volunteers is now 15.
- ✓ Delivery of manager mental health training
- ✓ A second Mental Health First Aid course for a further 18 staff. The total number is now 32.
- ✓ Support for national awareness campaigns throughout the year including Mental Health Awareness Week, International Suicide Prevention Day, World Mental Health Day, Anti Bullying Week and Time to Talk Day. Each of these highlights a different aspect of mental health and signposts to appropriate sources of support, available through RBFRS and also externally.
- ✓ A pre-Christmas suicide awareness campaign encouraged staff to complete the Zero Suicide Alliance's free online training, which outlines a simple way to approach someone about if they are at risk of suicide.

There are over 50 Blue Light Champions across the Service, with more station-based personnel volunteering. The sustained effort of these volunteers will have a positive impact on challenging stigma around mental health and creating a culture where people can talk openly about mental health in the workplace.



Continued support and advice on health and safety matters is given to managers on a broad range of issues, for example, risk assessment completion, workplace issues, accident investigation and health and safety training requirements.

Health and safety policies and procedures are routinely reviewed, and also in response to updated guidance or learning from internal and external sources.

RBFRS continue to take an active role in the NFCC South East Health and Safety Group and the Fire and Rescue Risk Group under the auspices of FRIC.

In response to national research work being led by the NFCC into the potential risks to firefighters from exposure to contaminants, we have been working on contaminant control procedures. In consultation with our Representative Body colleagues, this has seen the distribution of posters to our fire stations and the production of a contaminant prevention and management control document. We continue to monitor the outcomes of the national work and will act on any new guidance or lessons learned.

Since January, we have been running a lone worker technology pilot scheme. This involves the distribution of mobile phone applications and equipment to those of our lone workers who are perceived to be at higher risk due to the type of work they do or their public facing role. For example, one staff group being our Safe and Well Technicians who visit homes throughout Berkshire. We are evaluating the pilot scheme and the results of the evaluation will be available in the Autumn.

To ensure the safety of our buildings, workplace inspections, which include a review of the site fire risk assessment, continue to be undertaken by Workplace Managers in April and October. We work with our colleagues in the Facilities Team on the findings of these.

Combine training in manual handling and working at height awareness has been developed and delivered to 102 green book staff.

Following a tender process, St.John's Ambulance were awarded the contract to deliver our IOSH Managing Safely initial courses and refreshers. These courses are

attended by all grey and green book line managers. 10 members of staff have attended the Managing Safely course and 29 have attended the refresher course.

Accident investigation training has also been delivered to the 26 members of staff, 14 of those from the new cadre of watch based station managers, and we support the newly trained Investigations through their first investigations.

In support of Road Safety Week in November and World Hearing Day in March, we distributed materials to raise awareness via our Health and Safety Bulletin System.

81 new starters have been provided with essential health and safety information as part of their induction to the service.

We continue to support the musculoskeletal health and safety of all our office based new starters through our on-line risk assessment and training software. 22 members of staff have received this.

Throughout the early part of this year, we were preparing for our NFCC peer health and safety audit. The audit was due to take place in March this year but due to the Coronavirus pandemic has been postponed, with a revised date still to be agreed.

To support the health safety and wellbeing of staff during the Coronavirus pandemic, we have developed the following:

- Guidance for homeworkers on keeping safe and well whilst working at home
- Wellbeing guidance and wellbeing support area on Siren
- Guidance on safe systems of work
- Risk assessments to inform safe systems of work
- 'Staying in and staying well' pages on Workplace to enable the sharing of wellbeing ideas between staff

\*RIDDOR injuries are those that have to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences

Regulations due to their more serious nature or because the injured party was not able to carry out their normal work for more than 7 days.

Cllr Christine Bateson  
Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Community Safety Champion