

Information about Norfolk's Fire and Rescue Service

July 2018



Norfolk County Council

1 About Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service

Who we are

The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is Norfolk's community safety service.

The service is based within communities and operates from 42 fire stations

across Norfolk. There is also a shared HQ building in Wymondham with Norfolk Constabulary.

The location and staffing arrangements for fire stations are based on local risks (detailed in the Integrated Risk Management Plan)⁽¹⁾.

- 7** of our stations are crewed by whole-time firefighters, with dedicated 24/7 cover at six of these.
- 2** are crewed during the day, with one of these covered by our nationally funded Urban Search and Rescue Team.
- 33** stations are solely operated by our Retained Firefighters, called in to respond when needed. Retained Firefighters need to live/work close to the station, meaning that the majority of our service is provided by local people who are already part of their community, and know the local area.

As well as hosting a number of National Resilience Assets, we have an Urban Search and Rescue Team based in Dereham, a high volume pump and a mass decontamination unit. Our Control Room handles and processes all 999 calls for Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and our support teams help keep the service running as efficiently and effectively as possible. Norfolk was one of the first Fire and Rescue Services to set up a specialist team to respond to a terrorist threat, if needed.

We also work with our family of Community Fire Volunteers to get prevention and protection messages out to communities across Norfolk.

What we do

A key element of our vision is “for Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to be at the heart of community protection for Norfolk”⁽¹⁾, and we take our community safety service seriously. Everyone knows that we provide an emergency blue light response, and we will be there in your hour of need. What you may not be as aware of is that **we spend a relatively small amount of our time attending emergencies – we are about so much more than fighting fires.**

Your Fire and Rescue Service is part of your community, and our fantastic workforce and volunteers spend their time with you in your communities helping to keep you safe and well. **We don't sit around and wait for emergencies to happen.** We work tirelessly, every day, to use our resources to keep our staff trained and safe, and to reduce risk and improve lives and communities.

Prevention activities

Community safety and fire prevention is at the heart of our work. Prevention is better than cure. We carry out a wide range of prevention activities, including:

- **Free home fire safety checks** to residents across Norfolk. We can help people identify the best escape routes from their property. Last year we completed 3,751 checks in homes.
- **Fit smoke alarms free of charge** for those who are most vulnerable in our communities.
- **Run our Crucial Crew programme**, which sees firefighters working with children to educate them about what they can do to stay safe, including covering topics like household emergencies, online safety, gas safety, seaside safety, smoking awareness, road safety and first aid. Since it was set up in 2003, more than **60,000 Norfolk school children have taken part.**
- The youth development service was set up to help young people understand how Fire and Rescue Services operate, including the benefits of working as a team. We also support those who participate in seeking training and employment and encourage them to be community focussed. We have **four thriving fire cadet units** and were the first Fire and Rescue service in the country to set up a cadet scheme, back in 1984. Many of those cadets have gone on to be firefighters in our service.

- Our Prince's Trust Team programme is a **free personal development course**, and is one of the longer standing and most valued programmes of this type in the country. It offers vital life skills for people aged 18-25 who are not in education, training or employment (NEET), and 164 took part last year.
- Last year, we carried out over **6,000 youth safety activities** with communities, which involved close to **19,000 personnel hours.**

We carry out a wide range of other education and communication activities to help people to realise the potential safety risks and what they can do to avoid them. One illustration about how important prevention activities are is that almost all residents **(95%)** have a smoke alarm in their home, but barely half **(56%)** say they test them regularly.⁽³⁾



Response (emergencies)

Although making up a relatively small proportion of our time, emergency response continues to be the element of our work that is most recognised and valued by the public.

We respond to an average of 20 incidents each day.

The top three types of incidents ⁽¹⁾ are:-



Other incident types we attend are flooding, hazardous material leakage/spillage, collapsed buildings, explosions, physical entrapment, bomb and terrorist threats.

We are not the only emergency service working for Norfolk communities. The Police, Ambulance and Coastguard services also provide critical emergency services. When things go wrong, we all work together to do what is needed to protect and help you. **We do this well, working together.**

Protection activities

We **work with developers, businesses and housing agencies to help ensure that homes and premises are as safe as they can be for the people who use them.** This includes advising on how new developments can be safer by design, and making sure that relevant people are aware of and comply with fire safety standards. Each year, we complete over 600 building audits/inspections, working closely with other local authority organisations and sharing risk information.

This collective working was demonstrated to good effect following the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We inspected all high rise residential blocks in Norfolk and carried out work to educate and re-assure residents about the risks for them. We also inspected mid-rise properties and commercial premises including hospitals and schools.

2 How your service performs

Context

The Fire and Rescue Service covers:-



2,074 sq miles of Norfolk
891,700 residents, including
428,713 in rural populations



200 miles of inland water ways



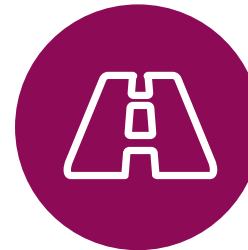
423,000 dwellings



90 miles of coastline



23,000 commercial properties



6,125 miles of roads

Since **2012/13**, demand for our services has increased and we are attending an ever increasing number of incidents.

How efficient are we?

We have a lean but effective Fire and Rescue Service, making the best use of the resources that we have available to us.

In our family group we are⁽²⁾:-
(15 Fire and Rescue Authorities in areas similar to Norfolk)

**3rd
lowest**
budget per
fire station

**4th
largest**
in area (sq m)
covered by fire
stations

**5th
lowest**
budget per area

**4th
lowest**
budget by
population

Are we improving?

Despite being one of the lowest cost services in the country, our performance is improving⁽³⁾.

We have seen increases in:-

- Emergency response standards, including availability of retained fire fighters – so that we are better able to respond to you quickly.
- The number of Fire Safety Risk Checks we carry out.
- The number of Road Safety Casualty Reduction Events delivered.

And decreases in:-

- The number of accidental deaths from fires.

Successful blue light collaboration

There is a statutory duty for all three emergency services – the Fire and Rescue Service, Norfolk Constabulary and the East of England Ambulance Service - to work together.

There is already a mature and strong track record of joint working with Norfolk Constabulary. We have already:-

- Relocated the Fire and Rescue Headquarters to the Police HQ building in Wymondham.
- Put in place three joint Police and Fire Stations (Sheringham, Downham Market and King's Lynn North) with plans for a further three (Reepham, Holt and Attleborough) and service managers are continually looking for opportunities to merge and share their estates.
- Almost completed plans for a co-located emergency control room at Wymondham, taking emergency calls from the public and directing resources quickly and facilitating the sharing of operational and risk information dynamically.
- Helped the Ambulance Service to access locked properties where there are medical reasons – for example if someone has become ill at home and can't open the door – meaning the Police no longer need to do this.

- Co-located teams and ways of working that mean we can share information quickly with each other, supporting quick and effective decision making. This includes some Police staff involved in community safety activities based in Wymondham with both Fire and Rescue and other County Council colleagues (including Public Health, equality and diversity, and Gypsy and Roma Traveller Teams) working together to support communities.

Put arrangements in place to share some specialist support resources – for example we maintain some Police vehicles, and in return the Police fit some specialist equipment in Fire and Rescue vehicles.

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Worked together to deliver the #Impact education programme to encourage young people to think about driving safely, holding 30 events last year, engaging with over 8,000 young people.

We will continue to progress further opportunities with Norfolk Constabulary. Our door is open, and will continue to be.



3

Views from those who know the service best

Your views

You - Norfolk residents, businesses and stakeholders - have told us⁽⁴⁾:-

62%

Support the strategic vision for the Fire and Rescue service

78%

Are satisfied with the service overall

78%

Agree that the service provides value for money

over 12,000

people signed a petition against making any cuts to the fire service

"The respect in which the service is held, grounded in experience, gives it a particular authority."

"Working in the community is key to understanding what is required for the public in areas of need whether it be prevention, support or rescue."

"The fire service seems to be highly respected. Preventative work to reduce the number of fires/improve road safety has a financial and emotional benefit for the whole community."

"Prevention is always better than attending to the results of fire."

What individuals tell us about the real impact we have had on their lives:-

"...we were also struck by the selfless determination of your fire crews, and the incredible kindness and generosity which has been shown to us by our many neighbours and local friends who were, like the firefighters, there to help when we needed them"

"Meeting you all first hand and having you share your experience with us has been eye opening. Thank you once again for visiting us in your own time and for all the amazing work you do every day. Please continue to educate young people across Norfolk, just as you have educated us".

"...such situations are alarming for all involved and your speedy response and control of the situation was very much appreciated by all concerned"



Views of your elected representatives for Norfolk County Council:-

"The Committee was of the view that Norfolk already had an excellent Fire and Rescue Service, being one of the most efficient in the country and felt that there was insufficient evidence within the report for changing the current arrangements"

**Communities Committee,
Norfolk County Council, January 2018**

"Council endorses and reaffirms the Communities Committee opposition to the potential application by the PCC to take over Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and regrets the decision by the PCC to take the proposal to the next stage. Council welcomes the cross party consensus that such a move would not be in the best interests of the service or the county"

**From motion agreed by
Norfolk County Council, April 2018**

Views of the Fire Brigades Union⁽¹⁹⁾:-

"We are a humanitarian service not an enforcement service. We enjoy high levels of public trust, satisfaction and confidence and communities know they can rely on us. Our role as independent and impartial life-savers enables us to reach all communities, in difficult political and social circumstances"

"There is already good voluntary collaboration between all emergency services. There is nothing about the current governance of our service that prevents working together for the good of the public"

References

1. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan.
2. Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) - annual survey information.
3. NFRS Key Performance Challenges - report to communities committee - July 2018.
4. Norfolk County Council public consultation carried out in 2015/16 on the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan.
5. Fire Brigades Union Petition - Hands off our Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (<https://www.change.org/p/lorne-green-norfolk-police-crime-commissioner-hands-off-our-norfolk-fire-rescue-service>).



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