



Annual Report and Statement of Assurance

2020-2021



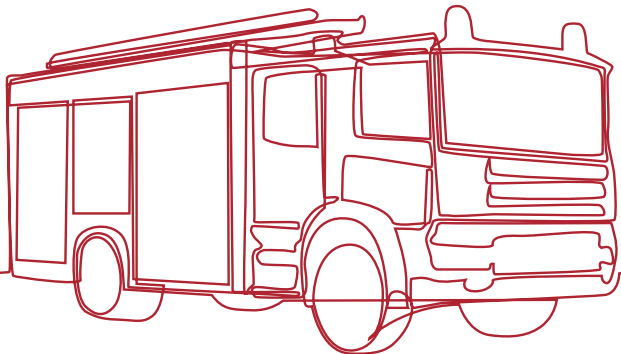




Welcome to the Fire and Rescue Statement and the Annual Report for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

The report covers the financial year 2020/21 and includes highlights of the year, how we spent your money, performance against our targets and how we are working to improve our service to you.

It incorporates the Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's Statement of Assurance. Under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.



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Fire and Rescue Statement

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out a requirement for the fire and rescue authorities to publish a statement of assurance.

It says the statement should:

“... outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan (e.g. the Fire and Rescue Plan) prepared by the authority for that period.

The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters. For Police Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authorities (PCC FRA), this statement is subject to scrutiny by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel. The name of this statement differs across governance models. In the case of PCC FRAs it is called the ‘Fire and Rescue Statement’.”

2020/21 Fire and Rescue Statement of Assurance

Essex Police Fire Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (EPFCCFRA) is satisfied that its business during the financial year 2020/21 was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority is further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

Evidence to support this judgement can be found within this report, specifically:

Governance matters - page 7

Integrated Risk Management Plan - page 19

Financial Matters - page 52

Signed:

Roger Hirst

Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

Governance

The Service is governed by Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (EPFCCFRA).

The role of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is to be the voice of the people, hold Essex Police to account and provide an efficient and effective fire and rescue service.

Responsibilities regarding Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

The PFCC must:

- Provide a local connection between the fire and rescue service and local communities
- Set a budget and determine the council tax requirement
- Maintain an efficient and effective fire and rescue service for the county
- Approve an Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Develop a Fire and Rescue Plan and Fire and Rescue Statement
- Scrutinise, support and challenge performance against the Plan
- Appoint a Chief Fire Officer to lead and manage the service

The PFCC is elected by the public to hold the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to account, effectively making the fire and rescue service and police force answerable to the communities they serve. The PFCC ensures that community needs are met as effectively as possible, and local relationships improve through building confidence and trust. They work in partnership across a range of agencies at local and national level to ensure there is a unified approach to preventing and reducing crime.

Our Police Fire and Crime Commissioner is Roger Hirst. Roger took on governance of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service in 2017 following approval from the Home Secretary and wide spread support from the public and partners across Essex. As the first Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in the Country Roger has helped to establish the role and developed the first Fire and Rescue Plan.

The Plan sets out an ambitious programme of change and development for the Service, increasing efforts to keep vulnerable people safe, prevent fire, work collaboratively with partners and ensure an efficient and effective fire and rescue service.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values for the control and management of all activities and how the Commissioner accounts to, engages with and leads the community.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Commissioner's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

Copies of these documents are available at www.essex.pfcc.police.uk or can be obtained from the Commissioner's office at Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall, Witham CM8 3HB.

The Governance Framework

The Scheme of Governance that operated during the year included the following:

- The Constitution
- The Scheme of Delegation
- The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) Order 2011; the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendment) Order 2012, and the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendment) Order 2013. Quarterly audits are undertaken by the PFCC's office to ensure the Service's continued compliance with these Orders
- Information Management Protocol between the PFCC FRA and the PFCC
- Information Sharing Protocol relating to information shared between the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority and the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel
- Revised Financial Management Code of Practice For the Police Forces of England and Wales and Fire and Rescue Authorities created under section 4A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Codes of Conduct applying respectively to the PFCC and their Deputy and to the PFCC FRA's staff
- The Police, Fire and Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012
- Government Security Classifications
- Financial and Procurement Regulations

Governance

HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is responsible for carrying out Inspections of fire and rescue services in England and Wales.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Police, Fire and Crime Panel

- Scrutinise Fire and Rescue Plan and Statement
- Scrutinise Senior Appointments
- Review Precept
- Hear certain complaints against PFCC and DPFCC

Strategic board

- Strategic oversight of the Service
- Delivery of Fire and Rescue Plan and IRMP
- Development of Budget

Performance and Resource Board

- Monitor overall operational and financial performance
- Functions delegated to Chief Fire Officer
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Monitor Financial and Service Performance

Audit Committee

- Overview of financial regulations, contract procedures
- Financial management regulations
- Good governance
- Risk management

Essex Emergency Services Collaboration Board

- Strategic governance of Emergency Services Collaboration Programme

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Report

Roger Hirst

Since becoming the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex in 2017 it has been a pleasure to see how Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) has continued to develop its prevention and protection offer, look after its people and improve the value it delivers for communities across Essex.

This report is important because it records the Service's Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and details how the Service manages and spends its budget. This budget ensures that the priorities that are set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019-2024 and the Integrated Risk Management Plan can be delivered. The Fire and Rescue Plan marks an important shift in the priorities for the Service with increased focus on working together with partners to reduce harm in Essex. Wherever possible we need to reduce the risk to the public and prevent incidents happening in the first place and this report shows clear, early signs of this shift taking effect.

The last year has been an incredibly challenging year with the global pandemic affecting us all in some way. Throughout this difficult time, ECFRS has continued to be

there when the public needs it and have gone above and beyond for their communities. Even while dealing with these new challenges the Service has continued to deliver against its priorities such as prevention and protection, kept its people safe, and has played a key leadership role in the Essex Resilience Forum, and supporting other organisations to keep Essex residents safe.

Collaboration continues to be a priority for me, and the work ECFRS has done to support the East England Ambulance Service Trust and other NHS trusts across the county in response to COVID-19 demonstrates the impact that working together can have. In fact, ECFRS on-call firefighters gave 7,770 hours and crewed more 700 ambulances this year.

This hugely successful collaboration also shows what we are capable of when we work together and how we could deliver more together in the future.

It is reassuring and encouraging, that despite having to do things differently, the Service fitted 43% more smoke alarms than it did the previous year, and still carried out 4,346 home fire safety visits. This is good work and I know there is more that we all want to achieve.

In 2019, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected the Service, with the feedback that ECFRS needs to do more with

regards to its fire safety inspection programme. This supported our understanding of where the service was and work was already underway to develop a plan focusing specifically on its protection activities. This programme of works is ambitious, and ensures that buildings are safe, protecting both residents and workers. Despite the pandemic, the Service has continued to deliver against this programme of works and in 2020/21 completed 319 full audits and 2,293 desktop audits against premises.

HMICFRS inspected the Service again in October 2020, with a focus on how Fire and Rescue Services across the UK were responding to Covid-19. I am delighted that ECFRS was praised for the support it has given to partner organisations, for being well prepared and for continuing to put the welfare of its people first.

I would like to thank all staff across Essex County Fire and Rescue Service for playing your part and keeping Essex communities safe throughout the last year. It's been a year like no other, where we have all had to consider how we can contribute to the national effort and ECFRS have really stepped up and made a difference. I am looking forward to what the next year looks like for the Service.

Roger Hirst

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner



Review of the year

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

Jo Turton

I am delighted to share with you Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's Statement of Accounts 2020/21. This report has been developed to help our public understand our Service, and how we manage our budgets and spend our money. It also provides insight into our activities throughout the global pandemic and how we have adapted to ensure that we continue to support our communities.

I think it's fair to say that we've all had a year like no other. But throughout the uncertainty of last year, one thing has remained constant, and that's the professionalism and passion that all our staff and volunteers display. I often talk about how proud I am to be Chief Fire Officer of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, and I am truly bursting with pride with everything that we have done during this very difficult year.

Our vision is that safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build well-being and prosperity for all. To do this, our Service needs to be efficient and effective

across all the services we provide, preventing incidents wherever possible and making sure we're embedded in our communities across Essex.

To be able to do this, we need the right financial support and for our budgets to be managed in the correct way. Our statement of accounts outlines some of the key financial issues in areas such as revenue and capital spending, ensuring that we are investing in the key areas that help drive change reduce risk and ensure that we can continue to provide a first-class emergency response service. Our priorities for improvement and investment are prevention, protection, response, and technology, and our budget is planned to enable us to develop and deliver against these.

COVID-19: Stepping up and stepping in

Throughout a global pandemic, we maintained and sustained the fire and rescue service that Essex can be proud of. And we have continued to do what we do best, and that's keep the people of Essex safe.

The pandemic has shown us that risks can present themselves in different ways, and our work with the Essex Resilience Forum, alongside our robust business continuity plans and our approach to budgeting has meant that we were prepared, maintained our core services and put the welfare of our staff at the heart of our decisions and activities.

Not only have we maintained a strong and resilient Service to our communities and looked after our own staff, but we've also used our resources, capabilities and willingness to do more to support the wider combined response.

But more than that, we've been there for one another, we've stood shoulder to shoulder, often socially distanced and more often than not virtually, but we've been together as one team, and the resilience we've shown for one another, and as a Service is something that I'm immensely proud of.

From driving ambulances for the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST), to training EEAST staff to become ambulance drivers. From volunteering and delivering food parcels to those who are isolating, to delivering and collecting COVID-19 tests to those areas of the county where a different strain has been detected. From setting up community hospital's and moving beds to delivering much needed PPE across the county. And from setting up new vaccination centres, to going through training to be able to administer vaccinations.

Our Service has stepped up, stepped in and been there for our communities and partners when they needed us the most.

We innovated. We rolled out IT so we could work remotely and more productively. We've used new communication

channels that we hadn't used before, and we moved our education online as schools closed. We've continued to deliver safe and well visits for the most vulnerable. And despite the pandemic we've continued with the ability to service our fleet, repair property defects and ensure our water hydrants remain serviced and usable.

We continued carrying on with our fire safety audits and taking enforcement action where it was necessary. We rolled out a new wellbeing support package, including mental, physical and financial help. And we made sure the Service was sustainable financially, even with the additional resources we suddenly needed. And of course if all that wasn't enough we've continued to mobilise and respond to around the same number of incidents we would do normally.

As I said, it's been a year like no other. But despite the pressures and the roles we've stepped up and into, we've continued to provide prevention, protection and response services to the communities across Essex. We'll always be there when you need us.

Maintaining our Services: protecting our communities

Despite county-wide and national lockdowns, and Covid restrictions, we've continued to deliver protection and prevention activities, and attend a number of incidents across the county.

We attended 14,339 incidents from April 2020 to March 2021; that's down from 15,243 the previous year, with the total number of incidents attended by the Service decreasing consistently over the last four years.

Although over the last decade the number of fires has significantly reduced across Essex, we need to continue to understand the ever-changing risk picture. As the risks, demands and needs of our diverse communities change, our Service needs to develop and evolve, responding to these new challenges by being innovative and adaptable in keeping the people of Essex – including our own staff – safe from harm.

Prevention and protection continued to be a priority, and over the last year our teams have found different ways to provide these vital services. During the pandemic, the team adapted to government guidelines to ensure it can still visit the homes of the most vulnerable people in Essex while wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

In 2020/21, our Prevention team carried out 4,346 home fire safety visits to vulnerable people in Essex where they fitted 5,865 smoke alarms including 753 sensory alarms. The team also supplied 1,349 smoke alarms during doorstep deliveries for people without working smoke alarms in their home during the pandemic.

And although these numbers are slightly less compared to that of 2020, the drop in activity is marginal considering the year and the amount of time our county spent in lockdown. In fact, we fitted 43% more smoke alarms than we had in the previous year.

The Community Development and Safeguarding team received 597 safeguarding referrals, the majority received from operational crews (211 referrals) and the team assess all against the Essex Effective Support Windscreen to ensure appropriate support and signposting is provided.

Reaching school-aged children has also been a priority, and ECFRS's education team moved their education hub online. All schools were contacted to make them aware of the education offer available, resulting in 20,576 pupils still receiving education advice.

As more people were staying at home, we saw an increase in accidental dwelling fires, as well as garden fires. In fact, April 2020 saw an increase of garden fires by almost 100% compared to the same month in 2019 and 2018. Alongside this increase, there was a decrease in road traffic collisions in the first wave of the pandemic and national lockdown.

We created bespoke safety campaigns and messages for our social media and digital channels, and worked with our partners and our local media, to share our messages and reach the public. Our digital channels continue to be a key

tool when informing the public about safety and incident information, with 1.65 million website views in a year, alongside reaching 10.4 million across our social media channels.

The Protection team completed 7,202 jobs in 2020/21, this includes 319 full audits and 2,293 desktop audits against premises. 99.6% of statutory consultations received were responded to within 15 working days by the team.

HMICFRS Inspection

In October 2020, the Service was inspected by HMICFRS as part of an inspection into how fire and rescue services were responding to Covid-19, as they continued to face challenges during a difficult period.

ECFRS was praised for being well prepared, the support we offered to partners, maintenance of our core services and putting the welfare of our staff at the heart of decisions and activities. We have continually worked to reassure our public that regardless of what is happening we will always be there for them in an emergency, and this report echoed this message. The overwhelming feeling I got when reading this publication was that the inspectors spoke of a Service that I recognise, and a Service that I am incredibly proud to be a part of.

And our public felt that we'd still be there for them too. Using our social media channels, we asked our public: "were you ever concerned we'd reduce our emergency response during the pandemic or related lockdowns?" 92 per cent of our Facebook respondents, and 89 per cent of our Twitter respondents said "no, I wasn't concerned".

Responding to large incidents

The last year has seen us respond to a number of large incidents that have tested our organisation resilience. This has including a large and complex incident at Tilbury Grain Terminal. Over the course of 20 days last July, firefighters managed an incredibly complex incident involving several grain silos in the port of Tilbury – the only incident of its kind to ever happen in the northern hemisphere.

The rarity and scale of the incident meant that our response was truly ground-breaking – and, after realising there was an almost identical site at Liverpool docks, we reached out to Merseyside to share what we'd learned.

In January 2021 – in the height of the second wave, and with Essex declaring a major health incident – we showed we were ready to respond to a major issue involving water shortages in Epping and Harlow. As well as putting extra resources in place to make sure we could respond to fires, including having Water Bowsers and USAR's High Volume Pump on standby, we were part of a Tactical Co-ordination

Group with our partners, helping to reach the local communities and those who were vulnerable.

Medium Term Financial Plan

The medium term financial plan (MTFP) ensures that we work as a value for money organisation, and that we demonstrate our efficiency and effectiveness. Our approach to budgeting is sustainable and ensures that we meet the needs of our communities across Essex.

Our 2020-24 MTFP was published in the financial year of 2019/20, and seeks to deliver against our financial challenges and save £4.3m over this term, while ensuring we have sufficient financial resources that can be invested into areas we have identified as our priorities.

You can read more, and read our MTFP here: https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/documents/Medium_Term_Financial_Plan_2020-24

We took early action in the year to identify savings, which were also then reflected in our 2021-22 budget.

A Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFP) update is being published in 2021-22, which will provide an update on the progress against the published MTFP, along with providing an update on the medium term outlook.

Recognising our people

Our people are the heart of our organisation, they're our greatest asset and they've continued to shine in this last year.

And we've continued to recognise them – albeit slightly differently. We held our first ever virtual ceremony that paid tribute to those colleagues who have achieved their Long Service and Good Conduct medals. These awards are one of the highlights of my year and I am so pleased that we could still celebrate the hard work and dedication of our colleagues with our first ever virtual ceremony.

Over the year we've continued to recruit, and have welcomed and trained wholetime firefighters and on-call firefighters. Our pass-out parades have been different too, but through the use of technology we've been able to live stream them, so families and loved ones can still watch on with pride.

I am delighted that between April 2020 to March 2021 we welcomed 40 wholetime firefighters, 69 on-call firefighters, two control officers and 37 support staff to the Service.

Recognising you

Finally, I have one last thing to share with you. And that's thank you. I want to thank our communities for the continued support they give to all of us at Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. For many, your support has shifted from attending our station events and open days, and instead you may be supporting us through engaging with us on our social media channels, following our safety advice, or passing on details of a vulnerable neighbour or person for us to visit. However you have supported us this year, thank you.

Jo Turton

Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive



Our Service

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is one of the largest fire and rescue services in the country, serving a county which includes Stansted and Southend airports, Harwich seaport, Lakeside shopping centre, Coryton oil refinery, power stations, docks at Tilbury and parts of the M25 and M11 motorways.

Essex is a county of contrasts. It contains numerous ecologically important areas and manages one of the largest sections of coastline (350 miles) in the country. There are various conservation areas and over 14,000 listed buildings.

ECFRS provides prevention, protection and emergency response services from 50 fire stations and an Urban Search and Rescue facility.

The organisation is administered from its headquarters at Kelvedon Park in Kelvedon, where the Service also has a mobilising control centre.

Our Vision

Safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build success and well-being for all.

Our mission

Essex is a safe place to live, work and travel.

Our Values

We are open, honest and trustworthy

We are courageous in everything we do

We work as one team

We are always professional

We value the contribution of all

Our Service Leadership Team

Jo Turton

Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

Rick Hylton

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Dave Bill

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Innovation and Change

Karl Edwards

Director of Corporate Services

Colette Black

Assistant Chief Executive People, Values and Culture

Moir Bruin

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Prevention, Protection, Response

Neil Cross

Chief Finance Officer Section 151 Officer

Emily Cheyne

Assistant Director
Corporate Communications and Marketing

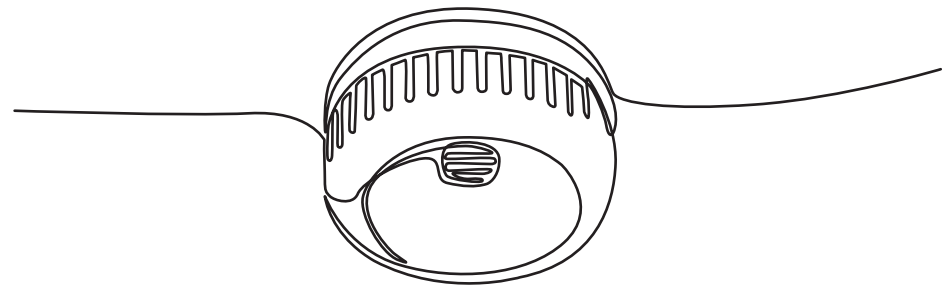
Our strategic priorities

Fire and Rescue Plan

The Fire and Rescue Plan sets out the priorities for fire and rescue services in Essex on how we will keep our communities safe.

Working with the public and alongside our partners, we created the plan to make sure we provide efficient and effective prevention, protection and response activities. This report focuses on our achievements and actions against each of these Fire and Rescue Plan priorities:

1. Prevention, protection and response
2. Improve safety on our roads
3. Help the vulnerable stay safe
4. Promote a positive culture in the workplace
5. Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service
6. Be transparent, open and accessible
7. Collaborate with our partners
8. Make best use of our resources



Integrated Risk Management Plan

Our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is our corporate plan and it focuses on how we achieve our strategic aims. Like all fire and rescue services, our IRMP identifies and outlines how we manage our communities' fire and rescue risks.

Our plan covers four years and will:

- Reflect up-to-date information on how we manage risks to lives and properties in the Greater Essex area;
- Outline how we will enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 as set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators and the Enforcement Concordat;
- Demonstrate how we can best use our prevention, protection and response activities and resources to prevent incidents and manage risk;
- Be reviewed each year and revised to make sure that we can act on it;
- Show how we have used what we have learned from consulting our workforce, communities, representative bodies and partners; and
- Be easily accessible.

Priority 1 | Prevention, Protection and Response

Prevention

Keeping our communities safe and preventing harm is at the heart of all we do. We work in partnership with agencies such as our local authorities, district councils and other emergency services to ensure that:

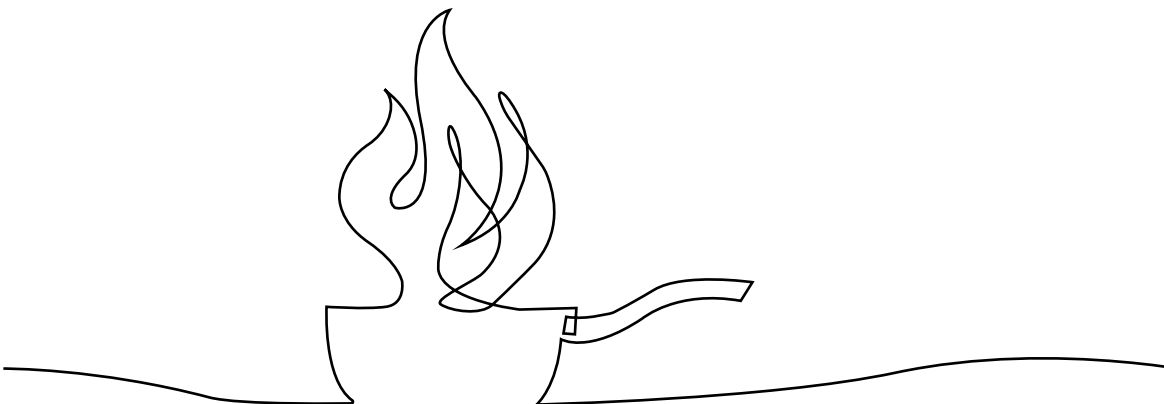
- There is a joint understanding of risk, and that the most appropriate intervention from all partners is identified and agreed
- Our approach is intelligence led and targeted to individuals who are deemed vulnerable from:
 - Risk of fire
 - Risk of being killed, seriously injured on our roads
 - Risk of injury or death in the water
- Our prevention strategy and focus aligns with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and HM Government campaigns
- There is effective safeguarding of adults and children
- That we review and continuously improve delivery of our activities to ensure high quality, effective interventions
- We evaluate the work we deliver to ensure that we can demonstrate that we prevented an event from occurring

Accidental Dwelling Fires

We are focused on continuing to reduce the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs), keeping our most vulnerable and communities in Essex safer. This number has been declining in Essex since 2017. This decreasing trend can also be seen nationally (a 22% decrease since 2010/11).

2020/2021	738
2019/2020	787
2018/2019	831
2017/2018	837

The Service has worked to improve the percentage of ADFs that are cooking related (31% in 2019/20, to 28% in 2020/21).



case study

Emergency Services give safety lessons to more than 46,000 school children during pandemic

Over 46,000 schoolchildren across Essex have been given safety lessons in collaboration with Essex Police.

Prior to the pandemic, our Education Officers would visit more than 190,000 students across Essex to deliver safety and awareness presentations in primary and secondary school classes. During the pandemic, our six Education Officers had to adapt quickly to schools learning remotely during lockdowns.



The team took their lessons online when we launched our Education Hub on 2 April, 2020. The Education Officers recorded the lessons they would usually deliver in schools to make them accessible to the many parents and carers home schooling children while juggling other commitments. Schools that were open to key workers also had access to the lessons.

Between 2 April, 2020 and 31 March, 2021, our Education Hub has had 6,142 visitors watching the lessons that cover a variety of topics including home fire safety, summer safety, knife crime and road safety.

The team also delivered 320 virtual lessons using virtual meetings to schools in Essex and when restrictions lifted, we were able to visit schools in person with 197 visits.

Teaching children and young people about fire safety and crime prevention can help them grow up into safer adults. Our goal ultimately is to give young people the knowledge and resources to make better decisions. This will help to reduce incidents of crime, accidental dwelling fires, Arson and hoax calls.

www.essex-fire.gov.uk/education

Education Programmes

By educating our children and young people in safety issues we make them aware of the dangers and consequences, enabling informed choices about their safety. At the same time, we can inform parents and carers about keeping their family safe.

Education Officers deliver safety awareness programmes to young people in Essex. The overall aim of the team is to help reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires and incidents of arson and hoax calls, among young people.

The table below shows the number of children and young people seen during the last year compared with the previous year.

	2020/2021	2019/2020
Face to face	5,366	191,491
Virtual	15,390	N/A
Education hub - web views	13,853	N/A



case study



Water rescue awareness sessions

ECFRS has been working in partnership with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to deliver throw line awareness sessions to licensed venues near water in Essex.

With 350 miles of coastline across Essex, there are many venues dotted along coasts and rivers in Essex and national data suggests that consuming alcohol contributed to accidental drownings in the UK.

In 2019, 223 people in the UK drowned and data across the UK suggests that half of all people who drown never intended to enter the water. With this in mind, Community Safety Officer Lisa Mitson, who is also a Water Safety Ambassador in her local community, has worked closely with the RNLI to deliver awareness sessions to colleagues across our Fire Service and licensed venues across Essex.

During an awareness session, staff at licensed premises are taught how to calm somebody down who is in the water, how to throw a throw line to help save the person and how to keep a person safe and well until the arrival of the emergency services.

Lisa has passed on her RNLI training to other colleagues in our Service and so far we've delivered awareness sessions to six waterside venues across Essex.

Lisa said: "The biggest and the most important thing we tell our licensees to do is to stop the casualty panicking and to remain calm themselves. Our delivery equips them with the confidence to take the lead in saving a person by keeping them calm and explaining how they can grab the throw line should they be in trouble in the water."

Roy Evans, Community Safety Officer led an awareness session at the Railway Tavern in Kelvedon that sits alongside the River Blackwater. Usually this river is only ankle deep but with the rain, the river can swell and start to move quite fast. We've given the pub a throw line, and so if anyone does fall in, they can come out and they know how to use it."

Jenny, a staff member at the Railway Tavern said: "Thankfully we've never had any incidents here but it's been really good to do the training so that we are prepared for the future. The session has been really useful, I learnt some skills that I didn't know and it's going to be really helpful for future references."

www.essex-fire.gov.uk/water_safety

Protection

Our priority is to protect businesses, people, the local economy and the environment from fire and wider community-related risks. Our protection work is guided by the duties placed on us by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Our protection teams work towards reducing the impact of fire in commercial premises. The teams work closely with local businesses, supporting them to meet their fire safety responsibilities, guiding them on how to keep to regulations, and making sure protecting people from fire is their priority.

We are committed to making our communities safer through appropriate regulation, while also using our enforcement and regulatory powers where necessary.

As with all fire and rescue services, we have reviewed our policies and procedures in line with the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry reports. We will make sure our organisation is in a position to be able to respond quickly and effectively to any recommendation made by the inquiry.

Our teams are involved in a number of activities to make sure our communities are safe.

- Inspection and audit
- Statutory consultations

- Undertaking enforcement activities as appropriate
- Carrying out activities associated with Higher Risk Residential Buildings (HRRBs)
- Reducing unwanted fire signals

Statutory Consultations

Despite being in a pandemic, the Protection team carried out more activity (7202 jobs) than in 2019/20 (7073).

As well as auditing premises to check compliance with fire safety regulations, team members are involved at the design stage of new buildings through planning where ECFRS are consulted by local authorities on access and water supplies to new premises. In 2020-21 Inspecting officers received and completed 921 planning consultations.

Where safe and possible to do, the Service conducted full audits of premises in the Service area. However, due to COVID restrictions, the Service also instigated desktop audits which enabled high risk premises to be inspected during a pandemic. The team completed 2,293 desktop audits and 319 full audits.

Licensing applications are also processed by the Protection Team as the Service are a statutory consultee. Premises require a licence for a number of reasons, for example the sale or supply of alcohol, to provide regulated entertainment, or to provide late night refreshment. In 2020-21 Inspecting Officers received 510 licensing applications.

case study

Sprinklers to be installed at seven housing estates in Basildon

ECFRS has contributed funding for the installation of sprinkler systems throughout seven housing estates in Basildon.

The latest match-funding project was agreed for sprinklers to be installed at all residential properties in the seven housing estates in the Felmores area of Basildon. Basildon Council were awarded £70,000 from the fire service's sprinkler fund to match-fund their project.

ECFRS Area Manager, Jim Palmer, said: "It's fantastic that Basildon Council are taking on this large project to fit sprinklers in every home in seven of their housing estates, and we're pleased that with our help their residents will have the best fire protection equipment available.

Director of Housing and Property at Basildon Council Lesley O'Shea said: "We are delighted to have received £70,000 funding from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service for our sprinkler project on the Felmores estate. I would like to thank them for this contribution which will help improve fire safety on the estate."

Think Sprinkler Strategy

Since 2013, the service has part-funded and supported the retrofitting of sprinklers in a number of high risk premises in Essex and has awarded a total of over £600,000.

Sprinklers are a reliable and cost-effective way of stopping fires from growing and spreading. In most cases, they actually put them out completely.

Did you know?

There is a common belief that if a fire starts in a property that has sprinklers fitted, that every sprinkler head will activate, flooding a property. This is untrue. Individual sprinkler heads will only activate when the room temperature reaches a certain point. The heads operate as individual heat sensors – water is only released in the area where there is a fire.

In 60% of cases, fires are controlled by the spray from four sprinklers or fewer. Firefighters often use 15 times more water from hoses to do the same job as a sprinkler does alone.

Response

We respond to a variety of emergencies, including fires, road traffic collisions, specialist rescues, maritime incidents, flooding, and incidents relating to hazardous materials.

To make sure we can respond effectively we have a modern fleet of fire appliances, including specialist appliances such as aerial ladder platforms, heavy rescue pumps, incident command units and water rescue units. We also have equipment, vehicles and firefighters used to support fire and rescue services across the country, which include urban search and rescue, high-volume pump, hose layers and tactical advisers.

ECFRS attended 14,339 incidents in 2020/21 - less than previous financial years. It shows that there were fewer attendances to fires and special service incidents in 2020/21 compared to previous year, whereas ECFRS attended more false alarms. Fires and special services both accounted for 29% of all incidents and false alarms, 42%.

The average speed of response to potentially life-threatening incidents within 10 minutes was slightly improved on last year, and the percentage of incidents/ calls attended within 15 minutes hit or was close to the target of 90%.

Incident numbers across Essex over the last five years

	Total	Fires	Special service	False alarms
2020 - 2021	14,339	4,201	4,088	6,050
2019 - 2020	15,243	4,720	4,521	6,002
2018 - 2019	15,515	4,938	4,283	6,294
2017 - 2018	15,566	4,769	4,485	6,312

The Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority has set response standards for the attendance of fire engines at fires and other emergencies. Our two response standards defined within our IRMP:

First attendance to potentially life-threatening incidents Target - average of 10 minutes	
2020-2021	10 minutes 10 seconds
2019-2020	10 minutes 6 seconds
2018-2019	10 minutes 26 seconds

First attendance to 90% of all incidents within 15 minutes	
2020-2021	86%
2019-2020	87%
2018-2019	87%

case study

Large fire at a grain depot

In July 2020, firefighters were called to a large fire at a grain depot in Tilbury. Initial reports indicated that a fire had broken out within one of their large grain silos, and due to their proximity, the fire managed to spread to several of other silos.

Our priority was to contain the fires and minimise the impact on the rest of the busy operational site. The location of the fire and type of material involved meant that fire crews couldn't simply pour water into the silos to extinguish the fires.



Firefighters worked for 20 days alongside site engineers, scientific advisors and other partner agencies and used specific firefighting techniques including using nitrogen and foam to extinguish the fires while working at height in challenging conditions. Fire crews managed to contain the fires and the site was deemed safe to leave in the care of the grain Port of Tilbury staff on Thursday 23 July.

Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive, Jo Turton, said: "I'm really proud of our team for their professionalism. The welfare of our staff was a priority and regular risk assessments were carried out to protect our crews, site staff and partners working to safely resolve this incident.

"This has been a great example of multi-agency working where different teams have worked closely together to contain this incident to the affected area. We worked closely with the grain terminal at the Port of Tilbury and even after officially leaving the site, was on hand while they continued to manage this incident."

A spokesperson for The Port of Tilbury said: "We would like to express our gratitude for the commitment and professionalism that has been displayed by all members of the fire service who have been involved in this significant issue."

Control

Service Control is responsible for answering 999 calls from members of the public, our partner agencies and our staff and, where appropriate, mobilising the appropriate response to the emergency.

Year	Calls	Incidents
2020 - 2021	28,651	14,384
2019 - 2020	30,542	15,033
2018 - 2019	32,595	15,513

Another vital part of this role includes liaising with our blue light partners including Essex Police and East England Ambulance Service, as well as contacting third party providers such as National Rail, Highways Agency, energy companies and water companies. Control are also responsible for answering and dealing with administrative calls from across the Service from Stations and Support services.

Control also hold the responsibility for ensuring the Service maintains its fire cover throughout the county, which simply means making sure we have appliances distributed across Essex in such a way that we can reach all incidents within our agreed response times.



Injuries and fatalities

We work to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries that occur in fires. These have decreased every year for the last four financial years.

	Primary fire fatalities	Primary fire injuries
2020 - 2021	5	67
2019 - 2020	3	66
2018 - 2019	4	68
2017 - 2018	7	74

Appliance availability

We maximise the availability and utilisation of resources within our operational response model.

Our Central Resourcing Team and our Control Team consistently monitor the availability and levels of resource within Essex. This includes those at station ready to respond and those already attending incidents across the county.

case study

Record number of On-Call Firefighters welcomed during the Pandemic

We welcomed a record number of on-call firefighters during the pandemic, with 69 new recruits joining on-call fire stations across Essex from April 2020.

On-call firefighters are people who live or work within five minutes of an on-call fire station and are paid to protect their community. We have more than 500 on-call firefighters in our Service based at fire stations across Essex.

“A lot has changed in the last year, but I’m so proud of the fact that so many people in our communities have still wanted to become on-call firefighters,” says Steve Osborn, On-Call Liaison Team Manager.

With lots of people looking to help in the community during the pandemic, the recruitment team, HR, On-Call Liaison Team and our training team have had a busy year working to bring on as many new recruits as possible.

Prior to the pandemic, ECFRS ran six on-call basic training courses a year but to keep up with the number of successful applicants, the Service has doubled its capacity to twelve courses a year.

In order to accommodate so many applicants, our training team took on two additional trainers - Linda West and Tariq Khan - at our Service Training Centre in Witham and sought support from Group Trainers and Support Trainers from fire stations. Fellow firefighters and managers on station have got stuck in welcoming and supporting the development of our new recruits.

To help us train more on-call firefighters, we’ve moved our training courses around the county to help candidates train locally and in the communities they will be serving and in the last year, we held our first ever training courses at Dovercourt, Waltham Abbey and Canvey Island fire stations.

“It really goes to show what we can achieve when we work as a team and we are already looking to see how we can do more to support our on-call colleagues,” says Station Manager Jason Gould, On-Call Trainer.



"We think this more flexible approach of moving our training courses around the county, with the support of our on-call colleagues at local venues throughout Essex, is making a real difference."

Steve Osborn, On Call Liaison Team Manager



Priority 2 | Improve the safety on our roads

In 2020-2021, ECFRS attended 845 road traffic collisions (RTCs) of which 95 incidents (11%) involved victims who died or sustained serious injuries (the victim went to hospital with injuries that appeared to be serious) within the collision.

As a key partner of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) we are working to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads in Essex. SERP launched Vision Zero in 2020, an ambition to have zero road deaths and serious injuries on roads across Essex by 2040.

We have a range of initiatives designed to help all road users, including:

- FireBikes
- Community Wheels
- FireCars
- Ford driving simulator
- Virtual-reality road safety

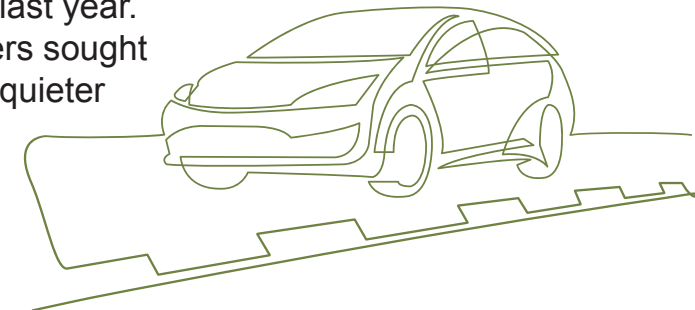
In 2020-2021, our road safety and RTC Reduction Team held a total of 18 events. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, less events were held compared to previous years. In 2019-2020 the teams held 392 separate events.

The impact of COVID on the roads

Reduced traffic levels have had an impact on road casualties in 2020-21. There was a significant drop in traffic during the earlier lockdown months, although higher speeds were recorded, which has continued as lockdown measures are lifted and traffic flows have returned to almost normal levels.

There was an increased prevalence of speed and errors behind the wheel as factors in RTC's, suggesting driver skills had declined during lockdown, and/or drivers and riders took the opportunity to drive faster.

We noticed a slight increase in powered two-wheeler killed and seriously injured (KSI) from previous years. Motorcycle casualties are often influenced by good weather conditions, which Essex experienced for much of last year. Alongside this, some riders sought to take advantage of the quieter roads at those times.





case study

Advanced Machine Skills course “best day’s training”

The FireBike team held an Advanced Machine Skills course in August 2020 - the first since lockdown - teaching 10 motorcyclists at Wethersfield Airfield.

One of the motorcyclists on the course, said learning from our three FireBike instructors was a fantastic experience.

The motorcyclist started riding 40 years ago but gave up after witnessing a fatal accident. He got back on his bike 18 months ago for the first time in 26 years and has thrown himself into all sorts of training.

He said: “I’d like to say a huge thank you – it was absolutely the best day’s training. They had me doing things on two wheels I’d never thought I’d be confident enough to attempt and experienced what emergency braking at real speed feels like.

“It is a great location and the instructional expertise inspired confidence to really commit to pushing myself in these exercises. I knew I’d never have a safer environment in which to learn, try these things for real and be confident I’d know what to expect in these situations on the road.

“I feel I’m so much better equipped to handle whatever the road throws at me and my bike.”

FireBike is our motorcycle safety initiative. It promotes skills improvement and safer riding and encourages advanced rider training in a bid to reduce the number of motorcycling casualties.

Our instructors are all RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Gold advanced motorcyclists, as well as qualified RoSPA advanced riding instructors and, of course, motorcycle enthusiasts.

Priority 3 | Help the vulnerable stay safe

ECFRS staff and volunteers undertake Home Safety (HSV) and Safe and Well visits across Essex, to help the most vulnerable in our communities.

The main aims of our Home Safety and Safe and Well visits are:

- To reduce the number of accidental house fires in Essex
- To reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured as a result of house fires.

We offer two types of visit:

A Home Safety visit by firefighters, volunteers and other community safety staff. This visit focuses on giving people advice on fire safety around the home.

A Safe and Well visit by highly trained Safe and Well Officers. This more in-depth visit aims to improve the health and well-being of the more vulnerable people in our communities, by advising them on where they can get support.

Number of home safety/ safe and well visits

Measure	2020-2021	2019-2020
Total number of visits	4,346	7,718
Safe and Well visits	3,764	5,288
Standard smoke detectors fitted	5,865	8,459
Sensory smoke detectors fitted	753	1,307
Home safety doorstep interactions	762	N/A
Smoke detectors provided to public via doorstep drop offs	1,349	N/A

Number of individuals visited in the following vulnerable groups:	2020-2021	2019-2020
Over 65 years old	3,230	5,278
Who live alone	1,916	3,248
Who have a disability	1,663	3,053
Who live in social housing	243	525

case study

ECFRS reassures communities through Safe, Well and Secure visits

October 2020 saw our Service and partners knock on 2,146 doors in West Mersea and in Rayne, providing more than 200 smoke alarms in Safe, Well and Secure events.

Our Operational and Community Risk North team was supported by firefighters, our Safe and Well team, Education team, Community Safety Officers and Community Builders.

They worked with a range of organisations and charities, including Essex Police, parish councils, Community 360, Essex Dementia Care, United in Kind and Provide.

While our Service's main aim was to give fire safety advice and provide smoke alarms if needed, we were able to help residents get support from other agencies.

Our Operational and Community Risk Officer, said:
"The biggest thing we're finding with COVID is we're knocking on doors of people who haven't seen anyone for months. They will chat with us for five or ten minutes, but we're happy to give them our time."

"It shows there are still members of our communities that are socially isolated and in need of our support."

"It also allows us to involve other services and provide them with information to help with mobility, social isolation or health issues. We're doing as much as we can do help our communities at the moment."



Priority 4 | Promote a positive culture in the workplace

Our people are at the heart of making sure we keep our communities safe, one of our key priorities. We want our colleagues to be supported and feel engaged so that they can do this to the best of their ability.

Our colleagues demonstrate our Service's values every day - and that has never been more apparent than during the last year. As colleagues we have collectively risen to unprecedented challenges.

Our focus is to continue developing a positive culture. As part of this work, we have continued to develop our staff networks, delivered dignity in our workplace facilitated sessions, engaged dignity at work champions, provided training for people impact assessments and neurodiversity training and coaching, and have focused on diversity data declarations. Where concerns do arise, we have continued trying to resolve concerns early via informal resolution where it is appropriate to do so.

Leadership Development

Our objective is to have a safe and diverse workforce who we enable to perform well in a supportive culture underpinned by excellent training. We do that so we have a forward looking, innovative and collaborative culture that can deliver against the changing needs of our communities.

We have invested £1.4m over four years in a Leadership Development programme and which focuses on self-awareness, behaviours and culture.

The programme is part of a much wider approach to learning and development which includes coaching and core learning pathways.

Culture

Our 2020 staff survey tells us that colleagues feel more engaged (from 71% to 82%). Colleagues feel 21% more positive about our culture than they did in 2018 (up to 54%). Colleagues feel significantly more confident that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated- up from 49% to 64%.

case study

First virtual Long Service and Good Conduct Ceremony

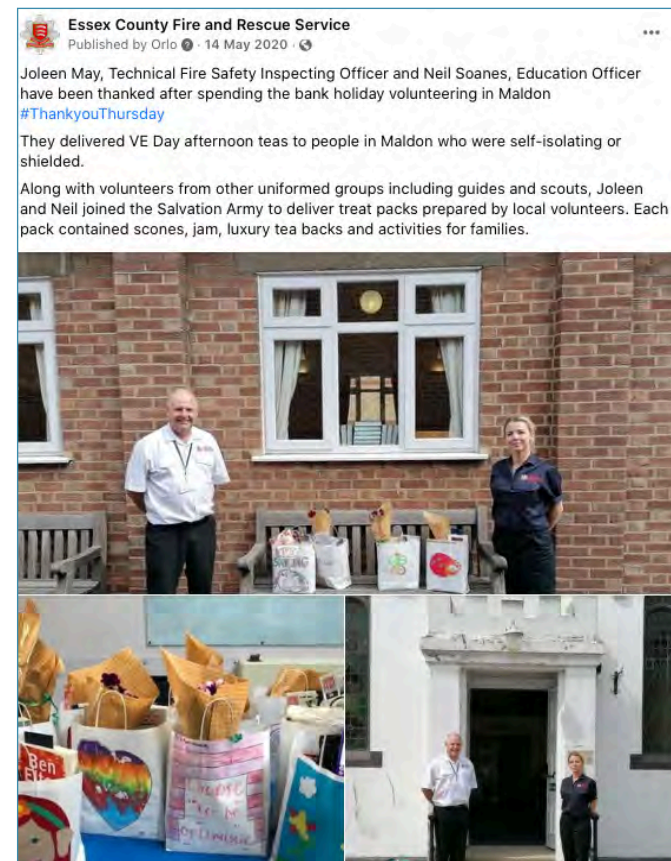
The pandemic couldn't stop ECFRS recognising and celebrating those colleagues who had achieved their Long Service and Good Conduct medals and awards, honouring them at a virtual ceremony.

A total of 26 colleagues were joined by Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Jennifer Tolhurst, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Moira Bruin (Host), Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Jo Turton, Rick Hylton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, and Area Manager Neil Fenwick (who read the Royal Warrant).

Our operational colleagues with 20 years' exemplary service were recognised with a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal and support colleagues who have completed 20 years' service were recognised with a Long Service Award. Nine colleagues were honoured for an amazing 40-plus years' service

Engaged and Valued

We know that rewarding and recognising our people is part of a positive, kind culture. Due to the pandemic, we couldn't hold our annual People Awards celebration. However, we have continued to recognise and thank our people through our monthly recognition awards, #ThankyouThursday and also through our Chief Fire Officer Commendations.



case study

Fair, Kind and Inclusive

Andre Turner, Technical Fire Safety Watch Manager, has demonstrated our One Team value by supporting colleagues' wellbeing. He posted regular messages on our Service's Wellbeing Hub on Workplace to give colleagues a lift. He also completed a 52-mile fundraising walk for The Fire Fighters Charity, raising £750.

He said: "As soon as the first lockdown began, I took the opportunity to change my mindset, which included making use of the natural world by exercising.

"I felt the difference and wanted to share my experience with others to help them through the lockdowns. It was nice to see how people were reacting to the posts and I received emails from colleagues to say how it had helped.

"It's been hard for people to support each other; not being able to have a quick chat in person, you have to make an extra effort to do it on Teams or on the phone.

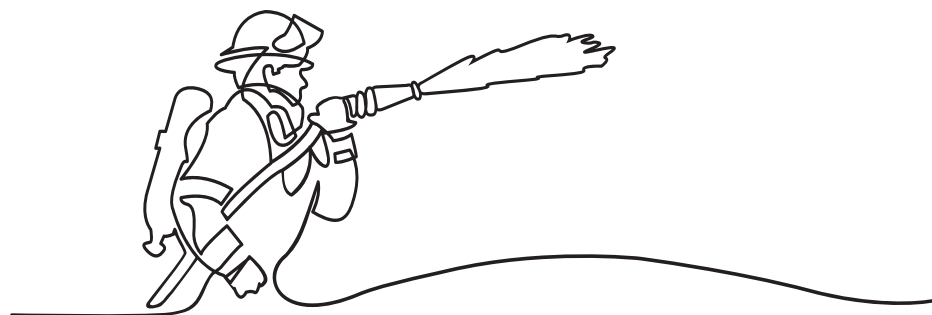
"Our Service has come a long way in looking after its colleagues' wellbeing and it is doing well but, as always, there is more to do. It is an ongoing process that requires adaptability and flexibility."



Operational Training

Our training strategy makes clear our commitment to offering training opportunities so that all of our people have the skills and behaviours they need to flourish and remain safe in their work.

Our £1.4m investment in Operational Training has delivered benefits including increased assurance of competence via our Competency Skills Assurance Programme and is delivering results.



case study

Operational Training Team demonstrate versatility and resilience

Colleagues across our Service have showed their versatility and resilience over the past 15 months - and none more so than in our Operational Training team.

Paul Chipperfield, Operational Training Group Manager, said: “It has been challenging for everyone, but at the same time it has been inspiring to see how people have gone the extra mile to provide a service.

“Against a very difficult set of circumstances we have been able to deliver 90 to 95% of what we would normally deliver. The credit goes to the team for being really flexible, operational colleagues for adapting to the changes and our Service for supporting us.”

On top of completing Risk Assessments and adhering to control measures to continue “business as usual” training, a number of complex projects have been completed or are on track.

Paul said: “We’ve been able to maintain the vast majority of our training and get very complicated projects out on time, all against the backdrop of COVID. We’ve learnt lessons too and now understand more about remote training and using videos.

“I’m immensely proud of the team. What we’ve achieved collectively shows our Service in its best light; reacting to an ever-changing environment really positively.”

Priority 5 | Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service

#NotJustFires

Responding to fires, accidents and rescues are just part of our day to day activities. We also work with our communities and businesses across Essex to keep them safe, and help prevent fire and incidents from happening in the first place.

We also work with our partners and play a huge role in tackling wider social issues by creating a number of intervention programmes that can influence positive behaviour change. ECFRS has been recognised nationally and internationally for its innovative approach to community engagement and supporting some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Our willingness to step up and lean in has never been more apparent as it has in the last year, coming together with our partners to help stop the spread of COVID19. The situation has been unprecedented in our lifetimes, but through the intense challenges we've seen kindness and community strength. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is proud of the contribution we have made to support our partners, our staff and our communities.

Not only have we maintained a strong and resilient service to our communities and looked after our own staff affected by the coronavirus, we've also used our skills, resources and 'can-do' attitude to support the wider combined response.



National Fire Chiefs' Council COVID-19 position statement

In March 2020, the NFCC issued a position statement which confirmed that the Government's objectives in the response to the pandemic were to deploy phased actions to contain, delay and mitigate any COVID-19 outbreak, using research to inform policy development.

Roy Wilsher, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs' Council said:

"The way all fire and rescue services have adapted to the pressures of COVID-19 has been second to none. This is what the FRS does best – ensuring those who need help, receive help.

"At the same time, they have maintained the delivery of our core duties and their dedication and commitment has been clear to see. The fire and rescue service has stepped up and carried out this work professionally with the community at the heart of its response – our 'can do' ethic and the use of our existing skills, competence and capabilities has been exemplary."



Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service

Priority 6 | Be transparent, open and accessible

Statutory Request

We have responsibilities to process and respond to statutory requests made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection Act. We have a statutory deadline to respond to 90% of those requests in 20 days. In 2020-2021 we replied to 95% of statutory requests within the statutory deadline.

ECFRS' Information Governance (IG) team publish responses to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 on the Service's transparency page. Responses are published as they demonstrate how we have made decisions, spent public money, or used our resources. Personal information has been removed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

The page can be accessed here
<https://www.transparency.essex-fire.gov.uk/information>

2020-2021 statutory requests

The total number of requests received in 2020-2021 was 599:

- **434 Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) Requests.** The main themes were fire reports (422) and other environmental information requests (12)
- **152 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.** The main themes around FOIs were data requests (57), fire safety (20), HR/Recruitment (19), ICT (18), contracts (8), operations (7), purchasing (7), finance (4), fleet (4), policy (2), training (1), H&S(1) and others (4).
- **13 Subject Access Requests (SAR).** 6 SARs were received from current members of staff, 4 SARs from former staff members, 2 SARs from the Police and 1 SAR from HMRC.



Open and accessible with our public

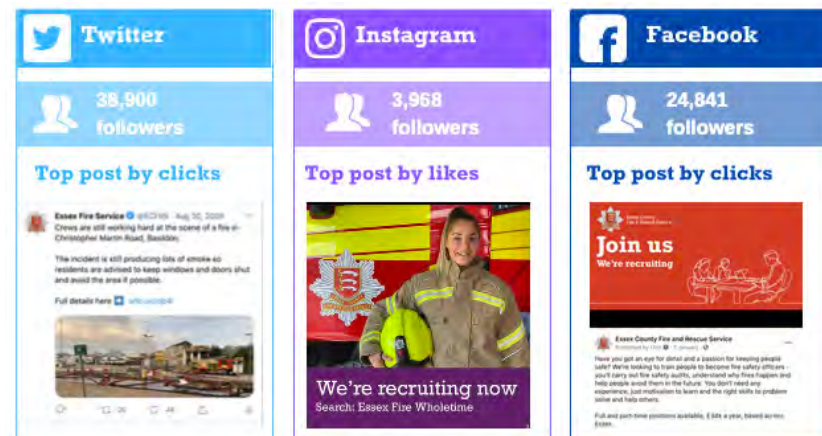
The use of strategic and tactical communication in emergency services is ever-changing, but a constant is the evidence that such activity is vital in a number of ways. Communication can be used to raise awareness, correct inaccurate information or “fake news”, campaign for behaviour change and support positive action recruitment - reaching communities that might now have thought about a career with our Service before.

Our communication, marketing and brand team works in partnership with colleagues, the public and our partners to deliver campaigns which make a difference to our communities and our people.

We use a range of channels to communicate with the public. We check in with our public and employees through a range of polls and surveys, to ensure that we are telling a narrative that people want to engage with, in a way that is accessible and favoured by them. Communications in ECFRS also specifically supports and delivers against operational activity and priorities as set out in the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

External communication statistic headlines

1,650,322	visits to essex-fire.gov.uk
292,887	visits to join.essex-fire.gov.uk
67,709	total social media followers
10.4m	total social media reach
127,000	total social media clicks
555	press enquiries into the team
164	press/ news releases issued
429	incidents published on the website
1,277	subscribers to our newsletter



Performance monitoring and management framework

To make sure we can monitor our performance against the Fire and Rescue Plan and the IRMP, we have developed a performance framework. This framework includes a continuous improvement board who will meet regularly to discuss progress.

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner receives highlight and exception reports each month, monitoring and analysis reports every three months, and an end-of-year performance report. These are available to the public and are published externally.

As part of the ongoing review of this IRMP, we will continually review our performance measures to make sure that our performance is monitored and managed across all parts of our service, in line with the priorities laid out in the Fire and Rescue Plan.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is responsible for carrying out Inspections of fire and rescue services in England and Wales.

Our inspection reports can be found here:
https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/About_Us/Inspections

Performance measures

The most effective way to save lives and to reduce injuries and other losses through fires and other emergencies is to reduce the number of incidents that happen.

We track and report on our prevention activities through a range of measures. We also recognise the importance of considering how these work together to make our communities safer.

These are the measures we will report to the public on, telling them whether we have met our target. They have been reported in the various sections of this document.





Be transparent, open and accessible

Priority 7 | Collaborate with our partners



case study

Tri-Service Rural Community Officer

Les Davis is Essex's first Tri-Service Rural Community Officer, representing all three emergency services. He has begun working in the Maldon and the Dengie Peninsular areas as part of a 15-month pilot for our Service, Essex Police and the East of England Ambulance Service.

Les, a former firefighter and Community Safety Officer, provides fire safety and crime prevention advice, as well as being First Responder for the Ambulance Service.

Les joined our Service as a firefighter in 1983 and enjoyed a long a varied operational career, including in Fire Protection, Breathing Apparatus training and Operational Assurance, before retiring in 2010. He re-joined our Service as Community Safety Officer in 2014.



We know that we are better able to achieve our aims and objectives across all areas of the Service by collaborating and working in partnership with others who have similar aims and goals – these include other emergency services and public sector organisations, charities, voluntary groups and other fire and rescue services. Not only does this improve the service we each deliver, it also makes financial sense to remove duplication and share resources.

In 2017 the revised Policing and Crime Act directed emergency services to consider collaboration in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness.

We have agreed the shared use of Dovercourt fire station with the Police, a relocation subject to Business Case of our fleet services to a Police site and the introduction of a fire investigation dog to support arson conviction and reduce time spent on fire investigation.

Partnership has of course been vital throughout the pandemic and our Service was praised for its work with our partners during a COVID specific inspection by HMICFRS.

case study

Response to water shortages an Essex team effort

In January 2021 our Service demonstrated it is always ready to respond after a major issue involving water shortages in Epping and Harlow.

Affinity Water reported that a pumping station had broken down, causing a loss of pressure and water shortages to 9,000 homes and 25,000 residents. There was a risk it could quickly escalate and affect 40,000 homes and 150,000 residents.

As well as putting extra resources in place to make sure we could respond to fires, including having Water Bowsers and USAR's High Volume Pump on standby, we were part of a Tactical Co-ordination Group with our partners which supported:

- council volunteers contacting 1,200 vulnerable people to provide support and reassurance
- Affinity Water providing a water supply to a hospital and COVID-19 care home, and delivering pallets of water to residents

- keeping residents informed and reassured with social media messages
- readying volunteers from the Essex Tactical Co-ordination Group

Work continued into the night to repair the pumps, recharge the system and start refilling the reservoir. It will be at full capacity over the next few days, but levels are already sufficient for our Service.

Group Manager Martyn Hare, our lead on the incident for the Essex Resilience Forum, said:

"This was a significant issue but thankfully the impact to the public was not as bad as it could have been.

"Colleagues dropped what they were doing, pulled together and were involved in some really impressive multi-agency work."

Essex Resilience Forum (ERF)

The Essex Local Resilience Forum is a multi-agency partnership that's made up of representatives from emergency services, other local public services, local authorities and the NHS.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 every County in the United Kingdom is required to establish a resilience forum.

Through the Essex Local Resilience Forum (LRF), we are prepared and rehearsed for a number of issues and scenarios. We do it every month of every year for issues such as bad weather, major disasters on our transport network or pandemic health crisis.



COVID19 and the ERF

The last year has seen a coordinated effort and approach across Greater Essex. Co-chaired by the Chief Constable of Essex Police and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, the response to the pandemic has been a multi-agency approach.

- Essex Police (Co-Chair)
- Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (Co- Chair)
- East England Ambulance Service Trust
- Health – NHS, CCGs, DPHs, EPUT, Acute Hospitals Trust (MSE/ESNEF/West Essex)
- MHCLG – via GLO
- PHE
- Military
- Unitary authorities: Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, Southend Council
- Local Authorities: all Districts
- Essex Communicator Group - through co-chairs (Fire and Police)
- TCG Leads

Alongside the pandemic, a number of large incidents have been managed including flooding, a large and first of its kind grain terminal fire and water outage in Harlow which required a full ERF coordinated approach.

Priority 8 | Make best use of our resources

Ensuring that we have an efficient Service that offers value for money underpins everything we do. The Authority is responsible for ensuring that our Service's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way our Service's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Statement of Accounts includes an Annual Governance Statement that sets out a review of the key financial controls. The Statement of Accounts for the financial year that ended on 31 March 2021 was published June 2021.

In 2020/21 the Authority's total planned net expenditure was £74.9m.



This was an increase of £1.1m from the Authority's budget of £73.8m in 2019/20. This increase primarily related to a 2% pay provision that was included within the 2020/21 budget.

65% of the net expenditure of the Authority is funded by Council Tax, payable by householders in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. The Authority increased the Council Tax precept by 1.99% in the year, from £72.45 to £73.98 for a band D council tax property.

The balance of funding is provided by central government, through a share of non-domestic rates and revenue support grant. Specific grants provided by the government, for example to support the Authority's Urban Search and Rescue unit are included in operational income.

Overall employment costs for the year 2020/21 totalled £59m, which was an overspend of £1.4m as compared to the budget of £57.6m.

The full statement of accounts is here:

www.essex-fire.gov.uk/documents/Statement_of_Accounts

2019/2020		2020/21		
Actual £000	Net Revenue Expenditure	Latest approved budget £000	Actual expenditure £000	Variance overspend/ (underspend) £000
33,308	Wholetime firefighters	34,633	35,130	(497)
6,782	On call firefighters	6,893	7,064	(171)
1,365	Control staff	1,368	1,616	(248)
14,176	Support staff	14,715	15,243	(528)
55,631	Total Employment Costs	57,609	59,053	(1,444)
2,336	Support costs	2,174	2,137	37
10,163	Premises & equipment	10,678	10,437	241
3,248	Other costs & services	3,298	2,869	429
2,261	Ill health pension costs	2,276	2,252	24
1,301	Lease & interest charges	1,265	1,264	1
4,781	Revenue provision for Capital Financing	5,100	4,318	782
24,090	Total other costs	24,791	23,277	1,514
79,721	Total gross expenditure	82,400	82,330	70
(8,378)	Operational income	(7,539)	(9,274)	1,735
71,343	Total net expenditure outturn	74,861	73,056	1,805
	Funding			
8,337	Revenue support grant	8,473	8,473	-
16,569	Non domestic rates	16,519	16,919	(400)
643	Council tax collection amount	400	543	(143)
45,695	Council tax precepts	47,851	47,765	86
731	Collection fund adjustment amount	-	(37)	37
-	Capital grant	-	211	(211)
(632)	Contribution (to)/ from reserves	1,618	(818)	2,436
71,343	Total funding	74,861	73,056	1,805





Ready, Willing and Able
Our response to COVID19

#EssexUnites #StaySafeEssex



The international spread of the COVID-19 has changed the way we live our lives. But throughout the national emergency, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has stepped up, stepped in and been ready to serve.

After the situation had escalated rapidly in March 2020, April then saw continued upheaval as the UK descended into lockdown - the most draconian restrictions since World War II and the biggest health crisis for a generation.

What hadn't changed was the need for the people of Essex to get what they deserved – a functioning and efficient fire and rescue service. At a time when nothing seemed truly certain, our ability to respond to emergencies could not waver.



Coordinating our Response

Our Critical Incident Team (CIT) was established following the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the UK.

Our colleagues needed guidance, our teams needed to adapt and our partners needed our support.

In order to reassure our communities that we'd be there for them in the face of such significant challenges, we needed to establish a team of colleagues that could consistently and appropriately work as one.

As the picture began to improve in the summer months, we adapted again. That meant moving into what became known as the 'recovery' phase – making all of our sites COVID safe workplaces and implementing longer-term practices and procedures with our people's wellbeing as a priority. Colleagues who had been working remotely and assessed as needing to return were safely re-inducted back into workplaces and our practices were adapted in line with the risks associated to the Government's local tiered system.

When the national situation grew more serious from November onwards, we moved into our third phase – the Covid Operational Facility. This facility, hosted virtually with a small physical presence at Rayleigh Weir, ensured that

as absence levels began to increase our operational availability and response times remained consistently good.

With case levels particularly high in parts of Essex, the situation felt more local than ever – and even more challenging.

In all, more than 100 colleagues volunteered more than 8,000 hours of their time to the CIT, Recovery and Covid Operational Facility phases.

Claire Sanders, our Business Continuity Advisor, said: "This has been an incredibly dynamic situation throughout – and we never rested on our laurels or hesitated to adapt our approach.

"Providing our operational response alongside our support functions during a time that was like nothing any of us had ever seen before was a tremendous challenge. It required the dedication of our people and - throughout our CIT, Recovery and Covid Operational Facility phases - leadership and clarity.

"Things remain uncertain but, after such an incredible team effort, we now feel prepared to take our next steps as a Service."

Volunteering and vaccinating

In April 2020, our Service formed an ECFRS Staff Volunteer Working Group, made up of colleagues who volunteered to be part of the management and oversight of our efforts in the community.

There was an overwhelming amount of support from staff across all areas of our Service, registering to volunteer in some way, to support the efforts in the community.

One of the requests for support came in via Essex's Multi Agency Information Cell (MAIC). The Army was asking for support to increase hospital capacity in Essex.

Coordinated through the Essex Resilience Forum, volunteers, military personnel, Witham-based logistics company Simarco and NHS employees, began clearing furniture and moving hospital beds, both within single buildings and across the county.

The purpose of this was mainly to convert office space into specialist hospital wards ready for patients.

Volunteers also supported PPE logistics, delivering PPE to hospitals and residential homes and food parcel deliveries.

Mark Powell, ICT senior application analyst, said: "Being stuck inside with the restrictions was frustrating; this was a chance to help the NHS in its fight against COVID-19.

"It was a pleasure to help, and I hope we can do the same again in the future."

Our staff also supported local Community Voluntary Service (CVS) in their virtual befriending services, with some of our staff maintaining contact with their person all year, often twice a week. The group also made sure fire safety literature was included within emergency food parcels going to at risk communities, ensuring they received advice on all matters relating to their safety.

By late summer 2020, the working group stood down, only to reassemble again in January 2021, to support the national vaccination role out. The ECFRS Staff Volunteer team regrouped and created volunteer recruitment questionnaires. These were circulated to all staff who wished to support partners voluntarily.

Having negotiated and supported colleagues in the NHS directly, our people were volunteering to support vaccination centers by the end of January 2021.

Our staff worked at Chelmsford Racecourse, Colchester Stadium and Thurrock and Southend centres. Initially our people supported the logistics for the mass vaccination centres, including the physical setting up of sites, movements of vaccines and patient logistics while on site.

Alison Brewster said: “As some areas became hotspots for new variants we needed to support community mass testing. This saw us knocking door to door in areas such as Nazeing and Brentwood.

“This work was often requested at late notice, with many of us responding almost immediately and travelling long distances to take part but it was so important to keep the virus contained, particularly when little was known about different variants.

I really enjoyed the work - it was nice to talk to people and support the communities. It’s really nice to put people’s mind at rest.”

In February 2021, 15 colleagues volunteered to begin training as volunteer vaccinators, undertaking a significant 50 hours of online learning, practical training (including jabbing oranges) and assessments, and committing to at least one shift a week to support the continued vaccination effort for the country.

During 2020-2021, ECFRS personnel gave approximately 4,000 hours to the pandemic response.





Andrea MacAlister, Road and Water Safety Manager in Prevention, is one of a number of colleagues who have carried out an additional role this year, as lead for the volunteer response to COVID.

About 200 colleagues have come forward to give their time in a variety of roles to support our communities and our Service, and Andrea has been an integral part of making that happen.

She said: "Colleagues have clearly demonstrated a commitment to make Essex safer over the past year. They have felt enabled and supported to get involved in various ways, including the Wellbeing Hub, volunteering, Critical Incident Team activity and recovery work.

"Our Service has supported a volunteering programme of wide-ranging activity, which allowed colleagues who were willing and able to give their time and energy.

"Our values really shone through; we worked as one team to support one another and our community through this extraordinary time. I am grateful and honoured to have been part of this team effort."





Ambulance drivers

On Easter Monday 2020, 19 on-call firefighters from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service began working as ambulance drivers with the East of England Ambulance Service, following two days of training that included blue light ambulance driving practice, equipment familiarisation and basic first aid.

These on-call firefighters came from stations and communities across Essex and were selected from more than 90 colleagues at our Service who applied to support. They were among the first firefighters to begin supporting the Ambulance Service in this way, and did so on an initial two month secondment, providing 12 hour shifts as part of a tri-partite agreement.

Within the first two weeks, two firefighters helped to deliver babies.

Adriaan Phillipsen, one of the drivers and Crew Manager at Frinton, said: "Being able to bring a little bit of joy into the world at that time of uncertainty and sadness was a great experience. The role of ambulance driver was really eye-opening and I really enjoyed it."



Marcus Bailey, Chief Operating Officer at the East of England Ambulance Service Trust, said he is grateful to our firefighters for their help during the pandemic.

He said: “The support they have provided us has been invaluable and has helped keep our patients, staff, volunteers and the wider public safe during this challenging time.”

During the second wave of the pandemic from December 2020, 12 drivers once again supported the Ambulance Service.

Between them, our on-call firefighters gave 7,770 hours and crewed more 700 ambulances in the 12 months to April this year – including one, Kevin Cope, who personally gave more than 2,000 hours of support!



Engaging with our On-Call colleagues

The wellbeing of all our colleagues is our ultimate priority. We knew our on-call firefighters would have personal issues to contend with and acknowledged we were not their ultimate priority, so our main message was always: you and your family's health and wellbeing come first.

Immediately our Occupational Health Team worked with our HR Team to produce a wellbeing leaflet. This simple guide signposted people to useful resources, ranging from mental health to financial support. A hard copy was sent out to all sites and a digital copy was sent to all staff.

Because of the nature of their roles, our on-call have historically been our hardest to reach employee group, so we needed to find ways of informing them of the latest guidance and Service information, which was changing rapidly.

Tom Rodwell, Employee Communications Manager said: "Clear and regular engagement eased anxiety and feelings of isolation and helped people navigate growing pressure – which meant a happier and healthier workforce and a better service."



#WellbeingWednesday: 'You're not alone... use this support'

27 January 2021

It's now almost four weeks into the latest national lockdown and more than 10 months since restrictions were introduced to slow the spread of COVID-19.

We've all had to adapt to changes, overcome challenges, and make ourselves a new the chest of the virus – and now we have a fight at the end of the tunnel in the form of vaccines.

But as the pandemic continues to effect all of us, we thought it would be useful to remind you what support is available from our Service and our partners.

The most important message is: please don't struggle on your own. Talk with your line manager, or whoever is most appropriate, and speak up if there is something you need. There is a huge amount of support in place, so please do reach out.

Wellbeing Support

Our Service's Wellbeing Support leaflet is a good place to start. The leaflet details what support is available and how to access it. You can download it [Wellbeing Support](#) or watch this video:



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Availability highs

Like every other fire and rescue service, we didn't know what we would be faced with at the peak of the pandemic. We prepared for every eventuality in the initial stages – bracing for a worst case of 60% operational absence, as well as scenarios of 20% and 40%. Thankfully we didn't come close to it: total sickness levels peaked at just over 10%, meaning we saw the highest availability levels in two years.

We put this down to our on-call colleagues, with many of them not at primary workplaces or working from home during lockdown – something we're hopeful will continue to some extent as more people work from home or more flexibly as the new normal takes shape.

Continuing training

After group gatherings were stopped, we had to quickly come up with an alternative for our on-call's weekly training sessions. Virtual drill nights offered an hour of remote training every week, live streamed to all on-call, and covering key operational learning including Hazmat, RTCs and Urban Search and Rescue.

All sessions were recorded and available to watch at a later date, and anyone watching live submitted real-time comments and questions. This has been so successful during lockdown that it will now continue long-term, and has

been widened out to include wholetime colleagues too. Of course, we know this will never replace practical training, but as another channel it's meant more flexibility for our on-call colleagues and continued engagement.

Continuing recruitment

Even when the world feels like it's stopped, you can't stop key activities in an organisation, and recruitment is one of these activities. On-call recruitment is an ongoing focus, but recruiting in the middle of a pandemic has its challenges, not least the lack of face-to-face events you can hold.

“This year we've seen a record number of recruits, so we've doubled our assessment days and training days – it's a record for the Service and never been done before,” said Steve Osborn, On-Call Liaison Manager.

“We've also spent the last year looking at what works well and what could be improved. We've committed to taking no more than three months to get on-call recruits through the process, this should immediately improve on-call availability. We've introduced a dedicated on-call training team and we're looking at how we can be flexible with contract hours.

“And above all, we're really taking the opportunity to listen to our colleagues through forums and steering groups, so we can understand how to continually improve the process as well as retain the talent we already have.”



Our response to COVID 19



Verne Lewis, Marketing Communications Manager for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, tells *FIRE* all about the on-call experience during the Covid-19 pandemic

Valuing the on-call firefighters in times of crisis

Al Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, our people are our service, and those people have shown a dedication to the community like no other. This is the story of our on-call colleagues, how Covid-19 affected their role and how it has shaped their future.

Engagement: Keeping Healthy, Keeping Happy
The wellbeing of all our colleagues is our ultimate priority. We knew our on-call firefighters would have personal issues to contend with and acknowledged we were not their ultimate priority, so our main message was always: you and your family's health and wellbeing come first.

Immediately our Occupational Health Team worked with our HSE Team to produce a wellbeing leaflet. This simple guide signposted people to useful resources, ranging from mental health to financial support. A hard copy was sent out to all sites and a digital copy was sent to all staff.

Because of the nature of their roles, our on-call colleagues have historically been our hardest to reach employee group, so we needed to find ways of informing them with the latest guidance and Service information, which was changing rapidly.

Tom Rodwell, Employee Communications Manager, said: "Clear and regular engagement eased anxiety and feelings of isolation and helped people navigate growing pressure – which meant a happier and healthier workforce and a better service."

"One success story was our use of Facebook Workplace – 77 per cent of on-call colleagues signed up. They were able to join a dedicated on-call group for information and guidance – particularly at a time when station access was restricted."

"There's no doubt we've faced significant challenges over the last five months, but in overcoming them we've found genuine positives and opportunities to embrace change"

Jo Turton, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive



Tillingham Fire Station

"We also used weekly livestreams for all colleagues, hosted by our Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and Critical Incident Team/Recovery lead. These could be watched using any personal or work device, anywhere – either live or at any time after. It gave people the chance to ask questions and have them answered immediately. It's something we're planning to continue even after the pandemic is over."

Our TRIM (Trauma Risk Management) continued throughout – if any operational colleague attends a difficult incident, a letter highlighting available resources is sent to their home address. They can then meet, either at social distance or remotely, with a TRIM Practitioner if necessary.

Availability Highs

Like every other fire and rescue service, we did not know what we would be faced with at the peak of the pandemic. We prepared for every eventuality in the initial stages – bracing for a worst case of 60 per cent operational absence, as well as scenarios of 30 per cent and 40 per cent. Thankfully, we did not come close to it: total sickness levels peaked at just over ten per cent, meaning we saw the highest availability levels in two years.

We put this down to our on-call colleagues, with many of them not at primary workplaces or working from home during lockdown – something we are hopeful will continue to some extent as more people work from home or more flexibly as the new normal takes shape.

Continuing Training

After group gatherings were stopped, we had to quickly come up with an alternative for our on-call's weekly training sessions. Virtual drill nights offered an hour of remote training every week, live streamed to all on-call, and covering key operational learning including tactical, RTCs and urban search and rescue.



Saffron Walden

All sessions were recorded and available to watch at a later date, and anyone watching live submitted real-time comments and questions. This has been so successful during lockdown that it will now continue long-term and has been widened out to include whole-time colleagues too. Of course, we know this will never replace practical training, but as another channel it has meant more flexibility for our on-call colleagues and continued engagement.

Supporting our Ambulance Service

For three months, 19 on-call firefighters joined NHS staff on the frontline to work as ambulance drivers, alongside East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) paramedics. In total they gave 8,350 hours and responding to an average of 4,175 emergency calls. Their work meant almost 700 extra ambulances were available during the pandemic.

Trevor Carrod is a traffic enforcement officer at Stansted Airport who has been an on-call firefighter at Braintree Fire Station for 16 years. He said: "My employer has been really supportive and enabled me to give back to communities in Essex in my on-call role as much as possible during the pandemic; they extended my furlough to enable me to continue driving ambulances."

Our partnership with the EEAST was invaluable: not only to the people of Essex but to us as a fire and rescue service. Those who look part have learned new skills that will enhance their careers. Our relationship with EEAST has never been stronger and we are excited to explore other collaborative ways of working in the future.

To acknowledge this fantastic place of work, we held a recognition event via Zoom for all 19 on-call colleagues, with several SUT members, including our CFO/ CIO and DCEO.

Recognising Value From the Start

Roger Hirst was the county's first Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and he is a strong advocate of Essex's on-call firefighters and the service they provide to all those who live, work and travel in the county.

In his *Fire and Rescue Plan*, published 18 months ago, one of Roger's priorities was to promote a positive culture in the workplace. He believes recognising the value

of on-call firefighters and improving recruitment and retention within the on-call system is key to achieving this.

Roger said: "On-call firefighters play a vital role right within the very heart of their communities and they make such a difference. The fact that many of them volunteered as ambulance drivers during the height of the pandemic to support their emergency services colleagues clearly demonstrates their commitment to helping to keep people safe."

"They enabled Essex to lead the way in terms of collaboration, providing the best possible service to the public at a very difficult and challenging time. I am extremely proud of them all."

Throughout the pandemic, the support of the OPFCC and all Essex public sector partners, as well as the NFCC, enabled us to continually navigate local issues and pressures to put the right control measures in place to prevent the spread.

Looking Forward

When things begin to return to a new normal, we will start to use the stories and lessons learned to encourage new people to join our service. With community spirit flourishing and working days looking so different, we hope we may be able to use this to create a successful recruitment campaign across the county.

In the meantime, our current on-call colleagues continue to be some of the unsung heroes of our story. Continuing to protect their communities and support our service alongside the rest of their day-to-day commitments.

In Turton, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, said: "There's no doubt we've faced significant challenges over the last five months, but in overcoming them we've found genuine positives and opportunities to embrace change."

"It's been inspiring to see the way on-call colleagues have stepped up, whether that's in the increased availability they've given, their willingness to embrace new ways of working or their volunteering within the community. I couldn't be prouder of each and every one of them."

"We've worked so hard during this time to respond to the changing needs of our workforce. I'm so excited to continue to harvest these ideas and actions to ensure we're an inclusive workplace that stays ahead of the game."

Credit: FIRE magazine | September 2020

Valuing our people

During the pandemic, our people overcame significant challenges and went beyond the call of duty to keep their communities and each other safe.

COVID-19 and the associated restrictions meant they'd had to sacrifice a lot, but we were determined that they would not miss out on the deserved recognition that underpins so much of what we do on a regular basis.

From firefighters who had just completed their training to colleagues who had given decades of dedication, we have always been passionate about valuing our people – and the pandemic reminded us just how vital that is.

It meant that we had to innovate, be flexible and adapt to the changing circumstances and - for the first time - use virtual means to bring people together safely.

In February 2021, we hosted our inaugural virtual Long Service and Good Conduct Awards via Zoom. 26 colleagues from both operational and support backgrounds joined on the night, many of whom were accompanied by their families, having been delivered their medals or awards in advance along with a hamper. Nine colleagues were honoured for an incredible 40-plus years' service.

Our Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Police Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, as well as several Service Leadership Team colleagues, joined them for a special evening.

Then in April, we hosted our first ever virtual wholetime passout ceremony at our Service Training Centre in Witham. Producing a digital programme and inviting families and colleagues to join the event during continuing COVID restrictions, our Corporate Communications team led the event.

The parade and a full road traffic collision drill was streamed with commentary, along with speeches from our hosts and presentations of certificates to all 16 firefighters.

Tom Rodwell, Employee Communications Manager, said: "Whether at the very beginning or decades into their career, we've always been passionate about recognising our people.

"These events had always been popular in person and we were determined that even in the most difficult periods of the pandemic, we looked for the opportunities."

The wholetime passout ceremony is available on our Service's official YouTube channel.

Doing things differently

As a fire and rescue service, face to face activity is at the heart of what we do. Whether that's attending incidents, meeting our community, delivering education or welcoming new recruits.

Two major changes the Service quickly implemented when face-to-face no longer an option as was moving education and recruitment online.

Education hub

Almost immediately our Education Officers recorded lessons they would usually deliver in schools to make them accessible to parents and carers home schooling children as well as sharing them with schools.

On 2 April 2020 the Education Hub launched, immediately gaining popularity and views. Between April 2020 – March 2021 it gained 13,853 views.

Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, said: "This was a great innovation that was delivered quickly and at a time when parents and careers really needed new resources to help their children continue with their learning."

Since then the team have continued to record lessons as well as deliver sessions virtually as pupils returned to the classroom.

Recruitment

When it came to recruitment, the Service knew it was another priority that couldn't be put on hold. On-call recruitment is ongoing and wholetime recruitment was due to launch within a few months.

Firefighter recruits are used to meeting people as part of the process – they want to see what the role is like rather than just read about it. And they need to be inspired by those who already do what they are considering.

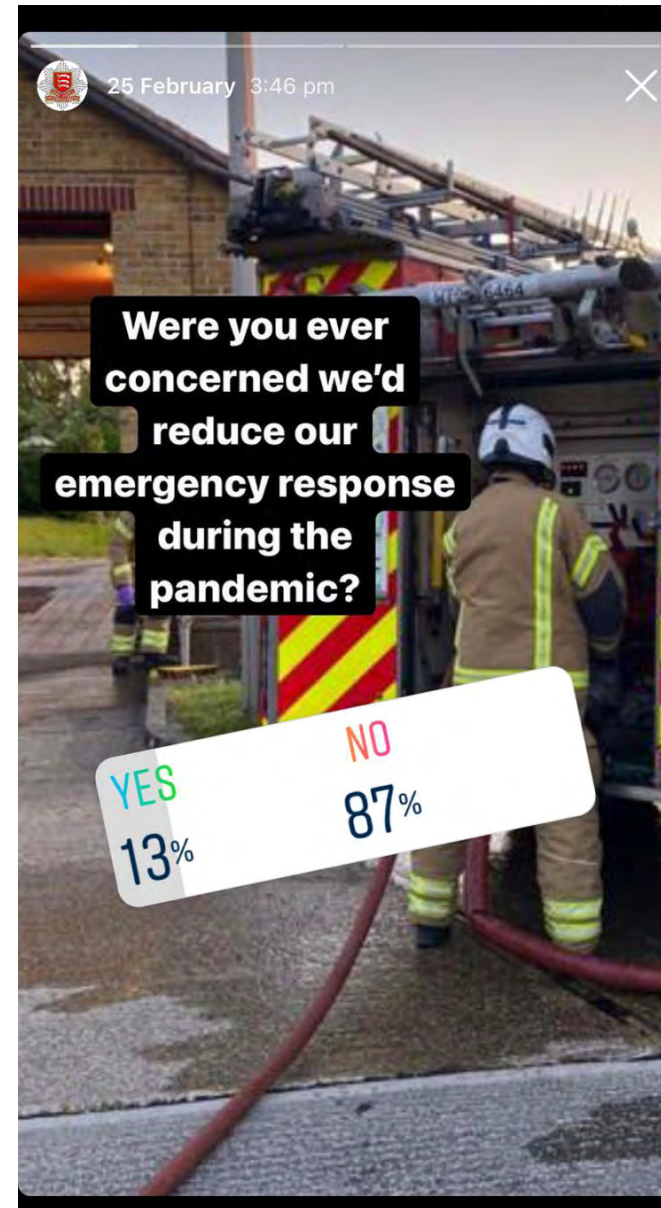
So a group of people from across ECFRS set to work. Building on the recruitment campaigns, which had already included case studies and videos from a diverse group of Essex firefighters, they directly challenged outdated myths. This was supported by the creation of a dedicated Facebook group to start building an inclusive and engaged community that could communicate regardless of where they were.

"You can't be what you can't see," said Station Manager Dave Bond, who had the idea of hosting a live stream 'meet our firefighters' Q&A session.

“That’s why we wanted to get a group of our wholetime and on-call firefighters to tell their stories and give our audience the opportunity to meet them, regardless of whether Covid-19 was throwing barriers in the way. We worked out it was just as effective to do this online, via Microsoft Teams.

“We wanted our sessions to feel intimate. To replicate a closed event, where the focus is entirely on the people who are there, was our priority. We felt giving the small groups the chance to ask whatever questions they wanted, and our firefighters and support colleagues the opportunity to be transparent and open with their responses, was invaluable.”

Overall, almost 300 members of the public attended the sessions, with one saying “It was the best way to spend an evening if you’re interested in becoming a wholetime firefighter. Meeting firefighters very quickly turned into meeting real, ordinary people with extraordinary lives.”



Essex Unites

Reassuring our communities, and providing up to date and timely information and advice has never been so needed. Uniting the Greater Essex voice through a shared narrative across fire, police, health and county council partners through a partnership approach with BBC Essex enabled us to help keep our communities safe, and cut through the misinformation.

Through a regular radio drive time slot, over 50 people were interviewed throughout the pandemic, from the Essex Resilience Chairs (ECFRS and Essex Police), to religious leaders, volunteers, charity workers, doctors and nurses, political leaders and those leading community initiatives.



There was one clear vision: to unite Essex, reassure the public, and give clear asks of our communities to help us.

Led by the Essex Communicators Group, all public sector organisations came together as part of a shared narrative.

Emily Cheyne, Assistant Director of Corporate Communications for ECFRS and co-chair of Essex Communications Group said:

“Partnering with a high trusted channel like BBC Essex enabled us to reach and engage with our communities across Essex. We demonstrated that Essex is united, and we brought key stakeholders together to reassure our public with regular and transparent updates.

“We used the platform to ask for help too, with a strong response to requests for volunteers through our Essex Welfare Services.”

Louise Birt, Managing Editor for BBC Essex said:

“Essex Unites proved invaluable to BBC Essex because we were able to inform our audience about aspects of the fight against Covid, which wouldn’t necessarily have made it to air in any other form.



“Sometimes the problem with “news” is that the bar is quite high to get into programmes, whereas public information is important to our listeners and needs to be relayed. For example, early on in the pandemic, we spoke to two volunteers who were helping to prepare a school for the return of pupils by moving furniture.

“I felt it really brought the collaborative nature of the Resilience Forum into sharp relief. We also trailed Essex Unites heavily in our programming so that the work of the ERF was being talked up day in, day out.

“I know from correspondence received that our audience appreciated having regular updates from those involved across all public bodies, whether it was Essex County Council, health trusts, fire or police.



HMICFRS

We were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in October 2020 as part of an inspection into how fire and rescue services were responding to Covid-19, as they continued to face challenges during a difficult period.

In an official letter received in January 2021, the inspectors praised ECFRS for being well prepared, the support it offered to partners, maintenance of its core services and putting the welfare of its staff at the heart of decisions and activities.

ECFRS received notable feedback in the following areas:

Preparation

The inspectors said business continuity plans were well developed and enabled ECFRS to respond quickly.

Statutory duties

The work of frontline firefighters, community safety officers, fire protection staff, water services, training staff and fleet and central stores, all underpinned by support services, meant ECFRS was able to maintain the delivery of statutory duties. There was particular reference to targeted and risk assessed approach to prevention and protection work.

Wellbeing

Inspectors said wellbeing and safety was a clear ECFRS priority and firefighters' core competence was maintained. Additionally, 93% of colleagues who completed an all-staff survey said they felt supported and appreciated.

Partnership working

Partnership has been vital throughout the pandemic and ECFRS was praised for the work they put into this. Inspectors noted the additional activities ECFRS carried out, including driving ambulances, delivering PPE and medical supplies, providing driving instructor training and packing food supplies. This was alongside its role in the Essex Resilience Forum and Strategic Coordination Group through the staffing of the Multi Agency Information Cell.

New ways of working

Inspectors praised how quickly new ICT solutions were put into practice and how well ECFRS adapted to remote working to ensure that essential support services could be maintained.

Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive, Jo Turton, said:

"We continually work to reassure our public that regardless of what is happening we will always be there for them in an emergency. We're also so passionate about our prevention work and know this is a priority to keeping people safe in their homes."

Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, said: “There’s some really positive feedback from this inspection that echoes what I’ve seen our Service deliver during this pandemic.

“HMICFRS has recognised our commitment to our core services and staff wellbeing throughout this difficult time, in addition to going above and beyond in the way it supported other emergency services and public sector organisations.

“The inspectorate’s findings reflect the Service’s hard work and the culture we now have. I am incredibly proud of our fire service as are the residents of Essex. Feedback from our regular public engagement meetings has been nothing but praise.”



Statutory responsibilities

As a Fire and Rescue Service we have legal responsibilities under multiple pieces of legislation. We aim here to explain what responsibilities fall under which piece of legislation.

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

The Act replaced the Fire Services Act 1948 with a new legislative framework to ensure fire and rescue services were better able to meet the particular challenges of the 21st century.

The Act clarifies the duties and powers of fire authorities to:

- Promote fire safety
- Fight fires
- Protect people and property from fires
- Rescue people from road traffic incidents
- Deal with other specific emergencies, such as flooding and terrorist attacks
- Do other things to respond to the particular needs of their communities and the risks they face.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Under Part One of the Act, emergency services and local authorities (defined as Category One responders) have a legal obligation to assess risk, plan and exercise for emergencies and undertake business continuity management

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England. It was updated in May 2018.

The priorities within the framework are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks their areas face
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- Be accountable to communities for the services they provide
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 replaces most fire safety legislation with one simple order. It means that any person who has some level of control within a premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk

from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire. The Order applies to virtually all buildings, places and structures other than individual private dwellings, for example a family home or individual flats in a block.

Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007

This outlines the additional statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for fire authorities.

The duty requires authorities, where provision of resources has been made by central government, to respond to incidents both within and outside the authority area involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear hazards (CBRN) and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR).

Localism Act 2011

The aim of the Localism Act was to devolve more decision making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils.

The Act covers a wide range of issues related to local public services, with a particular focus on the general power of competence, community rights, neighbourhood planning and housing.

The key measures of the Act were grouped under four main headings:

- New freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- New rights and powers for communities and individuals
- Reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- Reform to ensure decisions about housing are taken locally.

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- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks their areas face
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the

- efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- Be accountable to communities for the services they provide
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Equality Act 2010

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Service must have due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristic groups.

Our objectives, published in-line with The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010, are:

- To improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development and experience of the people employed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to enable the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice.
- To promote and encourage employees to voluntarily declare their self-classification diversity data to ensure ECFRS actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.
- To improve the mapping, quality and extent of equality information in order to better facilitate compliance with the public sector equality duty in relation to service delivery including IRMP additional activities.

- To review the equality impact of key organisational policies for differential impact in areas such as recruitment and selection, learning and development, absence management, modified duties, talent management, appraisal, disciplinary and grievance.
- To ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying by changing the culture of the organisation to one that is genuinely inclusive. All employees are high performing because we value their differences, which includes gender or gender identity, race, or religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy, caring responsibilities or membership of a trade union.
- To seek external review, challenge and accreditation of ECFRS' actions as an employer by actively participating with relevant equalities standards and benchmarks including the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

These objectives were adopted on 1 March 2018. They were approved by the Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group and are in place until 28 February 2022.

We last reviewed these as part of creating our People Strategy 2020-24. The objectives are reflected in our People Strategy.

Data Protection Act 2018

The Act is a complete data protection system, so as well as governing general data covered by the GDPR, it covers all other general data, law enforcement data and national security data.

The Act exercises a number of agreed modifications to the GDPR to make it work for the benefit of the UK in areas such as academic research, financial services and child protection. The Act aims to:

- Make our data protection laws fit for the digital age in which an ever increasing amount of data is being processed
- Empower people to take control of their data
- Support UK businesses and organisations through the change
- Ensure that the UK is prepared for the future now we have left the EU

Health and Safety at Work Act

Our Service recognises and accepts the responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of our employees and undertakes to protect people, assets and the communities in which we work.

To achieve this, we meet all relevant requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (together with all other statutory provisions associated with it) and supports staff in meeting their obligations under the act.

Detailed health, safety and welfare specific arrangements, based on the Health and Safety Executive's methodology, are set out in our Health and Safety Policy and associated framework of policies, which take relevant legislation, guidance and industry best practice into account.

The policies provide employees with relevant and comprehensive information on the risks they face and the preventative and protective measures required to minimise them.

Quarterly inspections are carried out on all our premises and any defects are reported and monitored until completed.

There is a shared common understanding of the Service's mission, values and beliefs and a positive health and safety culture is fostered by the visible and active leadership of Senior Managers.

Our Health and Safety Team continually develops and improves systems for monitoring and improving the effectiveness of our Health and Safety Management Systems. These processes include peer Health and Safety Audits.

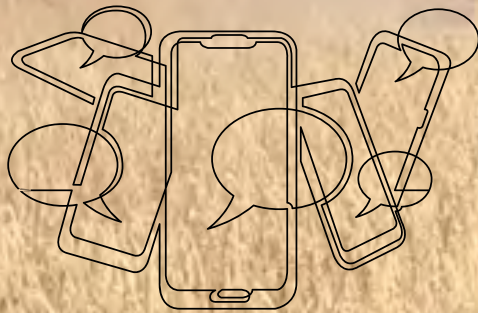
A productive relationship has been established between the Health and Safety Trade Union Safety Representatives and the Health and Safety Team.

Feedback and recognition

Feedback

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is fully committed to providing the highest possible levels of service to the communities in Essex.

In 2019/20 we reviewed and updated our compliments and complaints and whistle-blowing policies. This in part was to adapt our policy to incorporate our new Governance arrangements but also to ensure that members of the public had clear information on how they could complain to us and what level of service they could expect when they did.



Getting in touch

If you would like to send us your feedback please
email: compliments.complaints@essex-fire.gov.uk
or call: 0300 303 5555.

Compliments

We love to know when you have received especially good service from us.

This feedback is useful because it helps us to learn about the things we are doing right, so we can make sure we carry on doing those things in the future.

Complaints

Sometimes things do go wrong. Hearing about times when we've not met your expectations helps us to improve the service we provide.

In 2020/21 we received 50 complaints, and responded to 81% of those within the 20 day target.

We will always make sure your complaint is dealt with quickly, fairly and consistently.

Helpful links

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website:
www.essex-fire.gov.uk

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue
Services
(HMICFRS)
www.essex-fire.gov.uk/hmicfrs

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-and-rescue-national-frameworkfor-england

IRMP
https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/About_Us/Our_Strategy

Fire and Rescue Plan
https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/About_Us/Our_Strategy







