

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) Quarter 1 Performance Report
2019/20

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Report title: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) Quarter 1 Performance Report 2019/20	
Report to: Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel	
Report author: Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner	
Date: 24 October 2019	For: Noting
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report sets out the performance of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) during Quarter 1 of 2019/20 against a number of key metrics aligned to the Fire and Rescue Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Panel notes the content of the report, identifying any areas requiring further clarification or comment.

3. Background

- 3.1 The full performance report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 In terms of highlights:
- Essex has seen a 4% reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires in Quarter 1 of 2019/20 compared with the same period the previous year, and the rate of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population remains below the national average. In line with national trends, cooking continues to be the most common cause of accidental dwelling fires in Essex, followed by combustible articles being placed too close to a heat source and faulty equipment. The Home safety Team is working with operational colleagues to introduce a process to govern the provision of flame retardant bedding to residents who are at risk of fire at home, who are bed or chair bound and who smoke. The Home Safety Team has also introduced a new digital referral system,

which will enable managers to understand and share with frontline staff the number of additional referrals generated through Safe, Well and Secure Visits. This will particularly help the service to understand what additional help and services it is linking people in with and whether there is anything more it could do in this regard, especially in respect of individuals who are more vulnerable to injury in the event of an accidental dwelling fire. A new evaluation process for Home Safety and Safe, Well and Secure Visits is also to be introduced, which will follow up with a proportion of recipients three months after a visit to check whether the impacts are being sustained.

- The number of false alarms and unwanted fire signals reduced slightly (by 1% and 3% respectively) in Quarter 1 of this financial year compared with the same time last year, demonstrating the positive impact of continued awareness raising work.
- The number of people killed or seriously injured on Essex roads during the 12 months to the end of June 2019 was 9% lower than during the previous 12 months. The service's capacity to assist with local road safety initiatives has recently been increased, allowing additional road safety deployments and engagements to take place.
- The review and simplification of the appraisal process has increased the proportion of end of year appraisals completed markedly, from 68% to 93%. Now that completion rates have increased, the service recognises the need to do more work to assess the quality of appraisal discussions and to collate the outcomes for business planning and staff development purposes.

3.3 In terms of areas for improvement:

- The rate of deliberate secondary fires has increased but remains below the national average. Essex saw 29% more deliberate secondary fires in Quarter 1 of 2019/20 than during the same period the previous year, with the majority of these affecting grassland, woodland and crops.
- The total number of injuries sustained in fires was 35% higher in Quarter 1 of this financial year than during the same period last year, with the number of injuries sustained in accidental dwelling fires being 38% higher. However Essex remains below the national average for injury and fatal accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population.
- Overall appliance availability for the rolling 12 months to the end of June 2019 reduced from 85% to 82% but is in line with the national average. Within this, the service saw a slight increase in the

availability of whole-time appliances (from 96% to 97%) but a 5% reduction in the availability of on-call appliances. Where appliances are unavailable, this is most commonly due to a shortage of riders. On-call availability has been affected by recruitment challenges, especially in areas with more transient populations, as well as by on-call fire fighters joining whole-time stations. On-call support managers were recruited in June 2019 and have started actively to address these challenges. The service is also aware of the need to update its leave policy and process for booking time off in lieu on watches in order to maximise availability and ridership.

- Linked to this, attendance times remain outside of target. Work is ongoing to reduce call handling times in order to improve attendance times. Response times are also discussed at group and station manager supervision meetings and improvements are beginning to be seen at the larger stations, which will impact positively on the overall figures if sustained.
- The service's overall sickness absence rate continues to be high compared with other fire and rescue services and public sector comparators. The HR department is continuing to work positively and proactively with line managers to identify where attendance falls short of the expected standards and to manage this in accordance with the service's Attendance Management Policy. During Quarter 1, 33 new attendance cases were opened and 16 were closed. The average time taken to close those cases was 101 days.

4. Background papers

Appendix 1 – Essex County Fire and Rescue Service – Quarterly Performance - Quarter One 2019/20