

Focus on Your Safety

A Strategy for helping people in Kent and Medway to stay safe

2013/17

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Introduction

Kent Fire and Rescue Service's aim is to save lives and reduce risk¹. This strategy is about helping you to prevent emergencies when you are at home or travelling in Kent or Medway. When you get to work, or visit a commercial building as a potential customer, we still care about your safety. How we help to keep you safe in these buildings is set out in our 'Focus on Business' strategy.

In this strategy we focus on prevention from three types of emergency:

- Fires in the home or outside
- Road traffic collisions
- Flooding in the home or across broad areas, and incidents involving water

This strategy outlines the research and activities that support our aspirations to help you reduce risk in your daily life and stay safe. Chapter one describes how we began our prevention work in the mid 1990s. Chapter two describes how we seek to understand the communities we serve across Kent and Medway. Chapter three summarises this information into key issues, and chapter four sets out how we will aim to deal with them in the future through various approaches and campaigns.

The document is intended to be for our partners, our auditors, interested members of the public and our own staff. Where we have used a technical term, we have defined it in a footnote.

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¹ Risk is the combination of factors that add up to the likelihood of an incident in an area.

Chapter one: How our approach to promoting safety developed

Our approach to promoting safety in Kent and Medway started in 1997 and was called 'Making Kent Safer'. We realised that we needed to stop fires before they started. And to do this, we recognised that we needed to interact with the community and reduce risk among vulnerable people through education. This was an early informal example of an impact assessment². At this time there was no statutory duty³ for us to engage in fire prevention. However we knew this was the right thing to do, so we carried on doing it.

The Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on Fire and Rescue Services to undertake prevention work. This was further developed in 2004 when we published our first Integrated Risk Management Plan (now called the Safety Plan). More resources were committed to prevention work and we developed our first Community Safety Strategy. This evolved into a County-wide strategic assessment of risk, with local delivery plans.

We believe this approach has played a significant part in making people in Kent and Medway much safer than they were in 2003/04 (see **Box 1**, below).

Box 1: Positive outcomes from prevention work

- A reduction in all types of fire of 56%. This means 7,746 fewer fires in 2011/12 than in 2003/04;
- A reduction in the number of deliberate fires of 69%. This means 6,589 fewer fires in 2011/12 than in 2003/04;
- A reduction in the number of accidental fires of 27%. This means 1,157 fewer fires in 2011/12 than in 2003/04;
- A reduction in the number of accidental fires in people's homes of 22%. This means 195 fewer fires in 2011/12 than in 2003/04;
- A reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on Kent and Medway's roads of 39%. This means there were 367 fewer people killed or seriously injured in 2011 than in 2003.

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² A process by which local authorities assess the actions they want to take against the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which seeks to stop discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

³ A statutory duty is an action which is specified in law and must be carried out by a particular government body. For Fire and Rescue Services, the statutory duties are to promote fire safety; and to prepare for fighting fires and protecting people and property from fires, rescuing people from road traffic accidents; dealing with other specific emergencies; and to take 999 emergency calls.

Community safety is at the heart of what we do as an emergency service. We have a range of services available to help make people safer, which are available for free at the point of need⁴ (see **Box 2**, below). We focus our resources to reduce the highest risks.

Box 2: Examples of safety services provided

- **Home Safety Visits**: between April 2009 and August 2012 we completed 43,128 Home Safety Visits with 64,279 smoke alarms fitted;
- Visits to the most vulnerable people by a specialist team: between October 2010 and August 2012 we completed 3,684 visits;
- Work with identified 'firesetters': between February 2011 and August 2012, we worked with 546 firesetters, often referred to us by other agencies;
- **School visits**: between April 2009 and August 2012 we completed 3,948 school visits, seeing 236,682 students;
- Youth engagement: provided through targeted youth courses using firefighters as role models, such as Firefighting Chance, Climbing Fit and Firefighter Challenge.

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⁴ All the activities performed by Kent Fire and Rescue Service are funded through the collection of Council Tax, or through Government grant. We do not currently charge for any safety services at the point of service.

Chapter two: Understanding our environment

Using data

We collect and analyse data from all of the incidents we attend. We also use other data to understand and respond to risk. For example, we use a marketing tool to understand how particular social groups tend to behave. By cross-referencing this data with real incidents we can predict which groups of people are most at risk from the three emergency types (in the home, on the road and in or near water) on which this document focuses. This information is then used to target community safety work to people that might need it.

Working with partners to build a picture of risk

All twelve Community Safety Partnerships in Kent and Medway produce strategic assessments. They set out where the Police and local authorities should target their resources to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. We have supported their development and highlighted the areas where we can help identify and address risks. For example, we have shown that there is a link between rubbish fires and other anti-social behaviour. Working with Community Safety Partnerships we have reduced the number of deliberate fires considerably, from xxxx in 2003/04 to xxxx in 2012/13.

Conducting our own research

Below are four examples of research which help build a picture of risk in the County:

County-wide strategic assessment: In 2010/11 we produced our first county-wide strategic assessment. This gives a community profile of the people living in the area and helped us to build a picture of the County. Firefighters were also asked to think about the risk in their areas and set local priorities to address these risks. The risks identified locally were then added to our assessment. In this way, the academic research was validated on the ground by those closest to the local community.

Human behaviour: Innovative research into the human behaviour of people who have fires in the home is currently being conducted. This research is a world first as there is, perhaps surprisingly, no research into how people behave in fires at home, but lots for how they behave in commercial buildings. This has already produced some interesting findings and challenges our assumption that people "'get out, stay out and call the fire service out". We now know that often people don't do this. We are sharing findings as they are produced with other fire and rescue services to inform national campaigns as well as local activity. We want to ensure that the advice we provide to you is effective and will be followed if the worst happens.

The ABOUT toolkit: The strategic assessment for Kent and Medway and local plans include a detailed profile of the local community. These profiles identify the highest risks in an area. However, it is difficult to maintain this quantity of information and it is recognised that it can be almost too much information to take account of at a local level.

We are developing a new tool called ABOUT (the Area Based Overview User Toolkit). This will provide managers and staff with a wide range of area-based data and supporting analysis to identify and assess risks. It will provide staff with an interactive tool which will enable them to select geographical areas and types of data and will always be kept up to date.

Meeting your changing needs: We also think there are key times in your life when you may become more vulnerable and may need our advice or one of our services. This could be if you have experienced having an emergency in your home, like a fire, or even a near miss in the car which makes you want to seek help or reassurance (see **Box 3**, below).

Box 3: the key times in your life when the Fire and Rescue Service can influence behaviour

- Early in your education when you are in key stages one and two;
- At key stage four, when you start to think about learning to drive;
- When you leave school and choose to live more independently;
- When you start to drive;
- When you have children;
- When you buy or rent your home;
- If you have specific needs or a disability;
- As you get older or become infirm or less able to look after yourself;
- When you live alone.

Chapter three: The key issues in Kent and Medway

We have identified the following key issues:

An ageing population: Life expectancy and the proportion of the population over 65 are both increasing with a related rise in mobility problems and disability. People are being encouraged to live independently rather than relying on care provision and this can make some of these people more at risk from fire.

Mental health issues: Research suggests that the number of people with mental health problems is also increasing. We are the lead fire service on a national project responding to the Prime Minister's dementia challenge. This project intends to ensure that we all raise the awareness of the fire risks in the homes of people with dementia, and provide effective prevention advice for families and carers.

Deprivation issues: Our research shows that the risk of fire increases with a rise in deprivation. In addition, there is a growing transient population in the little-regulated private rented housing market and some of these properties are in poor condition. Recent joint operations with local housing authorities have helped make some of these buildings safer but we are concerned that we do not know the full scale of the problem. There are also some vulnerable people who live in otherwise affluent areas, who are 'property rich but cash poor'. We believe these people are also at greater risk from fire than their neighbours.

Domestic abuse: Recent tragic cases have shown us how fire can be used as a weapon. Domestic abuse sadly seems to be an increasing issue and when it involves fire the outcomes can be devastating. We are committed to working with the community to help those at risk from arson and have increased the size of our vulnerable people team.

Road safety: more traffic is likely to be on the roads in the future, although this in itself may not translate into more accidents. However, we have identified that young drivers are at more risk of being involved in an accident.

Chapter four: Dealing with the key issues in Kent and Medway

Over the next five years we will keep redesigning our services as new information or ways of engaging with people emerge. Our focus will remain on improving the safety of people in Kent and Medway and we want to provide people with the information and skills that minimise the impact of such events.

Focusing on individual needs

We want to focus on providing the support you need and where possible this should be specific to your individual needs. We would much rather prevent an accident from occurring, although we will continue to provide an excellent emergency response if you need us (see the *Responding to Emergencies* Strategy for more information on this). But if a fire or other emergency does occur, we want to minimise the severity of injuries and property damage it causes. So, for example, we want to make sure you know what to do if you discover a fire in your home.

Factors which can lead to vulnerability to fires in the home include old age, infirmity, being on medication, mobility impairments, mental health issues, dementia, domestic abuse, chaotic lifestyles, deprivation, hoarding and also the quality of a person's housing. However, a person who has one of these factors is not necessarily at risk. Risk tends to occur when these factors are combined.

To respond to these factors, and the various combinations that might create risk, we provide three levels of safety information to the public:

- Universal (low or no specific identified risk) these services are available for all, usually via our website;
- Targeted (medium risk) these services are provided to a specific section of the community who, due to a range of factors, may be at generally higher risk; and
- Specialist (high-risk) these services are typically provided to an identified individual or small group due to known and specific risk/s.

When a significant risk is identified we use our specialist resources to try to reduce it, and aim to ensure that any reduction in risk is maintained. This is important as we know that people who die or are injured in fires are generally those who are vulnerable in some way.

The majority of our community safety resources are provided for fire prevention (around 50%), with another 40% going to road safety and the remaining 10% to water safety, a relatively new area for us.

We also recognise that the people at greatest risk are often the ones who are hardest to reach. Although there is still a need for a universal message in some instances, it is likely that our approaches will become increasingly more focused and based on the risks identified.

The human behaviour research has provided information on the experiences of people who have been faced with a fire in their home. Our challenge will be to apply the knowledge gained from this research and develop new, easy to remember, safety messages. We will know if we are successfully helping those at greatest risk by measuring how many people suffer injuries or are killed in fires in the home, and by how much this reduces over the life of this strategy.

Promoting safety – engagement, communications and campaigns

Sustained behavioural change which encourages people to take the right safety decisions is an effective way of reducing risk. By better understanding our communities, we are able to target different audiences and tailor our messages.

We have traditionally seen engagement⁵ as passing information to the public, for example handing out leaflets at a public event. We are looking to develop our engagement activity to change behaviour, informed by a better understanding of our target groups through feedback.

To achieve this, we will improve engagement with key groups by:

- having clarity on how we gather and use existing intelligence to inform our understanding of particular groups, issues and risks before embarking on engagement activity;
- using this knowledge to develop engagement plans;
- agreeing Service-wide priorities for our engagement activity;
- having a focused approach to measuring and evaluating our engagement activity;
- ensuring that staff delivering engagement activity have clear objectives and the necessary skills to achieve them;
- being clear about how we will evaluate projects and activities to ensure we learn which methods of engagement and practical support work meet people's needs.

Customer Service

We want to provide the best possible service to anyone who needs to contact us with a query, whether by telephone, in writing or online. The most cost-efficient way of handling

⁵ Public engagement is the active participation of members of the public, service users or customers in service planning, delivery and evaluation. Effective public engagement leads to decisions, delivery and evaluation of services that have been shaped by the relevant people and communities.

queries is by having a list of 'frequently asked questions' available on our website. We will be looking to develop these in the first year of this strategy. For others who prefer to telephone, or who have slightly more complex queries, we are investigating how we can best handle their calls.

New technology offers new ways of engaging, and improved opportunities to reach traditionally hard to reach groups, such as young people and some minority ethnic groups. We are particularly interested in smart phone technology and how this allows people to engage with us wherever they are. This is a fast-moving field and we must remain aware of progress so we can make informed decisions about what is useful for us to adopt.

We will continue to engage with the public and listen to any requests for information. We are improving our website to ensure it provides information which is easy to access and understand. We will also use social media, such as Twitter and Facebook.

We will know we are being successful by measuring our customer satisfaction levels through the After the Incident survey, by measuring how well we deal with complaints, and by always responding to Freedom of Information⁶ requests within 20 working days.

Working in partnership with others

We are working with partners on the Government's '*Troubled Families*' initiative⁷. Troubled families are those that have difficulties and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector. The Government is committed to working with local authorities and their partners to help 120,000 troubled families in England turn their lives around by 2015. The Government wants to ensure the children in these families have the chance of a better life, and at the same time bring down the cost to the taxpayer. We support this aspiration and, as we potentially have easier access to some people than other parts of the public sector, will do all we reasonably can to help troubled families turn their lives around.

The partnership landscape is complex and continues to change. We will re-evaluate what partnership forums we support. We are also reviewing some jobs to ensure we are able to support and develop partnerships with local authorities, the Police and other agencies. We lead the Margate Task Force, which is a multi-agency approach to dealing with significant issues in two wards in the Margate area. The Task Force has recently won two awards for

⁶ Under the Freedom of Information Act, the public has the right to request information from public bodies, and if held, this must be released to them within 20 working days, unless doing so would breach other legislation, such as national security or the Data Protection Act. More information about the Freedom of Information Act and our approach to it is available on our website.

⁷ For more information on the Troubled Families programme please visit https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-troubled-families-turn-their-lives-around

innovation and reducing levels of benefit fraud. We also chair the Kent Community Safety Team⁸ and the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Group⁹. It is not likely that we will want to step away from these key partnerships.

We will be exploring how we might commission¹⁰ other agencies to deliver work on our behalf. We will also publicise what services and 'products' we offer. These can then be commissioned by other agencies, for example as a way to meet the Troubled Families challenge.

Water Safety

In 2000 the World Health Organisation estimated that over 400,000 people drowned, which makes it the second highest cause of unintentional death globally after road traffic collisions. In the UK 420 people drowned in 2010. We rescue people who have got into difficulties in and around water. We have produced a water safety plan that identifies the work we undertake to prevent deaths and injuries.

This is a relatively new area of preventative work for us and research shows this is an increasing risk with more people using inland water areas for recreation. The risk peaks in the summer and we incorporate water safety messages in our seasonal summer campaign targeted at schools and youth groups.

We will know how successfully we are preventing incidents like these by measuring how many incidents we attend, and what the outcome was. Our aspiration is that by 2020, from the incidents we might reasonably be expected to attend in an emergency, there will be no fatalities and far fewer injuries in water-related incidents¹¹.

Helping you during and after an emergency

We know that the consequences of a fire, road accident or other emergency can be severe and that is why we put so much effort into prevention. Our aspiration is that by 2020 there are zero deaths and far fewer injuries from fires. We know that this will be difficult to achieve and maintain but it shouldn't be impossible. In 2010/11 no one died in an accidental house

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⁸ The Kent Community Safety Team comprises Kent County Council, district councils, Kent Police, Kent Probation Services and Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

⁹ The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Group comprises Kent County Council, Medway Council, district councils, Kent Police, some voluntary sector organisations and Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

¹⁰ Commissioning is a process by which services are delivered on behalf of one organisation by another, but stops short of fully outsourcing the service

¹¹ This aspiration is deliberately worded as we do not attend all drownings. The Police have their own capability to deal with such incidents and where they arrive first at the incident, might choose not to request the attendance of the fire and rescue service.

fire in Kent and Medway but sadly most years that is not the case. Although in recent years the number of people injured each year in fires has not reduced significantly we are encouraged by the fact that the severity of injuries has reduced. However, accidents will still happen and we want to provide the best possible service when they do. How we intend to improve the way we respond to emergencies is covered in more detail in the *Responding to Emergencies* Strategy.

Knowledge gained through the human behaviour research project has identified that people that have a fire in their home don't follow the advice of 'get out, stay out and call the fire service out'. People have a strong inclination to try to save their pets or personal possessions, and use the gap between making a 999 call and the arrival of a fire engine to go back into their home. Therefore, our staff who take 999 calls will try to keep callers on the line so we know they are safe and to get more information to help the firefighters travelling to the incident. We will continue to measure how quickly we answer calls, and how quickly we then dispatch a fire engine or other vehicle to the incident. We will also assess how effective our work at the incident was through our quality assurance process, which is described in the **Responding to Emergencies** Strategy.

Having a fire in your home is very distressing, and we think we can play an important role in supporting people afterwards, as well as dealing with the fire itself. We know that we can provide greater post-incident support for incidents we attend and we intend to explore how we can use our volunteers to provide this service to people who suffer a fire to help them recover and return to normality. We also want to look at how we support the rehabilitation of people who suffer fire injuries. We will also continue to work with the British Red Cross to provide emergency clothing and shelter at incidents when required.

Targeting Home Safety Visits

The percentage of people we visit with our home safety service who are 'above average and well above average' risk is just over 50%. We want to increase this so that in the future around 70% of our visits are to people with an above average risk of having a fire in their home. Partner agencies equally target vulnerable households for similar issues. This provides an opportunity to work together to provide common safety advice.

Another area that can lead to death in the home is carbon monoxide poisoning. We currently supply carbon monoxide alarms to those vulnerable people who would benefit. However, we will be reviewing the advice we give about this, and to whom.

Extending the Volunteering Scheme

We have a successful volunteering scheme and we would now like to expand it further. For example, we'd like to:

- increase the number of 'Firewatch¹²' schemes across Kent and Medway
- Place volunteers with mobile library services to obtain home safety visit referrals.
- Provide support, advice and reassurance to victims of fire in their homes
- Create volunteer roles at the new road safety centre (see below)
- Sharing our volunteers with other organisations.

Developing our education provision

Provision for schools: Our primary school programme focuses on home fire safety. Our secondary school programme focuses on arson and criminal damage from fire as well as road safety. We will review what road safety education we provide in schools and at our new road safety centre at Rochester.

We will incorporate any new safety messages arising from the human behaviour research, as well as water safety advice. We are aware that students will spend longer at school in the years to come and this is something we may need to cater for in the future. We will measure the satisfaction of schools with the programmes we offer, and will formally recognise through our awards scheme young people who have acted upon our advice in helping to prevent fires and injuries.

Road safety: We are building a specialist road safety centre next to our new fire station in Rochester. The centre will deliver high quality road safety education in an interactive style. It will initially be targeted at school and college students but in the future could be used for a variety of different initiatives. The centre will provide an auditorium, themed learning zones and interactive installations. The learning ethos will be based on choices and consequences, and will be aimed at students thinking about their actions and how the decisions they make could impact on themselves and others. In the future we'd like to share resources with road safety partners, and be commissioned to undertake driver diversionary courses¹³.

Our road safety work has focused on young drivers as they are the group most at risk of being killed or seriously injured. We have staff with strong communications skills for engagement with young people and we will utilise their experience in the centre as well as developing a number of volunteer roles.

Our vision is that the centre will become the hub for high-quality road safety education, will become self funding and will have a significant impact in reducing death and injury on the roads. We will measure how well we are doing by measuring the number of people killed or

¹² 'Firewatch' is a scheme to support parish councils on local fire safety matters, the availability of fire hydrants in their area and identifying vulnerable people or other concerns around flooding and road safety.

¹³ Driver diversionary courses are often used as an alternative to penalty points being added to driving licences for offences such as speeding.

seriously injured on the roads in Kent and Medway, and assessing into what age groups they fall.

Access to skills and qualifications: Our BTEC¹⁴ youth course has received county-wide acclaim and we will be developing an ASDAN¹⁵ youth engagement course to cater for those young people who would be unable to attain the BTEC.

We will review how we resource youth engagement and will look to develop further the commissioning of this activity by our partners. We will develop a range of youth engagement activities that can deliver the priorities of other organisations.

Discouraging firesetting (arson): We will review our firesetting scheme and explore how we can better resource this service. We predominantly deal with young people who set fires as we know we can bring about behavioural change. Adult firesetting is much more difficult and tends to be a serious criminal offence. Ideally, we'd measure our success in these areas through reduced re-offending rates.

Continuing to improve our road safety products

Our aspiration is by 2020 to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road crashes by 33%, and the number of children killed or seriously injured by 40%, compared with 2004-08. Every year over 500 people are killed or seriously injured on the roads in Kent and Medway. Through our prevention work this number is steadily declining.

Three of our road safety initiatives, Licence to Kill, RUSH and Biker Down, have received national awards. We want to build on these successes. We are active members of the county-wide casualty reduction group and alongside our partners we focus on young drivers and people that ride motorbikes or scooters. Cyclists are also a high-risk group, and we support our partners in the work they do to reduce injuries and deaths of cyclists across Kent and Medway.

Our research into young drivers is being used to shape our future interventions and we are developing new approaches to reduce the numbers of young people killed or seriously injured on Kent and Medway's roads. For example:

¹⁴ <u>Business and Technology Education Council</u>, a British body which awarded vocational qualifications (which are themselves still known simply as BTECs)

¹⁵ ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) is a charitable social enterprise whose mission is to create opportunities for learners to develop personal and social skills through the achievement of awards and qualifications and further enhance their self-esteem, aspirations and contribution to their communities. For more information visit http://www.asdan.org.uk/

- We are buying a 'hot hatch' car which we will use as an engagement tool mainly with young male drivers, as a means of giving safe driving tips.
- We will adapt a fire engine as a mobile exhibit that provides education on the
 equipment we carry for road traffic collisions. It will also be able to screen educational
 films to promote safe driving and show the consequences of unsafe driving.
- Our research has also told us that parents have a huge influence on the driving styles and behaviours of their children. We are developing a scheme called 'Drive4Life' which involves educating parents and children in safe driving, driving laws, safe and properly maintained vehicles and ways to reduce risks as a driver or passenger.
- There has recently been an increase in the number of scooter or moped users. This increase has not just been amongst young people, but also older men who use them to reduce their transport costs. We are developing a safety programme to focus on scooters and mopeds which we will use in schools, with businesses like fast food/take away delivery services, and the 'driving business safely' initiative, and also for pleasure riders. This is because scooter or moped users appear to be at significantly higher risk of being involved in an accident on the road.

We will know how successfully we are preventing road collisions by measuring how many incidents we and our partners attend, and what the outcomes were. We will also measure the impact of our road safety initiatives through feedback from people who attend our road safety initiatives and our road safety centre.

Being a role model in the Community

Firefighters need to be fit and active. We use this requirement to encourage our staff to be role models in the community and promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. For example, we have developed the FireFit programme in partnership with local communities. FireFit involves firefighters and volunteers using a variety of sporting and cultural initiatives, and focuses on improving fitness, health, wellbeing and nutrition.

We hope that the scheme will reduce the number of fatalities and casualties in house fires, as well as encouraging people to access NHS services like medical screening and cholesterol tests. We think this will lead to the early detection of any potentially limiting illnesses, which might then increase risk from a fire in the home, or the ability to escape from one, should it occur. More immediately we will seek feedback from our partners on the scheme, as well as asking questions of the people that come to our FireFit courses, to see if they think it will change their behaviour in the long term.

Equality impact assessment

We take our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 very seriously and we seek to ensure that we provide services to everyone that needs them based on the approach outlined in this strategy. Therefore, everyone can expect to receive some advice or support, but the level of intervention will depend largely on the risk we perceive them to have. We are also keen to take every opportunity to promote equalities in the community and often support our partners in doing so. Our *Workforce Strategy* sets out in more detail how we promote equalities in our workforce.

We have recently refreshed our equality plan for community safety which sets out our approach to ensuring we meet our equality objectives. The Service has recently been rated Excellent under the Equalities Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service.