

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY REPORT TO THE

PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 MAY 2014

SUBJECT: HOME SAFETY STRATEGY 2014-15

REPORT NUMBER: CFO/061/14

APPENDICES:

REPORTING OFFICER: DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MYLES PLATT AREA MANAGER PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

OFFICERS CONSULTED: KEVIN JOHNSON HOME SAFETY MANAGER
WENDY KENYON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY MANAGER
WATCH MANAGER PHIL BYRNE

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members scrutinise performance concerning Home Safety in 2013-14 and scrutinise plans to review the Home Safety Strategy for 2014 going forward.

Introduction and Background

2. At the Performance and Scrutiny Committee 1st April 2014 Members resolved to scrutinise performance relating to accidental dwelling fires (ADF), and associated injuries and fatalities.
3. Since 1999, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) have proactively promoted community fire safety by conducting Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC), offering the free provision and installation of smoke alarms, including fire safety education for all individuals living within the Merseyside area.
4. From 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014, there were 9 Accidental Dwelling Fire (ADF) related fatalities in Merseyside (a 50% increase from 2012-13), 126 fire related injuries (a 3% increase from 2012-13) and 1154 ADF's (a 2% increase

from 2012-13). Detailed analysis of fatal fires over the last 10 years is contained within a separate report to this Committee.

5. From April 2014 the output related targets for the delivery of the HFSC have been removed with the scrutiny of performance concentrating on the key performance indicators as outcomes, namely accidental dwelling fires, associated injuries and deaths. Scrutiny is undertaken by the Performance Management Group chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.
6. The Functional Plan for Community Fire Prevention 2014-15 includes a review of prevention related activities for home safety and the provision of a Home Safety Strategy.
7. The strategy will take into account the fundamental review of support services carried out during 2013-14 and projected resources which are under review for 2014-15.
8. During 2007-2011, MFRA delivered in excess of 100,000 HFSC visits per year which peaked in volume during 2010 with 42 fire appliances and associated staff and 35 advocates carrying out over 5000 high risk visits.
9. In 2011 MFRA changed the mission statement to highlight the Authorities focus on Community Safety and Firefighter Safety and subsequently reviewed the activity carried out by operational staff, in particular relating to the gathering of Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) to enhance the management and understanding of risk on the incident ground.
10. Since 2011 the Authority has adopted a targeted approach to delivering home safety advice and free smoke detectors. This has included charging home owners who are assessed as low risk and have previously had free smoke detectors provided by the Authority for the provision of new detectors. Home safety advice is free to all.
11. Since 2011 the Prevention team have introduced performance targets for advocates and are currently delivering more high risk interventions per advocate per year compared to previous years.
12. The review of the Home Safety Strategy takes into consideration the reduction in the number of fire appliances and operational staff, a reduced number of advocates as a result support services review and the mitigation of those reductions included in the new work routines for operational staff introduced in April 2014.
13. For indicative purposes, at a peak of 42 fire appliances, approximately 900 hours per week totalling over 47,000 hours per year was made available for prevention activity. The revised work routine, based on 28 fire appliances provides capacity for a maximum of 43,200 hours subject to other operational requirements.

14. This time is currently available for activities which include Road Safety visits in schools, youth group visits, environmental impact assessments, Fire Protection Care Home visits, youth engagement, Firefit activity and HFSC visits as per Service Instruction Station Work Routines 0631.
15. To make delivery of the HFSC more efficient, Operational Crews and Community Fire Prevention Teams will target individuals MFRA have never engaged with previously using the Vulnerable Persons Index (VPI). The VPI is overlaid with data obtained from partner agencies via information sharing protocols, which enhances the ability to identify vulnerable individuals in the respective Districts who are potentially more at risk from fire in the home. There are approximately 225,000 households that have never received a HFSC from MFRA.
 - a. The review of the HFSC will include the provision of software and hardware, for example mobile devices which augment the efficient delivery of the HFSC, thus reducing administration whilst ensuring the safe storage of the Vulnerable Person Index (VPI) information in accordance with Data Protection Act 1998.
 - b. The review recognises the need to provide operational staff and prevention staff with additional training to manage risk in the home more effectively. This programme is currently underway and will be completed in early June.
 - c. Statistically, more than 50% of people that die in fires are over 65 years old. To that end the revised strategy will include the free provision of smoke detectors and fire safety advice to anyone over 65 years old.
 - d. Fire Service Direct (FSD), will conduct telephone risk assessments for over 65's who have previously received a HFSC visit to ascertain if there are any changes to their circumstances that could potentially put them at risk of fire in the home. This will be followed up by a visit if required, details of which will be included in the strategy.
 - e. The review includes a refresh of the risk scoring methodology that determines an individual as high risk, taking into account additional and emerging trends relating to vulnerability in the home, for example hoarding and isolation.
 - f. The information and advice provided for people in the home is under review and will be improved to provide additional information and points of contact aimed at improving the health safety and wellbeing of people in their homes.
 - g. From June 2014 the Prevention and Protection team will commence monthly district based audits of Prevention and Protection activity, systems, process and partnership working to ensure they are outcome focused as articulated in the performance management framework reported to Members.

16. The Home Safety Strategy will also assist in the access to risk information to support firefighter safety at incidents in the home. This is currently achieved through the Risk Management (RM1) process and includes information regarding home oxygen, health issues, mobility and arson.
17. To reduce the number of fatalities, serious injuries and ADF's in private rented properties; MFRA will work in partnership with Registered Providers and also support the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) Blue Watch initiative which is being delivered locally by Fire Support Network (FSN).
 - a. Blue Watch is a home safety scheme introduced by the trading arm of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA Blue Watch) and is aimed at increasing the safety of tenants in private rented accommodation in the United Kingdom through a validation system supported by UK Fire and Rescue Services and delivered by trusted partners.
 - b. To contribute to Firefighter safety, MFRA are in the process of refreshing Information Sharing protocols with Registered Providers in respect of Community Prevention initiatives. This will enable us to access information in respect of vulnerable tenants. Additionally, we are also delivering dry riser testing in high rise blocks as part of Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) visits and firefighter familiarisation.
18. The Home Safety Strategy will take into account the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for each local Authority and the projected rise in the elderly population, which includes a rise in people over 85 by 20% by the year 2020.
19. In addition a review of the Authorities joint working will take place as a result of reductions in service in each Local Authority and the unknown impact of those cuts in areas such as Adult Social Services.
20. The fundamental review of support services currently underway for 2015/16 will take into account the impact upon performance outcomes.
21. The draft strategy will be presented to Members at a subsequent Authority meeting to be agreed.

Equality and Diversity Implications

22. The final Home Safety Strategy submission will include a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

Staff Implications

23. Due to the reduction of frontline appliances from 42 to 28 and the fundamental restructure of the Community Fire Prevention Team, the targeting of home safety initiatives will ensure a more efficient and effective service delivery.

Legal Implications

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24. The provision of free smoke detectors is not a statutory duty, however Section 6 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires that the Authority provide free fire safety advice and promote fire safety in its area. The revised Strategy will ensure the Authority meets its statutory duty.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

25. There are no additional costs anticipated in delivering outcomes associated with a revised Home Safety Strategy as it will be delivered during the core hours of the work routine for Community Prevention and operational staff.
26. Since the inception in July 2012, the cost recovery model has recovered £250,000.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

27. All Operational Crews and Community Fire Prevention personnel responsible for delivering Home Safety initiatives, are receiving crew based training, reminding them of their personal responsibilities in respect of personal values, including HFSC visits, Data Protection, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Risk Management.
28. Service Instruction 0604 Home Fire Safety Checks will be reviewed and amended to reflect the Home Safety Strategy.
29. VPI status reports are formatted in a geographical area which makes HFSC service delivery more efficient and effective in targeting risk.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

30. The Home Safety Strategy will contribute to the mission by ensuring that risks and hazards in the home are identified during prevention activities and reported and recorded, thus ensuring actions to mitigate risk take place ensuring safer communities and safer environment for firefighters.

Recommendation

31. That Members;
- a) Consider performance in relation to this report concerning Home Safety in 2013-14 and
 - b) Scrutinise the information and strategy contained within this report concerning the proposed home safety strategy for 2014-15.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/083/12

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MFRA Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

HFSC	Home Fire Safety Check
ADF	Accidental Dwelling Fire
VPI	Vulnerable Persons Index
FSN	Fire Support Network
FSD	Fire Service Direct
CFOA	Chief Fire Officers Association
SSRI	Site Specific Risk Information