



Annual Report 2015 – 2016

Halton

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Keeping people safe and well

The Service is launching Safe and Well Visits - an exciting new initiative to help improve the health of potentially vulnerable people.

Safe and Well Visits, build on the Service's successful Home Safety Assessment programme that has helped protect thousands of people throughout Cheshire from the risk of fire in their home.

Cllr Bob Rudd, Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority, said: We have a proud tradition of delivering successful safety prevention programmes. Therefore, we are well placed to extend what we currently offer in order to support our health colleagues and promote further potentially life saving advice to the people we visit. It is often the case that those people who are most at risk from fire are at the same time vulnerable to certain health concerns. This is an extremely exciting programme that I am sure will bring huge benefits to the wellbeing of Cheshire residents.~

The visits will be offered to residents who are aged over 65 or who are referred to the Service by partner agencies. The visits will still incorporate the traditional fire safety information but will also offer additional advice on slips, trips and fall prevention; bowel cancer screening as well as offering additional support to those who wish to stop smoking, taking drugs or reduce their alcohol consumption.

It is expected that over the next year the visits will be extended further to provide extra help to people who have just been discharged from hospital after a fall and to address hypertension and blood pressure concerns.

Clare Duggan, Director of Commissioning Operations for NHS England, said: "We are delighted to be working with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service on the delivery of these Safe and Well Visits, which will be an invaluable way of supporting vulnerable people to look after themselves and stay safe and well in their homes. We are one of the very few areas in the country offering this service and are proud to be part of this new, innovative way of working. The Safe and Well Visits are a fantastic opportunity and a wonderful example of the great ways in which health and emergency services can work together to help improve the health and wellbeing of the populations we serve."

Stay safe with Risk Rater

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has launched its first ever app, called Risk Rater, which allows residents to check how fire safe their homes are.

Colourful and easy to use, the app asks a series of short safety questions before delivering a full risk assessment straight to your email.

The app is free to download on Google Play and App Store and is specifically designed to risk assess domestic properties.

Head of Prevention Nick Evans said: "With our new app all residents can now assess their home for fire risk, digitally, free of charge. Users are simply asked to fill

out a short questionnaire to assess fire safety in their home before being given their personalised fire safety plan which includes advice on how to prevent fires at home. “The app is a quick and easy check that not only shows you how fire safe your home is now but also gives you hints and tips on how to keep your home and loved ones even safer.”

There are plans to further develop the new app to contain additional modules and safety assessments, with a view to eventually include a feature for business continuity risk assessment.

People can also complete an online Home Safety Check by visiting the Service’s website. This produces a personal safety plan to help keep you and your family safe.

Don’t play at it - be it!

Tired of playing video games? Want to be part of the action rather than watching it? Then come and join the Cheshire Fire Cadets, an exciting group that offers more than most.

Try your hand at a range of sporting, adventure and exciting activities in a fun and friendly environment. Experience first hand what it takes to be a firefighter.

If you are aged between 13 and 17 and think that this sounds like your kind of thing then get in touch. We have units based on most of our fire stations so there should be one near you.

The Service is also looking for people aged 18 plus to become Adult Volunteers working with the Cadet Units. So if you have a few hours a week to spare and would like to get involved and make a difference to the lives of young people we would love to hear from you.

Call 01606 868700 or email feedback@cheshirefire.gov.uk today for more information.

Tragedy in a community

Just after 9am on July 17th 2015 an explosion ripped through a Cheshire mill injuring four people and resulting in the deaths of a further four people.

The incident at Bosley Wood Flour Mill was one of the largest incidents ever attended by the Service. Chief Fire Officer, Paul Hancock, said: “This was a tragic incident that will have affected the lives of many people, not least the families of those killed. There are some incidents that remain with you throughout your career – the explosion in Bosley was one such incident. However, I cannot praise enough the multi-agency efforts involved in bringing this incident under control and preventing even more loss of life.”

Derek Moore, Dorothy Bailey, William Barks and Jason Shingler all lost their lives in the explosion. The multi-agency response to the incident involved fire crews from Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. In addition Urban Search and Rescue Teams (USAR) from Merseyside, Lancashire and West

Yorkshire were called in to help with the search for the missing. A joint investigation by the Service, Cheshire Constabulary and the Health and Safety Executive continues to determine the exact cause of the incident.

Fatal distraction

Hundreds descended on the Crewe Lyceum Theatre for 'Fatal Distraction' - a moving and challenging performance devised by Cheshire students working alongside the Manchester Camerata Orchestra.

The piece, which also featured a cameo appearance by Crewe firefighters and the Cheshire Fire Choir, was the third collaboration between the orchestra and the Service.

'Fatal Distraction' involved four student groups from Warrington Collegiate, Riverside College, UCE Academy and South Cheshire College. They worked with a Camerata composer, dramatist and musicians to write the piece, which explored the causes and consequences of road traffic collisions.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mark Cashin said: "It was a real privilege to once again work in partnership with the Manchester Camerata to create yet another impressive performance. It is a terribly stark statistic that the single biggest cause of accidental deaths in young people remains the road traffic collision.

"A major contributor to this is people being distracted at the wheel. All the young people involved in the piece were at that age where they had either just passed their driving test or are taking lessons. Therefore, we really hope that the messages they have explored in the creation of the piece stay with them and ultimately keep them and their friends safe."

Funding for this project was provided by Cheshire Fire Authority, the Philip Barker Charity and Arts Council England. Traffic collisions are the single biggest cause of accidental death of young people aged 15-24. In the past five years 504 people aged between 17 and 24 have been killed or seriously injured on Cheshire roads.

Lucky number 13

The Service's efforts to engage lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff, volunteers and communities earned it the title of the UK's best emergency service in an influential equality index.

It has ranked 13th in LGBT charity Stonewall's prestigious Top 100 Employers list for 2016 and is the best performing blue light organisation in the country. Cllr Bob Rudd, the Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority, said: "We are delighted to be recognised by Stonewall as a leader for LGBT diversity. The index is a powerful way to help us demonstrate to our staff and the communities of Cheshire that we are here to support them."

This is the fourth consecutive year the Service has featured in the list, which assesses organisations against criteria including engagement with staff and communities, training and leadership. The Service was recognised in particular for

its focus on supporting the community, by addressing the safety risks faced by LGBT people, especially those who live alone, those aged over 65 and young people.

Chief Fire Officer Paul Hancock said: "I am so very proud to cement our position as a pioneering employer of choice for LGBT individuals. To feature in the top 50 over four consecutive years shows the value that we place on all our people. Our aim is to make sure that all our staff feel able to be themselves, give their all and be open at work. Participating in the Index helps us to shift perceptions and attitudes in order to help us achieve that."

Unsung Heroes at the show

Thousands of children and parents alike were delighted to take our 'Test me, Test You' fire safety tour at the Cheshire Show this year.

The tour involved a treasure hunt style quiz with a plethora of key safety messages located around the stand, and on the fire engines. Treasure hunters received a safety goodie bag and a pink or yellow fire helmet.

Sian Corrigan, Corporate Communications Manager, said: "Our stand was very busy this year, which is a testament to how fantastic it was! Once again, our toy helmets proved to be extremely popular and everyone was more than happy to take our safety tour and complete the quiz. Hopefully everyone also took home some potentially life saving tips."

Visitors to the stand also got the opportunity to see the 'smoke house' display that provides a dramatic demonstration of how a house fire can develop.

Life saving partnership

Cheshire firefighters are helping to deliver life-saving treatment for cardiac arrest patients in partnership with North West Ambulance Service (NWAS).

As of June a pilot project began in Crewe, Frodsham, Holmes Chapel and Warrington. When a person in those areas dials 999 to report a suspected cardiac arrest both NWAS and firefighters respond and whoever reaches the casualty first, starts providing life-saving treatment. It is hoped that the scheme will be extended to all stations in the future.

Mark Cashin, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, said: "We have a clear vision of a Cheshire where there are no deaths or injuries from fires or other emergencies and so we are delighted to be part of this exciting partnership initiative. We understand that with cardiac arrests every second counts and that the training and location of our crews puts us in an ideal position to support our partners in the North West Ambulance Service to deliver this potentially life saving service."

There will be no change to the system of sending medical staff and an ambulance to emergencies. Fire crews will be sent in addition.

North West Ambulance Service Director of Operations Ged Blezard added: "This is an extremely positive project and it's great to work with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service on a scheme that will contribute to saving lives in Cheshire."

Early intervention in cases of cardiac arrest is vital to the patient's chances of survival and subsequent recovery.

Building a better future

The education of children in a secluded village in Nepal has been changed for generations to come thanks to a group of Cheshire Fire Cadets.

15 Cadets and nine leaders went on a life-changing trip to build a new school in Thulodhunga for children who previously had little or no chance of an education. The group, who were working with the charity Classrooms in the Clouds (CiTC), raised more than £75,000 over 18 months to enable them to pay for the construction of the eight classroom school and for their trip to Nepal to help finish off the building.

Cheshire's Chief Fire Cadet Elaine Gnyp said: "This was a life-changing opportunity for us all as we got to help children in Nepal to achieve a better life through education."

When the Cadets and their leaders arrived the people on Nepal were still recovering from the impact of two massive earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks. Nick Evans, the Service's Head of Prevention, who went on the trip added: "I have never been more proud of the Cheshire Fire Cadets as they conquered their fears and walked until they couldn't walk any more to get to Thulodhunga. Their sheer determination from start to finish amazed me."

Fundraising has already begun for the next Nepal school building project. For more information visit the Service's website.

Paying tribute

The Service's Choir gave an emotional performance at a world famous New York concert hall and fulfilled their dream to deliver a tribute to the 343 firefighters who died in the attacks on the Twin Towers.

The Choir was invited to perform at the prestigious Carnegie Hall where they sang Welsh composer Paul Meallor's piece 'Stabat Mater' to a packed auditorium who gave them a standing ovation. While in New York they also became the first choir to perform on the Ground Zero Memorial Plaza. They sang Bruce Springsteen's The Rising, a song that tells the story of a firefighter who was inside one of the towers on that fateful day and realises he isn't going to survive.

Former Choir Chair, retired Station Manager Steve Flanagan, said: "Before we went to Ground Zero we spoke about our emotions and ways to keep them at bay. We wanted to do the fallen firefighters proud and we wanted it to be about them, not us. We'd waited so long to do this so it had to be right."

The choir is now raising money for The Firefighters Charity by releasing a download of The Rising. For more information please visit the Service's website.

Safety pledge from new Authority Chair

The new Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority has insisted the safety of local communities will continue to improve – despite the organisation facing some of the most significant challenges in its history.

Cllr. Bob Rudd was elected as Chair on June 15th at the Authority's Annual General Meeting and said: "I am delighted and honoured to be leading the body which manages what is recognised as one of the leading fire and rescue services in the country.

"While we are facing massive national challenges to the funding and management of our organisation, we have clear plans in place to protect local people and continue the recent dramatic improvements we have seen to fire safety across the communities of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington."

The meeting heard that, in 2015-16, injuries from fires reduced from 51 to 46, accidental house fires fell from 401 to 394 and fires in business and commercial premises fell from 189 to 159 – the lowest figure ever recorded. Cllr Rudd, who is also currently Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Council, was first appointed to Cheshire Fire Authority in 2011. He has been involved in local government for over 40 years, beginning his political career in West Sussex before moving to Chester in 1990 and gaining election to Chester City Council a year later. Cllr Rudd takes up the reins from former Warrington Borough Councillor John Joyce and he paid tribute to his "outstanding leadership."

Making Cheshire Safer

The construction of four new fire stations across Cheshire is well underway as part of ambitious plans to improve emergency response across the county. The programme, which was the subject of widespread public consultation a few years ago, followed an in depth review of the Service. The total cost is around £16million with all the money coming from Government Grants or the Authority's own reserves.

The last of the four stations is expected to open next year.

Penketh Fire Station

With the building almost complete and a new on-call crew recruited Penketh Fire Station is getting ready to open.

The new station, located off Widnes Road, will become fully operational in the coming months. When it opens the station will have two fire engines based there. One will be staffed by wholetime firefighters and the other by the new crew of on-call staff who have been recruited from the local area. Nine of the new recruits have already successfully 'passed out' after completing their training.

In addition to providing an emergency response the station will also have a number of rooms available for use by members of the community.

Powey Lane Fire Station

Work on the third of Cheshire's new fire stations is progressing well and the expectation is that it will become operational from early next year.

Powey Lane Fire Station is located just off the M56 in Mollington. Unlike the Service's community fire stations this will be an 'emergency response hub' housing traditional fire engines and a number of specialist vehicles to tackle specific emergencies across the county. The location near to the motorway network provides these vehicles with ready access to respond to other incidents across the whole of Cheshire.

Lymm Fire Station and Safety Central

Pupils from local schools joined the former Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority, John Joyce and Deputy Chair Cllr Stef Nelson, for the official ground-breaking of the new facility at the site off Cliff Lane.

The new fire station will provide full time cover and training facilities to ensure that firefighters continue to respond effectively to a variety of scenarios.

In addition, Safety Central, the area's first purpose-built education and lifeskills facility, will deliver educational programmes in an interactive way to ensure visitors to the centre take away important safety information. The programmes are devised and written with the aim of reducing accidental deaths and injuries from fire, at home, on the road and in the community.

Learning will take place in a series of purpose-built indoor scenarios designed to be realistic, immersive and interactive, including:

- a life size three-bedroom house
- a typical Cheshire A-road meandering through an urban and a rural setting
- a courtroom, cyber-safety classroom, shop and police custody suite
- a farm, railway station, urban park, forest, canal side and open water
- an immersive virtual learning zone.

Safety Central is due to open in the summer of 2017, with Lymm Fire Station due to open in spring 2017. The Safety Central website is now live so visit www.safetycentral.org.uk for more information.

Alsager Fire Station

The Service's newest fire station has already cemented itself as an important part of the community.

The new community station on Brookhouse Road opened last August. It was the first of the four new fire stations to be built as part of the Service's Emergency Response Programme to improve fire cover and response times across the county.

The new station, which is staffed by a crew of on-call firefighters, is now fully operational responding to emergency incidents. The Alsager crew has also attended

many community events as well as holding the Station's first open day. There is now also a Fire Cadet Unit based there for young people aged between 13 and 17. More information about this can be found on the Service's website.

Summary of accounts 2015-16

Cheshire Fire Authority is the public body which manages the fire and rescue service on behalf of local communities. It is made up of 23 elected Members, with eight appointed by Cheshire East Council, seven by Cheshire West and Chester, three by Halton Borough and five by Warrington Borough. The current political make up of the Authority is Labour (13), Conservative (8), Liberal Democrat (1) and Independent (1).

The Authority is a separate legal body and has the power to set council tax and agree its own policies and procedures without needing the approval of these local councils. Its meetings are open to the public and are usually held at the Service's Winsford headquarters. Full details are on the website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Its key duties include approving the annual budget; setting its council tax level and agreeing the numbers of staff and levels of equipment necessary to provide an effective service and approving the organisation's key policies, plans and strategies. It is also responsible for ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is properly accounted for and how it aims for continuous improvement. To demonstrate this it produces an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Statement of Accounts. From 2013-14 the Authority has included this as part of its annual Assurance Statement. Both the Annual Accounts and the Assurance Statement are available on the Authority's website.

Accounts

The Fire Authority's accounts show how it uses its resources to deliver a fire and rescue service across Cheshire. The summary accounts below provide an overview of where the funds come from, how they are used and the financial position as at March 31st 2016.

Summary Revenue Account

The 2015–16 Fire Authority net revenue budget was £42.5m, with total net expenditure incurred of £41.6m resulting in an underspend of around £941. The Authority has a General Reserve of £7m. This has been assessed as proportionate to the risks facing the organisation and balances the current public sector financial position with the need to ensure there are sufficient funds to deal with major incidents. The Authority also holds earmarked reserves to meet specific needs. In line with the continuing financial pressure it faces, the Authority has developed a range of options to deliver future savings. Implementing some of these will take time, however, and it is recognised that the Authority's reserves will be needed to smooth the financial pressure over the next few years.

Summary Balance Sheet

The Summary Balance Sheet shows the 2015-16 end of year position and the most obvious point to note is the net liability of £397m. In other words, the Fire Authority has assets worth £79m, but has long term liabilities of £476m.

Most of the liabilities relate to expected future pension costs of £474m, compared to £529m in 2014-15. All local authorities are required to recognise this liability in their balance sheet even though it is not an immediate call on their resources, but instead is paid out over the life of existing and future pensioners. At present, all deficits on the Firefighters' Pension Scheme are funded by Government through a specific top up grant.

Focus on Performance 2015-16

The Service continues to focus on fire prevention activity on those who are most vulnerable. Over the past three years fire crews and safety advocates have visited and carried out Home Safety Assessment in almost 84,000 homes.

The Service's prevention agenda continues to have a positive impact on the numbers killed and injured. Over the past decade house fires have almost halved, fire related injuries have reduced by more than 60% and smoke alarm ownership is now at record high levels.

In addition, deliberate fires, which often occur outdoors, have also reduced by almost 80% since 2006 with conviction rates also being higher than average. The Service has also helped to change the lives of thousands of young and often disadvantaged young people through its Prince's Trust and RESPECT courses. The following infographic highlights some of the key trends on different aspects of the organisation's performance over recent years.

A novel approach

Cheshire is one of three fire and rescue services to have received an award in recognition of their partnership work to reduce health inequalities. Cheshire, Merseyside and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services were all awarded Marmot Partnership Status following their efforts to improve the social circumstances and health of individuals living in their communities.

Simon Gibbins, Head of Protection for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, said: "We are delighted that our hard work with health and social care organisations has been recognised. We are very proud of these partnerships, which are not only making people safer in their own homes but also improving the health and wellbeing of many vulnerable people."

The award was by Sir Michael Marmot author of 'The Health Gap and the Challenge of an Unequal World'. For some time, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has worked with partners across the health and social care sector to target vulnerable people and help to prevent fires in their home.

Green Values

Fully committed to reducing its carbon footprint, this year saw the Service take delivery of twelve new electric vehicles.

The all-electric Nissan LEAF cars, distinctly liveried with the message 'Red Fire Engines, Green Values', replace some of the existing fleet of petrol cars used mainly by support staff as they go from station to station or carry out home visits.

75% of the total value of the vehicles is being grant funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service the remaining amount over a two year period. Multi-charge posts have been installed at nine fire stations across Cheshire, ensuring a network of fleet charging points.

The LEAFs are based at Warrington, Chester and Crewe Fire Stations, as well as at the Service's Winsford Headquarters.

Cllr Tony Sherlock, Cheshire Fire Authority Environmental Champion, said: "We launched our Environment and Sustainability Strategy in 2014 to ensure we achieve 40% carbon reduction by 2020 and have been very fortunate to be included on the OLEV readiness project for the procurement of electric vehicles reducing our carbon footprint and the implementation of a charging infrastructure, working towards being an increasingly environmentally friendly Authority."

Action packed visit

Widnes firefighters welcomed the entire Year Six from Farnworth Primary School to the Lacey Street station as part of the Phoenix Project.

The whole school group, 60 pupils and accompanying teachers, enjoyed an action packed day of activities. These included being shown all the equipment on a fire engine, trying on full fire kit and the favourite part of any visit to a fire station, the chance to spray water from a hose reel jet.

Watch Manager Jason Fletcher, said: "This visit was the perfect way for Red Watch to say goodbye to the Year 6 children who will be moving up to high school. There were vital lessons learnt in a fun and interactive way."

The Phoenix Project began in 2005, all Runcorn and Widnes Fire Station Watches have since adopted a school to mentor the pupils. This approach has led to a significant reduction in the number of fire-related calls in the area.

Boats and hoses

Firefighters took to the open water along with nine Halton residents for their second annual Boats and Hoses event. In conjunction with the Canal Boat Project, firefighters hosted nine older people from Widnes and Runcorn on two boats, Ada and Friendship, for a day out on the canal.

Deputy Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority, Cllr Stef Nelson, was at the marina to wave the group off. He said: "Boats and Hoses is a fantastic project created by Runcorn firefighters. They arrange the whole day from ensuring everyone is picked up, taking

them on a leisurely cruise, feeding them a hearty lunch before sailing them back to the marina and driven back to their homes. It is a unique way of showing our more vulnerable residents that they are cared for and that people are prepared to take them out and spend time with them, in addition to obviously getting across some vital fire safety messages.”

Those aboard, who don't normally get the opportunity to get out and about, were given fire safety talks and the chance to meet new people.

A lasting legacy

A team of young people on The Prince's Trust Team programme unveiled a community project in Runcorn for the benefit of stroke sufferers. As part of the 12-week programme the Team had to complete a community project and chose Halton Hospital Support Service, Haddock Wood Allotments to work on.

The young people got stuck in to painting fences and flagging footpaths making the allotments easier to access. They then built a shed as part of the project. To raise money for the project the Team bag packed in a local supermarket. They were supported by Barclays Bank and Halton Borough Council who also helped with funding the allotment that will be used by those recovering from a stroke. The work was unveiled in front of the town's Mayor and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service staff.

The Prince's Trust Team programme is a 12-week programme that aims to give people between the ages of 16 and 25 the opportunity to learn new skills, complete qualifications and gain greater self-confidence. The Community Project is one element of the course that encourages the Team to work together to fundraise and implement something that will bring benefit to others.

More information about the Prince's Trust Team programme can be found on the Service's website.

Halton - Unitary performance area profile

In the last three years, primary fires in Halton have reduced by 14%. These are fires that involve property such as buildings and vehicles and include both accidental and deliberate incidents. The numbers of fire related fatalities and injuries remain low, with the majority of hospital admissions as a result of slight injuries.

Also included in the primary fires category are accidental dwelling fires, which have reduced by 6% in the last three years. Delivery of Home Safety Assessments continues to be focused on those households most at risk and this is backed up with publicity campaigns highlighting key safety messages, particularly around safety in the kitchen where around 60% of house fires start.

Deliberate fires are more of an issue in Halton than in the other areas covered by the Cheshire Fire Authority, however a 34% reduction has been recorded over the past three years. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's intelligence-led approach to identifying 'hotspot' areas of high activity has become more sophisticated and these problem areas are tackled with a range of arson and youth engagement initiatives.