



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

ABERDEEN CITY LOCAL SENIOR OFFICER AREA

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE THEMATIC REPORT REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTIVITY DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Report Ref SFR/20/164

1 RECOMMENDATION

The Aberdeen Public Protection Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider and note the information provided in this report in relation to prevention and protection.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown saw the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) follow UK and Scottish Government guidance and issued an instruction to all personnel not providing a frontline emergency response to work from home, at the same time placing a moratorium on all engagement activity including both community and business engagement.
- 2.2 The early period of lockdown also saw a significant national spike in fatalities as a consequence of accidental dwelling fires, unfortunately including one in Aberdeen City.
- 2.3 To address this increasing risk SFRS personnel, both nationally and locally, developed a number of working options that would see a continued element of engagement utilising appropriate PPE and observing social distancing protocols to ensure the ongoing health and wellbeing of our staff and members of the public.
- 2.4 This report will summarise the actions taken by local Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) personnel, with support from The SFRS Prevention and Protection Function, to continue to deliver and support community and business safety activity.

3 COMMUNITY SAFETY ENGAGEMENT (CSE)

- 3.1 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV's) and supply & fitting of appropriate detection are the most effective tool available to SFRS to assist decrease the risk of harm in the home from fire.
- 3.2 Over the previous 5 years SFRS personnel have delivered an average of 2418 HFSV's per year in Aberdeen City and work hard to ensure "pending lists" are managed and controlled appropriately. A complete removal from engagement

activity would clearly have an impact on outstanding visit requests, visits referred from partners and re-visits to those presenting the highest risk.

- 3.2 To ensure the community did not feel isolated, CSE staff working from home developed a rota and used SFRS-produced questionnaires to engage by telephone with all high and medium risk HFSV requests either completing a home safety questionnaire or scheduling a physical visit when restrictions eased. All properties without detection were passed to watch-based firefighters who arranged contact-free delivery of detector(s) and installation instructions.
- 3.3 As a response to an increase in fatalities as a consequence of accidental dwelling fires the SFRS commenced a high-profile campaign (Make The Call) that identified circumstances which would determine individuals as very high risk and encouraged them, family or friends to request a HFSV.
- 3.4 Local CSE staff supported this by continually analysing new visit requests as well as revisiting previous requests to identify any that would meet this new risk category. Any identified were passed to watch-based firefighters who followed specific instructions and wore appropriate PPE to deliver HFSV's or, where COVID-19 was confirmed or suspected, talked through an expanded home safety questionnaire.
- 3.5 In addition to the above, CSE staff engaged with a number of local charities who were making food parcel deliveries across Aberdeen and reached an agreement to deliver **Make The Call** leaflets with food parcels. Almost 15,000 leaflets were shared with, and delivered by, these charities.
- 3.6 As part of the approach detailed in 3.5, we joined forces with Aberdeen City Council's Adult Support and Protection Team who provided cards of their own for distribution. CFINE distributed these alongside our leaflets.
- 3.7 During full lockdown and through the various lifting of restrictions, local CSE staff also responded to a number of referrals and requests from key partners and continued to provide fire-retardant bedding and fireproof letterboxes (mailguards) ensuring the most vulnerable continued to be protected.
- 3.8 Since 1 April, local SFRS personnel have undertaken 113 full HFSV's, made contact with over 400 occupiers providing home safety advice and provided more than 50 smoke/heat detectors. During the same period 15 fire retardant bedding packs, 7 fireproof letterboxes and 7 metal waste bins were issued via partner agencies.

4 FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT (FSE)

- 4.1 FSE refers to our programme of legislative fire safety audits within relevant premises as defined by Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act.
- 4.2 The SFRS has developed a fire safety framework that prioritises FSE audits in premises where the greatest risk of harm from fire is present e.g. care homes, hospitals, HMO's etc
- 4.3 Similar to CSE activity, the procedures introduced to protect our staff and the public from Covid-19 have had an impact on our annual FSE audit programme and our ability to deliver FSE audits as we always have done.

- 4.4 Local FSE personnel followed national guidance and conducted early telephone engagements with premises identified as presenting the highest risk ensuring that risk assessments were reviewed regularly to reflect changes in working practices within the premises and to also highlight the likelihood that virus transmission models and isolation requirements could have a significant impact on SFRS' capability to respond with the weight of numbers and speed it would normally plan for.
- 4.5 Whilst normal FSE activity was suspended, local FSEO officers maintained regular liaison with both ACC and NHS Grampian to ensure that a flexible and pragmatic approach was taken in support of the identification and modification of non-NHS premises to provide additional hospital beds in anticipation of the peak pandemic casualty numbers.
- 4.6 Local FSEO officers, conscious of their legislative responsibilities, maintained a cycle of support to care premises across Aberdeen and, through this approach, explored and conducted a "virtual" audit where a willing premises joined SFRS staff in a video call and a walk-round of their premises was completed, similar to what would happen during a normal legislative audit. A representative from the Care Inspectorate also joined the video call.
- 4.7 This innovative approach to maintaining an element of service delivery was welcomed by both Care Inspectorate and SFRS national leads and was identified as an area of best practice that should be developed further. Aberdeen City personnel were tasked with leading a project to develop a procedure, the first of its kind, that could be implemented nationally, would support SFRS' legislative requirements and will provide a long-term option that will be deliverable during any periods of lockdown as well as addressing challenges faced in some of Scotland's more remote communities

5 HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CENTRE

- 5.1 To provide an enhanced level of support to isolated and vulnerable individuals across the Grampian area, Grampian LRP established a humanitarian assistance centre (HAC).
- 5.2 To ensure the HAC could support the anticipated demand partner agencies were requested to encourage personnel to volunteer as call handlers, matching assistance requests with appropriate volunteers across Grampian.
- 5.3 In total 14 SFRS employees volunteered and provided volunteer shifts in addition to their own workloads.

8 FUTURE WORK

- 8.1 Recent easing of restrictions and Scottish Government guidance has allowed a gradual return to some normal activity, however, the level of that activity will be carefully managed to ensure the ongoing health and wellbeing of both staff and public.
- 8.2 SFRS will continue to provide extensive feedback and guidance from both a response and fire safety perspective in support of ACC's "Spaces for People" initiative.