

Operational Assurance Statement 2023-24

(for the Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Annual Report 2023-24)



**NORTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

The North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Fire and Rescue Authority) has carried out its functions in accordance with the defined statutory and policy framework in which it is required to operate. As such, the view at the end of the 2023-24 financial year, is that requirements associated with operational matters were met.

- The key documents setting this out are:
- the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- the Localism Act 2011
- the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England
- the Health and Safety Act at Work etc Act 1974

The Fire and Rescue National Framework states that Fire and Rescue Authorities must make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with their mutual aid agreements and reflect this in their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Risk and Resource Model

Within North Yorkshire the CRMP is known as the Risk and Resource Model (RRM) 2022-2025. This sets out who we are as a Service, the risk in our county and city, and the services we provide to prevent and respond to emergencies.

The Risk and Resource Model consultation took place over a 12-week period from 23 May to 14 August 2022 and collected opinion on seven proposals for change, developed by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS) and recommended to the Commissioner by the Chief Fire Officer to take forward to consultation.

During the consultation period, residents, businesses, stakeholders/partners, and employees were invited to provide feedback on the proposals via an online survey and in person across 12 district events. 1,378 responses were submitted. Three resident focus groups were also conducted to further explore views and opinions on the proposals.

The resources we put in place are based on an assessment of risk across the Service area called the Community Risk Profile (CRP). Our research and understanding of the factors that create risk have been considered, having used a wide range of information from a variety of sources. This has helped us prioritise the risks we need to focus on, accidental dwelling fires leading to death and serious injury, road, and water.

We have also considered the National Risk Register and the Community Risk Register created by North Yorkshire's Local Resilience Forum (NYLRF) which is a partnership of local agencies working together to manage emergencies covering the whole of North Yorkshire and York.

We ensure that the service has an internal governance structure and business planning process which enables senior leaders to maintain comprehensive oversight of RRM activity, to assure

themselves that the service is operating effectively. We have actively and regularly evaluated what we do, to make effective use of our resources and to identify opportunities to improve productivity and operate more efficiently, throughout the life of the RRM.

We have delivered upon our promises to the public, including,

- Improving our prevention and protection work
- Reconfiguring our Response resource in the York area
- Managing attendance to Automatic Fire Alarms
- Enhancing Specialist water rescue resource capability in Craven, and
- Introducing emergency response principles

We are currently engaging with staff and representative bodies to further explore the introduction of new duty systems and how we will configure our response resource firstly in Harrogate, and then Scarborough.

We have recently commissioned Operational Research in Health Limited (ORH) to undertake a review of Future Community Risk and Response Modelling, building upon the work of our previous Community Risk Profile. We recognised that our data driven approach was a significant step forward for the service, but was viewed as a new baseline, not the benchmark.

ORH has helped emergency services around the world to optimise resource use and respond in the most effective and efficient way. They understand the changing demands on FRS and the need for greater resilience and flexibility. The final report has just been presented and will allow the service to develop its fire cover model and response strategy, alongside informing other strategies and our next CRMP.

Our Service area is one of the largest in England covering more than 3,200 square miles and over 6,000 miles of road. Our area has isolated rural settlements and farms, market towns, and larger urban areas such as York, Harrogate, and Scarborough. Our area has two of England's ten national parks, three designated areas of outstanding natural beauty, over 200 sites of special scientific interest and over 12,000 listed buildings.

Overall, our area is sparsely populated, but there are still over 340,000 households and over 830,000 residents. The resident population is increasing steadily and becoming predominantly older. The City of York is also home to over 21,000 students, with two universities. More than 20 million visitors come to our area each year. There are over 37,000 active businesses across the area, with hospitality and entertainment among some of the main industries.

The road network is the main means of transport connecting small towns and villages. The rural nature of our area means that people often travel further to access work, education, and services. Several major arterial routes also cross our area – the A1(M), M62, A59, A64, A65, A66 and A19.

Two of the major rivers in the county are the River Swale and the River Ure, joining together to form the river Ouse which flows through York. The coastline of North Yorkshire runs for approximately 45 miles from just north of Whitby to south of Filey.

Prevention

If we must respond to an emergency, harm has already happened. Our stated ambition within the current RRM is to prevent emergencies from happening in the first place through education, advice,

and support. Through the proposals set out in the RRM we have worked to permanently increase the number of specialist staff in our prevention department and increase prevention activities.

Our prevention services are based around five main areas:

- Home fire safety
- Road safety
- Water safety
- Safe and Well
- Other engagement activities with communities, (including seasonal risk e.g., wildfire, bonfire night, chimney safety)

Last year (1 April 2023-31 March 2024) we undertook 9821 prevention activities, which equate to 605 days of activity and include:

- 3680 Home Fire Safety Visits
- 304 Detector fitting only
- 884 Unable to contact/declined
- 214 Road Safety activities
- 169 Water Safety activities
- 4570 all other community safety activities

Protection

We have a responsibility to protect the built environment within North Yorkshire and York; this includes all workplaces and premises to which the public have access. It also includes other premises to which the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies. We provide information, guidance, and advice to businesses and other employers to prevent fires happening in the first instance and to reduce the impact should they occur. Beyond this we also have a statutory duty to enforce compliance with fire safety law.

Last year (1 April 2023-31 March 2024) we undertook 5694 jobs which equate to 397 days of activity and includes:

- 2181 recorded as Fire Safety activities (1441 of the 2181 recorded fire safety activity have been scheduled Fire Safety Audits)
- 2097 Statutory and Non-Statutory jobs incl. Building Regs, Licensing and other consultations
- 1348 Guidance and advisory
- 68 Unwanted Fire Signal reduction activities

Resilience

Whilst the Fire and Rescue Authority is primarily a locally based service, mutual aid arrangements are in place with other services to provide resilience for large scale or complex incidents where additional resources need to be called upon. The Fire and Rescue Authority contributes to national resilience and can make several of its assets available to support a national emergency.

We provide support to national resilience through the maintenance and delivery of these assets. We provide:

- two High Volume Pumps (Harrogate and Richmond)
- an Incident Support Unit (Acomb)

- a flood rescue boat (Selby)
- waste fire tactical advisors
- National Inter Agency Liaison Officers
- High Volume Pump tactical advisor
- Airwave Radio tactical advisor
- National Flood advisors.
- CBRNe tactical advisors
- CBRNe tactical commanders
- Wildfire Tactical Advisor

We maintain these national assets and undertake specialist training to ensure that they are available for a coordinated national response when requested. We also use them within our own county when we need to.

Response

Our emergency response resources are widespread across the county to account for the large travel distances and times resulting from the expanse of geographical area we cover. We have 38 fire stations and operate a range of duty systems.

Last year (1 April 2023-31 March 2024), we attended 7559 incidents. This is an 8% reduction of total incidents compared with the same reporting period last year.

- 1561 fires. This is a 26% reduction from the same reporting period last year.
- 2785 special services. This is a 4% increase from the same reporting period last year.
- 3213 false alarms. This is a 6% reduction from the same reporting period last year.

Fires – Account for around a fifth (21%) of incidents we attend. These range from very small fires such as bin fires which are quick to extinguish, to large scale building fires which may involve people being trapped and requiring rescue.

Special Services – Over one third (37%) of incidents we attend require our technical rescue capability ranging from water and animal rescue, medical emergencies, supporting other agencies, road traffic collisions and working at height. The 4% increase is primarily from increased attendance at road traffic collisions and effecting entry into homes in support of other emergency services.

False Alarms - Nearly half (42%) of the incidents we attend turn out to be false alarms, sometimes made with good intentions, where people call us in the belief something is happening that requires our intervention. Most calls that become classed as a false alarm are from automatic fire alarms.

In April 2023 we informed businesses and the public on changes to how we would respond to automatic fire alarms.

How will we respond to AFAs from 1 April 2023,

- We will not attend automatic fire alarms between 7am and 7pm at premises where people do not sleep - unless a fire has been confirmed (we will continue to attend AFAs at these premises outside of these hours).
- We will attend AFAs at certain high-risk premises between 7am and 7pm this will be based on service intelligence about that building.
- We will continue to attend all AFAs at premises where people sleep.
- We will continue to attend all AFAs at domestic properties.

- **We will continue to attend all incidents where a fire has been confirmed.**

This has led to a 22% reduction in attendance at AFAs from the same reporting period last year. This means fire engines have been available more of the time to deal with genuine emergencies and to carry out more risk reduction work.

Productivity and Efficiency

On the 31st of March 2024 at the request of Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire we submitted our second North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2023-24. <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Download-the-Productivity-and-Efficiency-Plan-2024-25.pdf>

The plan not only covers planned efficiencies, but also our plans for increasing productivity.

Collaboration

enableNY brings together the support functions from police and fire, pooling resources on a client service model to deliver services, including people services, ICT, estates, finance, and business planning, to North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

This helps the Services plan better for future demands and challenges, increases resilience and effectiveness, and improves value for money for the public.

The **Control Partnership Agreement** enables Cornwall and North Yorkshire to take each other's calls during spate circumstances and to provide resilience should there be software mobilisation issues. Because of the geographical distance between the two areas, it is unlikely that both areas would be inundated at the same time, for example during flooding incidents. If there is no one to take calls in North Yorkshire then the call can be diverted to Cornwall who can mobilise and deploy crews to incidents, and vice versa.

The service collaborates closely with **local partners** through several forums, especially the Local Resilience Forum, the York and North Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership, the North Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership and the Safer York partnership, and district community safety hubs.

In support of the **North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (NYLRF)** NYFRS employees actively participate at the operational, tactical, and strategic levels, chairing working groups, participating in exercises and attending multi-agency incidents.

The **Public Safety Service (PSS)** is a pilot scheme which aims to improve local capacity across multiple services (initially including North Yorkshire Police, Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS), and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service) by providing generalist support and targeted prevention interventions through specific services. It brings together several organisations to improve the safety and resilience of communities.

North Yorkshire's Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner commissioned Kada Research to evaluate North Yorkshire's public safety service (PSS) pilot. The result is a return on investment (ROI) of 1:7.8m. This means that for every £1 invested in the costs of the service, there would be a return of £7.80 in social value benefits. The scheme, therefore, indicates a significant return on investment as well as good value for money.

FireBike is an initiative where a team of volunteers use a decommissioned Police Traffic Motorcycle to drive down road accidents and reduce injuries and deaths amongst motorcyclists. By directly

engaging with the most vulnerable of road users, FireBike promotes road safety and advanced rider techniques by being able to get into the heart of the motorcycling community. In total, FireBike delivered 1,177 Hours of community engagement and road safety activity during its first year of operation.

Transformation Plans

The Risk and Resource Model sets out the risk in our county and the City of York and how we will deploy our resources, prioritising prevention, and protection activity to address and reduce that risk and the likelihood of emergency events occurring.

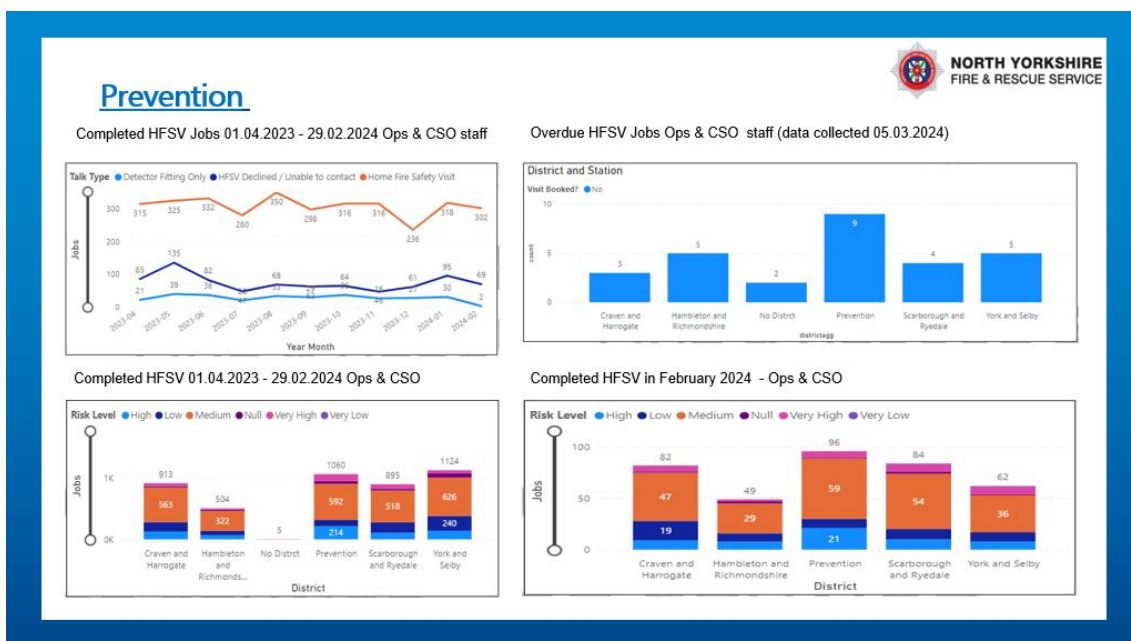
We continue to evaluate each phase of its implementation from its inception, through its consultation and at regular stages through its implementation.

In addition to the ambitious transformation plans we set out through our Risk and Resource Model 2022-2025 our Delivery Plan and Change Pipeline detail all other key work products and projects that are underway or planned, to deliver organisational change and improvement.

This provides clarity on what is being delivered and when. They are supported by tactical plans, performance metrics and an assurance framework to measure our progress, highlight good practice and, where we need to focus our efforts for improvement.

Operational Assurance

We have increased our scrutiny; we monitor and measure performance across our organisation through our monthly Service Delivery Performance meeting.



Our performance dashboards allow us to track performance at a station and district level and we do have some performance measures in place. This will be developed further with our station and district plans having clear performance expectations set for teams across the organisation. This will allow us to clearly display if teams are on schedule, ahead of schedule or behind schedule to meet the agreed performance expectations and will be implemented within this quarter.

This monitoring of performance has seen significant improvements in performance across numerous areas of business. Overall, Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) activity has increased by 9% on the same reporting period from last year. Individuals past their visit date have reduced by over 80% since reporting commenced. Areas of good practice are also identified such as our returns of operational learning, which is close to 90% return rate.

It allows us to focus our attention to those areas which require further intervention.

We have introduced a new **Performance Audit Process** designed to assure operational effectiveness, share good practice, and ensure alignment to the Fire and Rescue Service Plan. The new audit follows five areas of assessment. These areas are,

- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Efficiency
- People

The formal performance audit is scored. These audits are carried out by a local Station Manager, a peer or non-district-based Station Manager or Operational Assurance Manager. Specialist staff from Prevention or Protection may also perform audits on their area of expertise to support the Performance Audit Schedule.

The Performance audit is aligned to the three HMICFRS pillars of Efficiency, People and Effectiveness. Effectiveness is assessed under three separate strands of Prevention, Protection and Response. The scoring for each is aligned to the system used by HMICFRS:

1 -Inadequate, 2 – Requires Improvement, 3 Adequate, 4 – Good, 5 – Outstanding.

The scoring system will enable trend analysis across the five key assessment areas for the entire service. This system will also give each watch and station an overall performance score. The data collected will be used by relevant managers to monitor, and where necessary drive improvements in performance.

Incident and training exercise monitoring is another essential aspect of assuring the efficiency, effectiveness, and safety of emergency response operations. Direct observation of response activities will assist organisational learning by identifying areas for improvement and good practices for sharing.

Monitoring of incidents and training exercises focus on five areas:

- Health and Safety
- Incident Command
- JESIP (if used at the incident or training exercise)
- Welfare
- Equipment

These areas of focus will be periodically reviewed to ensure they remain in line with service delivery expectations.

The Assurance Function produce a mid-calendar year and annual report of results and feedback from all incident and training exercise monitoring. The purpose of these reports is to provide additional assurance of emergency response performance and identify any trends that may affect the

achievement of the strategic areas of focus. These reports are submitted to the Organisational Effectiveness Board (OEB) meetings for evaluation and actioning as appropriate.

We ensure further assurance through the introduction of **Peer reviews** when appropriate. In July 2023, North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Services jointly agreed to undertake a reciprocal peer review following planning undertaken for potential strike action. The two FRS's have similarities in organisation structure, but variations in geographical and risk profiles and in delivery structures which may identify useful learning. The report which was produced identified numerous areas of good practice surrounding our planning for industrial action and some useful learning areas for consideration.

Through the reciprocal peer review all objectives were met, these included:

- Form a structured and consistent basis to identify areas of improvement for both FRS's.
- Identify areas of strength and effectiveness
- Identify areas of good practice
- Identify areas of inefficiency or ineffective practice
- Provide the Senior Leadership Team with information that allows them to challenge their current arrangements to assure themselves that they are efficient and robust for future working and for the benefit of the community during periods of Industrial Action.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

HMICFRS published our second rounded assessment report in January 2023. We welcome regular inspections from HMICFRS, as the reports are an independent and rigorous assessment which we use to aid continuous improvement

Whilst we recognised that this was a very disappointing outcome from the inspection, we were self-aware and already working on improvements.

We submitted a comprehensive action plan to HMICFRS in September 2022 to address the two causes of concern that were issued, and we've continued to engage them on the plan, pace and scale of change required. This action plan included all the areas for improvement identified within the report and the recommendations issued to each of the 44 English Fire and Rescue services from the HMICFRS Culture and Values report.

Significant work has been undertaken to address all concerns raised by the HMICFRS. Following our second revisit in summer 2023, HMICFRS published a cause of concern revisit letter dated 19 October 2023 <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/publications/north-yorkshire-frs-causes-of-concern-progress-letter-october-2023/>

Within this letter HMICFRS closed both of our causes of concern. This is a considerable achievement within such a short space of time, one which we hope staff across all our family of organisations are proud. However, we do not underestimate the work still required to continue to improve the service.

In addition, following the independent review of culture within London Fire Brigade, HMICFRS also reviewed values and culture of all 44 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England and draws on the evidence collected through our inspections of FRSs since 2018.

<https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/publications/values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services/>

The report included 35 recommendations for stakeholders across the sector and government departments. 19 were specifically directed towards services and CFO's. We have provided a response to all of these and fully closed 18. We are looking to implement 360 degree appraisals across leaders in the organisation but have to look at a cost effective way of addressing this recommendation given our financial constraints.

The Independent Audit Committee

The Committee proactively supports the Commissioner and Chief Fire Officer in ensuring the right governance and control mechanisms are in place to support a well-run fire and rescue service. The Committee reviews and scrutinises the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, internal audit and control, and corporate governance arrangements of the Fire and Rescue Service, as well as reviewing financial management and reporting.

The service appointed a new internal audit provider in 2022/23 to offer a new robust approach and a targeted plan of internal audit coverage on known risk which was agreed with Senior Officers and the committee. The provider noted that the Deputy Chief Fire Officer has established a Risk and Assurance Board with the intention to triangulate all sources of assurance more effectively.

As a service we recognise that we have work to do to improve our framework of risk management, governance, or internal control.