



Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020 – 2021



PREVENTING



PROTECTING



RESPONDING



EMPOWERING



UTILISING



MAXIMISING



Find us on social media @bedsfire



CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| 03 | Welcome to the 2020/21
Annual Report | 20 | Finance |
| 05 | Month by Month | 22 | Human Resources |
| 09 | Performance | 24 | Projects and Programmes |
| 12 | Prevention | 26 | Our work with East of England
Ambulance Service NHS Trust |
| 17 | Protection | 27 | Letters of Appreciation |

Our Mission is to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.

Our Values



WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE
we are transparent,
trustworthy and responsible
for our actions.



WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK
striving to keep us all safe,
while being supportive
and inclusive.



EVERY CONTACT COUNTS
making a positive difference
each and every time, with
respect and professionalism.



WE DARE TO BE DIFFERENT
we are bold in our approach, we
welcome challenge and are
open to innovative ideas.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR



Together, we assure you of our continued commitment to making Bedfordshire a safer place.

WELCOME TO THE 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT

Our work over 2020/21 brought our Community Risk Management Plan to life. We engaged with our communities and staff to refresh our risks and consider any opportunities to improve our Services to our communities.

The past 18 months have seen us operating new ways of working as well as supporting our partners and our wider communities. In October 2020 we were inspected by the HMICFRS in response to our COVID work. As a result of this HMICFRS published their results in January 2021. The document can be found [here](#).

We were also recently fully inspected by the HMICFRS, the results will not be published until later in the year.

We welcome the published report and any areas of improvement that may be identified within the report, we will continue to work with HMICFRS to implement further improvements.

We know that our successes would not be possible without our team of professional and dedicated staff. We have always worked hard to provide the most effective equipment, vehicles, training and support to our staff.

The Chairman and CFO Hopkinson would like to pay tribute to CFO Paul Fuller who was the Chief of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service from 2002 to 2021 and for his dedication to the communities of Bedfordshire and more widely across the UK and internationally. CFO Fuller sadly passed away in June 2021 after a short illness, but he was instrumental in delivering the areas of work and performance of BFRS covered in this annual report.



This annual report highlights the wide variety of things our staff deliver, day in day out, to serve the communities of Bedfordshire.

Our role as an emergency service includes so much more than putting out fires and the work goes on behind the scenes to continuously improve our service to you.



CFO Paul Fuller

Chief of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service from 2002 to 2021

This year has given us some challenges with COVID affecting our normal ways of working. We have overcome these challenges by enabling our staff to work from home where they can and providing them with the equipment to do this effectively. We have made our offices and our operational areas COVID safe and have provided additional PPE and other equipment to ensure that our staff have safe working environments.

In addition, to aid the multi-agency response to COVID we have provided a valuable command and support role for the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), COVID Strategic Command Group (SCG) and the Tactical Command Group (TCG) meetings. We continue to strive to be an 'employer of choice' with a highly skilled and motivated workforce that understands and reflects the diversity of our communities, and who see our Service as an engaging, positive and rewarding place to work.

By being open and responsive to change, and through exploring and investing in new and innovative technologies and ways of working, we will continue to improve the safety and wellbeing of the diverse communities we serve. Each year we publish a Community Risk Action Plan summarising what we intend to deliver over the year.

This Annual Report highlights our progress and achievements over the past year including our support to EEAST, the NHS vaccination centres and the Local Resilience Forum.

We continue to provide updates on everything we do as a Service on our social media channels and we welcome any feedback you have.

You can stay connected on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, as well as visiting our website www.bedsfire.gov.uk please follow us on our social media platforms [@bedsfire](https://www.instagram.com/bedsfire).

Andrew Hopkinson



Chief Fire Officer Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Cllr John Chatterley



Chairman Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

MONTH BY MONTH

IN APRIL 2020

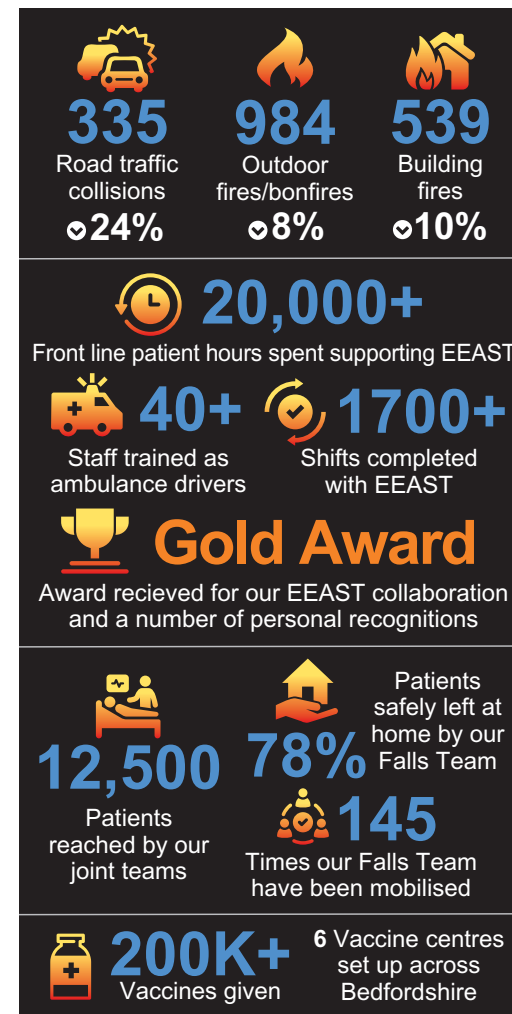
Firefighters in Bedfordshire joined forces with Blue Light colleagues at the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) to help provide life-saving frontline care during the coronavirus pandemic. We initially had 18 staff who volunteered to work alongside paramedics to respond to 999 calls over the coming months. The Firefighters who were already blue light trained received additional training to enable them to drive frontline emergency NHS ambulances, in turn freeing up paramedics to care for patients. The Firefighters received three days training at Luton Ambulance Station, which included familiarising them with EEAST's vehicles and equipment. They were also taught basic life support and safe moving and handling skills so that they were able help transfer patients.

IN MAY 2020

We extended our Falls Service, which complements fire safety activities and supports the response provided by EEAST colleagues. Some falls patients just need to be helped to their feet or a chair and checked to ensure they're safe to be left at home. Others are more serious, and patients need to be transported to hospital for further treatment. Our staff make an assessment with EEAST and ensure that essential Ambulance services are best utilised. As a result, over 77% of patients are safely left in their home, meaning they did not have to go into hospital for additional care.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service marked the historic VE milestone with a visual tribute from our Firefighters and a special message from our Chief Fire Officer. The coronavirus outbreak meant that many people commemorated the 75th anniversary of VE Day within their own homes. Along with socially distanced wreath-laying, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue created a short video showing our visual tribute, which has been shared online [here](#).

RESPONSE STATISTICS (APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021)



IN JUNE 2020

LGBT+ Pride is usually a vibrant celebration of diversity and provides an opportunity to raise awareness of current issues facing the LGBT+ community. Due to the current pandemic, many of these national celebrations have been cancelled or moved to virtual platforms. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service wished to reiterate our support to the county's LGBT+ community. We are proud of the diversity within our Service and we stand together with our partners across the county to support our ethnic minority groups and LGBT+ colleagues and communities, especially at this time, to challenge prejudice and discrimination. Earlier this year, the Service relaunched its LGBT+ Staff Network, demonstrating commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion aims.

IN JULY 2020

We created a memorial garden for East of England Ambulance Service after months of working closely during the current pandemic to support communities. Bedford firefighters, who volunteered to help the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) drive ambulances during the pandemic, designed and built a memorial garden at Luton ambulance station to show appreciation to their new workmates. The inspiration for the 'DIY SOS' makeover came after the firefighters from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue saw two bouquets in the garden in memory of much-missed ambulance workers who had died of cancer and suicide. The unveiling was captured by BBC Look East (West). Click [here](#) to watch the clip.

IN AUGUST 2020

We launched a new Technical Support Unit, based at Dunstable Fire Station. This was the first of its kind in the country, where emergency removal of a Bariatric or complex patient is required to support EEAST. Specially trained firefighters responded to more than 300 calls. Instead of the four-step resource-intensive approach, previously involving up to three ambulances and several ambulance staff, a two-step response has proved successful. This new vehicle responds to Bariatric and complex patient incidents where emergency removal of a patient is required to support the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST). This dedicated vehicle carries specialist equipment including a bariatric stretcher provided by EEAST which, will enable crews to provide the best possible care to the patient. This was part of our joint Blue Light Collaborations with various response vehicles being co-located at fire stations across the County. With a bariatric stretcher on the unit, the process is quicker, easier and more dignified for the individual and frees up ambulance capacity. It also ensures those vulnerable and at risk of fire are identified. This is an additional part of our collaboration with EEAST who have ambulances based at Dunstable Fire Station.



IN SEPTEMBER 2020

We won a BBC 3 Counties Radio Make a Difference - Emergency Services Award. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) came together with EEAST to thank firefighters for their outstanding support during COVID. On Thursday 24 September BBC 3 Counties Radio presenter Andy Collins arrived to present us with the Radio station's Award. This award was for the blue light service who put the needs of others ahead of their own every day. The gold award was given to the BFRS for the work that we have been doing with EEAST during COVID, providing seconded Firefighters to EEAST to drive ambulances. This enabled EEAST to keep more ambulances on the road during this time.

IN OCTOBER 2020

We were inspected by Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) on our response during the COVID pandemic from last March. The report released in January 2021 recognised the positive contribution we have made to our community during the pandemic. As a service we reacted quickly and proactively to give additional support to partners and the community during the initial phases of the pandemic. We continued to provide the level of activity expected in our response and prevention functions.

We also thanked our BFRS control room for the amazing work they do – all calls start with control! As part of International Control Room Week, we celebrated the life-saving work of our control room employees and acknowledged their resilience during one of the most challenging years to date. Our Control teams continued to work throughout the crisis to protect the public, dealing with an increase in calls in addition to the serious and distressing incidents that happen on a daily basis.

IN NOVEMBER 2020

We supported the UK's biggest road safety event, Road Safety Week co-ordinated by Brake (the road safety charity) the theme, 'No Need to Speed', was a reminder to everyone of how the speed they travel affects other people. We produced a **short film** highlighting a stretch of the A507, which is a particularly dangerous piece of road and accounts for over 10% of the Road Traffic Collisions we have attended this year. The outcome was that after consultation the speed limit was reduced along that piece of road, which supports our protection priority.

IN DECEMBER 2020

We launched a consultation on our proposals for Service delivery and our Budget and Council Tax requirements for 2021/22. We engaged with the local community to seek their views on our priorities and our proposals for the 2021/22 funding from council tax. Our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Annual Action Plan for 2021/22 sets out the key priorities underpinning our six strategic aims, which we focus our efforts on delivering in 2021/22.

IN JANUARY 2021

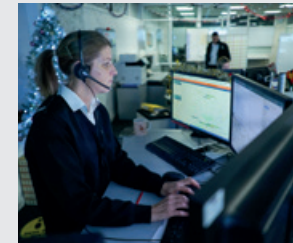
A co-responding service with EEASt was set up, following requests from firefighters at three remote on-call fire stations to do more to support their communities. Firefighters have responded to over 300 calls, swiftly tending to people in cardiac arrest, suffering chest pain or experiencing breathing difficulties. They carry out observations and basic life support before handing over to EEASt on arrival.

IN FEBRUARY 2021

We set up a new mass vaccination centre which opened its doors at Bedford Heights, Bedford. This was one of six centres opening over the next month. Over 200 members of the public received their vaccination on the first day. We are fully committed as a Service to working with the NHS to ensure that these centres were set up efficiently and effectively, utilising our experience and expertise in managing dynamic situations.

IN MARCH 2021

We held a community action day giving home safety advice and advice to businesses in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council.



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Community Action Day

THURSDAY 11 MARCH 2021
9.30AM - 1PM

Who is it for?

Do you live on Clarence Road? Or do you have a business on Clarence Road? Our crews will be in the area on Thursday 11 March for our Community Action Day.

What will it cover?

In partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council and our dedicated Home Safety Advisors, we will be giving home fire safety advice to residents. We will be looking at fire risks in the home, providing smoke alarms if required and giving support to shop owners with business fire safety advice.

How do I pre-book a visit?

Contact us below or scan the QR code here:
Email: Safeandwell@bedsfire.gov.uk
Phone: 0800 043 5042

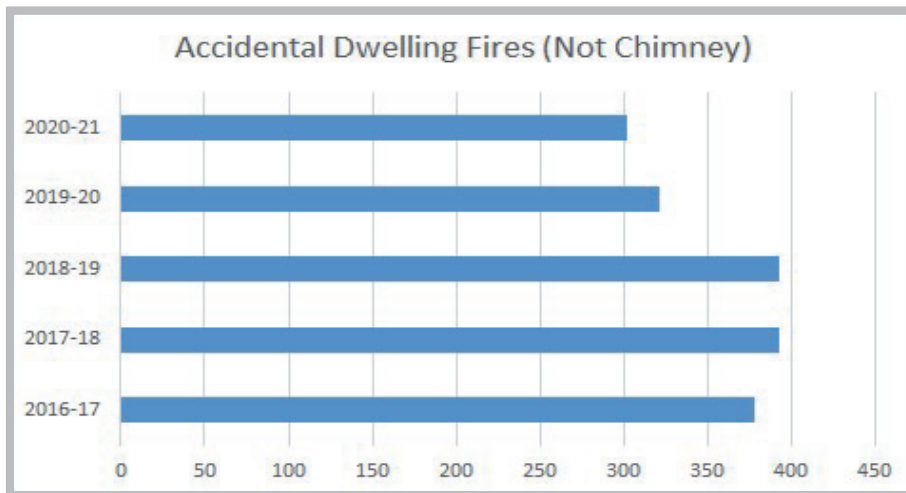
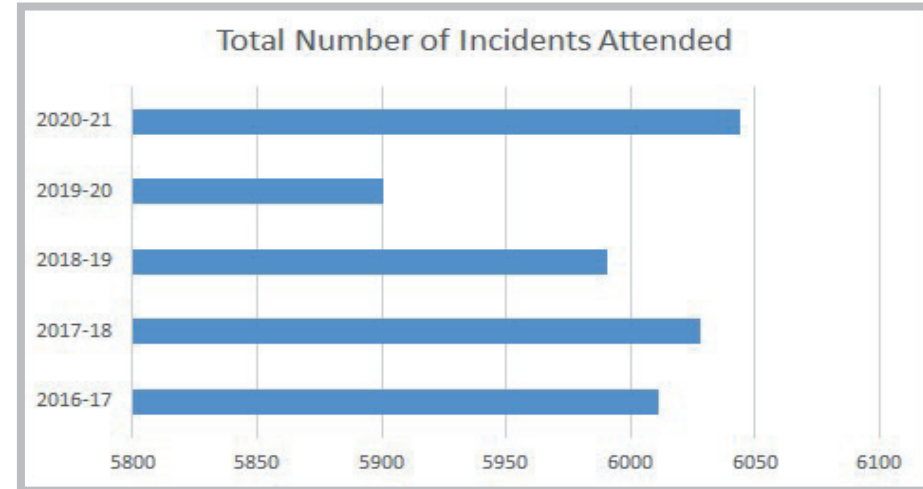


Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

PERFORMANCE

TOTAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS ATTENDED

The number of incidents attended by the Service has fluctuated over the five years and had been showing a three-year downward trend at time of last reporting. At the time of last reporting, we felt the number of incidents was anticipated to increase as more collaborative activity expands our capabilities (e.g. forced entry for medical emergencies, and assisting the Police). As the table below demonstrates we have attended have 143 more incidents in 2020-21 vs 2019-20 which is a 2.4% increase in line with our prediction.

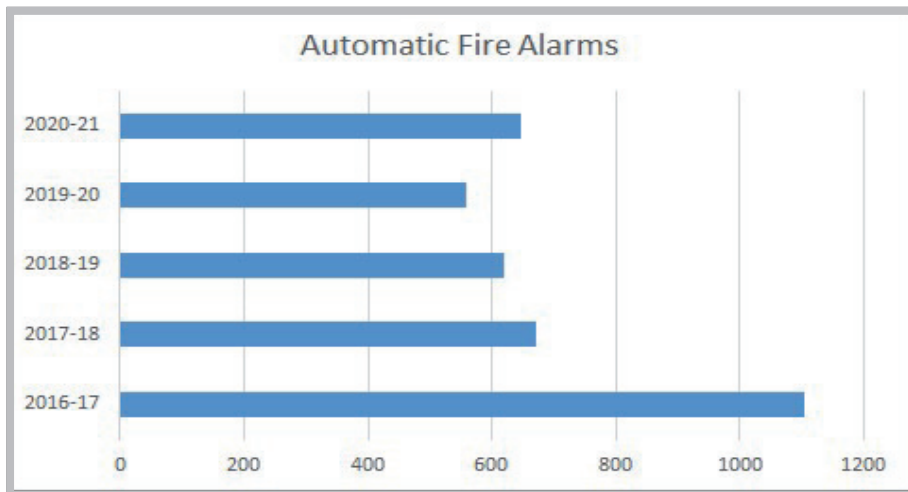
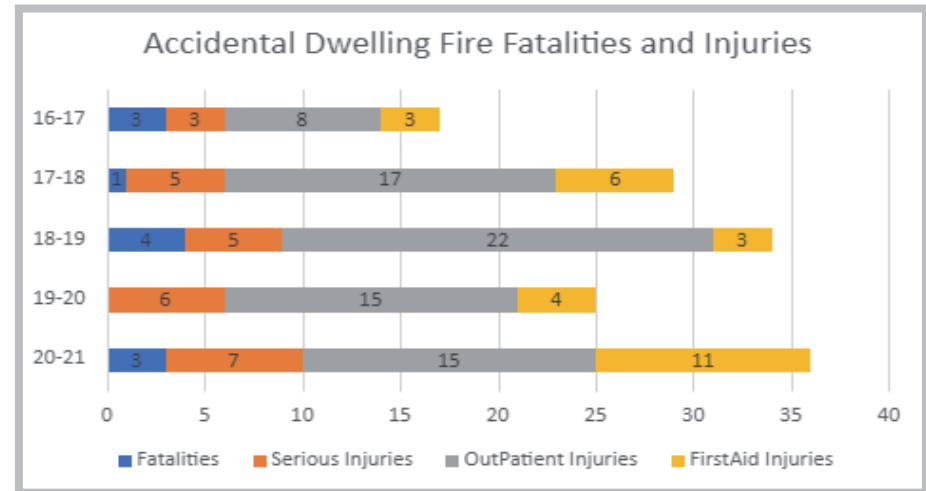


ACCIDENTAL DWELLING FIRES

When comparing 2019/20 and 2020/21 there has been a reduction from 321 to 302 in primary accidental dwelling fires (down by 6%). The average for the period April 2016 to March 2021 inclusive is 357.4 primary accidental dwelling fires per annum. The 2020/21 total of 302 is thus 16% below average when compared to the last 5 year's data.

NUMBER OF FIRE DEATHS, INJURIES AND LESS SERIOUS INJURIES

During 2020-21-there were 34 primary accidental dwelling fires that resulted in a total of 3 deaths, 7 serious injuries and 26 less serious injuries. 28 of the 34 fires (82%) were caused by 'human behaviour', 6 (18%) by 'faulty appliance' and 1 (3%) by 'overheating, unknown cause'.

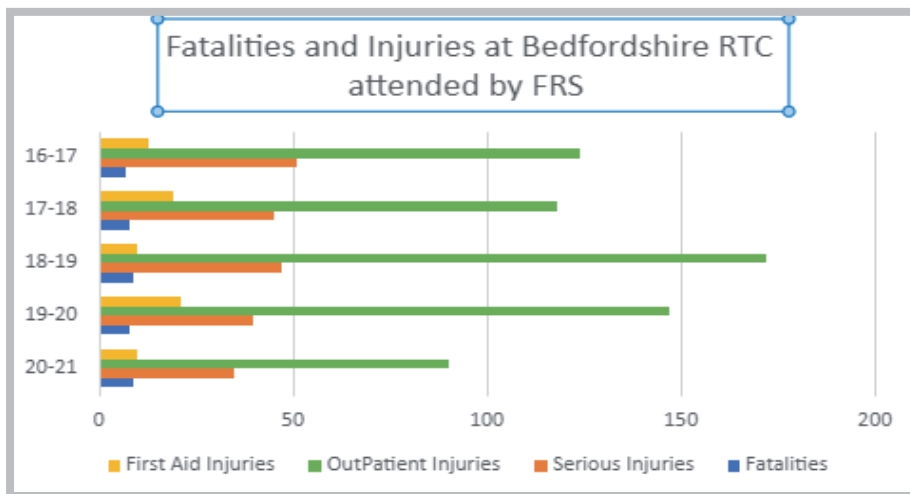
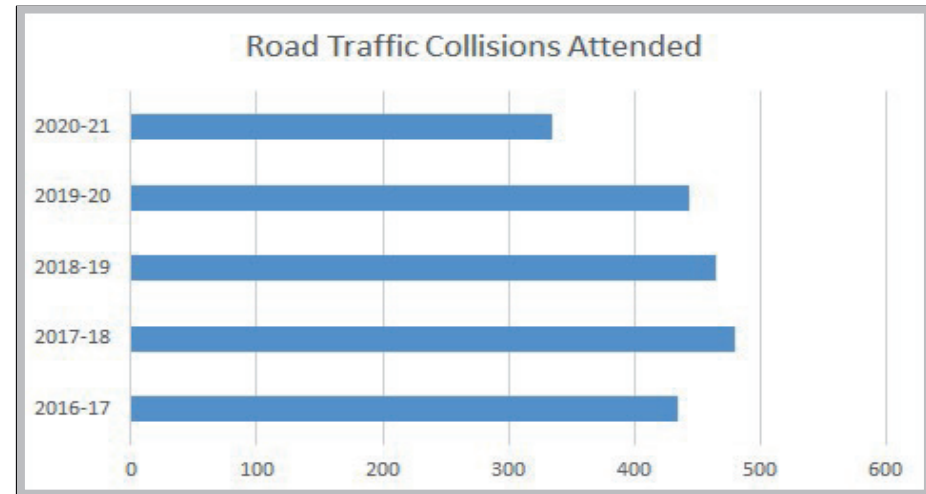


NUMBER ALARMS FROM AFA'S

BFRS continues to target the reduction in False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems and has been applying measures to support this. During 2020-21 we attended 647 AFA's which is an increase of 89 AFA's. This equates to 13 % increase.

ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS ATTENDED

The number of Road Traffic Collisions has declined over the last 3 years. The number attended in 2020-21 (325) has been the lowest in the last 5 years. This may have something to do with the pandemic and less commuters due to people working from home.



ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION INJURIES AND FATALITIES

The number of Road Traffic Collision injuries and fatalities has seen serious injuries decline over the last 3 years. However, Fatalities have remained stable with little fluctuation. Other factors have decreased and 2020/21 does appear to be down on previous years. This may have something to do with the pandemic and less commuters due to people working from home.

PREVENTION

HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS/SAFE AND WELL VISITS

BFRS makes effective use of its own data, and that of health and other partners, to implement an intelligence led approach, targeting delivery at the most vulnerable households. The Service is continuously establishing new partnerships to generate referrals from other agencies, who can assist in identifying vulnerable households that would benefit from a Safe and Well Visit.

BFRS uses a variety of risk reduction interventions in its continued commitment to keep the communities of Bedfordshire safe.

In 2020/21 prevention activity was affected by the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID pandemic. However, BFRS continued to deliver Safe and Well interventions within the community. Visits involving entering dwellings were maintained for those assessed as at high risk from fire, using measures such as social distancing and face masks to reduce the risk of infection. New delivery methods were also developed with 1710 interventions delivered by a 'Doorstep visit' and 916 delivered by telephone.

During 2020/21 BFRS supported the management of six vaccination centres across Bedfordshire and deployed personnel to engage with risk groups at these centres speaking to over 4,000 people resulting in 450 direct referrals for a Safe and Well visit.

An online referral portal was launched in August 2020 and proved to be a real success with 756 (11% of total) visits

generated by the portal. The portal generated a high proportion of visits to households with known risk factors such as elderly occupants, people living alone and households with no working smoke alarm.

In total 6,835 Safe and Well interventions were delivered, representing a 17% increase compared to 2019/20 and the highest numbers recorded in the 5 year period. These visits take the form of enhanced Home Fire Safety Checks that cover a range of additional areas addressing personal safety and wellbeing. These areas include advice and referrals to partner agencies aimed to reduce risks from:

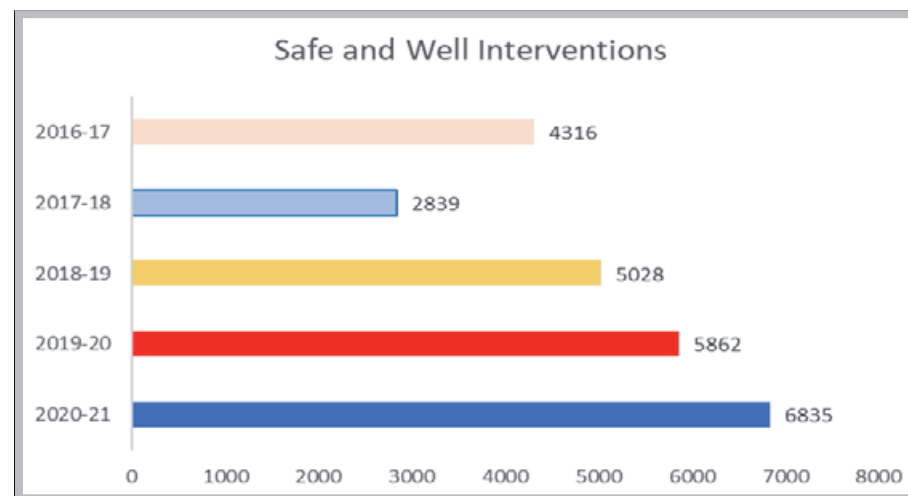
- Crime;
- Slips, Trips and Falls;
- Smoking and,
- Alcohol consumption

BFRS uses a variety of risk reduction interventions in its continued commitment to keep the communities of Bedfordshire safe.



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SAFEGUARDING

BFRS personnel undertake a wide range of public facing roles, educating and engaging with our communities including children, young people, and adults with complex needs and vulnerabilities. BFRS has a legal and moral obligation to recognise and report concerns about abuse or neglect and ensure personnel have the necessary skills and training to be safe and effective practitioners.

- In 20/21 we have seen an increase in the number and quality of referrals made by BFRS due to the training provided by partners in Central Bedfordshire Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). There has been an average of 9 Safeguarding referrals made per month during 2020/21
- Group Commanders who deal with Safeguarding have received Level 3 Safeguarding training
- With partners the pan-Bedfordshire hoarding protocol was launched and during lockdown we worked with the CCG and local authorities to share information on hoarders
- We launched a direct referral pathway from the Ambulance service safeguarding social worker to BFRS for vulnerable patients
- We worked in partnership with local authority partners and the CCG to provide advice to homeless people rehoused in hotels during lockdown

- We continued to respond to requests for arson proof letterboxes to victims of domestic abuse directly from Bedfordshire Police
- We continued to engage with young fire setters using virtual platforms
- We established a fire death and injury subgroup to the Safeguarding Adults Board

ARSON REDUCTION

BFRS has two Arson Reduction Officers who lead on delivering the Arson Reduction Strategy.

We work in partnership with other agencies to reduce arson by implementing interventions in three key areas:

- **Environmental Interventions:** aimed at removing the opportunities for arsonists to commit offences, removing potential targets for arson offences and improving security in respect of targets for arson offences that cannot be removed
- **Investigation-based Interventions:** aimed at assisting the police and other partner agencies in the identification of patterns, series and trends in respect of arson offences
- **Educational Interventions:** aimed at educating offenders and potential offenders to remove or prevent development of the motivation for engaging in fire setting behaviour

Despite the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID pandemic it was 'business as usual' in respect of the environmental and investigation-based interventions. Visits involving entering dwellings and other properties that were assessed as at high risk from fire were still conducted using measures such as social distancing and wearing gloves and face masks to reduce the risk of infection. The only interventions that were affected were educational interventions with the Prisons not allowing our Arson Reduction Officers to conduct an educational input with convicted arsonists prior to their release.

In respect of the county there was a reduction from 708 to 429 deliberate fires (down by 39%) compared to 2019/20.

ROAD SAFETY

Our Community Safety Officer Road Safety is supported by eight part time Road Traffic Collision(RTC) Reduction Officers. Although the last year has presented challenges, our team has been working hard to ensure that collaborative working and educational events have continued as best as practicably possible. We have also taken the opportunity to progress joint working initiatives:

- Working alongside our local advanced motorcycle group, Herts & Beds Advanced Motorcyclists (HBAM), we have devised a training package for Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) National Observers to ensure they have the skills to manage group riding sessions and manage the initial 'first on scene' at an RTC
- We have been working in conjunction with Bedfordshire Police to deliver Police Bike Safe

- The team supported educational campaigns including at vaccination centres and a joint campaign on the A507. This was designed solely for Social Media due to the pandemic and was very successful in terms of views and shares. The campaign generated significant interest from the local parish councils (Amphill / Clophill / Shefford / Maulden) who have been campaigning to make the road safer and it resulted in Central Bedfordshire Council committing to short-term improvements and exploring longer term solutions.

WATER SAFETY

Social media campaigns have been favoured for the educational route during the last year due to pandemic restrictions. Our media campaigns aligning with the NFCC National campaign calendar.

Our safety officers have been working with colleagues at Forest of Marston Vale to install a number of the water rescue boards around water sites they own. This included 6 boards initially, with further boards to be purchased at a later date.

The last year included a significant amount of planning for a county wide implementation of the NFCC water safety responder programme. Riverside North and the Embankment in Bedford has been targeted previously with refresher training carried out to local businesses by our safety officers and operational crews from Bedford station.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT/FIRE CADETS

We have two Youth officers who support a variety of youth initiatives many of which have not been able to take place due to pandemic restrictions.

Our Youth officers delivered a 5-day National Fire Setter training course to 6 members of our community safety team to help build resilience. This has enabled us to support 11 cases involving young fire setters within Bedfordshire.

The team supported operational crews to create a virtual Year 2 educational package. A pilot received positive feedback from schools. The design phase is due to be completed during 21/22 year so that virtual visits can be delivered to key stage 1 and 2 pupils utilising the Staywise educational resources.

Despite the challenges last year, we recruited 24 new fire cadets during October and November 2020, joining our three cadet units (Luton, Leighton Buzzard and Sandy) to bring the current total to 32 Fire Cadets supported by 16 Instructors, including 3 volunteers.

The cadet instructors adapted and launched virtual sessions on MS Teams which kept the young people engaged with over 30 virtual sessions run from December 2020 to April 2021.



PROTECTION

BFRS is the enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Fire Safety Order requires anyone in control of a premises (the 'responsible person') to carry out a fire risk assessment to determine what steps they need to take to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

During 2020/21 we introduced significant changes to our Protection approach in response to national learning arising from the Grenfell Tower tragedy. In February 2020 the National Fire Chief's Council published its revised Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators (the Competency Framework). This sets out a framework through which FRS can demonstrate their Fire Safety Regulators are suitably competent, defining roles, qualifications, development and quality assurance requirements. The Government also provided significant grant funding in 2020/21 to support a programme of inspections of high rise residential buildings and to support an uplift in protection capacity and competency.

Over the course of 2020/21 BFRS:

- Published our own revised Competency Framework, adopting the national standards for a consistent approach
- Implemented new Fire Safety Regulator roles including a part-time Fire Engineering Design Technician and two new full-time Fire Safety Advisor posts aligned to Competency Framework requirements
- Reviewed and revised our risk-based inspection programme adopting a new definition for high risk premises based upon Competency Framework guidance

- Invested significantly in protection related training and development with a first cohort of operational staff working towards the Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety
- Undertook a programme of inspections of all high-rise residential buildings reporting our findings to Government
- Continued our investment in improving our premises database and fire safety management systems

AUDITS AND INSPECTIONS

As the enforcing authority BFRS undertakes a range of planned and reactive inspections of premises (normally buildings or parts of buildings) to which the Fire Safety Order applies. The Fire Safety Order applies very widely and there are over 22,000 premises within the county of Bedfordshire to which, the Fire Safety Order applies. With such a large number of premises, through our risk-based inspection programme we target our finite resources on those buildings that present the highest risk to life safety in the event of a fire. This is predominantly those buildings used for sleeping or with vulnerable occupants, such as care homes, hotels, hospitals and other residential accommodation. We also sample other types of premises such as offices, factories and shops.

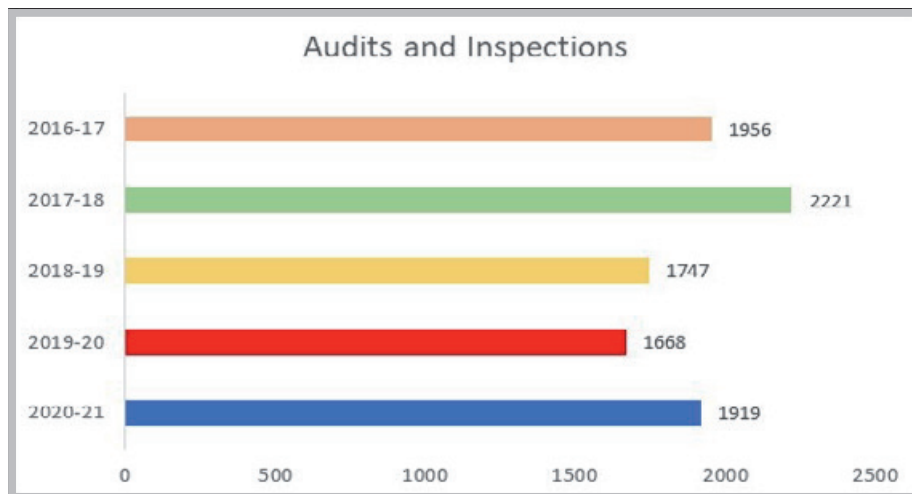
Our risk-based inspection programme includes the following types of activity:

- Planned audits of higher risk premises by specialist fire safety staff
- Basic fire safety checks of lower risk premises by operational staff
- Carrying out 'after fire' inspections
- Inspections to investigate complaints we receive about fire safety standards in premises

In 2020/21 protection activity was affected by the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID pandemic. However, BFRS continued to enforce the Fire Safety Order taking

a risk-based approach to protection activity. With many premises being closed during the lockdown periods of the pandemic or, in cases such as care homes exercising tight control over access, the number of physical audits was significantly less than in a normal year. However, we completed the inspections of high-rise residential buildings allocated under the Government's Building Risk Review programme and increased the number of basic checks undertaken, targeting low and medium rise blocks of flats.

BFRS conducted a total of 1919 audits and inspections during 2020/21 some of which were carried out as 'desktop' audits rather than physical site inspections.



FORMAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION

When BFRS finds that the requirements of the Fire Safety Order have not been complied with, the action that can be taken ranges from informal advice through to prosecution. BFRS takes a 'firm but fair' approach to enforcement in line with the Regulators Code. Formal enforcement actions include serving the types of notices set out below. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with these notices.

- **Prohibition Notice** – served where the risk is considered so serious that use of the premises needs to be prohibited or restricted until specified matters have been remedied

- **Enforcement Notice** - served where there is a clear breach of the law, where the degree of risk of harm is significant, and where a remedy needs to be secured within a set period of time
- **Alterations Notice** – served where there is a serious risk (or there would be with a change to the premises) and may require that before any changes are made details of the proposed changes must be submitted to the fire authority

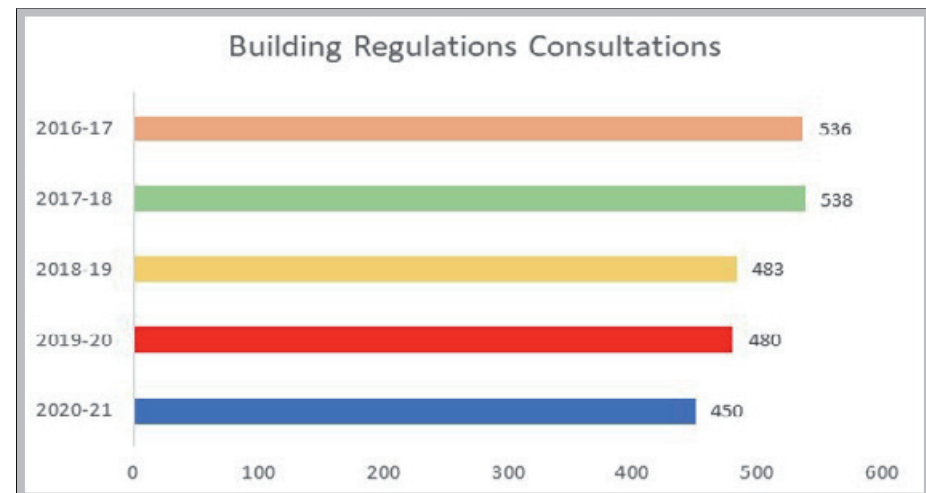
During 2020/21 BFRS served higher numbers of Notices than in previous years. Prohibition Notices have been served on residential accommodation, particularly houses in multiple occupation (HMO) as a result of our joint working with the housing authorities to combat rogue landlords who are renting accommodation without ensuring that the required fire safety measures are in place.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

In England and Wales, the Building Act 1984 and its Building Regulations apply to new buildings and to building work such as the erection, extension or material alteration of an existing building. Fire safety requirements are set out in Building Regulations and guidance on meeting the requirements is given in Approved Document B (Fire safety). The building control authority or approved inspector are responsible for checking for compliance with these requirements and undertake statutory consultation with the fire and rescue service as part of that process.

In 2020/21 BFRS made responses to 450 Building Regulations consultations, which was slightly fewer than in previous years.

In addition to Building Regulations consultations, BFRS also responds to other consultations including those relating to Licensing, Care standards, and Ofsted inspections. In 20/21 BFRS responded to 117 such consultations.



FINANCE

A FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF 2020/21

The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) is a precepting authority – this means that its net cost, after receipt of Government Grant, is met by a proportion of local business rates and council tax via the unitary authorities of in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

The FRA is acutely aware, particularly in the current economic climate, of the need to keep any increase in council tax to the minimum, always bearing in mind the need to adequately fund the Fire and Rescue Service. Resources must, therefore, be sufficient to enable this emergency service to be fully operational throughout the year. For the 2020/21 budget, the FRA was able to keep its Council Tax increase to 1.99% for 2020/21. A Band D property in 2020/21 paid £100.41 for the annual council tax charge of the Fire and Rescue Service.

A FINANCIAL COMMENTARY OF 2020/21

Revenue Budget:

For 2020/21 the FRA approved a revenue budget requirement of £31.063m. Circa 80% of these costs are for employees.

2020/21 Year End Contribution to Reserves:

The year-end contribution to reserves was £878k. The underspend was predominantly due to pay awards being set nationally that were lower than had been budgeted for. This underspend had been reported during the year to the FRA.

Capital Budget:

What the FRA spends on capital expenditure and how that expenditure is financed is governed by a Prudential Code, which has been adopted by the Authority. The FRA each year considers and determines what can be afforded taking into account service needs and the effect of the cost of financing the expenditure at local council tax payer level. For 2020/21 the FRA determined that capital expenditure be approved at £1.505m, of which £0.505m was to replace fire appliances and other operational vehicles, the core items also included ICT and property works. The capital programme was funded from capital grant received from Central Government and revenue contributions.

Reserves:

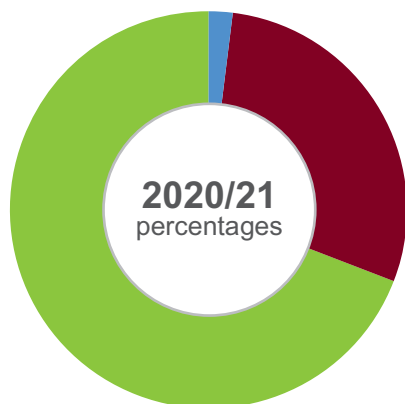
The General Reserve balance as at 31 March 2021 was £2.4m. This is following work undertaken over the last few years to establish specific earmarked reserves, which as at 31 March 2021 totalled £5.105m. The year-end revenue budget underspend of £878k was allocated to the Transformation Earmarked Reserve, this is in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Capital Receipts Reserve as at 31 March 2021 was £507k.

A full explanation of the 2020/21 finances are held within the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts. The annually accounts are subject to external audit each year, the Service's external auditors are Ernst & Young.

The link below will take you to the relevant page on the Service's website. <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Finance-and-budget/Statement-of-accounts.aspx>

The Fire and Rescue Authority has a responsibility to publish a statement of assurance on an annual basis which sets out the approach taken to ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place in terms of governance and operational delivery. The statement of assurance will be published later this year ([link to follow](#)).

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM 2020/21



2%

Income

29%

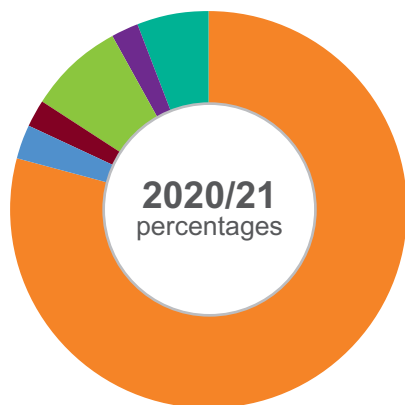
Central and Local Government Funding

69%

Council Tax

	Gross Budget	Income	Budget Requirement	Central and Local Government Funding	Council Tax	Total
2020/21 (£m)	31.7	(0.7)	31.0	9.1	21.9	31.0
2019/20 (£m)	30.3	(0.5)	29.8	8.8	21.0	29.8

WHAT THE MONEY IS SPENT ON 2020/21



79%

Employees

3%

Premises

2%

Transport

8%

Supplies and Services

2%

Agency and Contracted Services

6%

Capital Financing

	Employees	Premises	Transport	Supplies and Services	Agency and Contracted Services	Capital Financing	Total	Reserves Funding	Budget Requirement
2020/21 (£m)	25.3	0.9	0.7	2.5	0.7	1.9	32.0	(1.0)	31.0
2019/20 (£m)	23.8	1.0	0.7	2.3	0.5	2.0	30.3	(0.50)	29.8

HUMAN RESOURCES

20 employees received their Long Service & Good Conduct Awards in 2020/2021. In addition to business as usual the HR Team have adapted and implemented a range of advice, initiatives, measures and guidance to support Service delivery as a result of the pandemic. A great deal of additional work has been undertaken by all members of the HR Team and here are some of the key achievements:

A full review of the recruitment and on boarding processes took place to ensure that we were able to continue to recruit to vacancies despite national lockdowns and on-going restrictions. During the performance year we have recruited to 18 support roles (Green book), 2 Control posts, 7 Retained Firefighters and 18 Wholetime Firefighters (who started in September 2020). To do this HR developed risk assessments to enable our practical firefighter selection tests to take place as well as developing guidance for interviewees and interviewers to support virtual interview and shortlisting processes. On boarding protocols changed to enable us to safely recruit.

A Recruitment Audit was undertaken by RSM Risk Assurance Services our external auditors. This confirmed we had adequate controls in place and highlighted that “the Service has made adaptations to the recruitment process as a result of COVID, including the use of virtual interviews. We have not identified any issues in relation to the timeliness of the recruitment process.”

During the pandemic we have maintained contact with our community groups virtually using a range of media platforms. An Instagram page has been created called WIREbedsfire (Wellbeing, Inclusion, Recruitment and Engagement) – the number of followers is steadily increasing.

Occupational Health implemented remote consultations for all existing clients as well as the additional workload associated with the pandemic such as advice and support to vulnerable employees and confirmed COVID cases. They continue to provide advice to managers and the Service on individuals fitness to work, infection control etc. Our employee wellbeing offer was enhanced and a range of promotional activity was performed. We have facilitated virtual webinars, workshops and drop in sessions in partnership with a variety of organisations such as our Employee Assistance Programme, MIND, the Samaritans and the Fire Fighters Charity, etc aimed at supporting employees mental health.

Payroll have performed additional work ensuring that salary costs associated with the pandemic are accurately reported on and any recharge information is available to the Service. The HR Operations Team have ensured that pensions advice and information is clarified and available to the Service and employees in relation to additional duties in the pandemic as well as researching, developing and implementing secondment arrangements for EEAST.



The Employee Relations Team have researched, developed and implemented a range of revised HR procedures to support new ways of working, respond to COVID related legislation changes and to help the Service respond to the operational demands of the pandemic.

We have also successfully implemented virtual hearings for managerial meetings and increased the level of support available to the Service in dealing with complex people management issues in a remote environment.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

THE PARAGRAPHS BELOW PROVIDE KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES LOOKING BACK AT 2020/21:

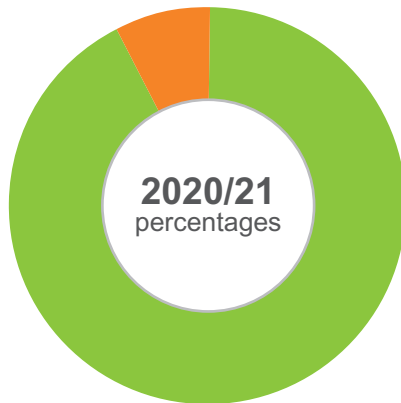
The Replacement Mobilising System Procurement phase (RMP Project) was completed successfully in June, 2020. This project is progressing well, with a “go live” expected in Autumn 2021. Additionally, BFRS is the first FRS in the region to go onto the Emergency Services Network (ESN) for Mobilising as part of our new mobilising solution implementation, which is in progress.

New Digital service created - The Safe and Well On-line Referral form (Safe and Well Project) was implemented in July, 2020, with

scoring to provide for self-referral or referral by other person or Agency / professional referral. This created the ability to identify those most at risk of injury or death in fire at the point of referral, and by utilising customer insight, geographical location and known risk factors (their personal and behavioural factors and not just the type of property they live in) to prioritise our visits.

The new Safe and Well Visits O365 form (electronic) was implemented on the Home Safety Advisors mobile phones (Dec 2020) and tablets (Mar 2021) thus achieving paperless working. This is being rolled out to all appliances' Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) and iPhones for use by the operational crews.

BFRS PROJECTS STATUS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



92%

Green

- No issues
- On course to meet targets

8%

Amber

- Some issues
- May not meet targets

0%

Red

- Significant issues
- Will fall outside agreed targets
- Requires CPB intervention

Project Status	Green	Amber	Red	Complete 2020/21	Total
Count	24	2	0	5	31

The Course Management System (CMS) and (Performance Development) PDR Pro Upgrade project (training records), were delivered successfully with the new Course Management System implementation going live in September 2020.

The Service deployed MS Office 365 and are rolling out the Digital Champions Programme with cloud based storage enabling a more effective collaborative working environment. Digital literacy training and webinars have been provided by 365Tribe and made available to all staff. This has improved the efficiency of working, and has supported the remote working during the COVID pandemic lockdown.

The Fleet and Assets Tracking project implemented the new Fleet and Asset Tracking System live within 3 stations. This is now used for inventory checking and “task and test” activities, instead of the previous paper based process. Full rollout is in progress.

The new Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) rollout to all appliances was completed. This project is in closedown, now progressing post implementation review.

As part of the Command Support Project, we completed the Incident Command Unit (ICU) hardware refresh in April 2020 and have delivered the Procurement Phase for the Incident Command Software (March 2021), pending contract sign off by the selected provider.



OUR WORK WITH EAST OF ENGLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

OUR SUPPORT FOR EEAST

In March 2020 BFRS decided to live our values and 'dared to be different'! It started with an internal call out to our firefighters and over 30 stepped forward to volunteer to drive ambulances for EEAST.

This request was put out in March 2020 and by April our firefighters were trained and on the road driving ambulances alongside EEAST. Our partnership has grown significantly since then with the introduction of a Falls Service, Specialist Rescue Unit, and Co-responding. Stepping forward during uncertain times has allowed both EEAST and BFRS to keep the public safe during a time of national emergency.

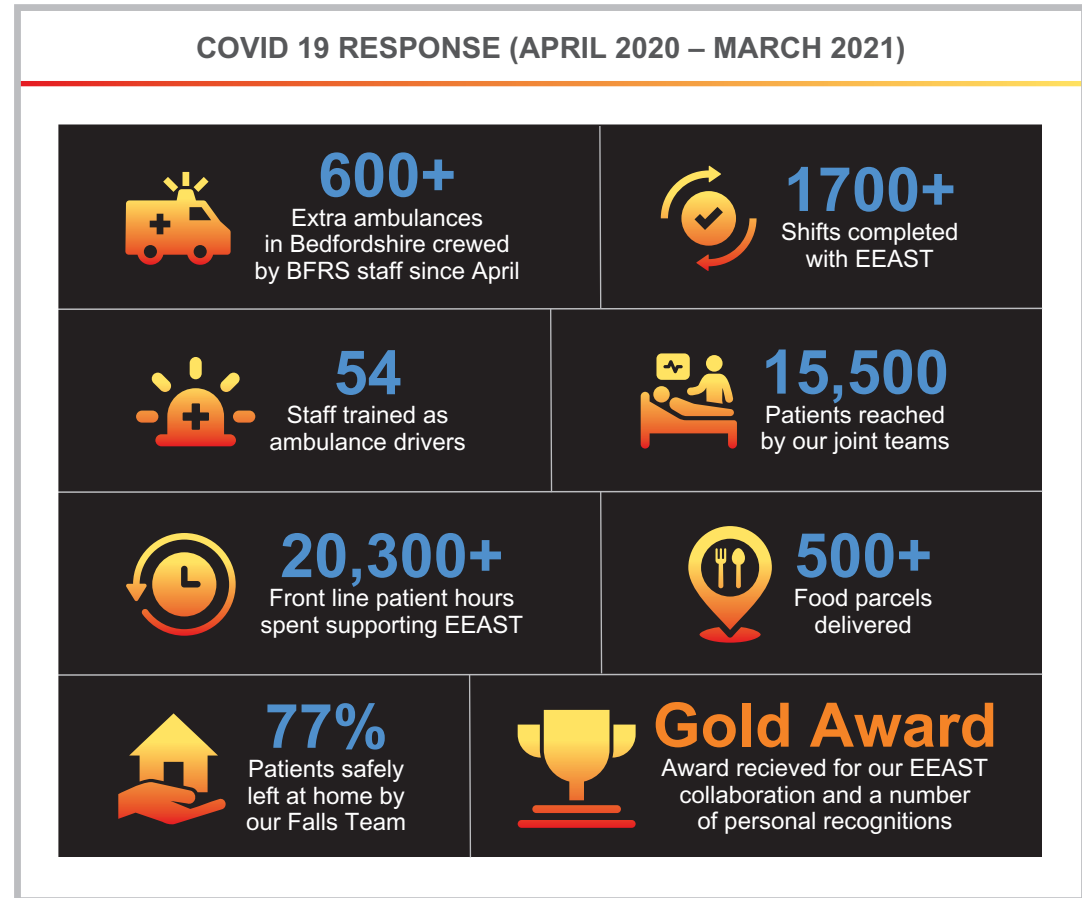
Evaluation shows that public services benefit by £7 for every pound we spend, with people in Bedfordshire getting £5.1 million in social value from our combined efforts.

Cost to the service in support of EEAST;

- £724,766.55, cost of seconded Firefighters driving ambulances; £289,235

April 2020 – April 2021, 54 firefighters have undertaken;

- 1700+ Operational shifts with EEAST completed
- 16,000+ patient interactions
- 20,300+ front-line patient hours spent supporting EEAST





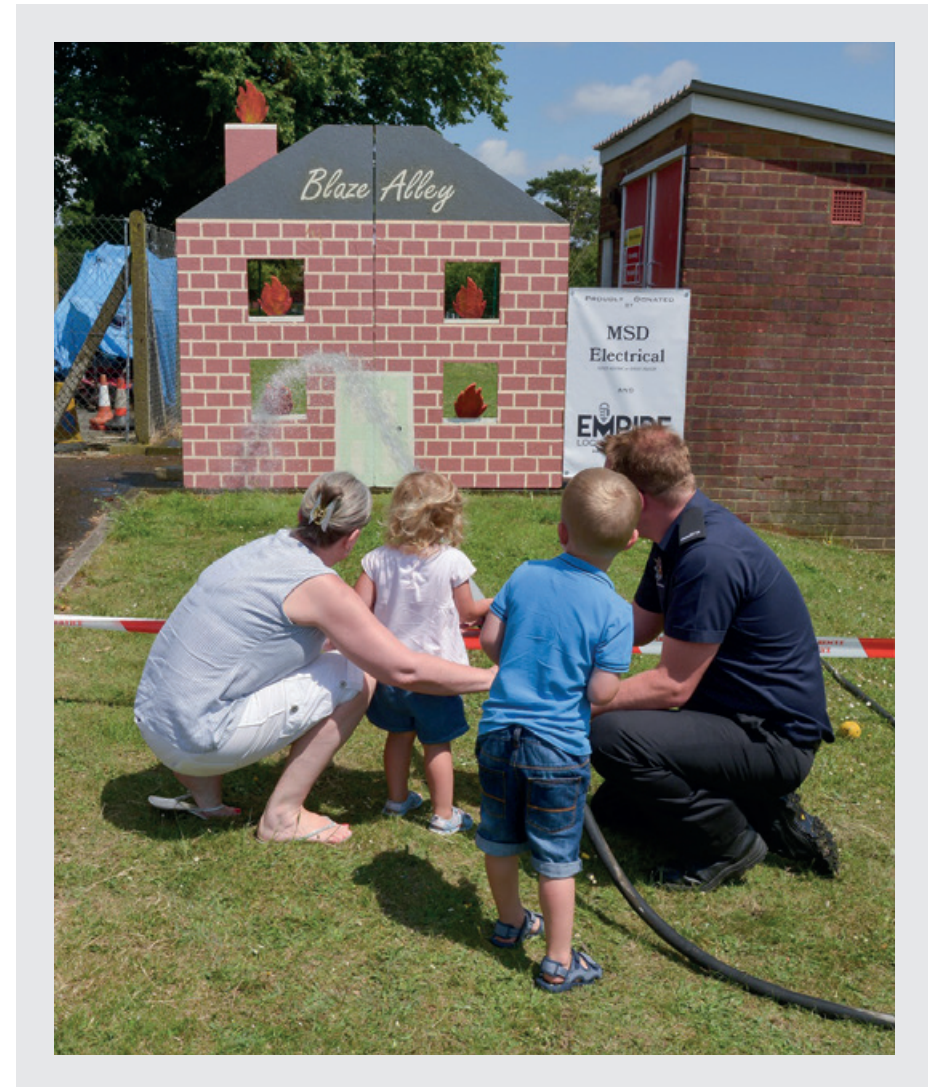
LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

Please find below a selection of the many letters and emails thanking us for our services and our outstanding team at Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

- Thank you from BCH police who attended the water safety training in Harrold. I just wanted to write and say thank you for delivering our water training last week. It was one of the best courses we have done and the whole team thoroughly enjoyed it. It was delivered in a relaxed manner, with consideration for all levels and ability with support given to those who needed it. I was really impressed with the whole course and from one training team to another we thought you were all excellent and we look forward to continued training and deployments with you in the future. Thank you, for supporting us with this training and I just wanted to let you know that the team were a credit to Beds Fire and Rescue Service. Unit Head for Operational Support Unit /CT SeCCo. #WeveGotYourBack #EveryContactCounts



-
- Thank you received from Thames Valley Air Ambulance for Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable White Watch who attended a fire at Clarence Road, Leighton Buzzard on 24th February. Sadly, the patient later died in hospital from their injuries. Our Team asked specifically to pass on to the Fire Service crews the statement below. “The support and quality of the care delivered by the Fire Service that evening was truly excellent. The team had removed the patient from further danger in a burning building, successfully cooled the patients’ burns and remained actively involved in facilitating their further care. This included covering burns, creating an area protected from the elements and providing support before, during and after the anaesthetic. Despite the fact the outcome was ultimately poor, the care delivered gave the patient the best chance of survival. A huge thank you from us. Alex Martin-Bates and Lisa Brown and the TVAA team.
 - Compliment received from EEAST - Your on-going drive and professionalism has been fantastic on many different levels with secondment drivers supporting EEAST since April 2020. Fire Fighters and BFRS support staff have proven that ‘red and green’ can work hand in hand no matter what the challenge. Things haven’t always been easy and at times it has felt as if we have been in rather deep and uncharted water, but with the vaccine now being rolled out I can only hope normality will be restored soon. Within Bedfordshire we have led not just across the region, but nationally.



We might be a small sector within EEAST and with BFRS being one of the smaller Fire Services across the country, but do not underestimate the impact your support has made. Daring to be different and stepping forward during uncertain times has allowed both EEAST and BFRS to keep the public safe during a time of national emergency. Whether you have supported EEAST by driving on secondment or are part of our falls team/ TSU or medical responders you have made a real difference and from us all here at EEAST thank you. Thank you once again and I look forward to seeing what else we can achieve together during the rest of the year.

- Letter received from the Army to Crew Commander Bedfordshire FRS, I wanted to write and thank you for speaking at the Army LGBT+ Network Conference in January. Your perspective and the historical context of LGBT+ inclusion throughout your career, including your time serving with the Royal Air Force Fire Service, provided a very positive view of the progress made in shaping an inclusive environment for the community. Your personal story of coming out to your colleagues highlights the very real challenge that I know our LGBT+ personnel continue to face today. I recognise that coming out is something LGBT+ people often feel that they have to do every day. Indeed the challenge of tackling the mindset that you described as, 'you can be gay, just discreetly' was particularly stark. Your honest and candid thoughts on inclusion were greatly appreciated by all; the seeds that you planted during the day will provide food for thought and open doors for future conversations so that the Army can continue

to 'be the best', inclusion is hard won, and I sense there is much value in further collaboration between the Army LGBT+ Network and the Fire and Rescue Service to collectively develop a stronger and inclusive culture for both of our organisations. Thank you once again and, once COVID restrictions are lifted, I do hope to meet you at a future LGBT+ inclusion event.

- A member of the public - Hi just a quick email to say thank you to the fireman at Kempston fire station who made my sons dream come true. It was his 2nd birthday yesterday and obviously has had his first 2 birthdays in lockdown. Yesterday morning we decided to walk him down the fire station as he is obsessed with Fireman Sam (we did him a Fireman Sam birthday theme at home) the fireman spotted us walking outside trying to show him the fire engines from a distance and he took a couple of minutes out of his busy day to lift the shutters up and turn the lights on for my son to see it and even allowed us to take a photo with him in front of the fire engine. I don't know the fireman's name but if you can pass on our gratitude for making a 2 year old boy sooo happy on his birthday we would really appreciate it. Thank you.
- Compliment received from member of the public - Hi, The fire team came out today to check as I could smell burning, they did a full check, which I am extremely grateful for, nothing was found but they were extremely friendly and didn't make me feel like a total wally for calling them out. Thank you so much for your help.

“Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is effective
at keeping people safe and secure.”

HMICFRS December 2018



Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

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