

Community Risk Management Plan 2019-2023

Survey Results

1. Executive Summary

- CRMP 2019-2023 consultation survey received 125 individual responses (10% of the response to our recent budget consultation);
- Only 7% of respondents stated they work for BFRS;
- A further 50 staff were involved through our management engagement event on 19 March 2019, additionally 21 watches and stations visited through February and March where CRMP was a key engagement topic (approximately 200 staff);
- 99% of respondents support our Mission;
- There is significant agreement that our proposed actions fit with our aims;
- 91% of respondents support the CRA (or chose not to read it), however 9% felt it did not provide sufficient detail;
- 82% support an in-depth analysis of emergency cover arrangements, delivered prudently and, if possible, independently;
- High support for our prevention, protection and response proposals, with emphasis made toward reassuring those that live in high rise accommodation;
- There is general agreement that our Community Risk Analysis (CRA) provides sufficient detail to enable the Service to plan and deliver its services;
- A number of additional risks were suggested by those responding (see Q5);
- There was overwhelming support for our priorities and approach towards prevention, protection, response activities and towards our people, assets, digital transformation and finances;
- As a source of information, local news websites are more popular than local newspapers, along with Town and Parish Magazines and Community Magazines;
- The most popular sources of information provided by the Service were our website and Facebook page;
- There was a high level of support that we should invest in data analytics and digital solutions to deal with a number of issues;
- We received 47 comments on our People Strategy element covering recruitment, pay and conditions and diversity.

2. Introduction

Between February-March Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) undertook a consultation on its proposed Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) covering 2019 to 2023.

The CRMP, in Word format, together with its supporting Community Risk Assessment (CRA) document, were placed on the BFRS website. The survey was open for responses between 18 February and 10 March 2019, a total of twenty days. A number of methods were used to invite local people to read and comment on the draft. These include:

- a consultation was launched on the BedsFireAlert (BFA) community messaging service. This was sent to 14,737 participants who wished to receive surveys. Two reminders were subsequently sent to those who had not responded;
- a post was put on the Service's Facebook page and boosted – it "reached" 44,886 people across the county and led to 1,196 engagements including 45 link clicks and 80 shares. The cost of boosting the post was £261.15;
- a tweet was sent out every day of the campaign, sometimes several were sent;
- an email was sent to town and parish councils and to a range of partner organisations;
- an article was placed in the internal BFRS staff newsletter, Blue Bulletin, each week during the consultation period;
- information on the survey was shared by Bedford Borough Council with its citizen panel and by Central Bedfordshire council with its staff;
- the website consultation page received 152 page views and those visiting spent an average of 3 minutes 46 seconds on the page.

A total 125 responses were received – 73 through the BedsFireAlert (BFA) service and 52 through a questionnaire on Survey Monkey (SM) promoted via social media and to staff.

It is difficult to measure the scale of reach and engagement to our survey, however we do know that posts about the survey reached in excess of 50,000 social media followers, nearly 15,000 BedsFireAlert subscribers (some of whom may be both), generated over 150 website page visits, plus communicated to approximately 600 staff within Service. Without trying to understand the reach beyond these (such as interest from posts within partners websites) this provides 65,750 people, which is approximately 10% of the population.

3. Survey Question Responses

There were thirteen core questions relating to the CRMP; several of these included the ability for those responding to add their comments. This provides both quantitative and qualitative data to consider.

Subjective responses have been considered as being positive, neutral or negative in context, however this is meant in relation to the question posed (i.e. supporting or not supporting the position) and not whether the perceived comment is felt to be either positive or negative (e.g. a seemingly unsporting comment may provide content that offers a positive change of direction or new idea). In this report I have included a few representative sample comments.

Q1 : Do you support our mission: "to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer"?

Only one person did not support this mission statement, which therefore gives 99% support.

Q2 : Our CRMP includes revised aims for the Service. Previously the aims of the Service were: -

- To respond effectively, manage risks, and reduce the number of emergency incidents that we attend;*
- To ensure high standards of corporate governance and continued service improvement; and*
- To develop our employees and create a safe, fair and caring workplace for our staff.*

Do you agree with our revised aims?

All of our revised aims received a high level of support. 'Maximising' received some negative responses from 7 out of 125. This can be seen in the table (for Q2) below.

Our new aims:

PREVENTING fires and other emergencies from happening

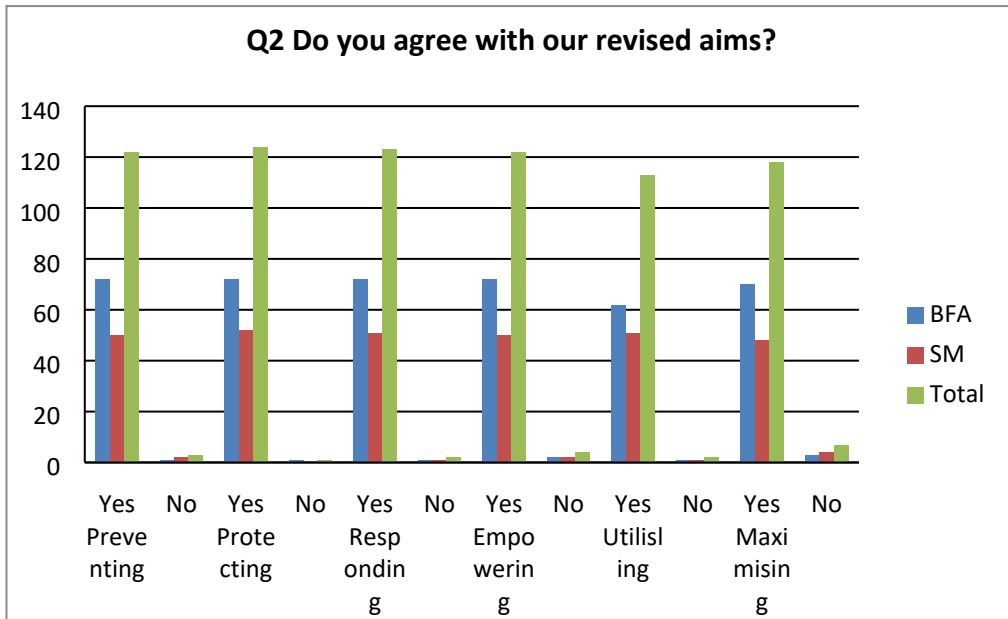
PROTECTING people and property when fires happen

RESPONDING to fires & other emergencies promptly & effectively

EMPOWERING our people as we work together to make Bedfordshire safer

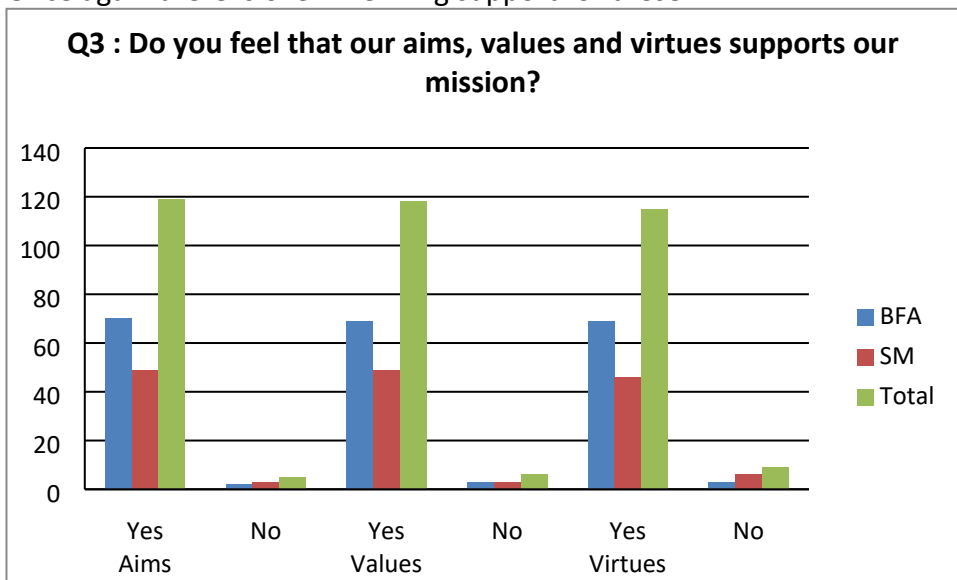
UTILISING our assets & resources efficiently & effectively

MAXIMISING use of data analytics and digital solutions to drive improvements



Q3 : Do you feel that our aims, values and virtues as detailed supports our mission as defined in Q1?

Once again there is overwhelming support for these.



There were a total of 17 comments made about our aims, values and virtues. These included positive support for them such as:

“It is good to know the service is focussed on the safety and well-being of the community.”

As well as the comment that:

“Virtues are somewhat “old fashioned” in this day and age.”

The most pertinent comments were:

“As long as utilising assets and resources efficiently and effectively doesn't include reducing crewing to increase fire engine availability then I agree.”

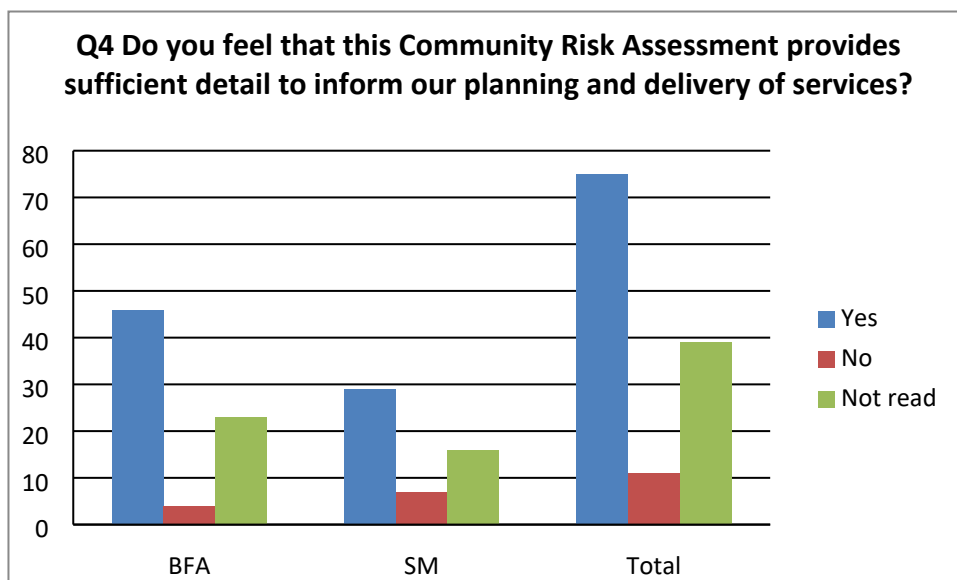
“We should not lose sight of the fact that firefighters are there to fight fires and extract people in RTAs.”

Other comments raised issues such as:

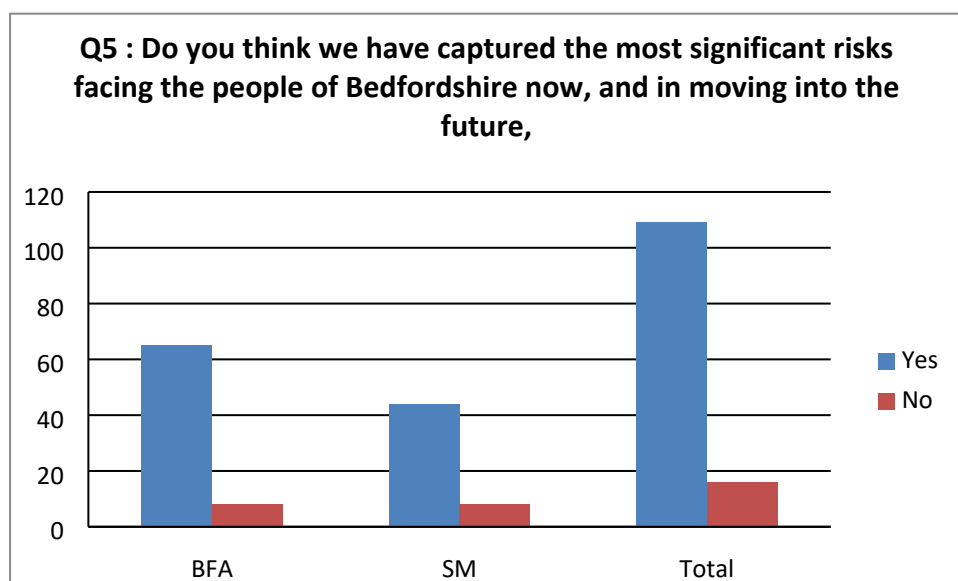
- working with estate planners to ensure easy access for fire appliances;
- prosecuting those who make false 999 calls;
- targeting elderly people who don't have smoke alarms; and
- there is too much emphasis on diversity.

Q4 : Do you feel that this Community Risk Assessment provides sufficient detail to inform our planning and delivery of services?

There is general agreement that our Community Risk Analysis (CRA) does provide enough detail to enables the service to plan and deliver its services – however almost one third of respondents had not read the CRA and 9% said it did not provide sufficient detail for us to plan and deliver our services. A sample of responses and considered areas for further development can be seen below.



Q5 : Do you think we have captured the most significant risks facing the people of Bedfordshire now, and in moving into the future.



While a majority of people agreed with this statement, sixteen disagreed. The risks that respondents perceived we were not taking into account were:

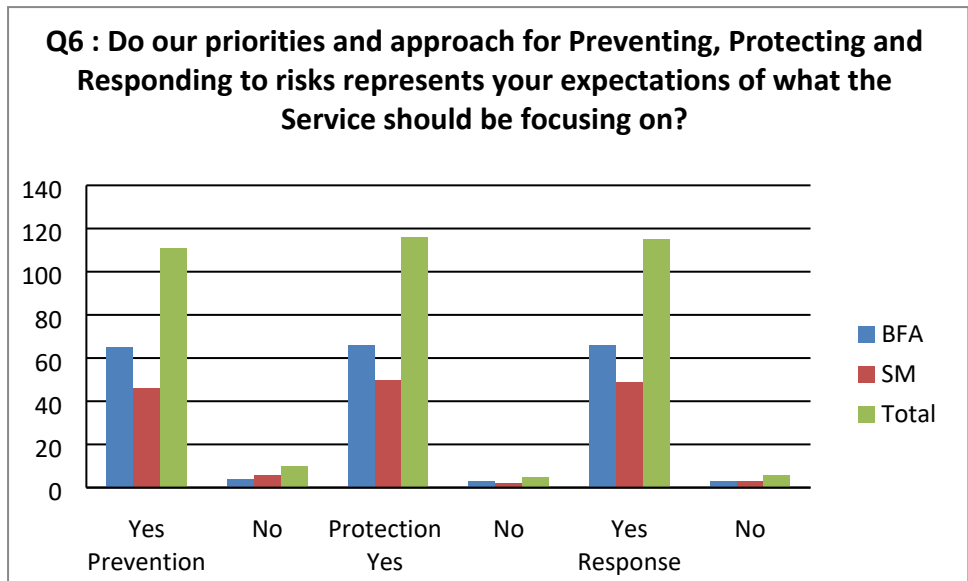
- A crash by aeroplanes using Luton airport;
- Railway incidents;
- The extensive building programme in Bedfordshire that is planned and would current station locations will cover this;
- Rising levels of cybercrime;
- Flammable cylinders in small business premises, requiring evacuation of local communities;
- Response to civil unrest;
- Single elderly in old houses.

One response pointed out:

“I can’t see any reference to the major roads that run through Bedfordshire. M1, A421, A1 although you mention road networks. If someone outside of Bedfordshire was reading this document it might be helpful.”

Q6: Do you think our priorities and approach for Preventing, Protecting and Responding to risks, detailed on pages 14 to 18, represents your expectations of what your Fire and Rescue Service should be focusing on?

Again there was significant support for these, as shown below.



Issues raised by respondents were:

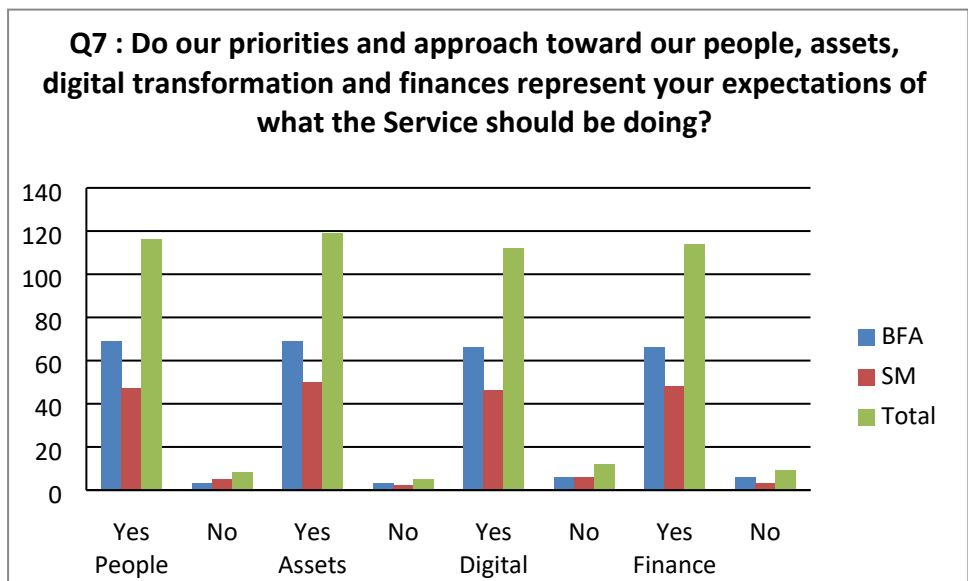
“Education for people living in multi-floor buildings.”

“After Grenfell I think the public need reassuring that you do check blocks of flats to ensure fire doors are working, that they are not covered in flammable cladding, that refurbishment has not degraded fire prevention; that there are multiple staircases or other means of escape.”

“Greater attention needed to speed of response.”

Q7 : Do you think our priorities and approach toward our people, assets, digital transformation and finances (as detailed on pages 19-23) represents your expectations of what your Fire and Rescue Service should be doing?

There was overall support for each of these.



There were a number of varied responses to this question. In many cases people said there wasn't anything to add – People (16 responses), Assets (13 responses), Digital (12 responses), and Financial Management (12 responses). In terms of comments there were a variety spread across each area:

People:

“More Frontline staff”

“Greater collaboration across local agencies and regional FRS's”

“Explore alternative ways of flexible working to make it a more attractive option.”

“Quite inflexible in supporting partner agencies”

“I have heard that there has been a culture of bullying in the service management I don't know if that has been addressed?”

“Respect your Green Book Staff (you say you do but you don't)”

Assets:

“Improve crewing at on-call stations”

“National procurement across all FRS's”

Digital:

“The transition to cloud increases the impact of a network connectivity outage. Using on-premise software (like legacy desktop versions of MS Office) will at least allow legacy files to be read, even if they have to be passed around on memory sticks! If there is a transition to cloud, it should be accompanied by increased resilience of the network architecture (dual links etc) and a clear backup plan of how services will continue in the event of an outage. Sadly a lot of businesses have learnt this the hard way... Also note that cybersecurity is a Tier 1 threat (see the CRA) so there is a credible risk to network connectivity!”

“You don't have the staff and are not ready for digital transformation”

“Didn't understand much of the narrative to be able to give an informed opinion.”

Financial Management

“Maximise economies of scale and performance through national purchasing. Vehicles; equipment; uniforms; telecoms; systems including HR systems”

“How might we address the fact that most of our budget is spent on staffing?”

“Will you stop replacing workers as they retire?”

Q8 : The Service uses a range of communication channels to inform you of our activities, including our website, social media and local news media.

Full results for this question are given in Appendix 3.

Local news websites are now more popular than local newspapers (as seen in the demise and closure of recent local printed news), with Town and Parish Magazines also very popular as a source of information, as were Community Magazines. Given that a large proportion of responses came through our Community Messaging Service, BedsFireAlert, it's no surprise this was also a popular source of information.

In terms of social media, the BFRS Website and Facebook page were more, or as, popular as local newspapers and community magazines. However Twitter, Instagram and YouTube were less popular. Given the age range of the respondents (see below) this is also not surprising.

What is of note here is the relative low importance reported of Station Open Days which fall below those sources in the first paragraph above, although are more popular than Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. As above, this could be attributed to the age group that have considered to engage in our survey.

There were many suggestions about how to improve communications and information provision. Some suggestions, if adopted, would require additional resources, in both revenue spend and staff to fulfil, while others could be met by using existing staff.

- *"Perhaps utilising local community open days and neighbourhood watch events."*
- *"Visit more community clubs/offices or retirement facilities"*
- *"Possibly via a monthly/quarterly roundup of activities and news/plans by email."*
- *"More video content for YouTube and other social media platforms."*
- *"Posters in local supermarkets, schools, churches, local stations/bus stations/shopping"*
- *"Add Barcodes [QR codes?] on your vehicles to allow smartphone users to photo them/ access your website easily"*
- *"Use Post Office advertising screens to publicise what we do"*
- *"Local notice boards"*
- *"Community talks"*
- *"Make all media multi lingual including the visually impaired"*

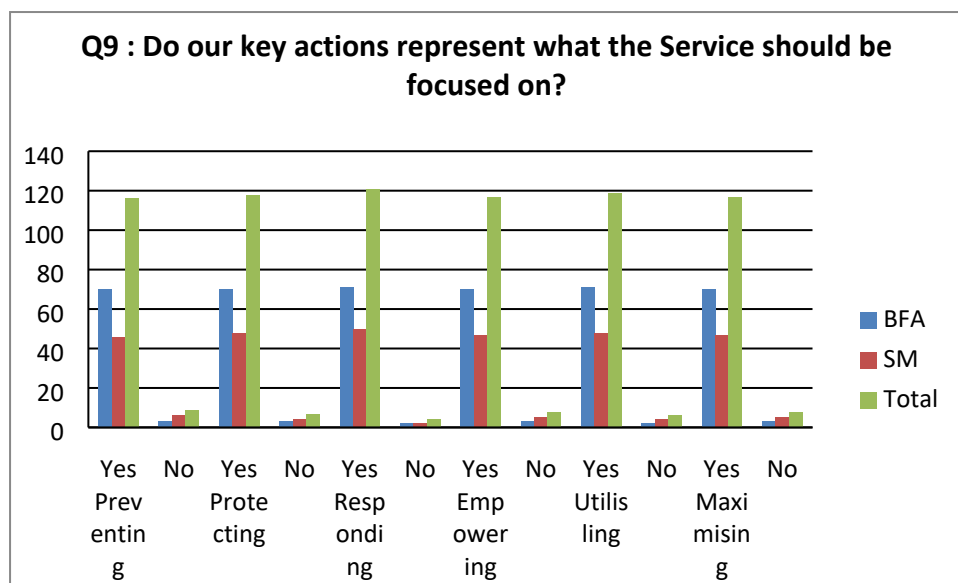
There were some negative comments presented:

- *"The social media platform used is stale and does not link to other service platforms. We need to refresh content and broaden out content. There is too much of the same stuff that does not capture the community."*

- “In North Bedfordshire we don't get any information at all”
- “It doesn't take account the rural communities (i.e. Odell) no longer receive local papers so no longer know what is going on, broadband/mobile phone connection is also poor”

Q9 : Our key actions for each of our proposed aims are detailed on Appendix A (p26-32). Do you think the activities set out there represent your expectations of what your Fire and Rescue Service should be focused on?

There is significant agreement our actions fit our aims.

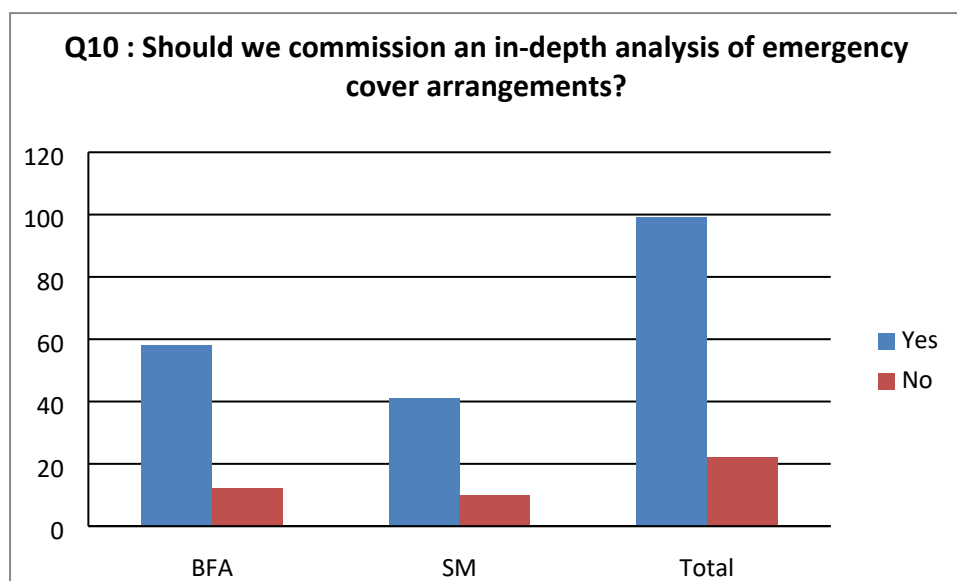


Those who chose to add comment thought much of this had been covered previously. Areas that the Service could also focus on were to “do more to support partners” (Prevention), “ensure fire engines are properly crewed on call and at full time stations” (Responding) and “Talk to staff and take action to deal with bullying” (Empowering), “Hire a business analyst! Take a holistic view of systems architecture instead of buying software in silo”, “Reduce too much localism, maximise national¹ whilst retaining local effectiveness” (Maximising).

Q10 : Our Response Strategy states we will ensure we provide an effective and timely response to fires and other emergencies. Do you believe that we should commission an in-depth analysis of emergency cover arrangements, using the latest technologies, to ensure that we are doing the right thing, using the right people and resources, in the right place and at the right time?

While there is support for commissioning the analysis of emergency cover, 18% of those responding to this question disagreed.

¹ I’m assuming this means taking action nationally rather than the political sense of “nationalism”.



This question did generate a lot of public comments both in favour of carrying out the work but also concerned about the cost of such an exercise. There were four outright positive comments, 14 that made useful suggestions and 18 generally negative responses (i.e. many of these simply enforced the “no” option).

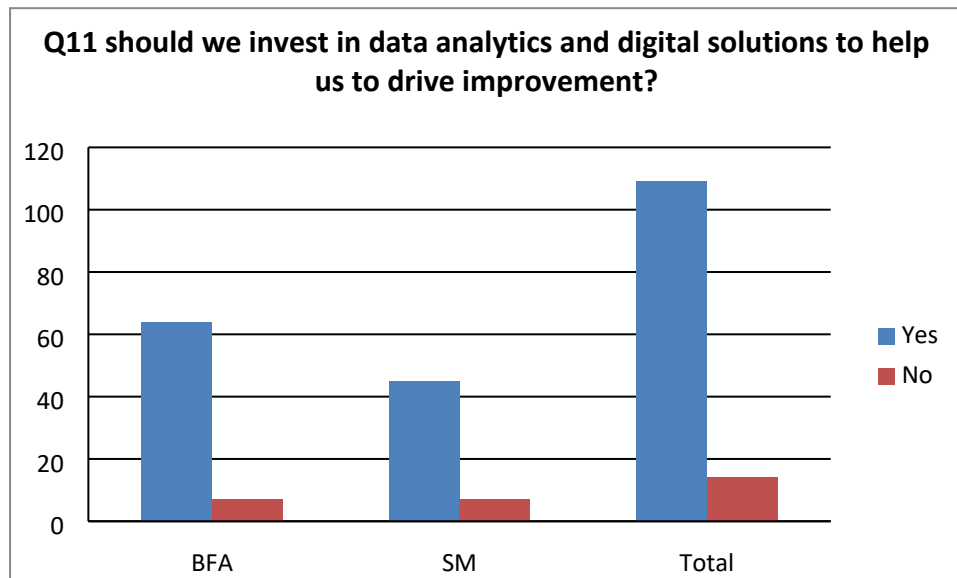
This selection of comments gives the range of responses:

- *“It just sounds very reassuring that you are doing everything you can to keep the public safe.”*
- *“Operational and effectiveness analysis are a key understanding what you do now and can reasonably predict what you will need for the future. Combined Operational and Effectiveness Analysis has been a tool used by large agencies, government and industrial, for decades.”*
- *“Perhaps establishing a local representative within community organisations who could act as a “go between”*
- *“Will need to spend some money on a proper GIS Analyst to do this.”*
- *“Not unless such an analysis can be done relatively quickly and cheaply, preferably in - house. Can’t your staff use “the latest technologies”, if needed?”*
- *“Don’t overthink the latest technology bit. This can be done pretty well with a spreadsheet/database and get actionable results.”*
- *“Worth getting another force [sic] to assist with audit as they will have greater awareness of risk issues”*
- *“Only if delivered by an independent organisation”*
- *“Use the money to fund more firefighters & appliances / Financial resources are already stretched: why squander them on yet another “strategic study”?”*

Q11 : Our Data Strategy states that we will use data and digital solutions to drive improvement. Do you believe that we should invest in data analytics and digital solutions to help us: a) better understand the risks in our community; b) reduce reliance on paper-

based systems freeing up staff time to focus more on delivering front-line services; and c) improve the availability of risk and performance information to both staff and managers to help target our resources towards the most vulnerable and keep our firefighters safe?

A high level of support (89%) was reported for this question.



This question also elicited a large number of responses; a representative sample are set out below:

- *“Data is an important element of the planning for improvement. All staff need to have access to it to provide feedback on their performance.”*
- *“Needs to be able to provide detailed real time information on availability of resources.”*
- *“There should be potential to reduce workforce and staffing budget through the Data Strategy”*
- *“Be careful - seen this is several government departments and it never goes smoothly. So maintaining current systems until proven wise”*
- *“You should do this. Sadly you have completely mis-managed the resources you have to complete this over many years. You don't have the resources or tools to do this. Your capacity to deliver transformational change using ICT is minimal.”*
- *“Very much doubt you would learn anything useful given how costly this could prove to be”*
- *“Limit the amount spent on this. It is important, but some companies charge vast amounts for analysis and new computer systems which are not always as effective as they could be. NHS systems being a prime example.”*
- *“Provided this can be managed in-house without further depleting valuable financial resources.”*

Q12 : Our People Strategy details our ambition to be an employer of choice; recruiting, retaining and developing a highly skilled and diverse workforce who uphold and model our values and virtues. How do you believe we could improve our recruitment and selection to all of our roles from across our diverse communities?

This was a free text only question and so has many and varied comments – 8 positive, 31 neutral and 8 negative (mostly reinforcing a “no” position).

Topics covered were:

- Doing a good job
 - o *“I don't think that you can improve with the budget you have”*
- Pay and benefits
 - o *“Better pay and benefits to the actual first responders. They are heroes!”*
 - o *“Encouraging a sense of belonging and making sure that loyalty is seen to operate positively in both directions in the management structure.”*
 - o *“A firefighter's job is a labour of love. No money can cover that stress and risks.”*
- Recruitment
 - o *“Increase the basic entry level requirements for joining as a fire fighter, and better promote the opportunities there are to progress to management roles. This may help attract high achievers to join the service who may normally see careers such as Law and Medicine as their options.”*
 - o *“The strategy does not seem to be a very "exciting" one in order to attract young men and women to view the job as a long term career opportunity when set against other employment and career opportunities.”*
 - o *“More locals, less out of county people.”*
 - o *“Making shift pattern even more available to families.”*
 - o *“Include different ethnicities in adverts / Target recruitment adds into less represented parts of the community”*
 - o *“Constant positive action campaign not just when we want to recruit. should be a constant program to raise our profile.”*
- Diversity
 - o *“Do not dwell upon being an "inclusive" employer! Dwell on finding the right people for the job and not reducing standards to accommodate those that might not ordinarily find employment in the fire service. Those that match up to the requirements of the jobs do so on their own merit!” [Most comments reflected this view]*

- *“Ensure you know what attracts and retains people as firefighters. Be real about cultural views of firefighter work - some cultural groups are highly unlikely to want to aspire to be firefighters”*

Q13 : Are there any additional comments you wish to make about our draft Community Risk Management Plan 2019-2023?

This was an open text question but only received 19 comments and almost all said they had nothing to add. Where comment was included, these said:

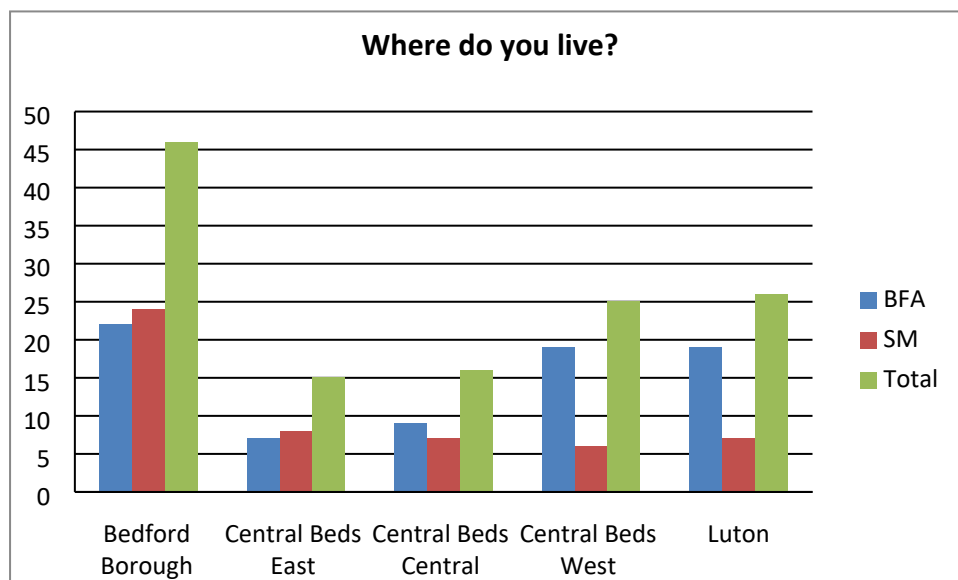
“No it all reads very good”

“It looks thorough”

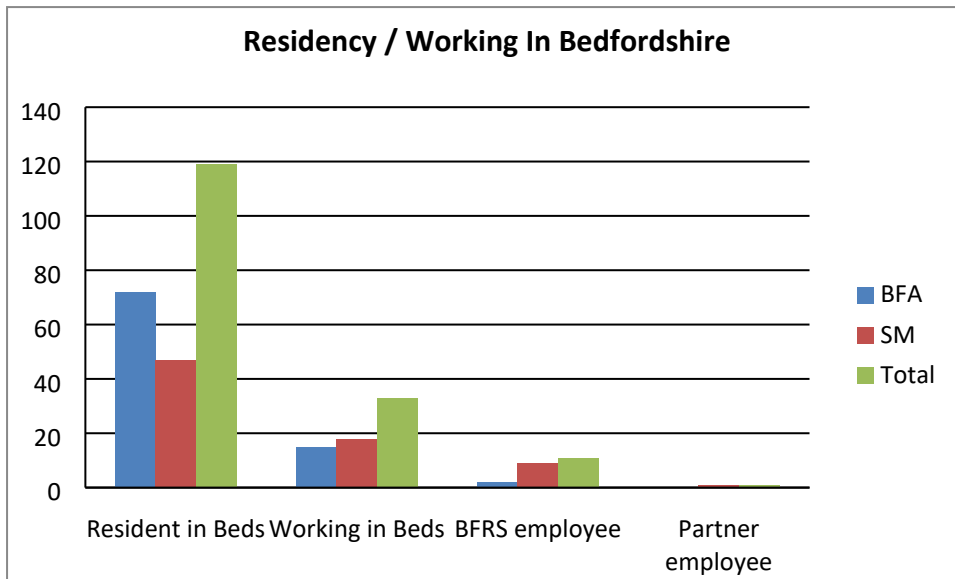
“Any plan is only as good as the people who implement it”

4. Demographics

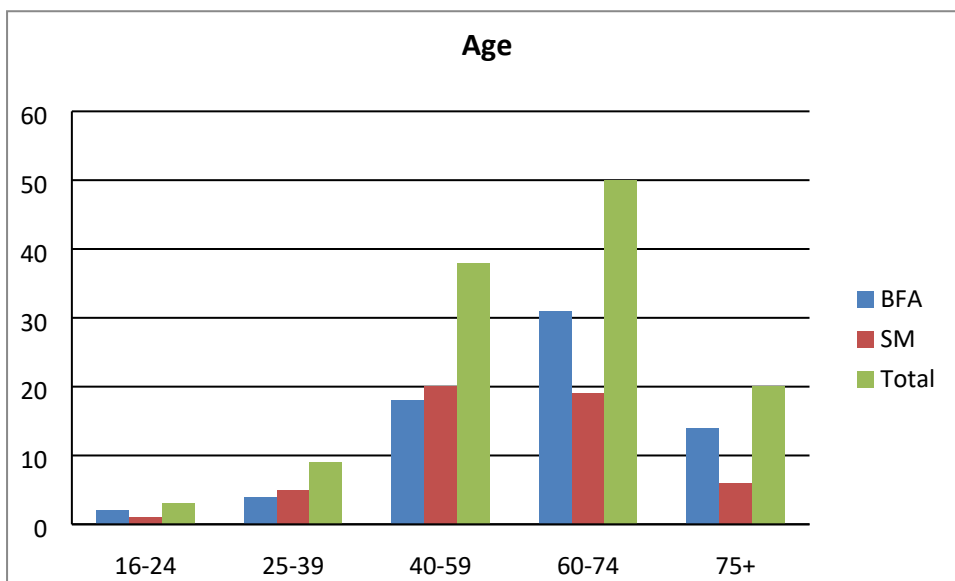
Responses were not proportionate to population; 44% came from those living in Central Bedfordshire and 36% from Bedford Borough with only 20% of responses coming from Luton. Take up of social media promotion was lower in West Central Bedfordshire (Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Toddington etc.) and Luton where a majority of responses came via BedsFireAlert.



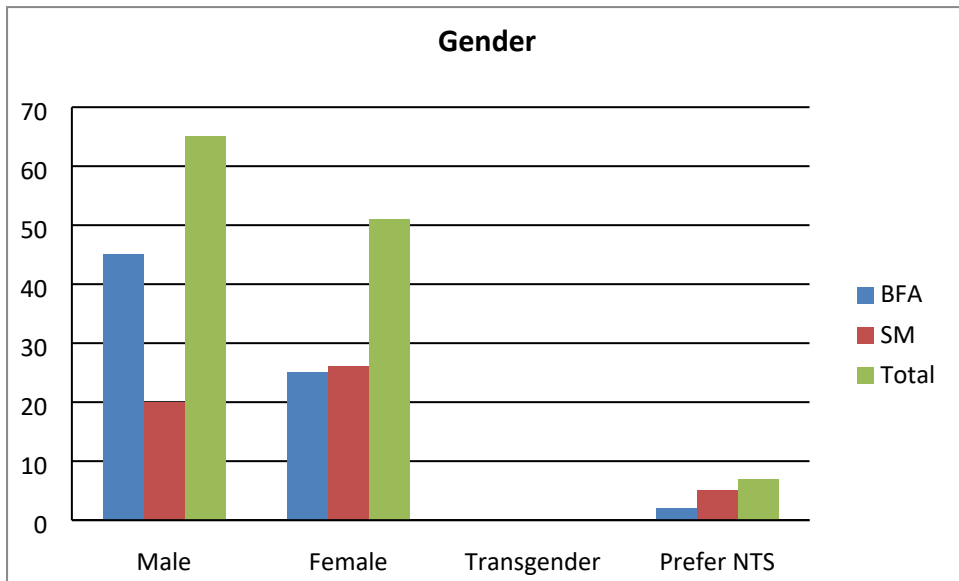
A majority of those responding lived in the county with one in five (20%) saying they worked in the county. Only 7% of respondents were staff and one person worked for a blue light or other partner organisation.



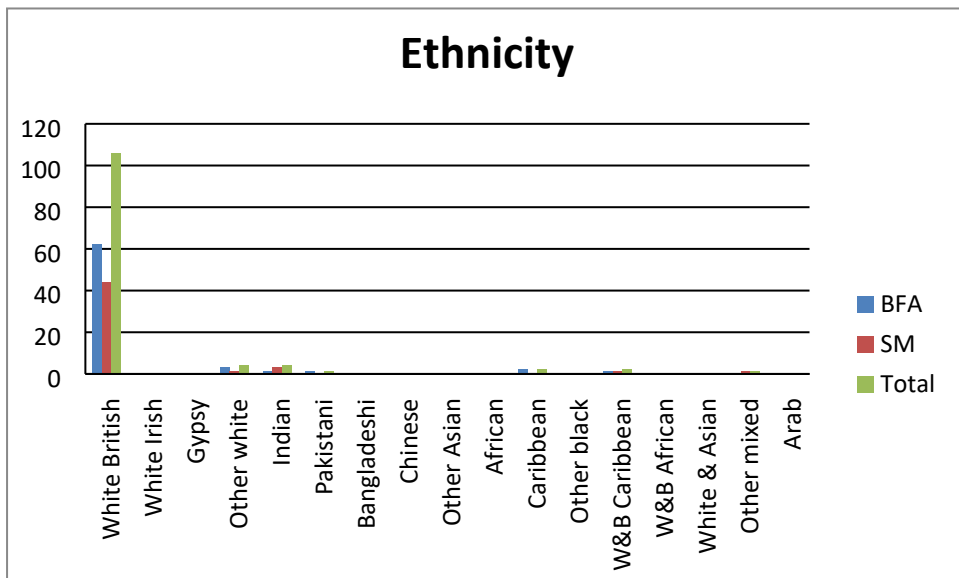
The demographic of the BedsFireAlert audience is over 55 and generally male, so we would expect this to be reflected in the respondents to the survey and 65% of them were over 65 years old. We can see that those who took part via Survey Monkey and were alerted by social media tend to be younger, with 51% aged 64 or below (although 49% were still 65 or over).



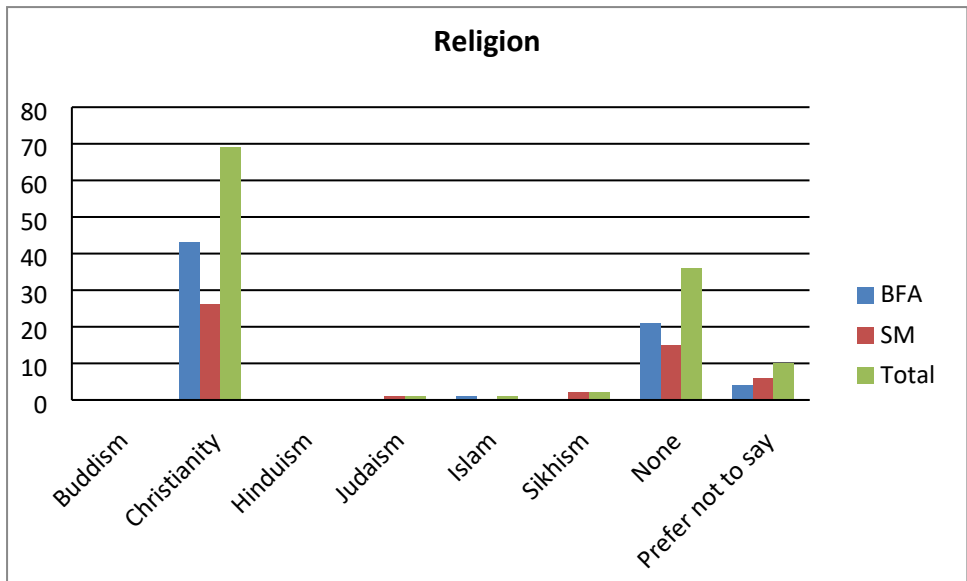
In terms of gender 62% of the BedsFireAlert respondents were male compared to only 39% for those using the Survey Monkey platform (51% were female and 10% preferred not to say). This brought the overall split between men and women to 53%:41% (with 6% preferring not to say).



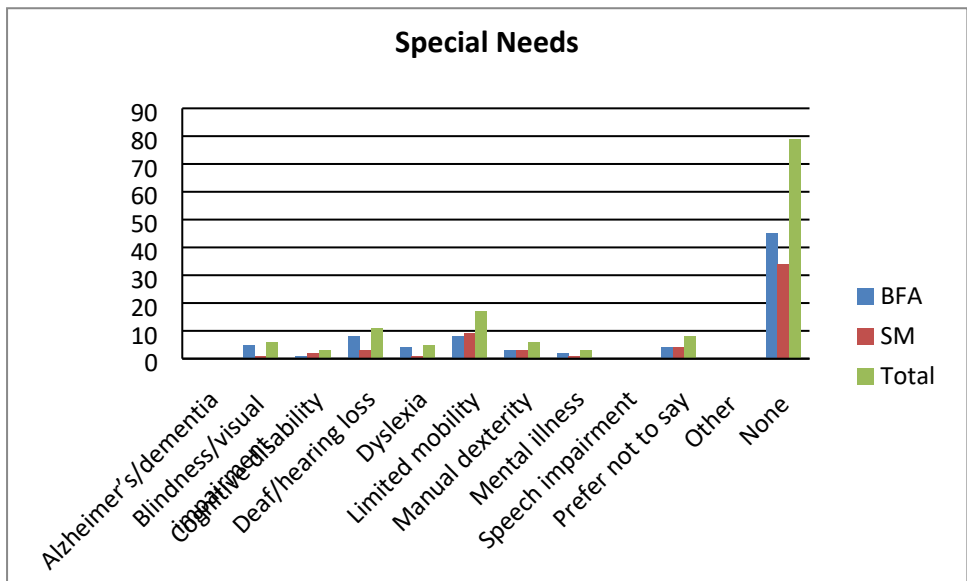
In terms of ethnicity the responses were overwhelmingly from white British people.



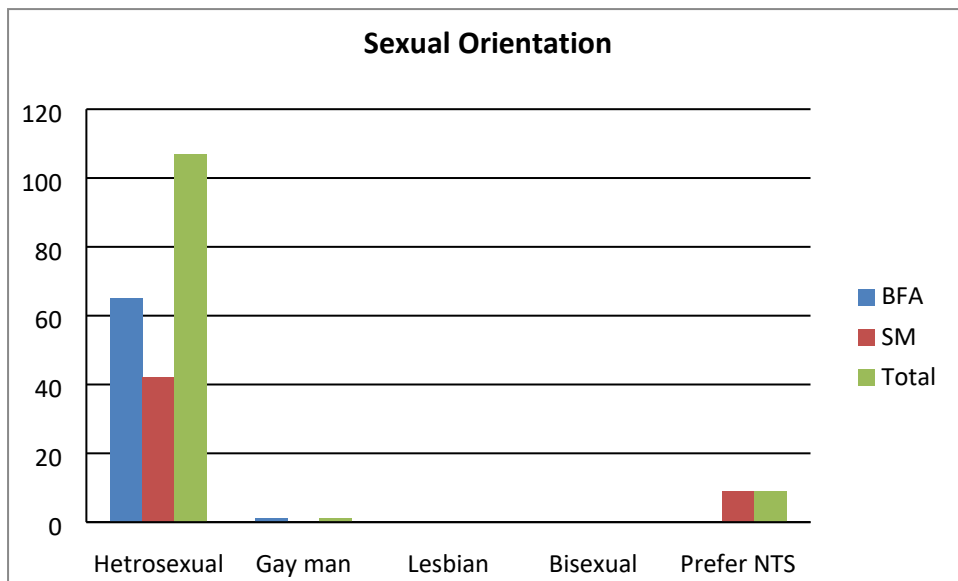
Generally respondents said they were Christian, had no religion or preferred not to say.



In general those taking the survey had no special needs. Where they were given they were hearing impairment and mobility impairment, something the Safe and Well surveys also find. One person did comment that the presentation of the CRMP on white only background and the survey itself on the same format made it hard for dyslexics to read (of which five responded to the survey).



Finally with the exception of one gay man all those who took part were heterosexual (under the “prefer not to say” heading three people questioned the relevance of this question).



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20 March 2019