

**Working together
for a safer Scotland**



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

HIGHLAND AREA

LOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN REVIEW 2020

Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.

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Introduction

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is required under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to prepare Local Fire and Rescue Plans for each local authority in Scotland. Our first Local Fire and Rescue Plans were published in April 2014. These were reviewed and replaced in 2017/18.

These Plans were developed to direct the Service through its initial transformation journey and to forge our place as a national organisation with a strong sense of local accountability. Against the drive of public sector reform, the local planning landscape continues to evolve to tackle inequalities and improve community outcomes through strong and open collaborative working.

The publication of our new Strategic Plan 2019-22 in October 2019 now instigates a requirement to carry out a mandatory review of all Local Fire and Rescue Plans. This review will provide us with information on how well we are performing against our existing priorities as well as highlighting areas for continued improvement and opportunities for change against the growing needs of our communities.

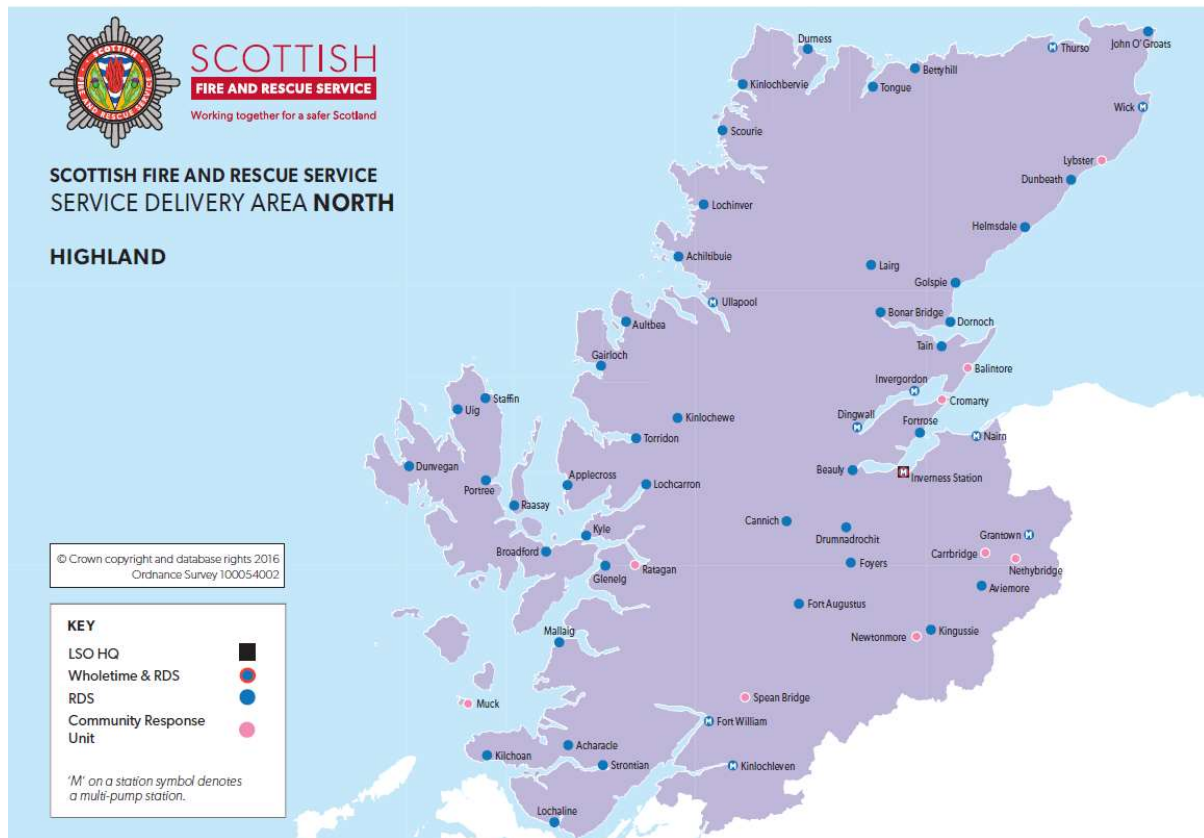


Figure 1 - Location of SFRS resources throughout Highland

Performance Data – what the figures told us

Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2017 – Local Priorities

The current Local Area Fire and Rescue Plan was developed in 2017 following review of the previous plan and the publication of the SFRS Strategic Plan 2016-2019. With consideration to the strategic intent of the Service, the plans ambition was to enhance our partnership working to improve community safety, enhance the well-being of those living in Highland whilst tackling issues of social inequality. To support this ambition, six local priorities were set out, these being,

1. Domestic Fire Safety and Unintentional Harm
2. Non-Fire Emergencies
3. Deliberate Fire Setting
4. Non-Domestic Fire Safety
5. Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals
6. Operational Resilience and Preparedness

Our local plan has served the local communities of Highland and the Service well over the last 3 years however, with an ever-changing world presenting us with new challenges and a new strategic plan setting the future intent and ambition of the Service, there is a need to review what we currently do to ensure we continue to provide the best value service to the people in our region.

Our Performance

Over the past 3 years the SFRS have responded to an average of 3891 incidents within the Highland Area on an annual basis. Review of operational demand during 2019/2020 has indicated a 2.5% decrease on the previous 3-year average and a decrease of 5% when compared to the same period in 2018/2019.

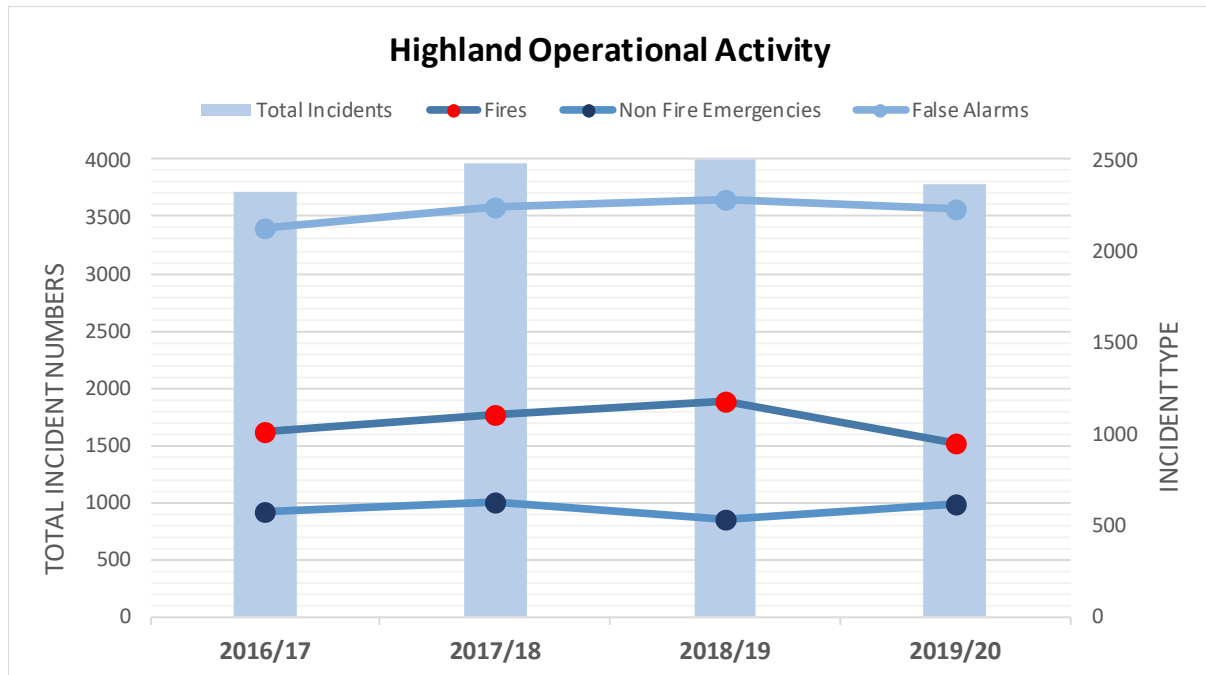


Figure 2 - Total operational activity in Highland and, operational activity per operational incident category. Shows years used to calculate 3 year averages and most recent year (2019/20) where confirmed statistics are available.

Annual Activity Levels from 1st April - 31st March						
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	3 Year Total	3 Year Average	
Fires	1009	1100	1181	3290	1097	28%
Non Fire Emergencies	572	629	528	1729	576	15%
False Alarms	2130	2241	2282	6653	2218	57%
Total Incidents	3711	3970	3991	11672	3891	

Figure 3 - Highland annual activity shown in categories for 3 years prior to 2019/20 and used to calculate 3 year average.

False Alarms are the most common type of incident attended within Highland and account for 59% of incidents attended in 2019/20 and on average 57% of incidents attended over the previous 3 years. False alarms account for calls to both domestic and non-domestic properties. Fires and Non-Fire Emergencies (Special Services) account for 25% and 16% of our attendances at incidents, respectively. Review of activity during the most recent fiscal monitoring period where ratified figures are available (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020) has determined minimal change in the demand ratio across these incident classifications.

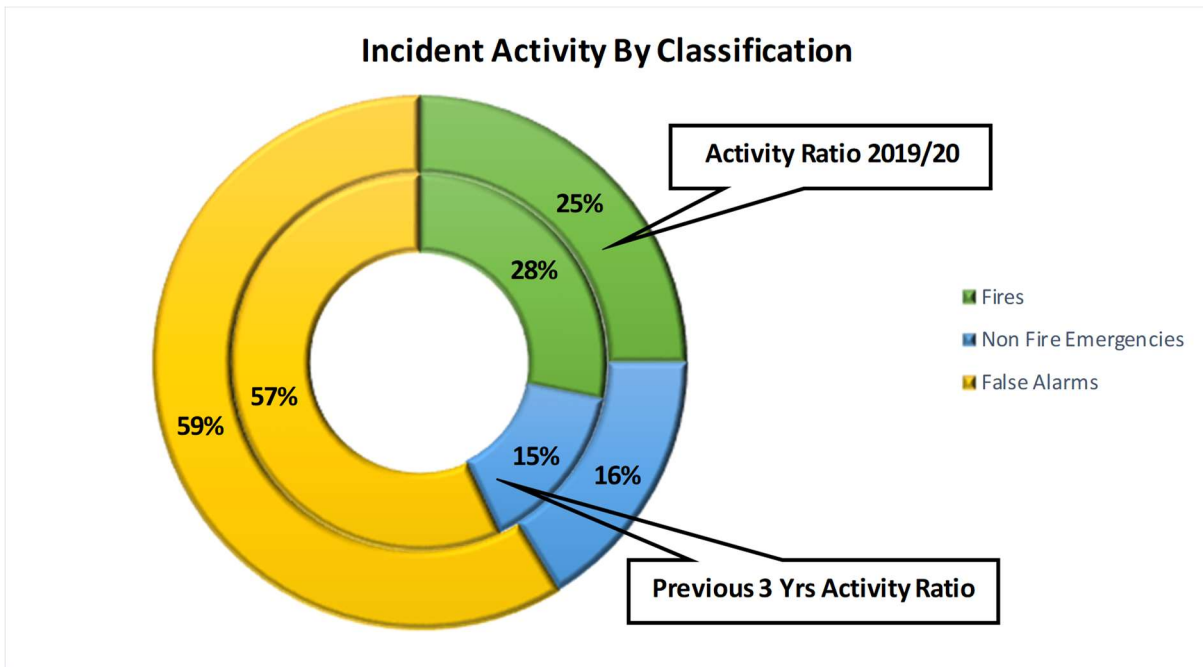


Figure 4 - Incident activity of classification of incident comparing previous 3 year average and most recent year where fully confirmed figures have been made available.

As part of the process of scrutiny the SFRS are responsible for the submission of performance reports to Highland Council’s Police & Fire and Rescue Sub-Committee. The basis of these reports is to demonstrate the progress the SFRS is making against the Priorities contained within the Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2017 for Highland.

We have assessed each of the priorities in order and have provided context during the narrative to each. For each priority, we look beyond the figure and where possible identify the root causes and have applied demand reduction strategies to reduce or eliminate events while working in isolation or with partners where appropriate.

Domestic Fire Safety and Unintentional Harm

“We will aim to improve domestic fire safety and contribute to reducing unintentional harm across the Highland area.”

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2017

Fire safety within the home is a key prevention strategy for the SFRS. Locally, we continue to monitor our progress in reducing the number of accidental dwelling fires and their severity, reducing the number of fatalities and the severity of non-fatal fire related injuries as well as increasing the presence of working heat and smoke detection within homes.

Over the last 3 years, the rate of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population within Highland is 6.18 which is both significantly below the average rate for Scotland (8.44) and at the lower end of the range when compared against all other local authority areas, with Highland being the fifth lowest in the whole of Scotland.

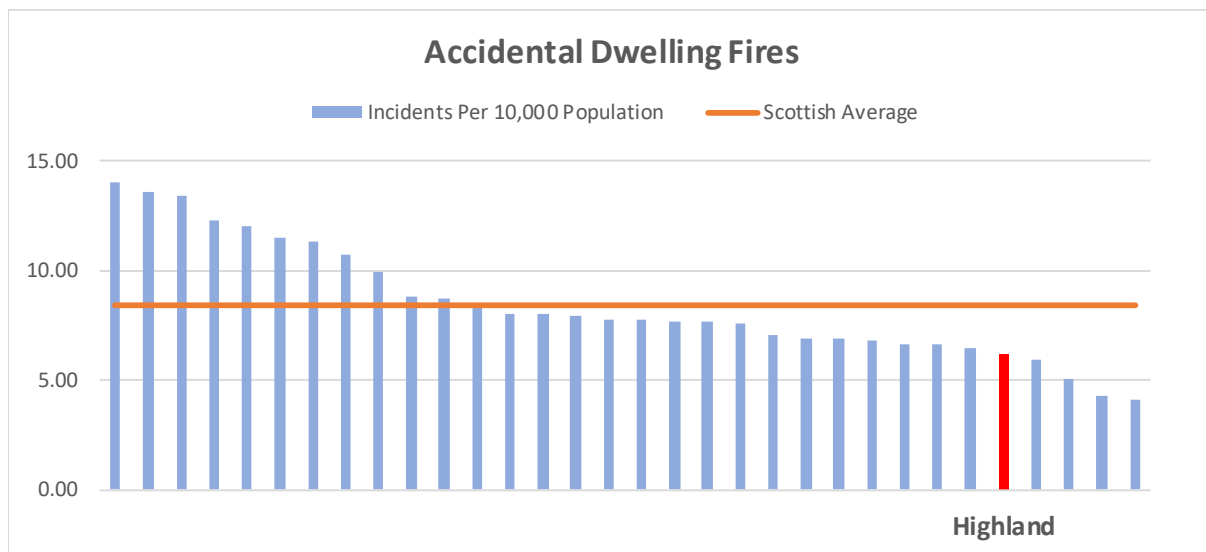


Figure 5 - Accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population showing Highland area in comparison with all other local authority areas in Scotland.

Since the release of the local plan in 2017, the instances of accidental dwelling fires have also been on a downward trend over the last 3 years with a reduction of 20% over this time period. It should be noted that due to the relatively small number of incidents in this category there is the potential for future fluctuation in this area however, we should recognise that our efforts in Highland have resulted in us being at the lower end of the comparator.

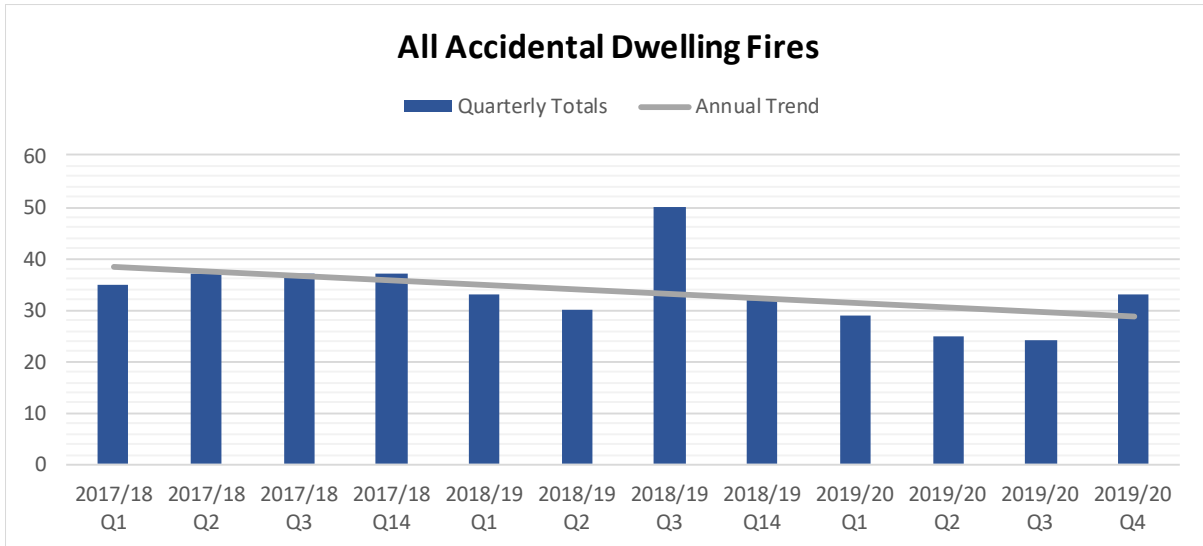


Figure 6 - All accidental dwelling fires for each quarter between 2017/18 and 2019/20 with annual trend line based on annual totals of 146 for 2017/18, 145 for 2018/19 and 111 for 2019/20.

Distraction has been identified as the main contributory factor where accidental dwelling fires and/or injuries have occurred. Those who are deemed at risk from fire may also have other vulnerabilities and impairments due to age, health, mobility or socio-economic reasons and may also be receiving support from other partners.

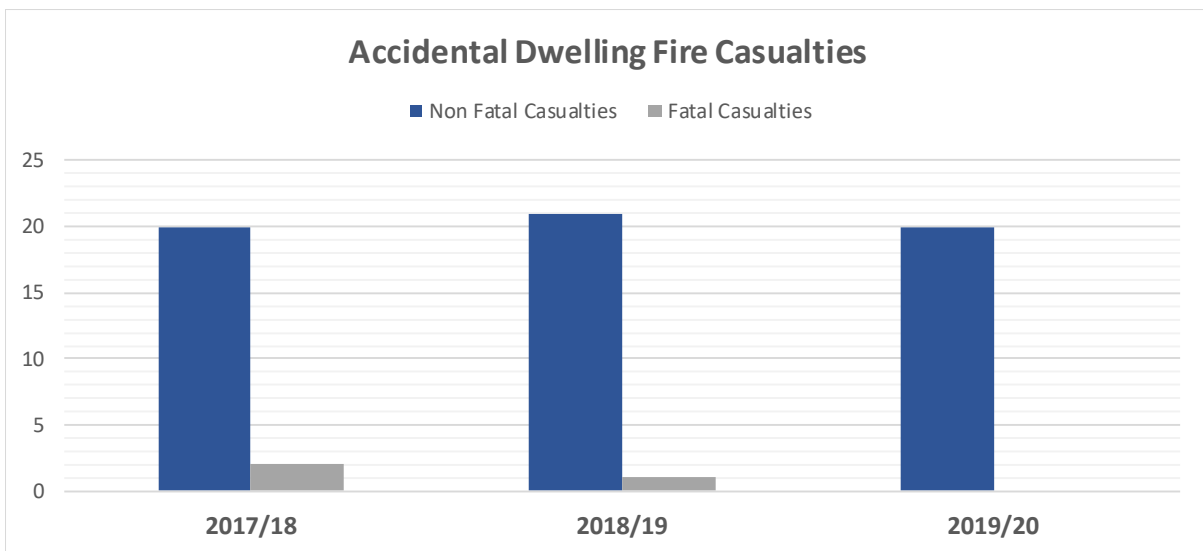


Figure 7 - Fatal and non-fatal casualty numbers for accidental dwelling fires in Highland for the previous 3 years.

Through the positive collaboration between staff and partners we have seen zero fire fatalities recorded this year. There has also been a slight decrease in non-fatal casualties during 2019/20 compared with the previous year, but this should be taken into context against the severity of injury. Two persons required treatment at hospital for severe injuries, ten persons for slight injuries, with the remaining nine receiving first aid at the scene. Recognition should be given that any slight increase in numbers will look greater due to significantly low numbers.

Influencing positive change in occupant behaviours through raising fire safety awareness has been at the forefront of our preventative activities. During the period 2017 to 2020, we have conducted 11857 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV's), fitting detection to 2674 of those houses. 846 of those homes were classed as high risk from fire.

We work closely with partner agencies to improve the safety of people within the home environment and have reviewed and updated the partnerships we have with Highland Council and other Housing providers to provide HFSV's to new tenants. We continually look for further opportunities to develop partnership opportunities to reach the most vulnerable in our communities. Understanding vulnerability allows us to meet the needs of all people within Highland and we engage closely with NHS Highland to provide advice, guidance and partnership engagement for those who require Technology Enabled Care to live safely at home. Our engagement model gives us the agility to meet local need and divert resources to point of greatest demand but also to deliver key projects like 'Safe Highlander' to children across the region as well as targeted fire setter intervention courses wherever they are required.



Figure 8 - Safe Highlander courses delivered and people engaged 2019.

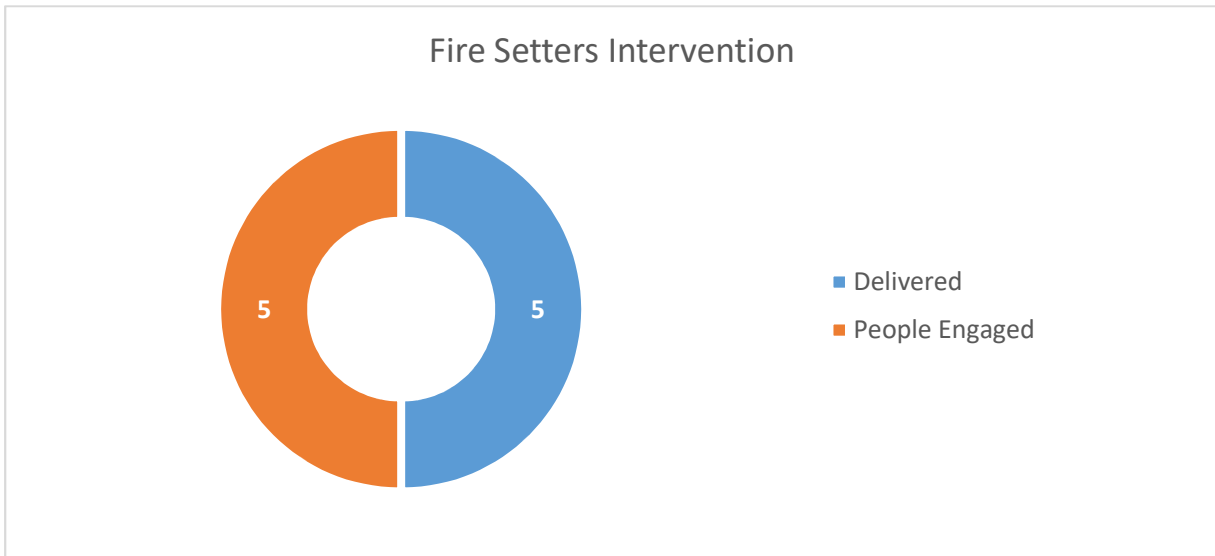


Figure 9 - Fire Setters interventions delivered and people engaged 2019.

To enhance and improve the service we provide, we will continue to strengthen our engagement model to the communities of Highland by making sure staff apply policy consistently, that we review existing arrangements, and that we engage regularly with our partners. Faster referrals to partner agencies following identification of high-risk people within communities will deliver timeous support at the point of need. Continuous interrogation of statistics will enhance our ability to deploy safety and intervention resources to reduce demand on other areas of our organisation and, to support our partners linked to our joint demand reduction strategies.

Unintentional harm

Unintentional harm and injury in the home is disproportionately high within Highland and is addressed through a wide variety of engagement models which supplement our Home Fire Safety Visit's. Working with partner agencies our Community Safety Advocates (CSA's) have undertaken additional training to engage directly during visits where they believe additional risk is present, through Alcohol Brief Intervention screening (ABI). Where a positive screening has been identified, the individual's consent is sought to refer them to partners for additional support in order to both reduce risk of harm and improve health outcomes.

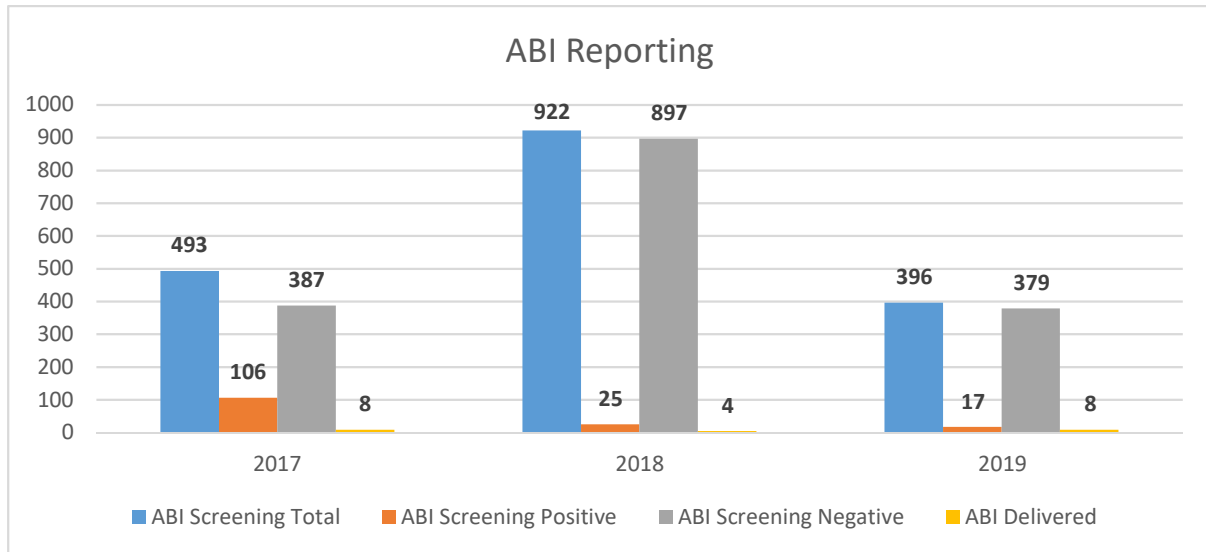


Figure 10 - Alcohol Brief Intervention screenings carried out in 2017, 18 and 19 with total screenings, positive screenings, negative screenings and ABI delivered through consent of occupier.

Within North East Highland our Caithness Uninjured Fallers programme see's both Thurso and Wick RDS Stations respond to individuals who have fallen in their own home, have been triaged by SAS as not requiring medical assistance, but who do require additional assistance to return to their seat or bed. Interventions such as this reduce the potential for these fallers to subsequently develop injuries which have the potential to result in hospital attendance or prolonged ill health thus reducing demand on the NHS and ensuring that people can live safely for longer in their own homes.

Non-Fire Emergencies

“We will aim to contribute to reducing the number of NFE incidents making Highland a safer place to live, work and visit.”

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2017

The SFRS has a key role to play in contributing to the protection of people from injury and harm within and outwith the home. Requests to provide assistance directly through a first responder role and to provide support for other agencies are also increasing. We continue to monitor the number of requests we receive from other agencies, including medical support, various statistical evidence provided from our attendance at Road Traffic Collisions and, identification of trends in the number of other non-fire related emergencies including frequency and severity of injuries.

Injury and Harm Out-with the Home

Out of the domestic environment, the SFRS respond to a range of non-fire related emergencies. One of the most common incidents of this type within Highland is attendances at Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's) which results in the majority of non-fire related injuries.

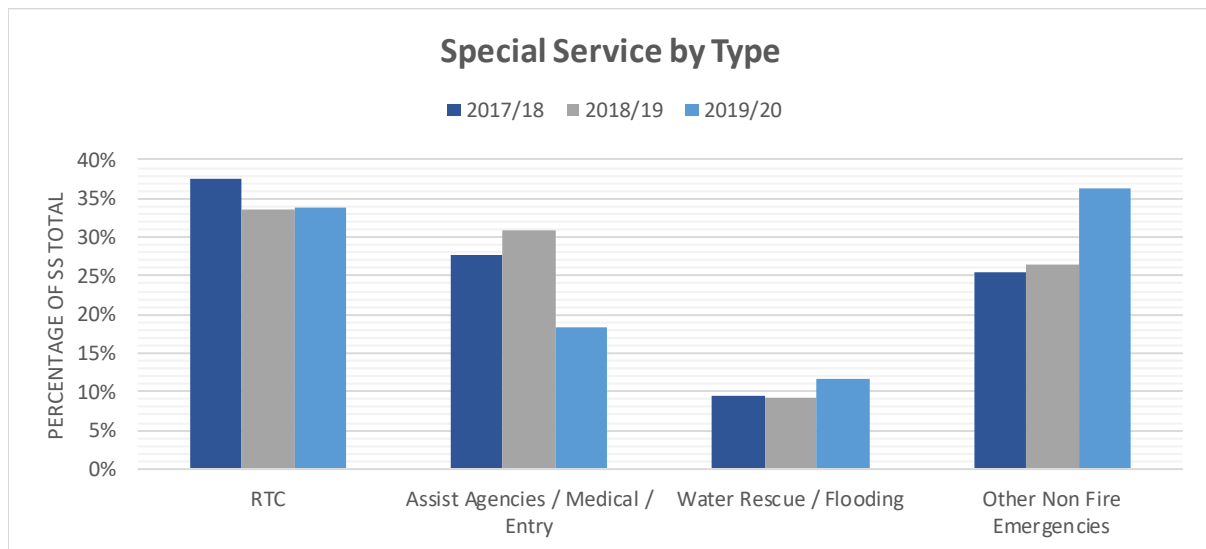


Figure 11 - Special Service by type over 3 year period within Highland.

SFRS are a key partner in the Highland Road Safety Partnership and productively contribute to the delivery of 'Driving Ambition' across the regions schools. 'Driving Ambition' is targeted at raising awareness and understanding amongst pre and young drivers to reduce RTC's, and their associated injuries, fatalities and negative consequences on individuals, families and communities. Innovative developments such as early investment and use of Virtual Reality technology enables us to productively engage young people's interest in the education we are delivering and extend the period of interest in conversation following.

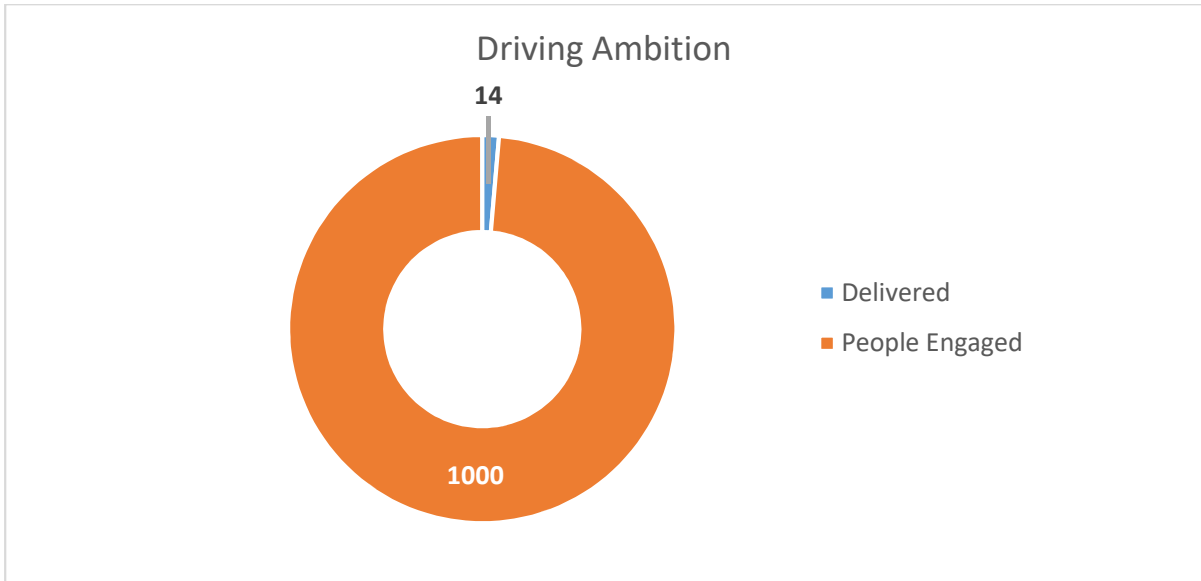


Figure 12 - Delivery of Driving Ambition in Highland schools and associated pupils engaged 2019.

Our use of innovative Road Safety engagement techniques such as Virtual Reality has also been extended beyond the schools based Driving Ambition programme to demonstration and engagements at the University of Highlands and Islands Inverness Campus, and also annual events with young drivers from construction workplace apprenticeships.

The number of RTC's across Highland have remained relatively steady over the last 3 years although slight fluctuations are evident. Where we have seen a rise in casualties over this time period there has been a drop in fatal casualties. Given the nature of the road network across Highland it is our intention to ensure that road safety remains a key priority in our future Local Fire and Rescue Plans to meet the ultimate ambition of zero deaths set by the Scottish Government Framework for Road Safety.

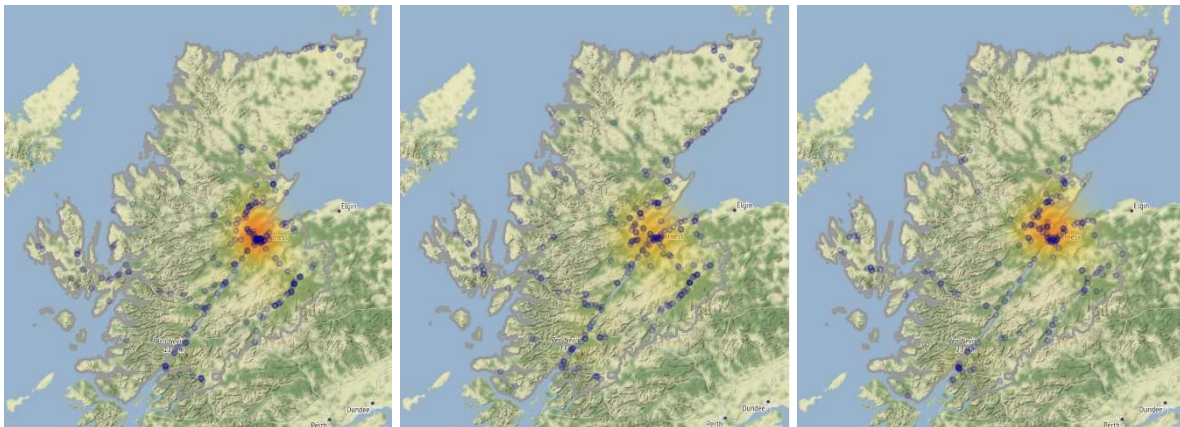


Figure 13 - Heatmap showing geographical representation of Road Traffic Collisions in Highland from 2016/17 to 2018/19.

We continue to support various partner agencies and have seen an increase in requests to support the Scottish Ambulance Service in gaining entry to premises for medical intervention.

As well as contributing to an increase in wildfires, changes in weather patterns have also seen an increase in non-fire emergency response to water and flooding related incidents across Highland. We continue to develop our staff to meet local needs and this response is supported by two Stations with water rescue capability based in Inverness and Fort William.

The SFRS are committed to prevention and response to incidents of this type and we look for local opportunities to raise awareness and knowledge of the risks associated with water and flooding.

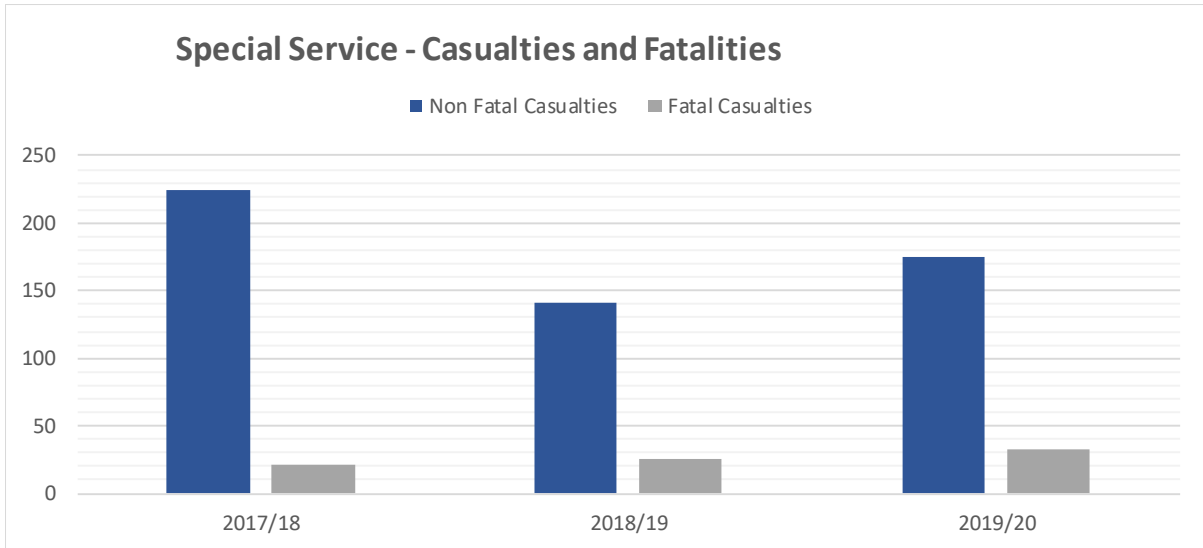


Figure 14 – Non-Fire related casualties and fatalities incidents attended by SFRS between 2017 and 2020. These include casualties from RTCs, water rescue, medical emergencies and assisting other agencies.

We monitor incidents and work with partners to reduce incidents where possible and will continue to deploy resources across the region to address local demand and educate communities to reduce and eliminate events wherever we can. Our resources are continually reviewed to make sure they are positioned at the right place, and are there at the right time to offer maximum impact and promote enhanced safety to our communities. The Service is committed to delivering reduction in demand and the benefits to communities and the economy which this will deliver.

Deliberate Fire Setting

“We will aim to reduce the number of deliberate fires in Highland.”

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2017

Deliberate fire setting accounts for a significant number of operational incidents with Highland and takes various forms. Whilst a small proportion involves occupied buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures (primary fires), most deliberate fires are classed as secondary in nature and on most occasions, occur in outdoor locations involving grassland, woodland and vegetation.

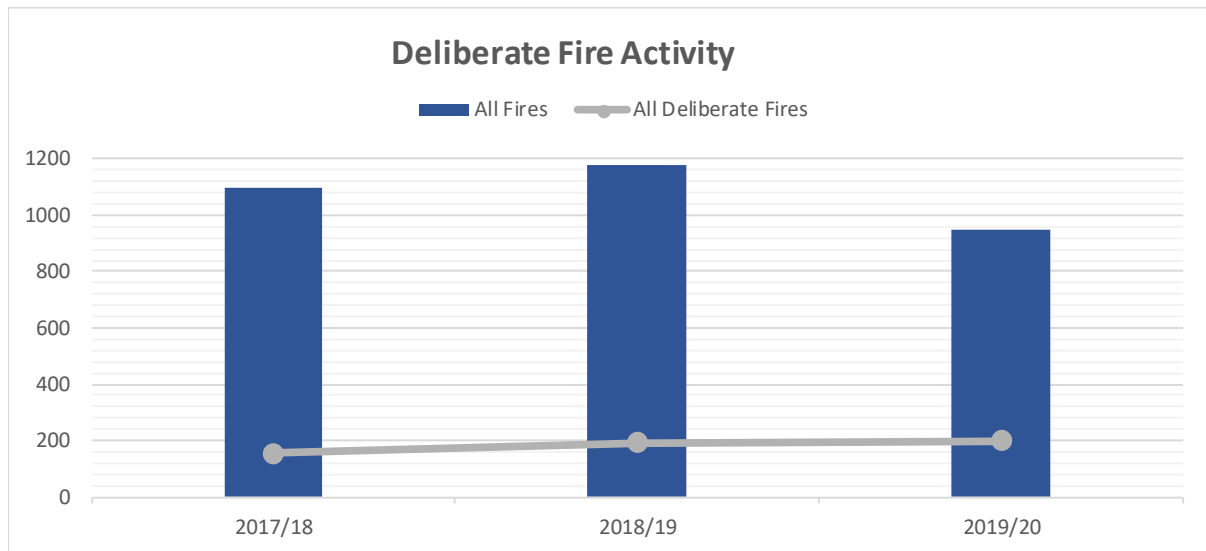


Figure 15 - Deliberate fire activity in comparison to all fires within Highland between 2017 and 2020.

Deliberate secondary fires are evident throughout the year with peak activity noted during Springtime, holiday periods, and during prolonged periods of dry weather. Many instances of deliberate fire setting in Highland are linked to controlled burning which has got out of control. Some deliberate fire setting is regarded as anti-social behaviour and is criminal in nature. These acts can lead to serious consequences such as personal injury, damage to property and the environment. Dealing with instances of deliberate fire setting also diverts fire and rescue resources from other meaningful activities.

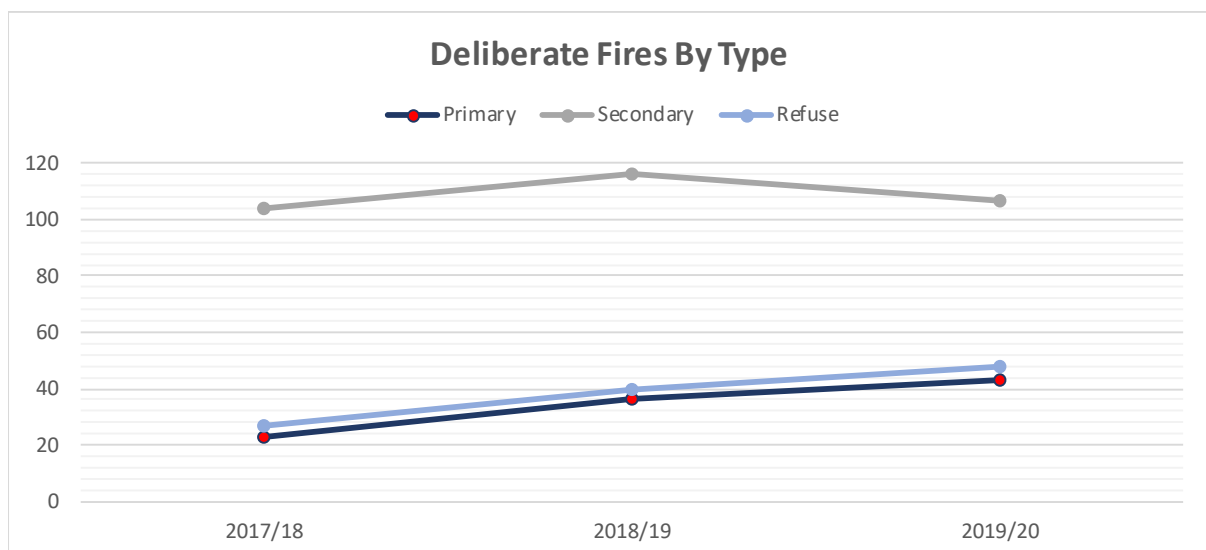


Figure 16 - Deliberate fires within Highland between 2017 and 2020 broken down into fire type.

We share intelligence with partners to identify those parts of our communities that are being affected by anti-social behaviour in order to reduce such instances whilst tackling the underlying causes of such behaviour. We work with Police Scotland to investigate deliberate fire setting, determine the cause and, if possible, identify those responsible for such acts. Diversionary and engagement activities such as Schools education talks, Fireskills Employability Award and Rock Challenge are an important approach in tackling anti-social behaviour and diverting young people towards positive behaviours and responsible citizenship. This will continue to be part of our approach to raise awareness of the impact of this unwanted activity particularly during school holidays.

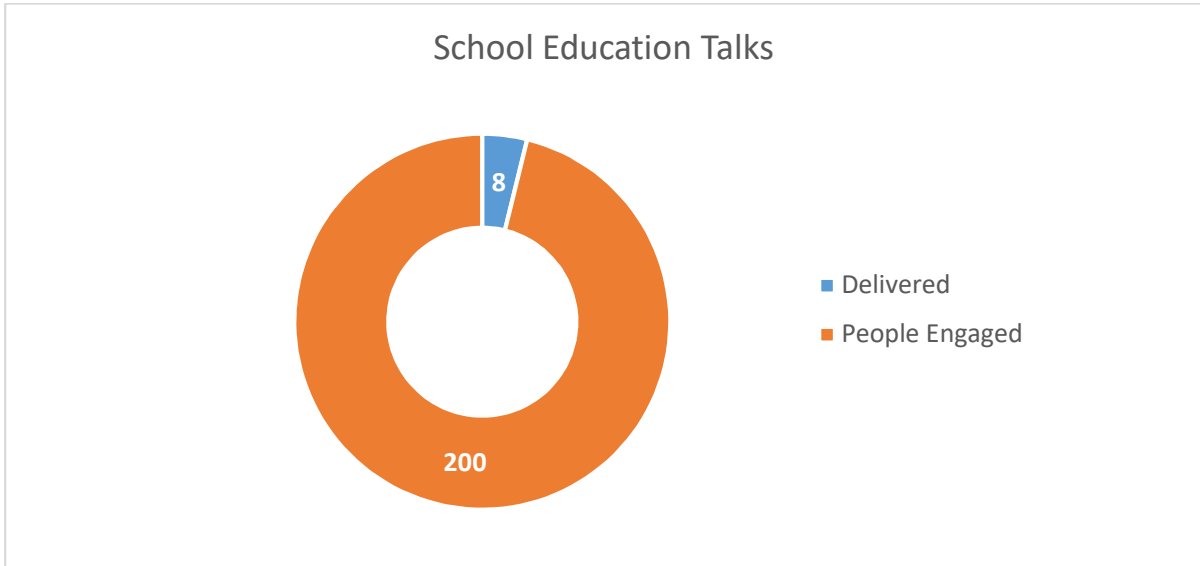


Figure 17 - Targeted schools' education talks delivered in Highland, and number of pupils engaged in 2019.

Anti-social behaviour intelligence and evidence is used to target schools where fire education talks are initiated in advance of holiday periods, or in response to deliberate fires with the aim of reducing or preventing recurrence. Partnership working with Police Scotland and Highland Council has also enabled high profile multi agency Police / SFRS / Warden patrols and engagement with young people in hot spot areas.

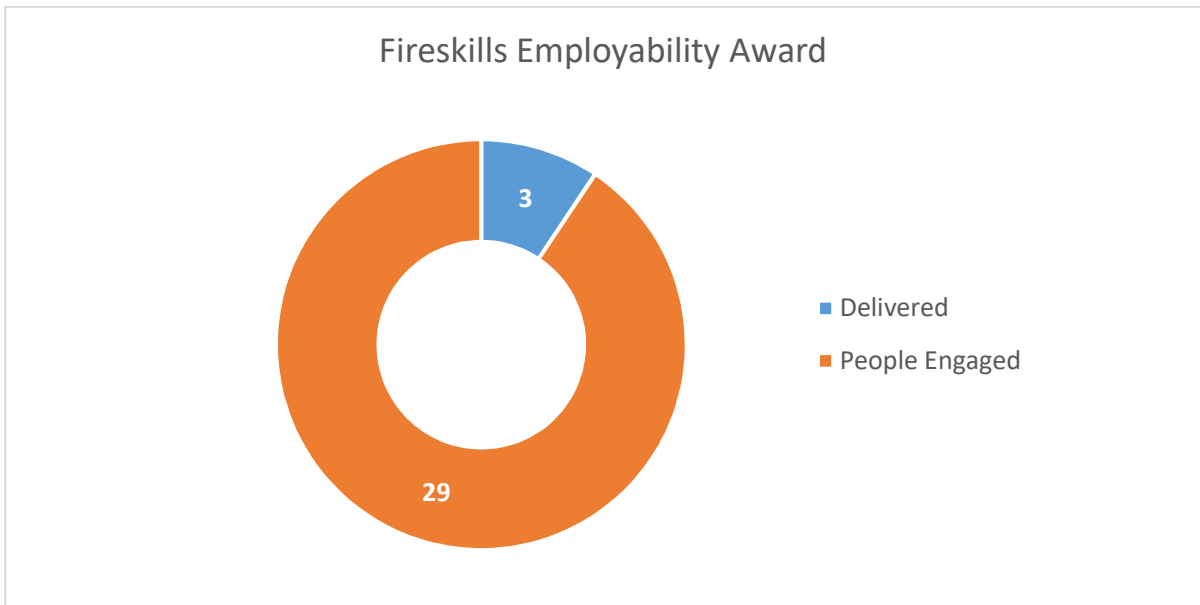


Figure 18 - Fireskills Employability Award delivered in Highland, and number of pupils engaged in 2019.

SFRS Fireskills Employability Award is a programme targeted at High School pupils who for a variety of reasons are nearing the point of exclusion, are not attending, or are not attaining well in school. The programme provides guidance, mentoring, practical skills and team building to build confidence, develop skills and deliver an employability award for successful attendees. Positive outcomes have been evidenced in relation to increased attendance and attainment at school, improved engagement with teachers, and positive peer engagement in relation to anti-social behaviour.

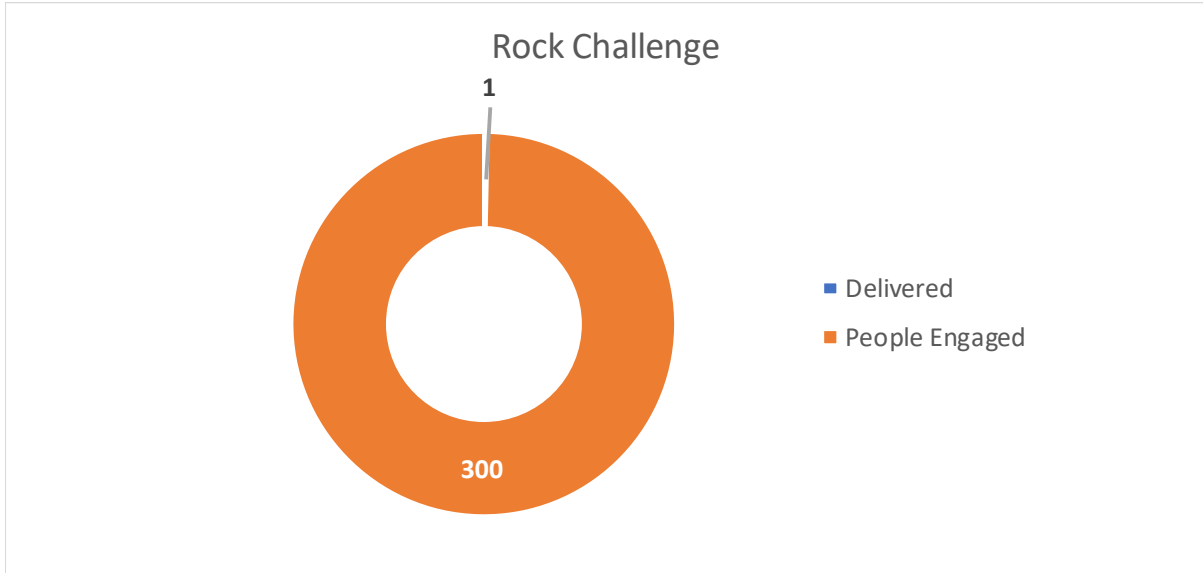


Figure 19 - Annual Rock Challenge delivered in Highland, and total number of pupils engaged in 2019.

SFRS has contributed financially and through personnel to the annual Highland Rock Challenge programme which see's pupils from schools across Highland engage in diversionary activities which culminate in them presenting a song and dance showcase in front of large audiences. The programme engages pupils throughout the spring and summer in developing a theme, creating stage sets, and building team working skills to deliver their performance as well as taking part in educational activities to raise their awareness of safety and deter them from anti-social behaviour.

Utilisation of social media allows us to deliver local messages quickly and tailor these messages to meet local need. We support partner agencies in delivering messages to support safety beyond the traditional fire roles and responsibilities with an aim of improving community safety.

Non-Domestic Fire Safety

“We will aim to improve non-domestic fire safety and reduce the number of fires in non-domestic premises.”

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2017

Non-Domestic fires vary from workplaces and businesses, which come within the scope of Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act), through to premises such as garden sheds and garages. The SFRS has a statutory duty to promote fire safety and where required, enforce compliance of fire safety legislation in relevant premises. The SFRS have adopted an approach utilising advice and education first, as well as formal enforcement powers where required.

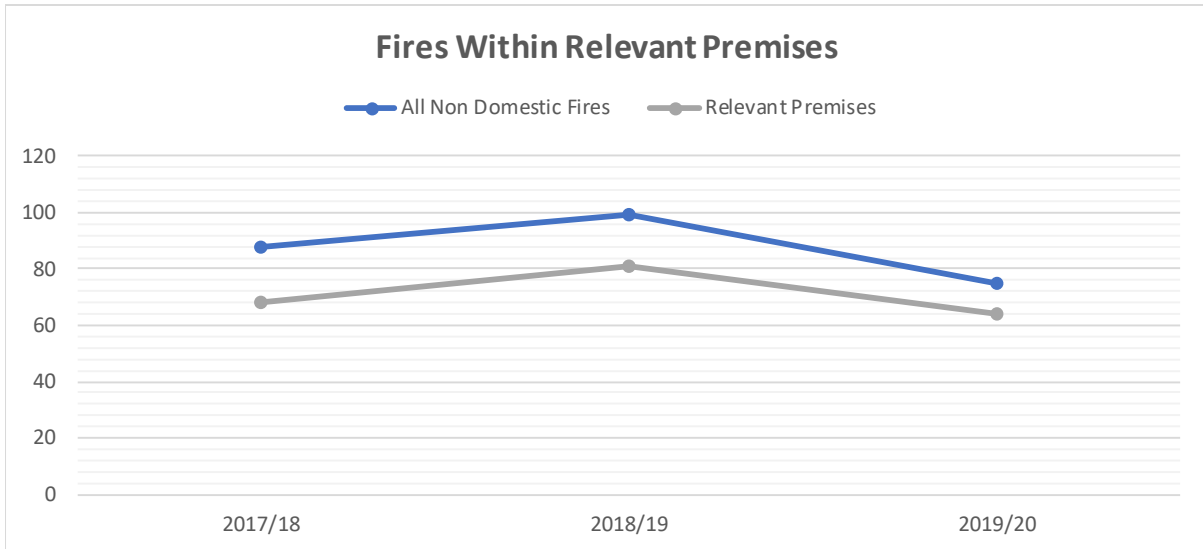


Figure 20 - Fires in relevant premises as a proportion of all non-domestic fires within Highland.

The SFRS continues to monitor fires within all relevant premises and will conduct post fire audits following any incident involving fire. When compliance with fire safety legislation is not met, this results in actions ranging from advice being given to formal action being undertaken, and will assist the duty-holder to meet their statutory duties. We conduct audits on premises types where fires are occurring and inform national audit profiling.

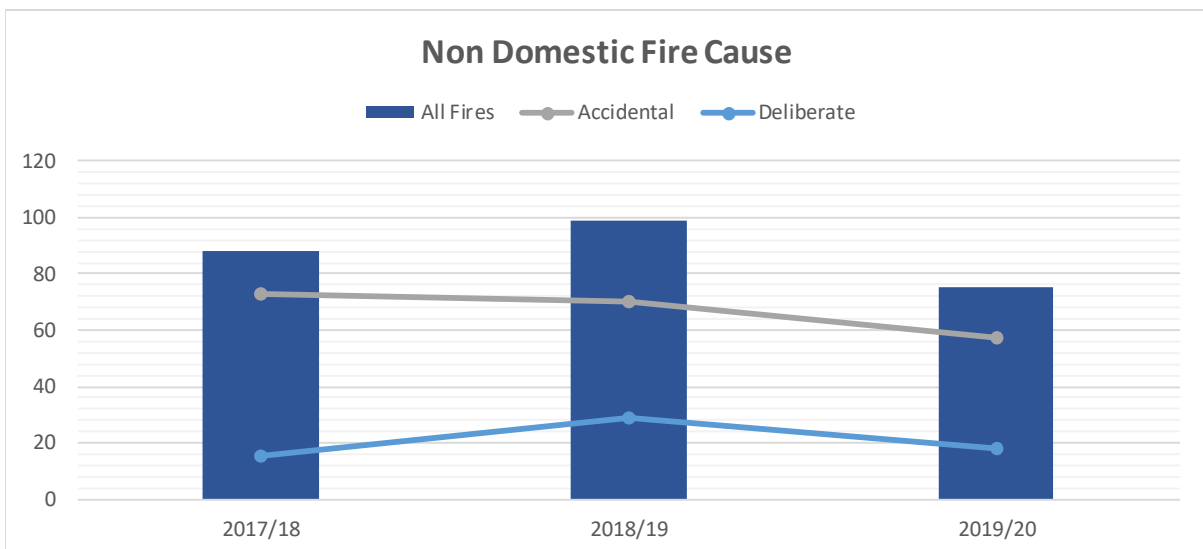


Figure 21 - Cause of all non-domestic fires within Highland from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The volume of accidental fire activity within relevant premises has fluctuated slightly over the 3-year period with a peak in 2018/19 followed by a drop to the lowest level over the period in 2019/20. The cause of such fires remains predominantly accidental in nature and despite an increase in numbers of deliberate fires in 2018/19 the trend is downward through 2019/20. Fire safety within buildings has improved over the years due to increased audits carried out and improvements within Fire Safety Enforcement. Within Highland our Fire Safety Enforcement Officers travel the length and breadth of the region providing advice and enforcement as required. As a result, 94 of the 200 incidents attended in Highland over the 3-year period required no firefighting intervention by the SFRS, minimising impact to the business sector.

The Service continues to audit higher risk premises on an annual basis such as Care Homes and Hospitals. We work in partnership with the Care Inspectorate in Significant Case Reviews and with other partners to improve the safety of employees and visitors to commercial premises.

As a Service we will continue to adapt in the way we support business communities during and following the current pandemic crisis. We will ensure that the people who reside, work in or visit Highland do so in the safest environment from fire.

Unwanted Fire Alarms

“We will aim to reduce the number of UFAS within Highland.”

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2017

The provision of early warning of fire is the key component to the success of any fire strategy. It allows those within premises sufficient time to exit the building to a place of safety in the event of a fire however, Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) continue to be a burden on the service.

UFAS is an event which requires an operational attendance by the SFRS due to the unwanted actuation of a fire alarm system or the activation of the system maliciously or with good intentions. We continue to monitor all mobilising to UFAS through review of numbers at non-domestic premises and, evaluate the occupiers demand reduction plans to minimise disruption to the business community and the service. We continue to provide advice to reduce demand and where necessary instigate formal enforcement action.

Continual work is carried out by personnel in Highland to drive down UFAS instances. Our Prevention and Protection staff engage with a number of partners on a regular basis to provide guidance and advice designed to reduce instances of UFAS and their impact upon business or services provided. Our staff engage regularly with NHS Highland to drive down disruptive instances of UFAS at Raigmore Hospital and have introduced the ‘Take 5’ initiative which educates staff on the most common instances of accidental alarm actuation and how to avoid them.

False alarms account for 59% of all incident activity of which UFAS is 55% of that figure. UFAS incidents across Highland up to 2018/19 are shown to be 45.83 incidents per 10,000 population. This is regarded as too many and the future Local Fire and Rescue Plan will seek innovative solutions to drive an ongoing reduction in instances of UFAS across Highland.

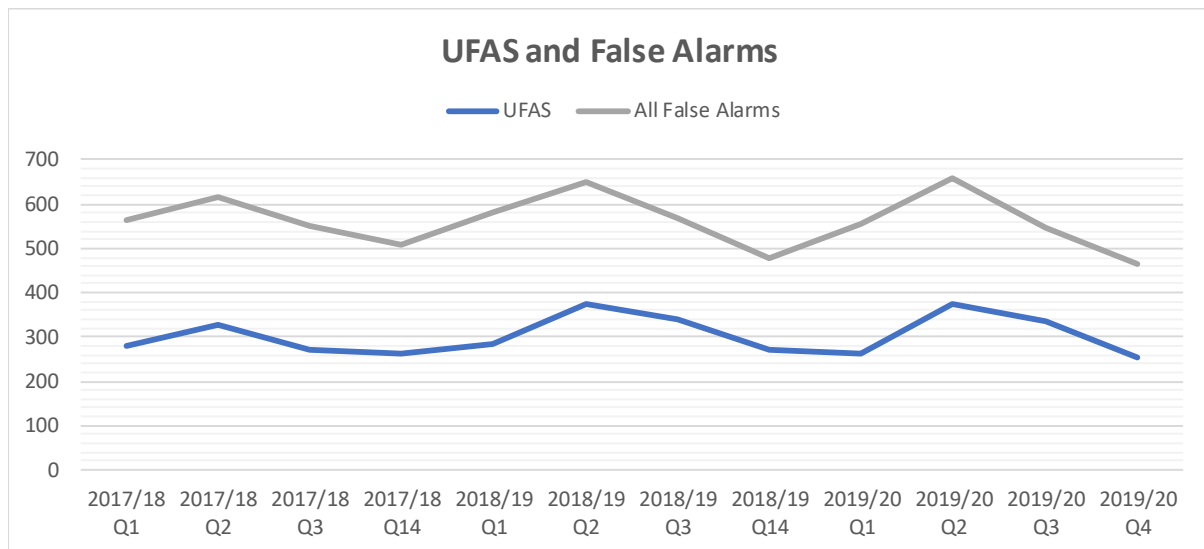


Figure 22 - All false alarms within Highland between 2017/19 and 2019/20 and the proportion of those alarms that are regarded as UFAS.

In reviewing UFAS activity over the previous 3-year period, weekdays indicate the greatest prevalence of UFAS incidents with the period between 0800 hours and 2300 hours being the most common time for UFAS to occur. Review of the data suggests these instances, on a general basis may be related to the most frequent periods when buildings are occupied. In examining the cause of alarms, several factors have been attributed to activating the system, the most common single factor being system faults which accounted for 8% of all alarm activations. However collectively human activity (cooking, accidental or careless actuation, and testing) account for 18% of all alarm activations. Review of the property types responsible for UFAS incidents have identified hospital/medical care facilities, residential homes and hotels as the most common property types. Over the last 3-years these premises types have been responsible for 29% of all UFAS incidents.

Early engagement and education is vital to driving down instances of UFAS across Highland. Raising awareness of not only the number of UFAS instances a business experiences, but the disruption this causes to its services and productivity, as well as the disruption, cost and risk associated with SFRS emergency response will continue to form part of our engagement process. Most recently this has been supplemented by a project to provide low cost call point covers to drive down accidental actuations. This project is ongoing and the results will be monitored for effectiveness.

We continue to provide guidance to partners and the business community on the design of systems that will help reduce instances of UFAS prior to the construction of buildings or whilst undergoing alterations to existing buildings. We will continue to trial well-proven UFAS strategies from other areas across Scotland as well as seeking to develop new and innovative solutions locally.

Operational Resilience and Preparedness

“We will aim to enhance operational preparedness and operational resilience across the Highland area.”

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2017

The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire (Additional Function) (Scotland) Order 2005 define the duties and responsibilities of the SFRS in relation to responding to emergencies. It is essential for our firefighters to possess the skills, knowledge and expertise to respond to incidents that can vary in type and complexity.

We continue to focus on recruitment and retention of Retained Duty System (RDS) and Community Response Unit (CRU) Volunteer firefighters, where firefighters respond on an “on-call” basis from home and primary employment locations. This staffing group make up the majority of firefighters in Highland and they respond to incidents in our diverse and often rural communities. We continue to promote this career opportunity in our local communities through local media, the use of social media, and direct engagement by staff. Recruitment is also supported by station open days and recruitment events across the region as well as our more recent involvement in the structured Uniformed Services programme delivered to some High School pupils. We will continue to look for new opportunities to attract members of the community to take up the rewarding RDS and CRU Volunteer vacancies which exist, and will seek to represent our diverse communities within the workforce.

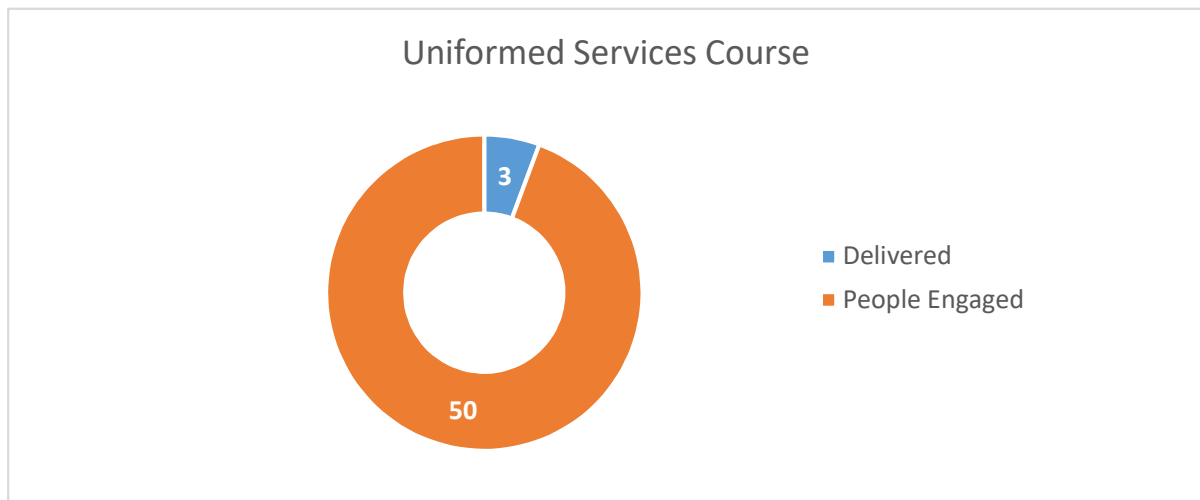


Figure 23 - Uniformed Services Courses delivered in Highland to S4-S6 pupils, and number of pupils engaged in 2019.

Across Highland we have introduced a total of 7 additional RDS and Volunteer Support Watch Commanders over the period of the plan. These personnel provide full-time peripatetic operational and managerial support across Highland including Caithness and Sutherland, North West Highland, Skye and Lochalsh, Lochaber, and Badenoch and Strathspey. This has further contributed to operational flexibility ensuring that RDS personnel remain trained and supported and that appliances remain available.

We continue to collect and document risk critical information from premises throughout the area through our Operational Intelligence (OI) programme. A clear and robust system of recording and revalidation, supported by ease of access to information for firefighters through technological advancement in the form of tablets now carried on all operational appliances, contributes to the safety of firefighters and the communities we serve and enhances operational preparedness.

Meeting our responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, we have forged strong relationships with our key partners across the Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership (HILRP) and the various Emergency Liaison Groups (ELG's) across Highland.

Multi-agency exercising and testing is paramount to ensuring the most efficient and effective operational response capability to incidents across Highland. An example of how this has been tested successfully is Exercise Lonestar. This was a multi-site live play and virtual multi agency exercise based upon a nuclear incident scenario at HMS Vulcan, Dounreay and staged for live play at Dounreay, with a Multi-Agency Command Centre (MACC) set up at Police HQ in Inverness.

Further opportunities to test and strengthen inter agency working relationships have been delivered at multi-agency Road Traffic Collision exercises and demonstrations held at Inverness Community Fire Station and University of Highlands and Islands Inverness Campus. The aim of these exercises and demonstrations was to both demonstrate the effectiveness of and evaluate the multi-agency emergency service response to incidents involving entrapment due to a multi vehicle Road Traffic Collisions. Additionally, these opportunities have allowed us to capture and incorporate potential enhancements to multi-agency interoperability, training and response to similar incidents.

Opportunities to share awareness SFRS's capabilities in Highland have been delivered through demonstration of our Water Rescue response to partners and Councillors on the River Ness in Inverness. This raises awareness and understanding of how SFRS can contribute to multi-agency response by demonstrating the specialist equipment available, our personnel resources and skills, and the operational flexibility and capability we can deploy.

Given the expansive and diverse geography and risks within Highland the development of partnerships with volunteers across the region is enormously beneficial to ensure that we can have the right resources in the right place whenever required to contribute to safe and successful operational outcomes. This willingness to assist in emergency response has also enhanced the SFRS Community Asset Register (CAR) with assets such as a remote control Robocut which can be safely deployed to cut fire breaks at wildfire incidents, and multiple drone providers who can use their resources to provide operational overview to assist with planning and deployment at large scale incidents.

Collectively, these partnerships enhance preparedness and ensure an effective response to all incident types. Our ability to continue to provide an effective service to our communities has been assured through the review of Business Continuity Plans for all premises, supported by an associated testing and exercising programme.

We have proactively developed our staff to ensure effective response and firefighter safety. We continue to provide bespoke courses to further enhance personal and organisational development within the area and to meet specific local training requirements and needs by the provision of courses such as Driving, Incident command, Rapid Response Unit Ultra High Pressure Lance, Road Traffic Collision, and Safe Work at Height. Operational staff from across Highland have attended our Invergordon and Fort William training centres to receive national core training delivery in Breathing Apparatus Initial, Fire behaviour and Tactical ventilation.

Training is also regularly delivered within our Wholetime, RDS and CRU Volunteer stations across Highland and within other suitable premises to support and enhance the skills and knowledge of all area personnel with training such as multi station Breathing Apparatus exercises, water rescue scenarios and Incident Command training being delivered at appropriately assessed venues.

We continue to review our operational capabilities to ensure that we have the right resources, in the right place, at the right time to respond to existing and emerging risks. Highland benefits from two water rescue response resources based at Inverness and Fort William. Personnel are trained to Swiftwater Rescue Technician and Swiftwater Rescue Boat Operator level, enhancing resilience across Highland to respond to severe weather events such as flooding, and also to persons within water. Inverness Station provides a specialist height vehicle, a water bowser, incident command unit, welfare unit, wildfire response with Argocat, and a Heavy Rescue Unit (HRU). The HRU capability enables an effective response to road traffic collisions involving large goods vehicles, railway incidents and serious entrapment.

During the period of this plan Highland has benefitted from the provision of bespoke Rapid Response Units (RRU) equipped with the latest firefighting technology in the shape of ultra-high-pressure lances (UHPL). These have been deployed to fourteen Stations across the region:

- Applecross
- Aultbea
- Bettyhill
- Cannich
- Foyers
- Glenelg
- Kilchoan
- Kinlochewe
- Lochaline
- Lochinver
- Raasay
- Staffin
- Torridon
- Uig

Engagement – What our stakeholders told us

Building on the intelligence we gathered during consultation of our Strategic Plan 2019-22 we re-engaged with our key stakeholders to seek further views on our local service delivery needs and provisions. This was carried out through survey and direct engagement with our key stakeholders. The engagement process commenced on 8th January 2020 and closed on 18th March 2020.

Survey

The survey was available on the ‘citizenspace’ platform throughout the duration of the engagement process. A total of 46 surveys were completed by key stakeholders, partners, employees and members of the wider community. Letters for Invitation to participate were sent to key stakeholders groups including council leaders, community council ward officers, health and social care partners, community planning partners, Highland Third Sector Interface and, other partner organisations. Organisations were also encouraged to promote the survey internally and with service users. The survey was also promoted to the wider public through Social Media, emails and messages attached to signatures and correspondence.

A review of survey returns show that we were able to engage with our own employees, Community planning partners, other key stakeholders, and members of the community from across the region.

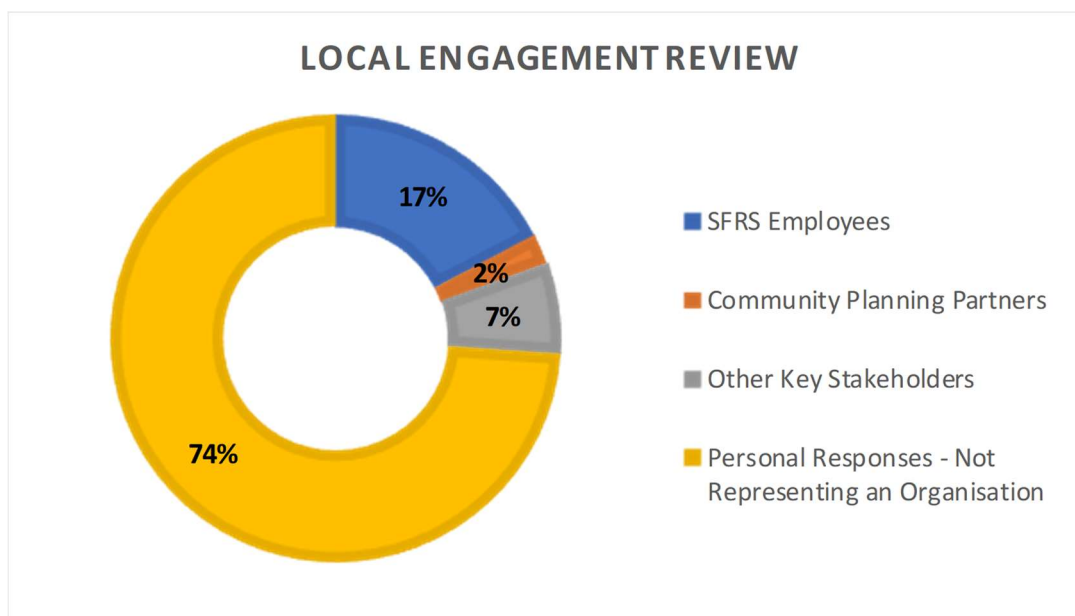


Figure 24 - Representation of 46 engagement survey responses shown in categories.

Feedback identified the SFRS in Highland as performing well in all categories of the engagement survey. 87% of those responding rated our overall performance between neutral (no concerns) and very satisfactory, with 48% rating as very satisfactory. 74% of those responding rated our ability to understand and reflect local needs within our plans between neutral (no concerns) and very satisfactory, with 37% rating as very satisfactory. Responses also regarded core fire and rescue services provided by the SFRS as being very important to the public.

Our work to keep people safe in our local communities through promoting fire safety in the home and responding to incidents was seen as being very important as was our role in assisting communities to prepare for emergencies. We will continue to engage with communities and partners to ensure that we support the most vulnerable in society and we will continue to review our capabilities to ensure that we have the right resources, in the right places, at the right time.

Comments suggest a need for the service to consider local solutions and also the need to consider the availability of RDS appliances and the training expectations placed upon RDS personnel. Our increased numbers of Retained and Volunteer Support Watch Commanders assist in meeting both of these areas of feedback.

Local Planning – What we learned from other local plans

Through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, statutory duties are placed upon the SFRS to undertake an enhanced leadership role in community planning. As a key partner within the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), the SFRS have participated in the development of the Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan. The SFRS will always work towards supporting the HOIP wherever possible:

Outcome 1: Poverty reduction, with 4 associated priorities.

Outcome 2: Community participation and dialogue, with 3 associated priorities.

Outcome 3: Infrastructure, with 5 associated priorities.

Outcome 4: Community safety and resilience, with 4 associated priorities.

Outcome 5: Mental health and wellbeing, with 4 associated priorities.

Cross-cutting Theme 1: Employability, employment and skills development.

Cross-cutting Theme 2: Community investment and development.

Cross-cutting Theme 3: Digital inclusion.

Cross-cutting Theme 4: Equality of opportunity and inclusion

Within the CPP, the SFRS currently chairs the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board. We remain committed to the outcomes of the HOIP and our future local plan will show the improvement actions we are taking to ensure that we are fully embedded in tackling the outcomes, priorities, and cross-cutting themes within the diverse communities of Highland. We participate at all levels of the CPP from being an active contributor to the Partnership Co-ordinating Group, chairing Highland Community Justice Partnership, through to leading Hilton Locality Plan. Additionally, we are represented and contribute to all Community Partnerships and HOIP Delivery Groups.

As a community planning partner, we have worked towards our current priorities through participation and engagement across various partnership arenas. Within the Highland Road Safety Partnership, we continue to work towards 'zero deaths on Scotland's roads' and have been instrumental in embracing and introducing innovative and engaging solutions such as Virtual Reality Road Safety Engagement which we have built into the multi-agency 'Driving Ambition' programme for pre and young drivers. Non-fire emergencies will remain one of the key priority areas in the new Local Fire and Rescue Plan.

SFRS Chair the Highland Community Justice Partnership and are committed to improving outcomes in areas including anti-social behaviour and fire setting through diversionary and engagement programmes such as Fireskills Employability Award. These programmes build positive citizenship, improve employment potential, improve attendance and attainment, and prevent offending and re-offending within our local communities.

Scrutiny – What we learned from the Inspectorate

To support this formal review the outcomes from HM Fire Service Inspectorate's (HMFSI) Local Area Inspections of SFRS service delivery within local authority areas have been considered.

In total, 12 local authority area inspections have been concluded since 2015. These include Aberdeen City, East Renfrewshire, Western Isles, West Lothian, Dundee City, South Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, Moray, Glasgow City, Highland, North Lanarkshire, and most recently Dumfries and Galloway. Once prepared and agreed, inspection reports are published by HMFSI on their [website](#).

The findings of HMFSI inspections influenced how Local Fire and Rescue Plans were developed in 2017. In response to these findings, our reports on the review of our first tranche of Plans provided risk-based evidence to identify and shape new priorities. The review reports also provided benchmark information against other authority areas. The timing of preparation and publication of new Plans was also staggered to enable alignment with the development of Local Outcome Improvement Plans.

Although a common corporate template is used to prepare Plans, Local Senior Officers have the flexibility to identify specific local priorities supported by appropriate local performance measures relevant to their area.

An area HMFSI highlights for exploration is the identification of local targets. To avoid expressing desired results which are unachievable, uncontrollable or impractical the SFRS will only apply targets when it is appropriate to do so.

HMFSI Local Area Inspection Reports will continue to be monitored to ensure the continuous improvement of Local Plans and to identify good practice.

To view the full report and its recommendations follow the link provided:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/hm-fire-service-inspectorate-local-area-inspection-highland/>

Conclusion

In reviewing progress against the priorities within the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland (2017), it has been identified that operational demand in the longer term has been decreasing however we have experienced a year on year increase in assisting other agencies and an overall increase in effecting entry, both of which reached their highest levels in 2019/20.

SFRS personnel in Highland have succeeded in delivering a reduction in incidents across the accidental dwelling fires, fatal and non-fatal fire casualties, non-fire emergencies, and non-domestic fire categories in line with the objectives of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan. These reductions are encouraging to note and it is essential that the focus which has delivered this success is maintained to ensure the continued and ongoing safety of our communities.

Unfortunately, whilst non-fatal RTC casualties have fallen over the 3 year period of the plan, the number of RTC fatalities has sadly increased. The only way to reduce these figures is to actually prevent the incidents occurring in the first place which will require a sustained partnership approach to engagement and education in order to develop behavioural change.

A key approach to reducing demand for our services is through effective engagement and by working in partnership to support our more vulnerable members within our communities. As a national organisation the SFRS is also progressing with its transformational agenda to develop the organisation in an environment of continuous financial challenges. This presents opportunities for the SFRS to develop its role at a local level in the protection of our communities across Highland through the strengthening of existing partnerships, whilst seeking new partnership approaches to manage, mitigate and reduce risk.

To support the pursuance of transformational efficiencies, reducing service demand is essential to provide the means to utilise the totality of SFRS resources to maximum benefit. It is recognised however, regardless of how active the SFRS is in its prevention agenda, operational demand will still be present. It is therefore vital to ensure the SFRS can respond as and when such demand arises. The process of identifying and reviewing the range of risks within our communities will provide the basis as to how we will manage and respond to such risks to safeguard the safety of our firefighters and our communities.

The review of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland over the period 2017-2020 has considered the progress that has been made to date and supports the development of key priorities for the next plan.

In summary, there have been many successes however it is essential that we do not become complacent. Meeting the challenges in the new plan will not be achieved in isolation but through effective partnership working and as such, the new Local Fire and Rescue Plan will seek to compliment and contribute to the integrated and highly successful approach to Community Planning within Highland.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the following priorities are taken forward in the new Local Fire and Rescue Plan for the Highland area:

Priority 1: Domestic Fire Safety

Priority 2: Unintentional harm

Priority 3: Deliberate fire setting

Priority 4: Non-fire emergencies

Priority 5: Non-Domestic Fire Safety

Priority 6: Reduction of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

Priority 7: Operational Resilience and Preparedness

Due to the disproportionately high level of unintentional harm across Highland this priority will be separated from Domestic safety so that additional emphasis can be placed upon continued partnership working, development and delivery of innovative solutions, and improving outcomes for individuals and communities.

In addition to the well proven existing areas of work associated with the identified priorities we will trial effective solutions from other areas of Scotland and where necessary adapt them to suit local needs or develop bespoke initiatives.

The relatively steady rate of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals indicates a need to review our partnership working arrangements and engagement activities and develop new initiatives and innovative solutions to drive a sustained decrease in this area. This will have the added benefit of reducing disruption to businesses and services as well as reducing disruption and response risk to Firefighters and communities.

Whilst recognising feedback from the HMFSI Local Area Inspection, following careful consideration we will continue to strive towards a reduction strategy in all key priority areas. Due to the previous and continuing good work carried out in Highland and the strong position we find ourselves in, we will not set percentage-based reductions for these priorities, some which have experienced very low levels of activity.

Contact us

We are fully committed to continually improving the service we provide to our communities and recognise that to achieve this goal we must listen and respond to the views of the public and our partners.

We use all feedback we receive to monitor our performance and incorporate this information into our planning and governance processes in order to continually improve our service. We are proud that the majority of feedback we receive is positive and we are keen to hear examples of good practice and quality service delivery that exemplifies the standards of service that we strive to provide for the communities of Scotland.

If you have something you would like to share with us or you would like more information, you can get in touch in several ways:

Write to: **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Highland Area Headquarters
16 Harbour Road
Inverness
IV1 1TB**

Phone: **01463 723000**

Visit our website: www.firescotland.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter **@fire_scot**

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