



**Safety Central  
Annual Report 2022 / 23**



# 1. Introduction

---

This annual report summarises performance for the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023. This reporting period straddles two school years – the summer term of 2021/22 and the first term and a half of 2022/23.

This is the first year without covid restrictions or centre closures as a result of covid restriction, we have seen an increase in visitors, schools, community groups and partners returning to Safety Central than were reported during the covid restriction period.

This report contains the following information;

- changes to the Safety Central staff team and volunteer programme.
- update of centre resources.
- our performance relating to educational visits and additional achievements throughout the year
- partnerships
- our plans for the year ahead.
- feedback from our 2022 – 2023 visitors.



## 2. Staff, volunteers, and resources

---

### 2.1 Staff Team

There were changes to the Safety Central team during April 2022 to September 2022, these include:

- The Interim Development Officer was made permanent in June 2022.
- Following the secondment of the Operations Officer to Operations Policy and Assurance in March 2022, the post was advertised with little response. The Support Officer moved into this role until March 2023 offering a development opportunity to our own existing staff team member.
- A new Support Officer was recruited and started in September 2022.
- Staffing levels have fluctuated during the first part of this year. For the first six months the centre has operated on three full time staff and during summer months this reduced. This had a significant impact on the number and type of visits that we could deliver and this is reflected in the lower than usual figures.
- Volunteer safety rangers returned to the centre, but lost some people and through changing circumstances some people were able to offer less support than previously, this impacted on staff time to support educational visits.

The second half of the financial year was fully staffed which covered the 2022 - 2023 academic year. However, due to reduced numbers of rangers, staff members were providing lots of resilience for the educational visits.

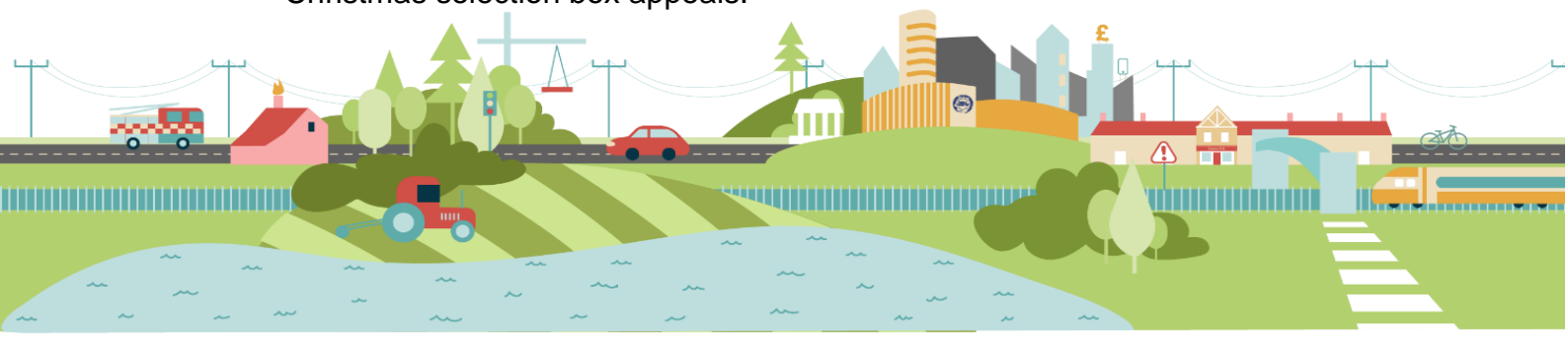
During this reporting year 2022 - 2023, we also received support from the service's community safety and firefighter apprentices. Their role at the centre was to:

- complete 20 days each at Safety Central
- deliver the KS2 SafetyQuest programme in preparation for future school's work
- supplement ranger numbers as detailed above
- gain a wider understanding of the centre and its link with the wider prevention team

This was invaluable in providing resilience on days where ranger availability was limited. Following their placement, the apprentices also used the centre for a fundraising coffee morning, raising over £200 towards their Nepal trip.

Throughout the year the staff team were also involved in:

- Supporting the Children's Adventure Farm Trust with their Easter Egg and Christmas selection box appeals.



- Centre Manager completed Step Up programme
- Centre Manager and Development Officer completed investigation skills training
- Centre Manager and Development Officer became members of the Cheshire Water Safety Partnership
- Centre Manager worked with five other colleagues to audit the Quality Management System across prevention and the wider service.
- All managers completed safer recruitment training and volunteer management training
- Operations Officer spent a day with the protection and prevention team and shadowed a Technical Fire Safety Officer and a Community Advocate to gain a greater understanding of other roles and responsibilities within the department.
- All staff were involved in the prevention review work-shops and meetings, the centre manager is a workstream lead.
- Centre Manager and Development Officer complete safeguarding level 3 and hoarding workshop
- Support officer completed IOSH Training and spent time with Lymm fire crews.
- Centre Manager and Development officer are internal auditors and were involved in the external ISO:9001 external Inspection which resulted in the Prevention Department maintaining the NQA quality management certification
- Centre Manager completed safeguarding level 5

The following issues and solutions were identified

### CHALLENGES:

- **Resilience** - Difficult to run the building in time of sickness, leave and staff supporting visits. The focus becomes to keep the building open and visits running. The development of new programmes and new scenarios and completion of centre / departmental objectives often take longer to complete.
- **Flexi accrual** – can be quite high at times due to supporting visits in the absence of volunteers and then being unable to take time back.
- **Covering volunteers** – takes time away from personal roles

### SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Prevention Review** - Opportunity to review staff structure and roles.
- **Timetabling** – continue to ensure staff have protected time each week to focus on their own work / development work.
- **Mange flexi time** - make sure everyone has work / life balance by discussing in monthly one to ones, organising rota's during staff Friday catch up and checking timesheets.
- **Recruitment campaign** – Volunteer and operations officer to prioritise recruitment campaign.



## 2.2 Volunteers

The number of active volunteers at Safety Central is identified as the highest risk to the successful day to day running and future development of the centre. Although COVID had passed, we were still seeing the effects, it was a difficult year for recruitment but there has been some positive work to attract new volunteers and keep our current volunteers:

### **Recruitment**

- The Operations Officer and Support Officer attended the Lymm Dickensian festival, invites to further local village events were sent.
- Word of Mouth – Volunteers promoted the role at internal events and 2 new people signed up.
- Staff attended a large Warrington Voluntary Action, volunteer recruitment event at The Gateway building, this was poorly attended by the public.
- New updated posters and leaflets were designed for distribution. As well as being included in the SaferTogether community group packs, they were given to all school groups who visit to promote the role to retiring teachers or wider school staff.
- There is a permanent volunteer recruitment stand in the centre for all visitors to see alongside new smaller banners to be used at local events.
- The team attended Cheshire Show as part of the larger service stand.
- The Chester University website was updated and the Operations Officer attended two lectures speaking to students about the volunteering role and the advantages of volunteering for employability.
- Visitor Relations Officer increased the number of volunteer recruitment notifications across Twitter and facebook.

**Retention** - We were extremely thankful for the Safety Ranger's continued enthusiasm, loyalty, and commitment to Safety Central and the staff team and to show our appreciation arranged social activities or involved them in wider service events:

- 15 attended Christmas breakfast and quiz held in December
- 4 Volunteers received covid medals for their community support throughout the pandemic.
- 6 volunteers attended the annual volunteer celebration event at Sadler Road and had a tour of the new training centre.
- 16 rangers took part in additional training sessions.

Some of the rangers were still anxious about socialising even though restrictions had been lifted so there weren't as many additional social activities organised this year.





### **Volunteer numbers and hours for 2022 – 2023**

In April 22 there were **20 rangers registered**, this increased to **24**, then reduced to **21** in March 23, although only 19 consistently supported the visits. These numbers do not cover a week of school and community group visits, the core team have provided regular resilience and support, but this has impacted on centre development and active volunteer recruitment.

| <b>MONTH</b> | <b>NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS</b> | <b>HOURS GIVEN</b> |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| April 22     | 16                          | 171.5              |
| May 22       | 15                          | 290.5              |
| June 22      | 12                          | 172                |
| July 22      | 16                          | 172.5              |
| August 22    | 2                           | 8                  |
| September 22 | 18                          | 143.5              |
| October 22   | 14                          | 154                |
| November 22  | 19                          | 346                |
| December 22  | 12                          | 113                |
| January 23   | 14                          | 273.5              |
| February 23  | 18                          | 204.5              |
| March 23     | 18                          | 290                |
|              |                             | <b>2339</b>        |

In total the volunteers completed **2339** hours during 2022 - 2023 equating to **£32,512.10** of support based on a **£13.90** activity hourly rate, provided by the Volunteer Programme Manager. In comparison to 2021 - 2022, **936** more volunteer hours have been delivered in 2022 - 2023.



The following issues and solutions have been identified;

## CHALLENGES:

### Low numbers

- not enough to deliver all programmes in the centre, impacts staff time.
- Role is quite demanding  
Anxiety remains after covid.

### DBS Process

Loss of three volunteers due to length of process

### Communication

Consistency of core team due to vacancies, sickness and leave

## SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

### Volunteer Programme review

- Wider review of all roles and opportunities available.
- Prioritise recruitment campaign
- Protect Operations Officer time to recruit

### Improve timescale

- Liaise closely with HR and Volunteer Programme Manager
- Opportunity of changes within prevention review

### Regular contact

- Introduce Volunteer quarterly meetings.
- Volunteer e-newsletter for monthly updates.

### Recruitment

- Progression opportunities for cadets and Princes Trust young people aged 18+.
- Employees on light duties could support the centre, dependant on reason for light duty.
- Volunteer opportunities to be promoted at internal retirement seminar.

SP Energy networks has reinstated the full £10,000 sponsorship this year, which was received in January 2023, this will be used to support the volunteer recruitment campaign in 2023 - 2024 and resolve some of the challenges identified.

## 2.3 Resources

The centre has been open since 2017 and during this time the devices used to manage the special effects have not been upgraded or changed. Some of our devices have been repaired but due to the innovation of technology the components are now longer compatible. For this reason, budget bids were submitted for the following:

- **Replacement of the large Low-Res LED Welcome screen in the main area** – this will be replaced with 4 x 55” televisions, replicating the new training centre. The LED panels are no longer compatible, Tech Creative have been unsuccessful in sourcing their replacements. Four TV screens will be cheaper to replace in the long term and they will still offer the same function as the LED screen.



- **Replace and Refresh water safety scenario** – following the introduction of the Cheshire Water Safety Partnership and the IRMP focus on increasing water awareness education, we will improve the water safety scenario in the building.
- **Replacing the quiz tablets** – The tablets are now unusable and newer devices are not compatible to the quiz system. We have researched other audience participation systems and will be replacing the current quiz system in 2023 - 2024, using an option that can also be used portably in schools as part of the follow up evaluation process.

These have been approved and the funding will be allocated as above.

Moving forward, the issue of changes in technology is something that will need to be considered in our base budget, cost has increased between 20 – 30% over the last few years and this is reflected in quotes from our contractors.

The following issues and solutions were identified

#### **CHALLENGES:**

**Costs** – increasing for both repair and replacement of technology and devices.

**Quality** – devices breaking during the academic year effects the quality of the visits.

**Access to budget** – sometimes equipment breaks or needs replacing after budget bids are submitted and been allocated.

#### **SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Budget Bids** – ensure annual budget bids are submitted to cover the cost of any tech / resource changes needed.

**Contractors** – work closely with contractors to prioritise repairs and replacements each year and implement a maintenance and replacement timeline across the length of the contract.

**Research** – alternative systems and methods for the centre.

**Funding** – work closely with Steve Wright for funding applications that are relevant for the centre.

**Partners** – research partners who may have an aligned interest and can offer, financial support or sponsorship of equipment.

**Budget code** – have a specific budget code that is purely for tech replacements and upgrading of existing devices where possible.



















- x UK fire cadets participation workshops
- x North West Operations Resilience meeting
- x Biker Down

The following issues and solutions were identified

**CHALLENGES:**

Expectation management ±trying to deliver too many different messages on behalf of too many agencies; free use of centre for own purposes

Levels of awareness ±still a large number of potentially allied organisations  
W K D W G R Q ¶ W N Q R Z D E R X

Longevity of partnerships ±risk of fading if key personnel move on, as has happened with SSYP, however strong relationships with individual Police Officers has helped to keep the support for the session.

**SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Core programme/timetable management ±clarity about target groups and themes and availability of centre through website and stakeholder engagement

Possible stakeholder event or drop in sessions ±to showcase facility and seek views on priorities and themes

Regular contact ±ensure that partners know that they can use, and get value from, the centre in return for their support

## 5 Plans for 2023/24

---

Safety Central objectives for 2023 – 2024 are highlighted below and we look forward to reporting against these in next year's annual report.

### 5.1 Key IRMP Objectives

- Review the range of education programmes in the centre and ensure content is consistent, engaging, and relevant to its audience.
- Continue to support the Cheshire Water Safety Partnership in raising awareness of water safety.

### 5.2 Key objectives included in the Prevention Department Plan 2023/24.

- **Water safety added to all core programmes** – Working in partnership with members of the water safety partnership to raise awareness of water safety for all ages of visitors.
- **Cash 4 coaches project** – This will aim to provide free visits to those Cheshire schools within the top 10% and 20% of the multiple deprivation index and help to subsidise the cost of coaches to other schools across Cheshire by applying for external funding, working with local transport companies and local businesses to provide sponsorship opportunities.
- **Review the volunteer programme** – Review the current volunteer programme and offer, with a view to having different volunteering roles within the centre to increase the number of active volunteers. This will involve looking at different recruitment avenues and opportunities.
- **Install new content within the water safety scenario** – Working closely with the Water Safety partnership's educational sub-group, to refresh and enhance the current water safety scenario to include key messages for all ages.
- **Produce a special educational needs strategy for the centre** – Centre staff will work with a focus group of educational partners who work specifically with special educational needs children, young people, and adults to create a more effective, efficient, and relevant programme of safety messages.

Alongside these objectives, staff will continue to be involved in the Prevention Departmental review process.



## 6 And finally .....

---

To conclude this annual report a variety of comments from some of our 2022 -2023 visitors, following their Safety Central experience.

“Really good, nice to see activities changed and improved slightly every year”

“ The rangers were amazing with the children, all of the activities were relevant and (most important) there were some very important messages delivered in an exciting way! Thank you!”

“The visit was excellently managed and the rangers were outstanding in the delivery of the sessions. Would highly recommend Safety Central”

“Fantastic trip – super staff and resources. Thank-you!”

“The rangers were very knowledgeable. The special effects were amazing. All the children learnt something new too. Well done!”

“Excellent and informative trip for all.”

“Loved the whole experience. We all took lots from the visit. An excellent facility”

“We had an amazing day at Safety Central. It was very well organised and run. Staff were very knowledgeable and the activities were very engaging for the children. The pace of the activities was perfect as was the variety. The children thoroughly enjoyed them and the interactive aspects maintained their interest and curiosity. Several children commented that it was the best trip ever!”

“An excellent informative and interactive trip. Thank you. The ranger who led my group was brilliant and the children said how much they had learnt. One child said it was the best school trip they had ever been on.”

