



Cheshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Prevention Partnerships Annual Report 2023 - 2024



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Partnership Management

The Fire and Rescue National Framework (2018) outlines the national requirement for fire and rescue services to work in partnership with a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver services and manage community risk via prevention and protection activity.

For many years, working with key partners has proven to be a vital component in delivering prevention objectives and managing community risk. The partnership arrangements in place support the provision of risk reduction services offered including home fire safety, arson reduction, water safety, road safety, working with children and young people and improving health and wellbeing.

There are many benefits to working collaboratively with trusted agencies, including maximising the use of limited resources, building capacity, enhancing delivery, sharing critical information, and promoting good practice. Working with carefully selected partners, ensures Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS), (the Service) works more innovatively and draws upon the expertise of industry professionals. It also creates opportunities to explore different ways of engaging with communities, develop skills and create fresh concepts. Partnerships that consider and promote equality, diversity and inclusion are also central to eliminating barriers that prevent access to services, information, and employment. All new CFRS partnerships are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

CFRS defines partnerships in four ways:

Collaboration: A voluntary arrangement providing a forum for cross-agency discussion and information sharing. The Service will have no direct powers or specific responsibilities to achieve outcomes.

Statutory Collaborations: Requirement for co-operation between local partners to agree and deliver national or local priorities set down by statute. The partners are defined and national and local funding is directed towards achieving shared priorities and outcomes.

Joint Delivery: Services are delivered jointly with other organisations. Additional capacity or efficiencies are achieved through partnership working. Responsibilities are documented in service level agreements.

Strategic: Set up to deliver specific, jointly agreed, possibly time-limited outcomes. Aims to better align and streamline ways of working to ensure resources are better allocated. There are usually formal governance arrangements in place. Co-operation is sometimes dependent on member organisations working together voluntarily (non-statutory).

Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Service employs a dedicated Partnerships Coordinator who oversees the Partnership Policy and management arrangements with Prevention teams. Live partnerships are managed through our internal database system, the Cheshire Planning System (CPS). Each partnership record contains; legal agreements, progress updates, associated risk management information, outstanding actions, review and monitoring documentation and is held on record in an accessible format. The system provides a platform that allows partnership managers to easily record and review outputs and outcomes, which is critical to measuring the success of the partnership and providing ongoing resilience to workstreams.

Each partnership is subject to a cyclical review process, which is carried out by the Partnership lead to maintain optimum performance, manage issues, and resolve problems as they arise.

These records are also able to be scrutinised by external agencies such as His Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and to affirm our commitment to the NQA (ISO9001 accreditation) standards. International Organisation for Standards (ISO) is a quality management system that helps the service ensure they meet stakeholder needs within statutory and regulatory requirements.

Included within this report is an overview of partnership performance during the 2023-2024 financial year.

Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation Updates

The Prevention Department hosts the Prevention Partnership Board which is conducted quarterly to provide more formal support to partner leads in the monitoring and ongoing governance of prevention partnership and collaboration activity.

This platform ensures that all partnerships are meeting the corporate objective set by the service and partners. Membership of the board includes Prevention managers and internal partnership leads as well as other governance departments such as Information Governance and Legal.

The Partnership Board provides the opportunity to discuss the status of each partnership and the completion of the Prevention Partnership toolkit, a review and evaluation of current activity, consideration of local and national contexts and identifying any new partnership activity and driving forward improvements.

Improvements to the partnership toolkit are continuously being reviewed and supported by staff feedback which is raised at the Partnership Board meetings. These improvements are needed to ensure that the continual success of our partnerships in the event of changes to personal, priorities or budgetary issues.

Annual partnership reviews and partner feedback support our effective evaluation of Prevention Partnerships. The toolkit has been presented to the Protection

department with the plan to implement this across Protection Partnerships 2024 - 2025, the impact of this will standardise partnership working across both departments and add resilience.

Following the March 2024 (ISO 9001 accreditation) surveillance audit visit within Prevention and Protection, positive feedback was given, and good practise recognised for Partnership work / Interested parties. As a result of this surveillance visit there was no conformance identified which highlights our effective work in this area.

The Partnership Policy was reviewed and updated accordingly.

Partnership Overview and Performance

Early Help and Prevention Partnership

A seconded member of staff from the Prevention Community Safety team (Family Fire Engagement Officer) has worked in the Early Help and Prevention department at Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority (CWAC) for several years. The department offers a wide range of services for families including supporting young people and children with specific risks. Support for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, family intervention, youth work and home safety are some of the services utilised. The primary objective of the role is to work with families and individuals in relation to fire prevention, feeding into a wider agenda of improving preventative health and wellbeing and reducing the likelihood of complex issues occurring.

2023-2024 Performance

The Family Fire Engagement Officer supported the family intervention team by completing Safe and Well visits and risk assessments. In total **387** Safe and Well referrals were requested during the year (01/04/23 – 31/03/24).

Of the **387** referrals made **212** referrals were completed and **175** families refused a visit or would not engage with CFRS. The top five highest risk referrals were:

- Under the age of 5 years old in property
- Disability mobility
- Substance misuse
- Smoking concerns
- Overcrowding

Completed Safe and Well visits included **11** properties, which were deemed high risk, and additional risk assessments were completed.

Over the course of the year **192** smoke alarms were fitted by the postholder. Fireproof letter boxes were also installed at **35** properties to help reduce the risk of a fire developing within a property (e.g., due to a threat of arson, Chart 1).

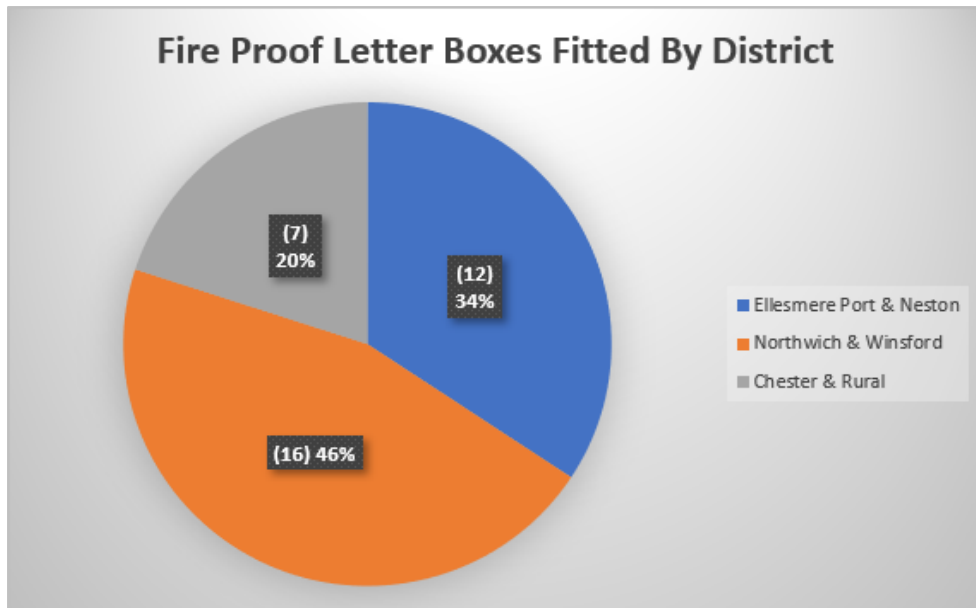


Chart 1: Fireproof Letterbox Data: April 01, 2022 – 31 March 2023

Outlook

The Family Fire Engagement officer role was established in CWAC in 2015 and is reviewed annually. The secondment was renewed in March 2024 with an extension to June 2024 to put this role in line with the new Prevention structure that was agreed as part of the Prevention Department Review. This partnership was only available in Cheshire West and Chester, it was identified within the review that this role was not replicated in the other three unitary areas of Cheshire. This function has been brought inhouse under the “Persons at Heightened Risk” workstream with a pan Cheshire approach, eliminating the funding risks of the partnership and the “post code lottery” method to delivering this service.

Health and Wellbeing Partnerships through Safe and Well activity

Safe and Well (SAW) visits assess individuals who may be at heightened risk of fire due to several contributory factors. Working with statutory and third sector partners, and with householder consent, individuals are also invited to discuss topics related to their health and wellbeing. The service then signposts or refers eligible residents for further support or information in relation to the following:

- Falls
- Alcohol & smoking cessation
- Affordable warmth
- Loneliness & social isolation
- Atrial fibrillation (this offer was removed at the request of health partners in November 2022 and **re-established April 2024**)
- High blood pressure (this offer was removed at the request of health partners in November 2022 and **re-established April 2024**)

A referral from the service involves the sharing of personal information to a partner agency to support an occupant. A signpost involves a member of CFRS highlighting the services and support provided by a partner agency, but we do not provide any personal information.

2023-2024 Performance

During the 2023-2024 financial year, **964** referrals were made to partner organisations (see table one below). There has been a **46%** increase in referrals compared to 2022-2023 (661). This is partly due to the total number of visits completed increasing to **25,519** this year and greater engagement with local managers to promote this work. The rate of referrals/signposts following a Safe and Well visit is 3.8%, compared to 3.2% last year. However, as BP and AF referrals had been paused during 2023-24, this means some of the other referrals have seen a greater increase. For example, falls referrals have significantly increased from 182 to 312, while loneliness referrals have more than doubled from 52 to 120.

	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Halton	Warrington	Total Referrals
Falls Referral	120	55	61	76	312
Smoking Referral	16	9	14	8	47
Alcohol Referral	2	1	0	0	3
Affordable Warmth Referral	116	44	222	100	482
Loneliness Referral	45	5	49	21	120
Total Referrals	299	114	346	205	964
Visits Completed	5802	9149	4697	5871	25519

Table 1: Safe and Well Referrals: 2023-2024 (NB. BP and AF signposts were paused for this period so are not included in the table.)

Safe and Well partner, Energy Projects Plus (EPP) continue to provide dedicated support to help residents with the cost-of-living crisis. The programme aims to support residents in reducing their energy demand, access financial support, understand and manage fuel bills and identify competitive tariffs. Energy Projects plus supported households across Cheshire with telephone calls, face-to-face advice, and casework support. During the period April 2023 – March 2024, the project has supported **482** households as stated in the table above. This shows a **49%** increase in referrals compared to April 2022 – March 2023 where the project supported 324 households.

Outlook

In November 2022, our NHS partners requested that we stop testing for atrial fibrillation and blood pressure due to structural and governance changes within health. Following dialogue with the NHS Cardiovascular Disease Prevention group and Cardiac Network across Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, this work was re-introduced in April 2024. New equipment has been provided by the NHS and refresher training and guidance materials have been distributed to stations and Prevention delivery staff. Residents are signposted to community

pharmacies or GP surgeries depending on their blood pressure reading and the result of the Atrial Fibrillation test, accordance to NHS guidelines.

Loneliness and Isolation referral pathways have now been identified for all four local authority areas to offer a pan Cheshire approach. This is a result of the issues identified in the period April 2022 – March 2023 with the withdrawal of support in Cheshire West and Chester and the impact on providing a standardised approach on service provision across Cheshire with partnerships of this type. This further highlights the importance of the established Prevention partnership board.

The Service continues to have a representative at the council Health and Wellbeing boards for Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Halton, (we have reached out to colleagues within Warrington and are awaiting response) which provides extra opportunities to gain information regarding health and wellbeing initiatives within the local authority, NHS and third sector, along with the possibility of collaborative working.

During the past year, we have implemented a new referral process for partner agencies and householders to request a Safe and Well visit. There is now an agency referral and self-referral form on the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service website, where we can receive requests in a standardised format. Moving forward, a risk rating will be attributed to each request based on the information they provide, so that we can prioritise the highest risk households. This will be based on an agreed set of risk attributes, in line with the “Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action” (CIPHA) data trial, which can be applied to our own data sources and all types of referrals, in order to prioritise households as accurately and consistently as possible.

Safety Central Collaborations

Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The weekly Midwife clinic on a Monday and Friday continues to be successful and is a valuable service, offering support to expectant parents.

The NHS team have had staffing changes to both the lead clinician and midwife staff and new relationships are being built, this will see the collaboration expand to other support services and educational programmes for 0-4year olds.

Scottish Power Energy Networks

SP Energy Networks (SPEN) continues to support Safety Central by providing a £10,000 donation each year to support the running and development of the volunteer ranger programme. The funding is used to help recruit new volunteers and provide training and support social activities to retain existing rangers. This supports both safety education locally and supports SPEN's Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) obligations to actively support community development and the promotion of public safety it also helps to keep safety messages within the centre relevant as they are quality assured annually.

Delivery Partners

Safety Central have worked closely with local organisations who commit staff to deliver sessions that are part of the core programmes these include:

- Cheshire Polices Safer Schools
- Young Peoples Partnership
- Magistrates in the Community
- Youth Fed – All supporting the Stay Wise programme for Princes Trust and High School visitors.
- Lymm Rotary Club – who provide Heart start first aid sessions and continue to provide evening sessions for members of the community.

Detective Constable Andy Kevan, from Cheshire Police's Cyber Crime Team has worked closely with Safety Central staff to update and quality assure online safety messaging and provide training for Safey Rangers for the Safer Together (adult community groups) and Safe Wise programmes.

Current Workstreams

The Prevention department is currently undergoing a departmental structure review, as part of a wider departmental review. An outcome of this review will be to focus on highest-risk priority groups with a pan Cheshire approach. This is to be inclusive of all four unitary areas working with a range of organisations to support and enhance the safety of their community in standardised way.

Work has been done to standardise the approach of referrals coming into the department. Two forms have been created and sit on the services internet page to cater for self-referrals from the public and a Partner agency form. We are in the process of reviewing the risk rating submitted on these forms, this will help identify the residents most at risk. All regular referral partners have been notified of the new referral pathway. Training for Partner agencies on fire risk awareness and the new process will be available and evaluated on in future reports.

The Partnership Co-ordinator and Partnership Leads constantly look to improve partnership activity via enhancements in the quality of recording, feedback from partner agencies and improvements identified via external auditing agencies such as NQA (ISO9001 accreditation) and His Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Partnership Leads are currently working to review and update the governance arrangements with the support of Legal and Information Governance officer around some of their "business as usual" partnership activity.

There is a significant amount of work ongoing with colleagues from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the "Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action" (CIPHA) programme to provide more detailed information related to health and fire

risk to better prioritise our home safety safe and well activity. The CIPHA trail has begun in the Halton area and evaluation information will be provided in future reports.