

# Our first two years of bringing safety to life

A report for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's Performance and Overview Committee

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# 1. Introduction

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**Cheshire Fire Authority's long-held ambition to establish a facility dedicated to safety education was realised on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017, when Safety Central threw open its door to its first ever visitors.**

On that day, we welcomed our first school, bringing to life an idea first tabled in 2000 and the culmination of four years of detailed research, planning and design work that began in 2013.

More than 14,000 people have since passed through Safety Central, gaining important skills and knowledge to keep themselves and others safe and well at home, on the road and in the community. The centre is the largest of its kind in the country and is already gaining a reputation as one of the most forward thinking.

This was confirmed in January 2019 when we won a **silver award in the prestigious iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards**, in recognition of our work to improve the lives of local people and our potential to reduce demand on public services. We were also shortlisted in the **Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards 2018** and, at the time of this report being written, in the **UK Heartsafe Awards 2019**.

After two full years of operation, refining what we do and how we deliver it, we are now operating in 'steady state'. The time is therefore right to produce a formal report of our work. Moving forward, we will report each September on our performance and progress from the previous financial year, our key challenges and our plans for the year ahead.



However, it would be remiss not to begin this first report by recognising the support of our many and varied partners during our first 24 months.

Firstly, our thanks go to **Cheshire Fire Authority**, which approved the centre's business case in February 2014 and which continues to meet its revenue costs. We are particularly grateful to the Members who formed a small Sounding Board, working closely with the project team to generate ideas, review designs and help gain wider support for the scheme.

We must also acknowledge the leaders and chief executives of Cheshire's **four local authorities**, **Cheshire Constabulary**, the local **NHS** and the **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents** who endorsed Cheshire Fire Authority's bid to the former Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Transformation Fund. As a result, we were awarded more than £1.9m to match the Authority's capital investment in the centre.

A large number of other public, private and third sector organisations have given their time, energy and resources to get the Safety Central show on the road. In recognition of their support, they are detailed in the partnerships section of this report on page 13.

And last but by no means least we must extend our sincerest gratitude to our **volunteer rangers**. Without them giving many hours of their own time, we would not be able to deliver our programmes and make a difference to so many children, young people and community groups.



## Key milestones

<b>September 2013</b>	Desk research and fieldwork to inform business case.
<b>February 2014</b>	Business case approved by Cheshire Fire Authority.
<b>May 2014</b>	Full-time project manager appointed, detailed design work on building begins.
<b>September 2014</b>	Plans approved by Warrington Borough Council.
<b>December 2014</b>	DCLG awards Transformation Fund grant of £1.9m.
<b>November 2015</b>	Year of detailed programme development, scenario design and stakeholder engagement culminates with conference to confirm learning themes.
<b>March 2016</b>	ISG Ltd. begins construction with ground-breaking ceremony attended by local children. Programme development continues.
<b>October 2016</b>	Bookings open to primary and secondary schools, with most days during the 2017/18 academic year filled by Christmas.
<b>March 2017</b>	ISG handover building to project team and Paragon Creative and sponsors start scenic and interactive installation.
<b>June 2017</b>	Lymm Fire Station becomes operational.
<b>July 2017</b>	Fit out complete, followed by test visits from partner schools.
<b>August 2017</b>	Programmes refined in light of school feedback and first cohort of volunteer rangers trained.
<b>September 2017</b>	Key Stage 2 and 3 schools programmes launch.
<b>March 2018</b>	Official opening by HRH The Princess Royal abandoned owing to severe winter storm.
<b>April 2018</b>	Key Stage 1 schools programme launches in response to demand from teachers and 5,000 <sup>th</sup> visitor passes through the doors.
<b>September 2018</b>	HRH The Princess Royal is able to travel to Cheshire and officially open Safety Central.
<b>December 2018</b>	Adult community group programme launches as centre welcomes its 10,000 <sup>th</sup> visitor.
<b>July 2019</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> volunteer ranger becomes active and total visitors forecast to exceed 14,000.



## 2. Headline performance

The following table summarises the numbers and types of visitor to Safety Central, where they are from, what they think of their experience and the number of volunteers we engage.

This information is reported monthly on our social media channels and around the centre and quarterly to Unitary Performance Groups and the Performance and Overview Committee, through the performance report. It draws from our visitor database, quiz software, volunteer rota system and responses from visitors to our freepost feedback cards.

	July 2017 to March 2018	April 2018 to March 2019	April to June 2019 (Q1)	Total since opening
<b>Individual visitors</b>				
Children and young people	3,313	Mainstream 3,335	Mainstream 858	8,064
		Non-mainstream 432	Non-mainstream 126	
Accompanying adults	645	534	179	1,358
Adult community group visitors	-	934	288	1,222
Community group helpers	-	205	37	242
Stakeholders attending training or meetings	533	1,500	521	2,554
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>4,491</b>	<b>6,940</b>	<b>2,009</b>	<b>13,440</b>
<b>Visiting school and community groups by local authority area*</b>				
Cheshire East	32	32	14	78
Cheshire West and Chester	25	40	18	83
Halton	11	19	7	37
Warrington	27	31	6	64
Pan-Cheshire	2	36	1	39
Out of county	2	10	4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>317</b>

\* Where schools and groups have visited in successive years, these have been counted as fresh visits owing to them bringing new children, young people or adults.



	July 2017 to March 2018	April 2018 to March 2019	April to June 2019 (Q1)	Total since opening
<b>Evaluation and visitor experience</b>				
Average improvement in key subject knowledge following a visit	88%	76%	72%	79% average
Teachers rating their visit as 'good' or 'very good'	100% of 110 responding		100% of 39 responding	100% of 149 responding
Teachers who would visit again	100% of 110 responding		100% of 39 responding	100% of 149 responding
Percentage of children and young people scoring their visit 4 or 5 out of 5	93% of 1,045 responding		93% of 132 responding	93% of 1,117 responding
Percentage of adult community group visitors scoring their visit 4 or 5 out of 5	-	-	98% of 54 responding	-
<b>Volunteer ranger programme</b>				
Total number of volunteers active at end of period	20	25	26*	-
Volunteers who left during period	2	5	1	8
Volunteer hours logged	1,880	3,957	1,052	6,889
Notional value of volunteer hours at Scale 3 (£9.94ph)	£18,687.20	£39,332.58	£10,456.88	£78,933.54

\* In the first weeks of Q2 this figure rose to 31 following a cohort of new rangers becoming active.

We are currently forecasting visitor numbers to reach our 2019/20 target of 9,000 and most term-time days during the forthcoming academic year are now booked. Notwithstanding any cancellations, which are very infrequent, or groups bringing fewer visitors than planned, which is sometimes the case, this would represent a 30% increase on visitor numbers this year.

Other established safety education centres report annual visitor numbers of between 6,000 and 15,000, but significant differences in the way they run their programmes make direct comparisons difficult to draw.



### 3. Programmes and events

Members of Cheshire Fire Authority were very clear when they approved the business case that the centre should offer learning opportunities to all vulnerable groups, not just mainstream primary school children.

For that reason we have developed a suite of core programmes that address the avoidable harms children, young people and older adults are likely to face at key points in their lives. This mirrors the approach of several other UK safety education centres.

#### Our core programmes at a glance

<b>SAFETYSTARS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aimed at children aged 5-7 in Years 1 and 2 at KS1.</li> <li>• Five 20-minute games focussing on fire, home and road safety, five ways to wellbeing and healthy eating.</li> <li>• Activity book, colouring and outdoor space available at break times and lunch.</li> <li>• Maximum of 40 children across five teams, each with two rangers – one facilitating, one acting ‘unsafely’ to help reinforce messages.</li> </ul>
<b>SAFETYQUEST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aimed at children aged 9-11 in Years 5 and 6 at KS2.</li> <li>• Twelve quick-fire activities lasting 12 to 36 minutes covering subjects above plus online, water, electricity, farm and building site safety, basic first aid, bullying and journey planning.</li> <li>• Based around the choices of a fictional family, introduced in the cinema room, and evaluated using quiz software.</li> <li>• Maximum of 60 children across five ranger-led teams.</li> </ul>
<b>LESSONS4LIFE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aimed at young people aged 13+ in Year 9 at KS3.</li> <li>• Some elements also utilised in bespoke visits for Respect, Prince’s Trust, pupil referral units and cadet and uniformed youth groups.</li> <li>• Currently four 45-minute sessions covering fire and road safety, plus two optional topics delivered by key partner agencies – the most popular choices being crime and consequences, cybersafety and LGBT identities.</li> <li>• Maximum of 40 young people across four staff or partner-led teams.</li> </ul>
<b>SAFER TOGETHER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aimed at community groups including Women’s Institutes, Rotary Clubs, churches, social clubs, residents’ associations and carers’ groups – not specifically for older people.</li> <li>• Four 25-minute activities focussing on fire safety, accidents at home and assistive technology, personal safety and online scams.</li> <li>• Maximum of 40 people across four staff or ranger-led teams.</li> </ul>

Although we endeavour to work to standard session plans, they are easily adapted and tailored for groups with specific needs. Examples include delivering our KS2 activities to adults with learning disabilities and inviting partner agencies to help us focus our KS3 session around specific issues in particular geographical areas.



## Timetabling

In January 2018 we introduced a new timetabling framework to enable us to better plan and resource the day-to-day running of the centre.

This reflects what we now know about volunteer ranger availability and the preferences of certain visitor groups. It also ensures that smaller special interest groups do not monopolise the centre at the expense of larger school or community groups, thus compromising overall visitor numbers.

Because our four local authorities take different school holidays, this timetable applies for much of the year apart from about five weeks during the summer and two weeks at Christmas.

	9.30am to 2.30pm	2.30pm to 5pm	6.30pm to 9pm
MONDAY	<b>SAFETYSTARS</b> <b>SAFETYQUEST</b> <b>LESSONS4LIFE</b>	<b>SAFERTOGETHER</b>	<b>SAFERTOGETHER</b> UNIFORMED YOUTH GROUPS HEARTSTART FIRECHOIR
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY	BESPOKE VISITS	<i>TEAM PLANNING</i>	<i>CLOSED</i>
SATURDAY	<b>SAFERTOGETHER</b>	ROAD SAFETY	
SUNDAY	ROAD SAFETY		

The summer holidays have proven popular with community groups and also allow for a 'shutdown' week of maintenance and deep cleaning.

In 2017 and 2018 the centre has closed for two weeks over Christmas and New Year, when there is no visitor demand and ranger availability is low. This has the advantage of enabling staff to take an extended period of annual leave or catch up on administrative tasks.

A routine technical shutdown, to allow scenarios to be serviced and repaired, takes place one Monday each month. This helps to facilitate planning meetings, development time or additional ranger training.

## Other regular learning events

In addition to our core programmes, other functions of the Prevention Department are encouraged to make use of the centre's facilities and do so on a frequent basis. Selected not-for-profit public and third sector partners, who share our vision of a safer Cheshire, Halton and Warrington, are also regular guests.

These may take place during school programme slots or holidays and include:

- **Ashworth Extended Services** using scenarios for a 'living soap opera' written by young people excluded from mainstream education



- **apprentice and work experience student** training and shadowing opportunities
- **Biker Down** courses, run at weekends throughout the year
- **'bring your child to work' family days** for fire and joint corporate services colleagues
- **British Heart Foundation Community Heartstart** sessions, run by Lymm Rotary Club one evening a month and supported by a Safety Central ranger
- **Cheshire Autism Practical Support (ChAPS)** family safety days
- **Cheshire Downs Syndrome Support** family safety days
- **Child Brain Injury Trust** family safety days
- **Cheshire Safer Schools and Young People's Partnership** and **Collaborate Digital**, who run an annual cybersafety competition
- **Fire cadets**, whose leaders are trained to use certain scenarios in the evenings
- foster family safety sessions for **By The Bridge and Orange Grove fostering agencies**
- **Manchester Camerata**-led workshops for primary schools taking part in their annual safety performance project
- **National Citizenship Service**, using the centre for the first time in summer 2019
- **North West Children in Care Council** activity day and meeting
- **North West Children's Major Trauma Network** fun days for families with children who have suffered serious injury
- **Pedal Smart** courses, run at weekends throughout the year
- **Prince's Trust Team Programmes** visits by young people as part of the course and later with adult community groups as part of their final team challenge
- **Respect** groups
- **Silver Rainbows** older people's LGBT group 'tea and tattles'
- **Think Drive Survive** courses, generally run on selected weekdays
- **YouthFed**, who run monthly themed training for professionals on issues such as mental health, knife crime and cybersafety.

## Evaluation

Measuring behavior change in the disciplines of accident prevention and health promotion is problematic because of the difficulty in establishing a 'cause and effect' link between an intervention and any long-term difference in outcomes or attitudes.

For that reason, we have taken a realistic, blended approach that aims to gauge visitors' levels of satisfaction with their Safety Central experience and the levels of understanding about key risk factors before and after a visit.

This is done in the following ways:

PROGRAMME	MEASURE/S
ALL VISITORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of people visiting Safety Central, broken down by children and young people, service users and supporting adults</li> <li>• number of groups visiting, broken down by mainstream and non-mainstream education provision, community groups and unitary authority areas</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feedback through social media, cards and letters of appreciation</li> </ul>
<b>SAFETYSTARS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-question interactive quiz undertaken on arrival and at the end of the tour</li> <li>• satisfaction cards for teachers scoring pre-visit information, enjoyment, benefit to pupils and qualitative feedback</li> </ul>
<b>SAFETYQUEST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12-question interactive quiz undertaken on arrival, at the end of the tour and repeated with a sample of schools six months afterwards (currently under trial)</li> <li>• satisfaction cards for pupils, returned via freepost, scoring levels of enjoyment, favourite activity and three things they will change as a result of their visit</li> <li>• satisfaction cards for teachers scoring pre-visit information, enjoyment, benefit to pupils and qualitative feedback</li> </ul>
<b>LESSONS4LIFE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8-question interactive quiz undertaken on arrival and at the end of the tour</li> <li>• satisfaction cards for students, returned via freepost, scoring levels of enjoyment, favourite activity and three things they will change as a result of their visit</li> <li>• satisfaction cards for teachers scoring pre-visit information, enjoyment, benefit to students and qualitative feedback</li> </ul>
<b>SAFERTOGETHER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• satisfaction cards scoring levels of enjoyment, most useful activity and three things they will change as a result of their visit</li> </ul>

The results of this evaluation are summarised on page 7 of this report, however it is clear that the vast majority visitors enjoy their Safety Central experience and, in the case of teachers or supporting adults, believe it benefits those they bring to the centre.

There is also a marked difference in knowledge and understanding of safety and lifeskill issues before and after a visit. We have amended the evaluation question set over the last two years, in response to comments from teachers in particular, to make it more challenging. Caution should therefore be applied when comparing improvement scores year-on-year.

We are in the process of revisiting a sample of schools and early indications show strong continued retention of knowledge six months after a visit. Work will be carried out this year to test this methodology, before reporting this formally in the next annual report.



# Programmes and events

## CHALLENGES:

- **capacity management** – ensuring as many groups are able to visit as possible, particularly in evenings, while recognising the finite capacity of the staff and ranger team
- **expectation management** – centre’s popularity means most school slots for 2019/20 academic year full; ensuring groups that most need to visit are able to do so; accepting that there are too many schools in Cheshire for term-time days available
- **relevance** – ensuring staff have time to develop existing programmes to reflect current themes and introduce new programmes if required; ensuring programmes are targeted to groups most in need
- **KS3 programme** – bookings relatively low from secondary schools; partner involvement difficult to plan; some options never chosen
- **evaluation** – quiz has to be dropped if groups run late; longer term outcomes very difficult to measure
- **integration with other Prevention functions** – very difficult to ring-fence time for Respect and Prince’s Trust teams; ad hoc referrals from complex family teams; no formal link with traditional KS2 school visits

## SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

- **trusted partners** – replicating the successful arrangement with Lymm Rotary Club to other trusted agencies to use the centre outside core hours
- **rangers** – increase to 50 and recruit those able to engage during evenings
- **digital booking system** – new website, under construction, will allocate bookings to first available slot and in line with timetabling framework
- **doubling-up** – continuing arrangement of pairing up smaller groups and classes where possible
- **visit limits** – limit schools to two visits per year and prioritise Cheshire schools over those out of county
- **duty visit rota** – ensuring protected time for Centre Manager, Development Officer and Support Officer each week
- **index of multiple deprivation** – using this as the basis for proactive group targeting; using Crimebeat funds to support transport costs where possible. Visits to 15 schools in Halton in September with Safer Schools and Young People’s Partnership to encourage uptake
- **KS3 relaunch** – work already underway to standardise format of visit from September 2019 and ensure it can be used for a wider range of young people’s groups
- **Safety Centre Alliance research project** – participate in multi-centre Evaluation Expertise project in late 2019
- **timetabling** – continue to ensure Fridays are kept clear of mainstream school visits; double up Respect and Prince’s Trust teams where possible
- **Safewise best practice education project** – continue to be sighted on developments nationally



## 4. Partnerships

The breadth of topics covered at Safety Central means it is essential to draw upon the expertise of trusted partners to help deliver our messages.

At the same time, a range of agencies is recognising that the centre provides the ideal venue to help them address some of their priorities.

This synergy is entirely in line with the ambition expressed by sub-regional leaders and chief executives who supported our bid for transformation funds from the Department of Communities and Local Government in 2014.

Our partnerships, which are recorded and monitored on the Service's partnerships register, are broadly categorised into four different types:

<p><b>Funding partners</b> <i>Provision of funds to support aspects of activity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SP Energy Networks</b> – £10,000 annual sponsorship to fund volunteer ranger programme, plus donation of substation electricity safety scenario</li> <li>• <b>Cheshire Crimebeat</b> – grants to support travel costs for schools in disadvantaged areas</li> </ul>
<p><b>Delivery partners</b> <i>Commit staff to deliver sessions as part of our core programmes or as standalone sessions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cheshire Constabulary</b> – SaferTogether personal and cybersafety activities</li> <li>• <b>Cheshire Safer Schools and Young People's Partnership</b> – Key Stage 3 choices and consequences session</li> <li>• <b>Heartstart (Lymm Rotary Club)</b> – practical resuscitation skills for community groups (evenings)</li> <li>• <b>Magistrates in the Community</b> – Key Stage 3 choices and consequences session</li> <li>• <b>Sanctuary365</b> – telecare equipment and live call demo during SaferTogether visits</li> <li>• <b>YouthFed</b> – Key Stage 3 cybersafety session</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resource partners</b> <i>Donation of equipment or props to bring our educational scenarios to life.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cawley Rail</b> – railway track and level crossing</li> <li>• <b>Changing Lives in Cheshire</b> – furniture for our family home</li> <li>• <b>Diebold Nixdorf</b> – mock ATM for cashpoint safety</li> <li>• <b>Dynniq UK</b> – toucan crossing and maintenance</li> <li>• <b>HM Courts and Tribunals Service</b> – court furniture</li> <li>• <b>ISG Ltd.</b> – building site safety scenario</li> <li>• <b>Normech Ltd.</b> – mock combi boiler and household props</li> <li>• <b>Merseyrail</b> – railway station posters</li> <li>• <b>Oakwood Mobility</b> – mobility scooter</li> <li>• <b>Tesco</b> – current mock convenience store</li> <li>• <b>Warrington Borough Council</b> – recycling bins</li> <li>• <b>Zoll Medical</b> – training automatic defibrillator</li> </ul>



## Expertise partners

*Assist in the development of lesson plans, advise on key messages or help us reach target visitor groups.*

- **By the Bridge Fostering** – advice on tailoring Key Stage 3 session
- **Cheshire Autism Practical Support** – awareness training for staff and rangers
- **Cheshire Downs Syndrome Support** – awareness and Makaton training for staff and rangers
- **Cheshire East Council** – brokering contact with schools and community groups
- **Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Collaborative** – awareness raising of centre
- **Cheshire West and Chester Council** – brokering contact with schools and community groups
- **Co-Op** – new mock convenience store from 2020
- **Dangerpoint** – operational advice
- **Halton Borough Council** – brokering contact with schools and community groups
- **NFU and Farm Safety Trust** – countryside safety messages
- **North West Children’s Major Trauma Network** – data and advice about major injuries, awareness raising
- **North West Regional Cyber Crime Unit** – adult cybersafety
- **NSPCC** – Key Stage 2 bullying messages
- **Proud Trust** – gender identity and sexual orientation awareness for young people
- **Royal Lifesaving Society** – water safety messages
- **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents** – trampoline and home safety messages
- **Safe+Sound Staffordshire** – operational advice
- **Safety Centre Alliance** – best practice sharing
- **Silver Rainbows** – gender identity and sexual orientation awareness for older people
- **Warrington Borough Council** – brokering contact with schools and community groups
- **Warrington Visually Impaired People Social Group** – practical guiding skills for rangers

## One off events and VIP visits

As well as welcoming the partners listed above, we have been delighted to host a number of special events and visits by high-profile people over the last two years. These have helped to further raise aware of Safety Central’s potential and include:

- **Cheshire Constabulary** senior officer meetings and public order training courses
- **Cheshire Fire Authority** Members’ planning days
- **Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Service Management Team** meetings
- **Cheshire East Multi Agency Action Group** meetings and tour
- **Cheshire Equality Leads Forum** meeting and tour



- **Cheshire Magistrates' Bench** meeting and tours
- **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel** public meeting
- **Cheshire and Warrington Sub Regional Leaders' Board** meeting and tour
- **Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Board** training
- **Home Office Fire Directorate** tour during visit to Cheshire
- **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services** focus groups during inspection
- **Her Majesty's Prison Service** Styal, Thorncross and Manchester team meeting
- **High Sheriffs of Cheshire**, Alexis Redmond and Mark Mitchell, meeting and tour
- **Institute of Fire Engineers North West Branch** centenary conference
- **Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service** Prevention Department tour and meeting
- **Lymm Business Network** meeting and tour
- **National Fire Chiefs Council Inclusion Group** meeting and tour
- **North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Arson Team** meeting and tour
- **Oslo City Fire Department** two international best practice sharing days
- **Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust** neonatal conference
- **Warrington Safeguarding Board** meetings and training
- **Warrington Primary Heads Association** meetings.

## Partnerships

### 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 that don't know about our work
- **Longevity of partnerships** – risk of fading if key personnel move on, as has happened at Tesco and led to us being unable to refresh store
- **No obvious appetite for commissioned work** – partners seem happy for us to provide intervention, but funds seem unlikely to be available to support programmes

### 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
- **Support in kind** – donation of time, resources and expertise should be regarded of equal value; suggestion of a Police Community Support Officer to be based at the centre to add value could be explored

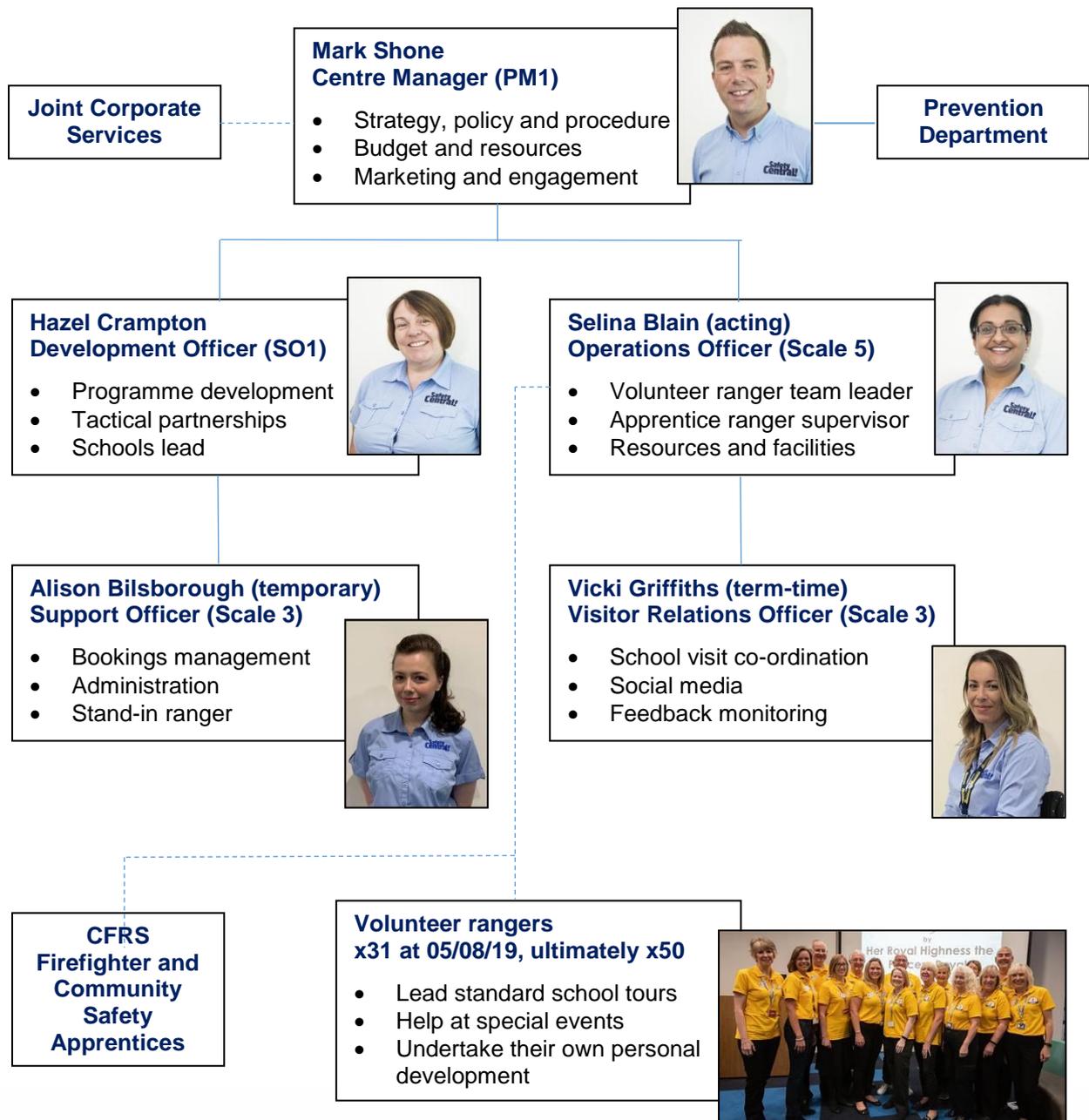


## 5. Staffing, volunteering and resources

The way in which Safety Central is staffed and resourced was determined and agreed in the months leading up to the centre's launch.

Our staffing model is based on experiences of other safety education centres and balances the need for capacity to run programmes for a large number of visitors, at the same time as being financial sustainable.

### Structure and key responsibilities



## Staffing

Over the last two years, as the day-to-day running of the centre has become routine, there have been some minor changes to line management. The Support Officer is now managed by the Development Officer in order to manage bookings more effectively, while the Operations Officer manages the recently-introduced post of Visitor Relations Officer, who co-ordinates large school visits.

The post was created specifically for Vicki Griffiths after an accident outside work left her paralysed and unable to fulfil her role as an on-call firefighter. Although not part of the original staffing model, the post has proven invaluable during busy term-time periods and freed up other officers to focus on development work.

Support from the Service's community safety and firefighter apprentices, who supplement ranger numbers when they are available, has been useful while we have been growing the volunteering cohort. The revised format of the apprenticeship programme from September 2019 means all apprentices will spend a month each at the centre during their first year. This provides extra resilience on days where volunteer ranger availability is limited.

## Volunteering

Engaging and empowering volunteers to deliver learning activities is an approach adopted successfully by a number of other safety centres. It has many benefits, including:

- being a **cost effective** way of managing large visitor groups and **extending the reach of education programmes** to as many people as possible
- engaging older retired or semi-retired people in **meaningful community work** and equipping them with important safety and lifeskills knowledge
- **attracting talent** into the fire and rescue service by engaging people who may be interested in becoming apprentices, firefighters or community safety practitioners.

An annual grant of £10,000 from SP Energy Networks offsets the cost of running the **Ranger Academy**, our training and development programme to get rangers ready to deliver and support their ongoing learning. It also covers uniform, mileage and any equipment they need to enable them to deliver sessions. This funding is part of SP Energy Networks' public safety plan for the next five years.

In July 2019, MIAA Assurance audited the volunteer ranger programme as part of their 2019/20 audit plan. Their interim finding is that there is 'substantial assurance' of its governance and delivery.

In November 2018 we surveyed the 27 rangers active at the time, to understand their motivations for volunteering, measure their experience and inform future development of the programme. Our intention is to run the survey every two years and to use the results as the basis for an ongoing ranger recruitment, retention and improvement plan.



Sixteen rangers responded, which asked the to rate different aspects of the programme using a level of agreement scale of one to seven (one being 'very dissatisfied', 7 being 'very satisfied').

Aspect	Mean score (1-7)
<b>Eight highest-scoring statements</b>	
Management team highly appreciative of my efforts	6.81
Welcoming atmosphere as a volunteer ranger	6.75
I feel proud to be part of Safety Central	6.75
Management approachable with any concerns	6.73
Place of fun and delivering serious messages – balanced	6.69
Fully understand what is expected for each session	6.69
Safety Central management highly supportive	6.63
Safety Central set-up highly professional	6.63
<b>Five lowest-scoring statements</b>	
Find online SignUp (self rota system) easy to use	5.63
Easy to meet expected commitment of one session per fortnight	5.75
From application to starting time was acceptable	5.88
Find technology in the centre easy to use	5.94
Happy to get involved in promotion around Cheshire	5.94

"The centre is totally customer focused. The team are constantly moving forward and looking to improve an already great programme."

"Has – and is – a challenge which is ongoing, but there is satisfaction in achievement and knowing the children take a lot from the day."

"I enjoy being part of Safety Central and cannot thank the staff enough (or fellow rangers) for that support and welcome which has boosted my confidence and self-esteem."

"I'd like to add re 'the association with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service' wasn't part of my original motivation but now I know the sort of organisation this is, I would say it's a key reason why I am so proud to be involved here."

"Opportunity to shadow Safety Central staff on a fairly regular basis to keep us on the right track."

"Technological hiccups can be disconcerting e.g. if the wellbeing video isn't available."

"It would be good to get together as a group other than just at Christmas."

"Reimbursement of travel expenses has on occasion been slow."

"Staff enable us to perform to a high level with their dedication and support. This appears to be getting more difficult as the operation expands and demands more of their time."



## Resources

There have been no significant issues with the building or its resources since completion in July 2017.

Immediately after fit-outwork was completed, we entered into a contract with Paragon Creative – the company which designed and installed most of our scenery and technology – to undertake monthly service visits and an annual deep clean. This ensured that resources were maintained in a way that preserved their warranties and an ongoing arrangement means faults and minor repairs are addressed swiftly.

Paragon Creative and our primary building contractor ISG Ltd. carried out further work in April 2019 to provide additional ventilation to the hazard-spotting bedroom and burning bedroom scenarios, which were becoming very warm as a result of the special effects. This work, which did not disrupt delivery of our programmes, was covered by a defects clause in Paragon Creative's original contract and spare contingency from the original capital budget.

In July 2019 we learned that Paragon Creative had gone into administration and was to cease trading. An interim maintenance arrangement is in place with a number of trusted technicians and the contract will be put out to competitive tender in the autumn.

In addition to appointing a new scenic and interactives contractor, during 2019/20 we will be reviewing two of our educational scenarios.

Firstly, our popular mock Tesco store is the only part of the centre beginning to show real wear and tear and we are already working with the **Co-Op** to refit this feature towards the end of the year. The Co-Op has recently completed work at the Bristol safety centre (right) and the quality of installation and breadth of education it facilitates is far greater than we currently have in place. The cost will be met in full by the Co-Op and is valued at around £40,000.



Secondly, our rangers tell us that visitors find the building site scenario the least engaging or useful. We believe many of the hazards and workplace health and safety information it covers, could be included in the farmyard area, freeing up space for a new scenario on the urban street scene. We will scope ideas this year, but an early suggestion is that of a 999 control room where the consequences of **hoax calls** can be explored. This scenario works very well at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's safety and training centre (left).



# Staffing, volunteering and resources

## CHALLENGES:

- **resilience of staff team** – four full-time and one-part time member of staff sufficient the majority of the time, but stretched during annual leave, sickness absence and involvement in activities such as Limitless, Firepride and Nepal
- **volunteer recruitment** – the centre appeals to an older demographic who live nearby; need to grow numbers to 50 and attract a wider diversity of rangers who are available at different times of day
- **quality assurance** – ensuring rangers continue to deliver activities correctly, stay 'on message' and feel supported
- **cost of mileage expenses** – this will increase as the ranger cohort expands

## SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

- **timetabling** – continue to ensure staff have protected time each week to focus on development work
- **ranger recruitment** – continue to grow volunteer numbers so staff do not need to deliver standard school visits if not enough rangers are available
- **recruitment campaign** – Operations Officer to focus efforts on volunteer bureaux, colleges of further education and large employers county-wide
- **shadowing and 1-1s** – informal shadowing and supervision to take place on the anniversary of every ranger becoming active, from this September
- **monitoring** – close record of expenses being logged and to be reviewed as part of budgeting process later in the year



## 6. Plans for this year

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**Work is already well underway towards many of the solutions and opportunities highlighted earlier in this report.**

These are summarised below and we look forward to reporting against these in next year's Safety Central annual report.

### **Key objectives included in the Prevention Department Plan 2019/20.**

- Increase overall **visitor numbers to 9,000** between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020.
- Recruit and maintain a cohort of **50 volunteer rangers**.
- Work with colleagues in Business Intelligence to develop ways of targeting schools and community groups in **areas of highest need**.
- Develop a relationship with an academic partner to further develop process of **evaluating visits**.
- Achieve the **Council for Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge**, to give assurance to teachers about the safety and quality of provision

### **Other specific actions in support of the key objectives**

- Launch a **new user-friendly website**, with integrated booking calendar and ranger sign-up system and to better showcase the centre's work.
- **Refit our mock convenience store** with support from the Co-Op.
- **Appoint a new maintenance contractor** to look after scenic and interactives.
- Explore an alternative educational use for the **building site scenario**.
- **Quality-assure the evaluation methodology for revisiting schools** to test longer-term retention of knowledge.
- **Relaunch the KS3 Lessons4Life** programme in a format more appealing to schools and youth groups.
- Trial shorter version of new KS3 programme with **older uniformed youth groups** such as cadets, scouts and guides.
- Trial bonfire and Halloween sessions for **younger uniformed youth groups**, such as cubs and brownies.
- Trial **public SaferTogether sessions** using Eventbrite, for people who do not belong to a structured community group.
- Further explore options for a programme aimed at **parents and carers of 0-5 year olds**, continuing discussions with the Millie's Trust family first aid charity.
- **Increase social media following** to more than 1,000 on both Twitter and Facebook.



## 7. And finally...

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**We wanted to conclude this first annual report with a selection of comments from some of those who have visited Safety Central over the last two years.**

“My daughter came home full of all she’d learned and I can honestly say I’ve never seen her so interested by a school visit!”

“The experience was faultless. Every child was engaged and proactive during the day.”

“Sessions pitched at just the right level to challenge and inform our children.”

“I was blown away with the activities and the workshops that the young people experience.”

“Already booked for next year. Very useful to my Year 6 as they become more independent.”

“Very good. Ruby returned home and passed on all the safety education to her brother and sister.”

“Children completed work on it when they returned to school as they wanted to share what they had learned.”

“A fabulous centre. Very interactive and covered so many different elements of safety.”

“Informative and thought-provoking.”

“Staff were very patient and supportive of the children’s learning needs.”

“Staff excellent with children and very accommodating of special needs.”

“Best trip my colleagues and I have been on.”

“Exactly the messages our children need to hear.”

“Fantastic experience. Well-informed rangers, engaging and fun safety messages.”

“Our students had a great experience. They behaved better than I have ever seen.”

“Rangers were amazing and very knowledgeable.”

“Very strong, important messages delivered in an exciting, non-threatening way.”

