Minister launches youth strategy

Fire Minister Angela Smith MP launched the youth strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service during her visit to Northamptonshire late last year.

The four-year strategy, which is supported by four government departments – Communities and Local Government, the Home Office, Health and Education – for the first time makes combating anti-social behaviour and reducing the fire risk faced by vulnerable youngsters a mainstream activity for the Service.

Research has shown that children and young people are particularly vulnerable to death and injury by fire, especially in deprived households. Moreover, fire-related crimes, including arson, hoax calls, attacks on firefighters and associated anti-social behaviour, are disproportionately committed by children and young people, especially disadvantaged young people. It is estimated that around 40% of all deliberate property and vehicle fires are linked to youth crime and disorder.

The Fire and Rescue Service already has a strong track record of youth work and has particular strengths in supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged younger members of society and reducing risks to them and to their communities. The strategy puts existing youth work by the Service on a more formal footing. It provides a framework for engaging actively with children and young people to divert them from fire crime and associated anti-social behaviour and to educate them and their families in fire safety skills and responsible citizenship.

It will be for fire and rescue services to decide the type and extent of youth work appropriate for their area, in accordance with local priorities identified in their integrated risk management plans. In doing so, they will be required to have regard to the strategy and, through the mechanism of the National Framework, it will form the basis of all future performance assessments. The strategy will be underpinned by annual action plans, which will set out the detail of actions to be undertaken by central government and their partners in each year.

The Arson Control Forum will continue to provide support to fire and rescue authorities through its centrally funded good practice programme. This will draw on the emerging good practice from the fire prevention projects it has funded, and the guidance will be available to all fire and rescue authorities. The Forum has already published guidance on youth intervention and youth diversion work, which is available on its website at www.arsoncontrolforum.gov.uk.

Funding for youth work is already available through the Fire Prevention Grants, which are designed to support the fire prevention work being carried out by fire and rescue authorities, including work with children and young people.
In October, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service mobilised their high volume pump (HVP) module to a live incident for the first time, to fight a major fire at Hull docks. *FRS* explains how the emergency developed.

The incident began on the morning of Sunday 22 October, with a deep-seated fire in some 250 tonnes of wood chip and waste timber at the Queen Elizabeth Dock in Hull. Six fire appliances responded to the fire, within 20 minutes of the first call, at 8.04am.

At first, the scene of the incident appeared to be an isolated piece of ground with very few peripheral problems. It soon became clear that a number of issues could arise if prompt action was not taken.

**Chemical works**

The fire at the dock was adjacent to the BP Saltend chemical works tank farm. To add to the problem, the tanks nearest to the fire contained naphtha — a highly flammable material. As a precaution, the BP fire team set up a number of monitors around the tank farm, to protect them until the fire could be contained.

**Laying the hose**

Laying 2km of hose along the docks could bring with it a number of problems, so it was fortunate that the incident took place over the weekend, when traffic levels were low. Although the prime movers and water support unit were used to lay most of the hose, there were a number of points where the hose had to be sited manually. Close multi-agency and local industry consultation ensured that disruption was kept to a minimum.
At one point a small tunnel had to be dug to lay the 150mm hose underneath rail tracks.

Environmental issues
In addition to the problems of the neighbouring tank farm, Area Manager Tony Grayson was faced with several environmental issues. The first concern was about the large plume of smoke. Predictions for the plume were requested from the Met Office in Exeter. The health authority carried out a smoke and risk analysis to consider the impact on nearby housing if the wind should change direction.

As well as balancing environmental concerns in relation to the smoke plume and run-off water, Tony Grayson found that the fire was very close to a nature reserve, home to a number of protected species. English Nature was consulted about the incident and asked if they wished to attend and carry out any damage limitation work at the scene.

Fighting the fire
Mechanical shovels from an adjacent storage company were used to move as much of the mulch product as possible before it caught fire. Owing to the speed and strength of the wind, this initiative was not as successful as it could have been. The fire was successfully brought under control at 11.47pm on Sunday evening.

Associated British Ports, the owners of the site, accepted responsibility for the scene and additional security staff were despatched to monitor the remains of the fire. It was anticipated that the mulch would smoulder for some days after the fire and rescue service had left the scene. In fact, fire appliances made regular visits to the site during the following week to keep the fire site damped down.

HVP in action
This was the first time that the HVP module had been mobilised to a real incident in Humberside. As well as proving its worth in fighting the fire, it also gave the Humberside FRS an opportunity to confirm their mobilising and welfare procedures, in readiness for future incidents. At its peak, there were 53 Humberside FRS personnel in attendance at the fire. Without the HVP this number would have been much higher.

HVP equipment, supplied by Communities and Local Government’s New Dimension Programme, also played a key role in tackling the fire at the Buncefield fuel depot in Hemel Hempstead December 2005.
First ever FIRED UP! course produces seven graduates

Seven young men from Ashington are all FIRED UP! after successfully completing a challenging nine-week course.

FIRED UP! was the first course of its kind ever to be run by Northumberland County Council’s Fire and Rescue Service, with the emphasis on developing firefighting techniques and improving life skills.

Aimed at 16–25 year olds who were not in education, training or full-time employment and funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, FIRED UP! was created to help build confidence and motivation, enabling the young people who took part to reach their goals, especially in the field of future employment.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Alex Bennett congratulated the FIRED UP! graduates and presented them with a Portfolio of Achievement at a special graduation ceremony held at Fire HQ in Morpeth. Each of the graduates also had the chance to demonstrate their ladder and hose skills during a special display. DCFO Bennett said: “FIRED UP! was a challenging course and each of the young graduates should be very proud of their achievement. They have developed their teamwork skills, their self-discipline and their community awareness, plus they have gained a recognised firefighting qualification too.”

Chris Prior, Northumberland FRS’s lead instructor for the course, added: “FIRED UP! focused on techniques like hose and ladder drills, but it was also about more than just firefighting. Through the support of partners including Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, Northumberland College, Wansbeck Council for Voluntary Service and Wansbeck Healthy Living Centre the youngsters were also encouraged to develop life skills. They took part in special sessions including safe driving and first aid, how to write a CV, job searching and interview techniques.”

For more information on FIRED UP please contact Deborah Brown, Senior Education Officer, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Community Safety Academy: 01670 534 666.

London fireboat plays key role in Thames exercise

London Fire Brigade’s fireboat has taken part in a major search and rescue exercise on the River Thames.

Operation Palm Tree was directed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and, in addition to the London Fire Brigade, involved RNLI lifeboats, an RAF Sea King helicopter, London Ambulance Service, police boats, local authorities, the Passenger Boat Association and the Port of London Authority.

The exercise, which took place in Chelsea Harbour on Wednesday 1 November, involved the evacuation of a passenger vessel and the rescue of a number of casualties from the water.

The fireboat attended the crash site and, along with Police Marine Support and the RNLI, rescued 25 casualties who had left the sinking vessel and jumped into the river. The emergency services were then given 30 minutes to evacuate the remaining casualties – played by army personnel – from the boat and to land them at sites nominated by the police.

As well as the fireboat, the Brigade deployed fire appliances from Chelsea Fire Station to Albert and Chelsea Bridge to spot people in the water.

London Fire Brigade’s Assistant Commissioner for Service Delivery, Ron Dobson, said: “A

Lambeth River Station Manager Darren Munro added: “Testing the way we work and communicate with other search and rescue agencies, as well as testing our shore-to-river communications in a realistic environment, was a valuable exercise.”

For more information please contact Darren Munro, Station Manager, Lambeth River Station: 020 7587 4545.
**Multi-media fire safety messages for pharmacy customers**

A new, modern chemist is helping to keep its customers safe from fire by working with Cleveland Fire Brigade to promote fire safety messages.

Photo: Cleveland FRS

The chemist is working in partnership with the Brigade.

Pharmacy 365 on the High Street in Stockton, which is open 365 days a year, is going to be running a DVD on its widescreen televisions promoting fire safety messages, giving helpful tips and offering free Home Fire Safety Checks. To encourage the take-up of fire visits, the pharmacy is also looking to place Home Fire Safety Check request forms in the medicine bags staff hand out with prescriptions over the counter as well as deliver to people's homes.

The chemist is working in partnership with the Brigade after being approached by Shelly Walker and Pav Rehman from the Brigade's Community Education Department to see if they would assist in promoting the checks to help keep their customers safe from fire.

Home Fire Safety Checks are free and involve local firefighters visiting a home to check for any possible fire hazards, as well as to help make an escape plan in case of a fire and fit smoke alarms where necessary, which is also a free service.

The official opening of the joint initiative took place on Monday 27 November at 2pm, in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade. The Mayor of Stockton, Councillor Susan Fletcher, attended.

Older Persons’ Fire Safety Advocate Shelly Walker said: “Working with people who engage with the local community daily is vital, as it helps us reach people that otherwise we may not.

“It is so important to be proactive where fire is concerned and remove any risks that could start one. We have already had over 160 requests for checks through the pharmacy over the past six weeks, which is fantastic but is only the start.”

BME Fire Safety Advocate Pav Rehman said: “Pharmacy 365 is the first of its kind in the North East to open 365 days a year. It provides a wide range of services, which will bring the customers in who will hopefully be encouraged to have a Home Fire Safety Check through the information that is going to be continuously displayed on the DVD presentation.

“The pharmacy also has yellow boxes provided by the Fire Brigade in which customers can post their Home Fire Safety Check request forms. They also put blank request forms in with medicine bags.”

Councillor Suzanne Fletcher, Mayor of Stockton, said: “I am always happy to welcome initiatives to make people aware of fire safety in the home. I had a check done by the Fire Brigade recently myself. It didn’t take long, and they had a lot of useful advice to give, so I hope that people will take part.”

Owner of the pharmacy, Mr Daud Hafiz, said: “We are delighted to engage in a partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade which will help make our customers safer from fire. We hope we can encourage people to take up the free home fire safety checks when they come in to use our many services.”

For more information please contact Shelly Walker or Pav Rehman on 01429 872 311.

**Coming to a screen near you... anti-social behaviour**

**Anti-social behaviour problems faced by the fire service are being tackled through a new hard-hitting film being delivered to schools across Merseyside.**

*Street Heat*, produced by Colin McKeown (*Brookside, Liverpool One, Liam, Nice Guy Eddie*) and directed by Lynne Pearson (*Coronation Street*), deals with the tragic consequences of arson, attacks on firefighters and hoax calls.

The action-packed 20-minute-long film is based on real-life incidents that have faced firefighters, not just in Merseyside but across the country. It will be used alongside an education pack that will encourage pupils to debate social issues raised in the film and help them understand the consequences of anti-social behaviour.

The film took 12 months to produce and was filmed on location in Garston and at Allerton Community Fire Station. It stars Suzanne Collins (*Brookside*) and Terry O’Neill (*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, 51st State, Entrapment and Dragonheart*); Jon Griffiths, Steve Atkinson and Owen Watson from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service; and also local young people. The nine young actors involved in *Street Heat* were referred by Connexions and Merseyside Police and none had any acting experience. It offered them a fantastic opportunity to take part in drama workshops with Lynne Pearson and then go on to make a film that will be shown to thousands of young people.

“This is unlike anything we have ever done before,” said Chief Fire Officer Tony McGuirk from Merseyside FRS. “It is a powerful, hard-hitting drama but it conveys an extremely important message. Firefighters have a tough enough job without having to contend with the unacceptable behaviour of a small minority.”

Pupils will be shown the DVD and supported through the education pack by firefighters and police officers who are working in secondary schools throughout the county.

If you want more information about *Street Heat*, please contact the Youth Engagement Department at Merseyside FRS on 0151 296 4000.
Fire Gateway allows online public access to FRSs

For the first time, people all over the country can now go online to contact their local fire and rescue service and submit requests across a number of community safety activities.

The Fire Gateway (www.fire.gov.uk) is the national web portal for English fire and rescue services, and initially went live last May.

In November 2006, following the connection of individual services to the Fire Gateway, new functions were added to the site, providing the public with easy access to their local FRS and enabling them to make requests for services online.

These new functions allow the public to submit online requests for community visits, including free home safety visits, visits to schools, community events and firesetter advice.

In addition, the existing Fire Safety Order form has been enhanced to enable premises’ operators to submit the results of their compliance self-assessment to the local FRS, complementing and informing FRS business premises risk assessment strategies.

Where appropriate, premises’ operators can now also use the Fire Gateway to create explosives registrations and petroleum licence applications and submit them directly to their local FRS.

The Fire Gateway, developed by the e-fire project, was originally conceived by CFOA. Communities and Local Government and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority have worked with colleagues from across the FRS to deliver the approved objectives within budget.

As well as providing communities with a nationally consistent means of online access to FRSs, the Fire Gateway has established a secure network connection between all the fire services in England, which can now be used for a variety of purposes, including the secure sharing of information.

Further developments of the Fire Gateway are already being discussed within the fire and rescue community to take advantage of the potential that exists within the site’s design and infrastructure.

Following the public launch of the site at the LGA Fire Conference in March, case studies to highlight best practice are being developed in liaison with local FRSS.

Contact: Neil Thompson on 020 7944 4400 ext. 17574, or email neil.thompson@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Contribute your views on the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

Communities and Local Government has set up an online discussion forum for anyone with an interest in the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework to contribute their ideas and suggestions for the 2008 Framework.

The National Framework is a statutory guidance document that sets out the Department’s expectations for the Fire and Rescue Service. The Fire and Rescue Services Act puts a duty on the Secretary of State to maintain an up-to-date National Framework that sets out the priorities and objectives for the Service and to consult on any revisions to this Framework.

The Fire and Rescue Service has made significant progress towards modernisation since the National Framework was devised and we believe that the next Framework’s style, structure and format should be refreshed. We want to get these changes right and the opinions of the FRS are vital to make sure that the document has the right focus and is user-friendly.

With this in mind, the Department has set up an online discussion forum. We would welcome your views on the strengths and weaknesses of the current Framework and how we could look to improve the next Framework. This is an informal discussion site, aimed at giving the widest possible number of people the opportunity to comment without formally representing the views of their organisations. This is not the formal consultation on the National Framework, which will take place in 2007, but is aimed at getting informal views from the Service of the changes people would like to see.

The National Framework team will participate in the discussion forum where relevant and will respond to questions on a daily basis. The discussion forum will provisionally run until the New Year, but we are keen for it to remain open as long as it proves useful. We will consider all responses posted on the forum and will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the development of the Framework.

To access the forum, please click on http://forum.communities.gov.uk/forum/frsframework. The site will then prompt you to register before posting your comments.
Cornwall’s award-winning HayleSafe scheme

In October 2004, two dedicated firefighters started working in partnership with other agencies and the community to improve the quality of life in Hayle and the surrounding area.

However, Cornwall County Fire Brigade’s integrated risk management plan for 2003/04 identified an innovative alternative: a project that could prevent fires and hopefully make the area a zero tolerance fire zone. The project was entitled ‘HayleSafe’.

Firefighters Steve Benney and John Navin were seconded to the project.

Their aim was to visit every domestic and business property, giving community safety advice and creating a strong visual presence.

Working with the police, they have reduced arson and anti-social behaviour, have visited 5,869 homes, fitting 1,815 smoke alarms, and have received 24 referrals for specialist alarms.

They regularly engage with their service users and, working with the community, Steve and John identified a number of initiatives that could help deliver their vision. These projects included a major anti-bullying initiative – the Safe Street, Safe School project. This project is a partnership between Cornwall County Fire Brigade, the police, Cornwall Youth Service and Anti-Bullying in Cornwall.

The aims of the Safe Street, Safe School project are to:
- reduce incidents of violent crime committed by young people against young people, which can be intrinsically linked to bullying; and
- reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour committed by young people in the community.

Three ‘flaming sports challenges’ have been hosted by the HayleSafe team in partnership with the police. The innovative aim of the ‘flaming sports challenge’ is to create and sustain a positive relationship between the emergency services and young children.


The aim of the day was to show the effects of crime, demonstrate how the law is there to protect and to punish, and dispel myths of imprisonment.

Working in partnership with the local police and council, they have organised community action days. These include the removal of vehicles and rubbish and the promotion of securing buildings and storing potential arson targets correctly.

The Think Before You Park project informs residents about parking sensibly so that emergency vehicles can pass.

The HayleSafe project is the only scheme of its kind operating in Cornwall. However, the project has been so successful that parts of it have been rolled out across the rest of the county. This year the HayleSafe project won the Local/Community-based Partnership Award. Judges praised the scheme for “putting a very local and human face to public service organisations”.

For more information please contact Colin Hatch: 01872 323 770.

East Sussex fire fatalities

Two long-serving members of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service lost their lives while attending an incident on 3 December.

Geoffrey Wicker and Brian Wembridge, two fire service personnel from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, lost their lives while attending the incident at a fireworks depot in Ringmer, near Lewes, on 3 December. Twelve other people were injured: nine firefighters, a police officer and two members of the public.

Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Angela Smith said: “I fully recognise the contribution that the fire and rescue services make to our communities and the situations they face on a daily basis. I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal sadness at this tragic event. At this time my thoughts are with the families, friends and colleagues of those who died, and with those who were injured. To all of them I extend my heartfelt sympathy. Once the investigations have been completed, I will make a further statement to the House.”

Information on a memorial fund and an online book of condolence can be found on the East Sussex FRS website (www.esfrs.org).
A stakeholder says...

‘Until recently, Halton in Cheshire suffered more cases of hoax calls and arson committed by young people than anywhere else in the county.’ Ruby Dixon, Head of Programmes, Beacons and Services at the IDeA

Until recently, Halton in Cheshire suffered more cases of hoax calls and arson committed by young people than anywhere else in the county. But that’s all changed following an imaginative and daring initiative from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, with the support of the IDeA.

The new Fire and Rescue Service Act, which came into force two years ago, requires fire and rescue services to tackle community fire safety issues – a big change from the traditional role of the firefighter. But Cheshire FRS faced up to the challenges in the Act and on the streets and, working with the IDeA, became the only one of its kind to win Beacon status for its community cohesion work. The focus of Cheshire’s cohesion work centred on tackling anti-social behaviour among the young, but simultaneously building positive relationships within and across vulnerable communities, and addressing gaps in self-esteem, basic literacy and numeracy, and life skills.

The FRS’s Halton project was a natural extension of its Beacons work with the IDeA. When it started, the FRS was already running a number of community engagement activities, including a long-term Prince’s Trust programme, but the Cheshire FRS needed to find out what worked, what didn’t, and what the impact of the projects was on promoting equalities and good community relations.

The IDeA brokered partnership development workshops with representatives from the police, the youth service, housing associations, the council and the children’s strategic partnership. The IDeA succeeded in improving each organisation’s understanding of the prevention and development work the others carried out with young people. Sharing experiences and agreeing goals helped identify the types of common youth anti-social behaviour and solutions that worked, as well as forging an ongoing and lasting partnership strategy. The recent Local Government White Paper included a section on community cohesion, so the project’s lasting legacy to fire and local government is that its toolkit, ‘Evaluating cohesion outcomes’, demonstrates that basic cohesion indicators can be built into any service or corporate performance framework.

Ruby Dixon, Head of Programmes, Beacons and Services at the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)

For more information, please go to the website: www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk

The role maps – what’s missing?

“The standards aren’t real standards because they don’t tell you how to do anything.”

This is a comment we sometimes hear – is there any truth in it?

Let’s look at breathing apparatus (BA).

Firefighters sometimes have to search for someone trapped inside a building that’s on fire or that has collapsed. One of the most important pieces of equipment is their BA. The standards within IPDS were written by firefighters, so it’s not surprising that the standards state that firefighters have to be able to:

- use equipment (BA) within its limitations and capabilities;
- conduct a search to locate people involved in incidents; and
- know their roles and responsibilities within the Incident Command System (ICS).

The standards in IPDS don’t tell you how to use your BA set, how to search or how the ICS works. Why not?

Well, there are quite a few different BA manufacturers and they each have technical standards within their operating manuals. To include these technical standards in our role maps would mean including all of their different operating manuals, and every time they changed them we’d have to change our standards. The same goes for search procedures and the ICS. The “how to” for these is already written in the fire and rescue service manuals and your own FRS operational procedures documents.

The firefighters who helped develop IPDS decided that it’s best for the role maps only to detail the outcome (i.e. use equipment (BA) within its limitations and capabilities) and leave the “how to” or technical standards where they are. So it’s true. There is something missing from the role maps – technical standards. But it’s not by accident, it’s by design.

Find out who sets our standards – visit www.ipds.co.uk


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