



1. Changes since the last version

Version: 3.0

Information Asset Owner: Head of Protection, Assurance and Development

Author: Head of Protection, Assurance and Development

Approval: Fire Authority

Date: 06 December 2023

- This strategy Document supersedes version 2.0, the previous Protection Strategy 2018 – 2023 and is intended to cover the remaining period of the current Public Safety Plan 2020-25. This updated Strategy provides clarity on Protection objectives, with a focus on intelligence led targeting of risk through a risk-based interventions programme.

Please note that as Service Documents are frequently updated, if you print a document, its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Always check the intranet for the latest version.



Introduction

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) is responsible for enforcing fire safety legislation in most premises in Buckinghamshire other than single private dwellings. Our role is to ensure that those responsible for the premises, maintain appropriate and compliant fire safety standards.

Our protection staff meet our regulatory duties as detailed in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 predominantly through the following activities:

- Responding to statutory building and licencing consultations
- Planned audits of high risk commercial and residential premises
- Re-active audits addressing complaints, post fire incidents and unwanted fire signals
- Providing advice and where necessary enforcement notices
- Prosecution of the most serious offenders

Key objectives for the period 2023-25

- Ensure protection activity is aligned to the Service Delivery priorities outlined in the Public Safety Plan 2020-25
- Ensure the Service is prepared and able to deliver against its legislative responsibilities in respect of protection requirements
- Make provision for adequate resource by means of qualified staff proportionate to identified risk
- Ensure that resource is appropriately directed by way of an evidence driven risk-based interventions programme
- Engage in Primary Authority Scheme partnerships
- Make provision for a suitable and supportive programme of business engagement through use of Protection grant funding
- Ensure our protection staff are appropriately qualified to deliver the above objectives
- Ensure our protection activities and interventions are suitably quality assured and evaluated

Our Priorities as described in the Public Safety Plan 2020-25

“Our priorities are always to prevent incidents that cause harm from happening and to render humanitarian services. We will do all we can to protect homes, public buildings and businesses from the effects of fire.”

“Our duty is also to ensure that wherever required, we provide a timely and proportionate emergency response to incidents, ensuring we are there to save life, mitigate damage and help safeguard our environment.”

“To achieve these priorities, we will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable risks within our area, from across a spectrum of local and national influences, and give our employees the tools they need to succeed in ensuring



these risks are assessed and managed in the most effective, efficient and safest way.”

“We will align and integrate our Prevention, Protection and Response strategies, ensuring they complement each other towards achieving our vision.”

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a focus on the Protection, Assurance and Development Directorate’s priorities for Protection over the next two years in line with the above objectives and priorities. This will ensure that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service deliver the most effective activities to the risks and challenges set out in the Authority’s Public Safety Plan.

Legislative Requirements

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) discharges all its functions under a backdrop of some key pieces of legislation. This legislation establishes the duties and obligations to provide an effective and efficient fire and rescue service. Those listed below are the primary ones pertaining to fire safety (protection):

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

This is the core legislation for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs), establishing the legal powers and responsibilities of a fire authority. The Secretary of State prepares the Fire and Rescue National Framework under Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to establish a set of key priorities, objectives and direction for fire authorities to follow.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO)

Every enforcing authority must enforce the provisions of this Order and any regulations made under it in relation to premises for which it is the enforcing authority’.

The Fire Safety Act 2021

The Fire Safety Act 2021 amends the existing Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It provides additional areas which the responsible person/duty holder for multi-occupied residential buildings must consider when managing and reducing risk of fire within their premises.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

These Regulations have been introduced following on from the recommendations of the Phase 1 Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The Regulations impose additional measures on the responsible person for multi-occupied residential buildings.

The Building Safety Act 2022



The Act provides for a new regulator (the Building Safety Regulator [BSR]) to be established under the Health and Safety Executive. The aim of the regulator is to secure the safety of people in and around buildings with respect to the risk arising from them and to improve the standards of buildings.

Protection resources

It was recognised post Grenfell that the built environment posed a greater and more complex risk to communities than was previously understood to be the case. The Fire Authority has been prudent during the term of the Public Safety Plan 2020-25 in enhancing the resourcing of the protection establishment. The Service's full complement to conduct its protection activities is:

- 1 x Group Commander overseeing the protection function
- 4 x Station Commander managing protection staff and PAS (one of which is a level 5 fire engineer)
- 1 x Enforcement and Training Officer
- 3 x Watch Commander fire safety inspecting officers (level 4)
- 1 x PAS officer (also a level 5 fire engineer)
- 9 x non operational fire safety inspecting officers (level 4)
- 2 x non operational fire safety advisors (level 3)
- 4 x business engagement apprentices (subject to recruitment process)

The delivery of effective regulation depends on the competency of the professionals who carry out the work and BFRS is committed to complying with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Competency Framework for Business Safety Regulators. This Framework takes cognisance of and includes all of the essential elements within the 'Common Approach to Competency for Regulators' produced by the Better Regulation Delivery Office.

In addition to our qualified inspecting officers, BFRS has provided a level of fire safety training to our operational staff. Not only does this enhance the frontline crews' understanding of how to respond to incidents in the built environment, but it also builds a stronger relationship with our protection teams. The crews can signpost fire safety concerns to qualified protection officers and in some cases provide advice and make the necessary interventions with commercial premise owners.

Risk Based Intervention Programme

Whilst this strategy focusses predominantly on Protection activity, BFRS recognise the importance of integrated risk-based interventions across the Prevention, Protection and Response functions to ensure effective community outcomes.



BFRS has adequate provision of qualified protection staff, proportionate to the risks the Service have identified (see appendix 1). However, unless activity is triaged and focussed, demand will outweigh available resource. For this reason, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service will take a risk-based approach to all of its protection activity, underpinned with intelligence led data sets. This approach will identify a 'live' list of premises on which the Service can programme its risk-based intervention activity. The data identifies the highest risk commercial and residential premises which will be subject to a three yearly audit programme. These same data sets will inform other fire safety activity such as consultations, complaints, unwanted fire signals and post fire audits, which will also be prioritised on the same risk-based approach.

Broadly speaking, the focus of activity will apply to premises where there is identified to be a risk to life, premises with historically poor compliance and premises with a greater risk of high economic, social value and historic value loss.

The Statutory Regulators' Code is a central part of the Government's 'Better Regulation Agenda'. Its aim is to embed a risk-based, proportionate and targeted approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement among regulators and seeks to ensure that the enforcement of regulation does not unnecessarily inhibit economic progress. In support of the Regulators' Code, BFRS follows the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) for its audits. The EMM is a logical system that provides enforcers with a framework for making fair and consistent enforcement decisions.

BFRS aims to work with those who wish to engage with it and comply with the RRO; however, it will take enforcement action under the RRO where compliance or a willingness to comply is not demonstrated.

Primary Authority Scheme

BFRS can support a consistent approach to fire safety legislation and support business through the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS). PAS is a statutory scheme providing a means for businesses to receive assured and tailored advice on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact where businesses have a presence in more than one local authority area.

Primary Authority is based on legal partnerships between businesses and individual local authorities. Businesses can set up their own partnership or belong to a trade association (or other type of group) with an existing partnership.

A business can enter a legal partnership with a single local authority to secure greater coordination of regulatory and enforcement activities. It applies to a range of regulations, including the Fire Safety Order.



The advantages to business include:

- consistency of interpretation of Fire Safety regulations
- better intelligence
- advice and guidance
- access to specialist advice about Fire Safety

This in turn saves time and money whilst also ensuring compliance and supports economic growth and business continuity.

The advantages to BFRS include: more productive relationships with business, wider input into the safety agenda, quicker enforcement actions and enhancement of compliance across the relevant industries.

BFRS currently have 14 active PAS partners.

Business Engagement

The commercial landscape across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes is constantly changing and the types of businesses are varied.

The overarching aim of its business engagement is to make communities safer, healthier and more prosperous environments for the public, businesses and their employees across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. BFRS will achieve this by promoting best practice across business sectors, provide advice and guidance to businesses on fire safety, arson prevention and sprinkler systems, in addition to our work on Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) and Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS).

BFRS promotes and encourages the use of Automatic Suppression Systems when working with businesses and premises occupiers while carrying out consultations.

In order to continue to do this valuable work, but not to the detriment of the risk-based interventions, the Service will employ additional staff making valuable use of the protection grant funding.

Assuring and Evaluating our Activities

BFRS are committed to ensuring the quality of the Services we deliver and understanding the impacts of our interventions. Our quality assurance and evaluation framework (in draft) identifies how we will periodically assess the range of activities undertaken by our staff to ensure competency and consistency. Additionally, we will evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions through regular review of the risk-based programme, taking account the correlation between audits and enforcement outcomes. Furthermore, we will develop a customer satisfaction survey for businesses which we have engaged through our activities.

Consultation/Publication/Communication



Development of this strategy is supported by engagement with:

The Protection Team

Joint Consultation Forum – October 2023

Business Transformation Board – November 2023

Following approval at the Fire Authority, the strategy is published on the BFRS Document Management System with an externally facing version published on the Bucks Fire website.

Appendix items

1) Equality Impact Assessment

**2) Guidance Document for Risk Based Intervention
Methodology**