



**Kent** Fire &  
Rescue Service

## **Kent Fire and Rescue Service: putting NIM in the community**

**An insight into KFRS's new community safety strategy  
by Arson Reduction Manager, David Wales**

Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) has recently adopted a new 3 year Community Safety strategy. A name change from Community Fire Safety to Community Safety (CS) reflects the wider role played by the FRS, but the main focus is to implement a new business model capable of supporting the next stage of our development and to enhance our ability to work with others.

KFRS was one of the pioneers of CS within the Fire and Rescue Service and has been very successful to date, achieving considerable reductions in incidents and being only one of two Fire and Rescue Services to achieve 'excellent' status in the first round of Comprehensive Performance assessments.

We recognised however that it would be difficult to maintain that sort of momentum and ongoing risk reduction by continuing with existing processes and data sets. Additionally, the demand for our services is greatly increasing which, whilst welcome, also presents some managerial challenges to ensure that we use them to their greatest effect. Our ambition is to ensure that we are able to directly, or in partnership, tackle the root causes of issues by means of a range of appropriate services aimed at securing sustainable outcomes. This means that we need to better understand the nature of risk in our communities and put evidence led data at the heart of our decision making processes.

We have benefited from a good data collection system but this has typically been for performance management and not as a means to understand the root causes and inter-relationship of community activity. Many partner agencies have traditionally seen fires as outside of their direct interest or influence. However some of our work has already been able to evidence the clear and direct links between fires and other community incidents or trends.

Those vulnerable to accidental fires may well also be vulnerable in other areas of their life, and those likely to commit deliberate fires will also engage in other ASB or criminal activity. Some of the areas we are currently looking at include links to domestic violence/other abuse, fires in properties associated with planning issues and information to better understand the specific factors that put people at high risk from fires.

The key point is that by improving our understanding of the nature of risk in the county we will be better able to target our services and offer enhanced support and resources where the risk is greatest. To this end we have developed a risk/resource model to ensure that our services at each level are appropriate to the nature of the risk.

Through our work with Kent Police we have long been aware of the value of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) which they pioneered. With their invaluable support we have been able to transfer the principles to our strategy and ensure that it provides a common platform for future working with a range of agencies.

NIM offers improved clarity to the business model and underpinning information needs with a focus on what is ahead and not what we have done. We are now working to ensure that we provide timely accurate data based on end user needs (whether strategic or tactical). To this end we have spent considerable time working with CDRPs to improve the format and content of our data input. As a result we are increasingly able to present simple, clear and relevant up to date information understood in the context of other activities and issues within a community.

We have often been asked what will our CS services look like once the model has been fully implemented. In truth we don't fully know yet because the NIM approach is already changing the questions we ask and in turn the data we use. The addition of more predictive/scanning data will also change our understanding of the issues. All these will help to achieve identification of the most effective solution to secure sustainable outcomes and who is best placed to deliver it.

We are prepared to trust the findings of our analysis and research and let them determine what services we need to provide in the future. We expect some surprises and will look in innovative and radical ways to design new services (or update existing ones) where a need has been identified. We also expect to have to regularly review our services to ensure they remain relevant and reflect current trends/needs.

Other measures within the strategy will ensure improved awareness and ease of access to our services. Partnerships will be pro-actively sought following research to establish those best placed to reach the identified target audience or issue and deliver the required outcome. Personnel will be able to access an 'organisational memory' which will allow for the quick sharing of information on schemes already adopted and their critical success(or failure) factors to allow for improved selection of appropriate solutions.

All of the above will require an investment to adapt ways of working and where relevant the use new IS solutions but will ensure that we are able to provide a service continuing the success we have achieved to date and providing a rewarding and desirable working environment for personnel. Partners will notice continuing improvements in our ability to link in with them and find mutually beneficial and timely interventions.

Head of Community Safety Stuart Skilton said "We have set ourselves a challenging task within this strategy but are confident that it is the right route. It will ensure we offer services that are effective, efficient and fit for purpose. For many agencies the contribution that a Fire and Rescue Service can make is not fully realised. Conversely we in the Fire and Rescue Service have to be prepared to change what we offer to partners and the community to meet their needs and not just ours. This strategy will put us on course to achieve that".