Our quarterly Fire Authority Briefing Notes give us the opportunity to look back over the last three months and celebrate the hard work of our command area. It covers our priorities of response, prevention and protection focussing on how we help people have safer, healthier lives and how we tackle emergencies assertively, effectively and safely.

This quarter has predominantly been directed towards providing safe, effective and assertive firefighting when and where required – but most importantly aligning our services to support those vulnerable members of our communities who really need us and benefit significantly from the interventions we make, during a number of key regional campaigns over the winter.

We measure our effectiveness on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), of which we attempt to reduce through many proactive events. We also provide assurance of our effectiveness through ensuring our firefighters meet a range of national competencies – supporting both value for money and achieving a service that is recognised as one of the best in the country.

Some areas of our KPIs in the Black Country South command area are in exception to the targets we aspire to meet.

- Injuries in Accidental Dwelling Fires
- Deliberate Derelict Fires
- And False Alarm Equipment

These areas will provide increased focus for our teams moving into the next period as we aim to reduce any injuries sustained in fire related incidents through advice and delivery of; Safe & Well visits, continue to work side by side with our emergency partners and key agencies to identify derelict premises, working collaboratively to ensure they are secure from anti-social behaviour, progressing towards repurposing, or demolition. Both our dedicated fire safety teams and operational crews engage closely to build outcomes to businesses and non-domestic premises to reduce the number of unwanted fire calls.

We continue to provide our resources to where people are at risk and need us most through our 5-minute attendance time - this remains at the heart of our commitment to the communities of Sandwell and Dudley.
West Midlands Fire Service is committed to an average risk-based attendance time of 5 minutes. We know through academic studies on survivability that if we can get to someone within 5 minutes the chances of them surviving a significant incident increases.

Throughout October to December we have consistently over performed against our average risk-based attendance time, with the brigade average being 4 minutes and 46 seconds; which is really great news.

West Midlands Fire Service is the only Fire & Rescue Service out of all Fire and Rescue Services inspected by HMICFRS to receive outstanding for the response element of the service.

Our response priorities focus on dealing excellently with emergency incidents:

- through risk management, the most serious emergency incidents in high-risk areas will be attended within five minutes, to save life, protect homes and businesses, and keep our transport networks moving
- risk to life and property will be reduced through our commitment to operational excellence, enabling an assertive, effective and safe emergency response to all incidents whilst supporting firefighter safety
- at all incidents attended, rescue operations will be led and coordinated by WMFS whilst working collaboratively with other agencies to deliver an excellent response and meet public expectations
- National Resilience will be enhanced through delivery of a local, national and international response to major incidents, new risks and humanitarian situations through our specialist response teams.

Fire Control are the resource managers for both Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and receive all the emergency 999 calls for both services.

Between October and December 2019, Fire Control received a total of 15,336 emergency 999 calls; 69% of these calls were attributed to West Midlands Fire Service and 31% attributed to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Fire Control mobilised to 51% of these incidents with the other 49% being challenged as not requiring a resource or deemed a non-emergency.

A key performance measure within Fire Control is the speed in which they mobilise a fire engine to a serious incident e.g. a house fire; impressively throughout October to December 2019, Fire Controls average time to mobilise to a house fire was 54 seconds.

Fire Control apply dynamic intelligence led mobilisation which provides the control operators the autonomy to mobilise the appropriate number and type of resources to the incident based on the intelligence they receive from members of the public at the point of call. During this quarter, Fire Control have either increased or decreased mobilisations on approximately 600 occasions.
Crews from West Bromwich and Oldbury fire stations attended a serious RTC on the M6 thankfully the occupants were extremely lucky and walked away, with only minor injuries. A safety message was communicated on social media around driving in wet conditions.

Brierley Hill crews attended an incident involving a tumble dryer in October. The incident highlighted the importance of checking and recall notices that may relate to your white goods at home, as well as ensuring you never leave a dryer alone, unattended for long periods of time.

At the request from RSPCA we freed an entangled pigeon from a household aerial. The pigeon was treated by RSPCA officer but appeared unharmened.

RTC involving 1 car & 1 Heavy goods vehicle Cornwall road Smethwick, assertive decision making gave the driver of the car every chance (rapid extraction). Feedback from ambulance staff was that it was the right decision made by crews on scene.

Small industrial unit fire in Halesowen. Four appliances from across the command attended and managed to stop fire spread beyond the area where the fire started.
West Midlands Fire Service are committed to undertaking 104 large exercises every year, these exercises test our response and procedures to a variety of complex incidents in some of our high risk premises.

Crews across BCS attending Oldbury fire house for hot fire training, maintaining their competencies in breathing apparatus. This took form of tactical ventilation assessments which is a core skill to be prepared and trained for these type of conditions.

Oldbury and Stourbridge crews working together to complete their standardised assessment for Working at Height to maintain their competencies along with learning core skills with breathing apparatus utilising our 13.5 metre ladder for access.

Dudley crews developing their new trainee firefighter with the necessary skills with the use of Holmatro hydraulic cutting equipment.

Blue and Orange watch Dudley and Brierley Hill undertaking a simulation chemical incident, training is key to our response ensuring safe and assertive incident management across our communities.
Our prevention work focuses on reducing people’s vulnerability to the type of emergencies to which we respond.

Our firefighters carry out thousands of ‘Safe and Well’ visits every year, and our crews give advice on health and wellbeing where it will reduce the risk of a fire. This means vulnerable people are safer in their own homes and we can get them extra help if they need it.

We also provide fire safety education in hundreds of schools and colleges and at our interactive ‘Safeside’ learning centres in Handsworth and Eastside, as well as at public events and through our popular Fire Cadets programme.

Our prevention priorities focus on making safer, healthier communities:

- the number of people killed or seriously injured by fire related incidents will reduce as we focus, with our partners, on reducing the risks faced by the most vulnerable people in our communities
- the safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities will improve by targeting ‘radical prevention’ interventions that are directly linked to vulnerability from fire
- arson-related incidents will fall, supporting safer and stronger communities, as a result of our partnership working
- fewer people will be killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads and we will keep our transport networks moving, as we work with the West Midlands Combined Authority and other organisations to develop and deliver interventions that support the West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy.

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YEMINI COMMUNITY CENTRE

A morning visit to a local Yemini community centre. The aim was to target the most vulnerable people in the communities we serve with our prevention work. With help from everyone in the room we were able to assist everyone with fire safety advice in 4 languages.

WINTER SAFETY CAMPAIGN

A number of our stations across the Black Country South promoting key safety messages through November and December supporting our winter safety campaign. Crews attended the Christmas light switch on at Sedgley to offer advice, hand out leaflets and hopefully generate a few Safe and Well visits. All recorded on social media.

SANDWELL SAFER 6

As part of the Black Country South Winter Campaign, Teams from Fire Stations across the command set up and ran a campaign with local Business to support the most vulnerable members of the community. The campaign involved collecting and distributing food parcels to vulnerable families utilising established partnership connections. Pictured above is Louise Sullivan from Sainsbury’s in Oldbury with Firefighters from Oldbury who are collecting a Food Hamper that was donated, as well as Firefighters from Haden Cross supported by Natwest promoting our campaign. As part of the partnerships Safe and Well visits for the recipients of the food parcels were conducted by crews.
Our protection work focuses on helping businesses to thrive, making the West Midlands stronger.

We assess high-risk buildings including residential high-rises to ensure public safety and provide reassurance about the risks of fire.

We also advise companies how best to comply with fire safety legislation, to keep staff and customers safe.

If fire does strike, we help them to get back up and running as soon as possible. As a large organisation ourselves, we know the importance of business continuity.

Our protection priorities focus on protecting life and property to make businesses stronger and communities safer:

- Life and property will be protected by targeting high-risk buildings and vulnerable businesses, including residential high-rises, to ensure compliance and enforcement of fire safety legislation.
- Improved community safety through innovative and contemporary approaches to the delivery of protection activities and working cohesively with partners at local, regional and national levels to influence the development of new and enabling legislation.
- Prosperity and economic growth are enhanced by educating and supporting businesses, including collaboration with other regulators and partner agencies.
- Disruption to businesses, communities and West Midlands Fire Service caused by unwanted fire signals from fire alarms will be reduced.

BCS PROTECTION UPDATE

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TRAVIS PERKINS WEST BROMWICH

The Travis Perkins site in West Bromwich has been a common area for rough sleepers to gather. But the premises is an old fragile void building, that’s put these people at risk. Joint visits between fire safety, Travis Perkins representatives and local council have taken place. This has resulted in better security for the site, a great understanding for the council to the needs of the people that inhabited.
PEREZ RAGS LIMITED

Great example of how our Safe & Strong visits are making a difference to the community. Smethwick fire station blue watch attended Perez rags limited for a Safe & Strong and identified some areas for improvement. We subsequently linked in with our Fire Safety SPOC Wendy Westwood and Steve Richards who attended and have successfully given invaluable advice to the owner. Recommendations included a new fire exit, horns, flashlights and clearer pathways within the building to allow staff to exit safely.

This is a clear demonstration of how effective operational crews and fire safety are when working together to ensure our community and staff are as safe as possible. A visit will be completed in 2 weeks' time to ensure the work is completed to the required standard.

CAMBERLEY HOUSE

Camberley house is a complex high rise building within West Bromwich station area. It is also unique, as it's the only one of its kind within the West Midlands area, in terms of layout. Meetings have been held with OLPD/BA department, and fire safety. We are joint working with landlords and internal departments to provide the best fire safety advice and protection to the people at the premise as possible.

FSO Westwood arranged a joint visit to Camberley, Beaconview Rd, West Bromwich a 14-storey block of flats for fire safety officers and operational crews from West Bromwich and Smethwick. We were all in attendance for over two hours along with a Director from the Right to Manage Company for the block.

Crews found that the white key box was very difficult to open due to its position so this will now be moved to make access easier. The FF plan in the box in the foyer was found to be out of date so operational crews who attended are now working to produce a new plan. It may be possible to replicate the layout of the flats in the high rise building at Dudley which may assist in deciding the new plan.

A permanently open vent is now going to be installed on the 14th floor in the staircase to provide ventilation - currently there is no way of ventilating the single staircase.

West Bromwich fire station are going to arrange a few more visits to the block to do safe and well visits for any of the residents. Due to language barriers I have asked Private Sector Housing if they could provide a member of their staff who can speak Eastern European languages to assist and they have agreed to this.

FSO Westwood arranged with G4S to inspect all of the HMO’s in the West Cross Centre. Areas of work are fire doors, window restrictors, panels above bedroom doors, bathroom window emergency escape, open plan stairs, evaluating risk for people with disabilities.
SMETHWICK

Work continuing with partners reference Waggon and Horses, Smethwick. Sandwell Building Control to obtain warrant. Possible building in dangerous condition. Only opens match days.

Joint visits carried out throughout the quarter with advice or FSM return visits.

CMT and Vtex Smethwick both audits carried out as a result of a fire in the building opposite, reduced to FSM revisit with a view to enforcement if work is not carried out.

BRIERLEY HILL

Joint visit Silver End fish bar, Brierley Hill has received enforcement notice.

KINGSWINFORD

Larch House, potential ACM cladding. stay put policy, request for construction of cladding made, FRA and policy review to be carried out by Neil Butterworth Design Fire Consultants.

RUSSELS HALL HOSPITAL

Plan to address safety matters for North Block Russells Hall Hospital agreed with a 3-year plan to bring the building back to standard.

STOURBRIDGE

Further work with the Talbot Hotel who had an extension granted on 12month enforcement notice, taking Darren and Martin approx. 2 days’ work. Doors RAG rated for completion. Heritage considerations.

LOOK FORWARD

Safe and Strong visits form a significant benefit to business owners and advice from our trained crews directly links to a reduction of fires in commercial premises – supporting economic growth.

Our teams will shortly receive further training enabling them to provide the best possible service to owners and responsible persons - building confidence in the ever expansive services we provide.

We are also pleased to be supporting a national approach to reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. We aim to provide evidence to support local authority actions through intervention activities and accurate reporting. Which are aimed at making improvements to awareness and leading to safer choices made by the road users of Sandwell and Dudley.