



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Service Leadership Team</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>4i</b>
	<b>Performance and Resources Board</b>		11
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>9 March 2021</b>		
	<b>31 March 2021</b>		
<b>Report Author:</b>	Assistant Director, Prevention and Protection		
<b>Presented By:</b>	Director of Operations		
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Impact of Covid 19 on prevention and protection visits by Operational crews</b>		
<b>Type of Report:</b>	Information		

Linked to P&R Action Point 104 (Minutes 25/1/21)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper sets out the impact of Covid 19 on prevention and protection visits by operational crews. This paper is for information only and no decision is required by SLT.

## BACKGROUND

Covid 19 struck the UK in March 2020 with catastrophic effects that have continued to this day. This virus has impacted on a wider range of activities that would have been deemed business as usual prior to March 2020. The contents of this paper can also be found in the performance reports the service has produced during this time and will be further explored in the annual performance report. This paper seeks to summarise the activity that has taken place during this time and identify the impact of Covid on our delivery for both prevention and protection.

### Prevention

The table below shows the number of Home Safety Visits that took place between 1<sup>st</sup> March and the 31<sup>st</sup> December for the years 2019 and 2020.

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITS
2019	6612
2020	3703

We have had a drop in visits by a total of 2909 this was due largely to the pandemic however we did continue to target the most vulnerable and high risk.

- In the initial response to Covid we paused activities whilst we were able to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk. Safe and Officers resumed completing Safe and Well visits on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April.

- Visits resumed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April for those who were most at risk of fire (Gold category referrals). For everybody else, Safe and Well Officers could provide advice over the phone, and smoke alarms for self-fit.
- In September 2020, the Home Safety Team widened the number of people the team could visit to include individuals who were at higher risk of fire (Silver category referrals) in addition to Gold category referrals. In practice, many drop-offs during summer months had been upgraded to 'Gold category' by Safe and Well Officers on the doorstep, in recognition of the reality of their situation when face to face, and obvious inability of the individual to fit their own alarms.
- The number of referrals has steadily increased since April 2020. Referral numbers fluctuate in line with government advice, but generally the public and our partners appear to have become more confident in operating with the virus present in Essex through summer months.
- Due to the way the Home Safety Team prioritised the individuals, the Operational crews were not required to visit premises and provide advice. We were able to provide this advice over the telephone.

### **Protection**

The table below shows the number of audits that took place between 1<sup>st</sup> March and the 31<sup>st</sup> December for the years 2019 and 2020.

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF AUDITS
2019	719
2020	2058

We have had a significant increase in Audits during the pandemic this has been largely due to the introduction of a desktop audit process. During the period in 2020 we carried out 278 full audits and 1780 Desktop audits. This was largely carried out by our specialist officers within the protection department. Due to Covid restrictions operational crews were unable to physically visit sites. The specialist teams visit the Very High and High risk premises and the approach we have taken has mitigated the risk to our teams whilst continuing to inspect those premises most at risk.

### **OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS**

This paper shows that despite the restrictions placed on us by the Covid Pandemic we were able to continue to mitigate the risk to our public and communities we serve and in fact Protection numbers increased during the period. The work that was carried out in prevention enhanced our triage process and ensured that our resources went to those most at need.

### **BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

The benefits of the approach we have taken ensured that despite limited use of operational crews during the pandemic our response has been proportionate and ensured we have been able to deliver a good service to the public and continue to meet our statutory requirements.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None with this paper.

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

All activity carried out by Prevention and Protection during this time has been subject to our usual equality impact assessments. This was furthered strengthened by the robust triage we instigated in prevention and the introduction of a new risk based inspection programme in Protection.

## **WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT**

All Protection and Prevention staff have been engaged throughout this process.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The processes and activities we put in place ensured that we were still able to meet all our statutory requirements under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and the Fire and Rescue Services Act.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

All activity was subject to a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk and the decision to pause activity upon the initial announcement of a national lockdown facilitated this key activity.