



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council



Making a difference

How fire and rescue services supported communities during the COVID-19 pandemic

National Fire Chiefs Council | July 2021



Front cover: West Midlands Fire Service | Above:Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service

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1. Foreword

I am delighted to share Making a difference with you. It is a celebration of the incredible efforts fire and rescue services have made to help our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic was unlike anything else we have experienced and asked us to work in different ways, drawing on our strengths to help everyone in our communities get through and ultimately emerge from this challenging period.

It would be fair to say that fire and rescue services don't work in isolation and have a strong tradition of collaborating with other organisations in all areas of our work. We stepped up and built on what we do best.

Making a difference tells the story of how the fire and rescue services throughout the UK worked with partners to prevent the spread and limit the impact of the virus.

We asked fire and rescue services to offer their own vignettes and we could have filled hundreds of pages with what they told us. What you read here is simply a taster of what was going on across the country throughout 2020 and the first half of 2021.

The real stories of endeavour, compassion and selflessness can only be fully appreciated when you sit with the people who have gone way beyond our expectations, they explain in a very matter of fact way what they did and why. The personal, touching stories are truly inspirational – genuinely life changing.

While we publish this in the summer of 2021, we know that there is still plenty of partnership working going on as the vaccination programme continues.

The story is not over. For now, I am proud to shine a spotlight on some of what has been done and to provide a reminder of how important it is to pause, reflect and say a huge thank you to all our staff who adapted and really made a difference.

CFO Phil Garrigan
Vice-Chair National Fire Chiefs Council
National Fire Gold Covid 19
July 2021

“The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic put a level of stress on the ambulance service that has never been seen before. We could not have got through this without the help of our partners, and I cannot thank the fire and rescue service enough for stepping up and offering to help us in our hour of need. The level of professionalism, flexibility and willingness to do whatever was required meant that ambulance services across the country could operate even when demand was at its peak. I read these stories with great pleasure because I recognise them all and thank everyone involved.”

Daren Mochrie, Chair Association of Ambulance Chief Executives

“I’m very proud of the community centred support from fire personnel during the pandemic. They adapted to local need and volunteered to make a difference for their communities, using a nationally agreed framework to deliver local priorities. The sector demonstrated its ‘can do’ attitude and rose to the challenge, thank you.”

Councillor Nick Chard, Chair of the employers’ side of the NJC

“It comes as no surprise to me to see so many examples of fire and rescue services working with organisations at a local level to bolster community responses to COVID-19. I am proud that staff in all areas of fire and rescue services were able to contribute in so many ways.

I am equally proud of the role undertaken by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the leadership role it has played across the UK. The way we have worked with all government departments, particularly the Home Office and our partners to meet the challenges head on has been incredible. There is no doubt in my mind that the collective actions of fire and rescue services, led nationally by the NFCC, have contributed to the saving of many lives.”

Mark Hardingham, Chair National Fire Chiefs Council

2. Introduction

The stories are organised under broad headings and roughly follow a chronological flow, starting with early responses to help partners support the vulnerable, most isolated in their communities through to the vaccination roll-out that continues to this day.

Fire and rescue services provided supporting quotes from their partners and the beneficiaries of their interventions to give an insight into what difference they made. In conjunction with the photographs, they provide a snapshot of the strength of community response to COVID-19.



North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

3. Helping vulnerable people

Home visits

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council

There were 24,500 names on the shielding list held by North Yorkshire County Council. We were asked to help with contacting people to find out what they needed in terms of food, medication and essential support.

Our friendly teams, made up of operational staff and community safety officers, took the time to check on people's well-being and talked about home fire safety. Some of these conversations also resulted in referrals for safe and well visits. We had already contacted the 3,000 households that had received a visit from us in the last three years.

There were a couple of standout calls for us, one being an elderly lady who had an accident in her home, which had caused a fracture. She was reluctant to seek help and was suffering in silence. One of our fire stations made contact with the lady, identified the issue through a friendly discussion and got her the help she needed.

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service made over 5,000 calls to the public during this period, which meant they could get the help they needed during a time of national crisis and isolation.

"I would like to extend my thanks to North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service for their involvement. The dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved in this Team North Yorkshire effort has been outstanding and is very much appreciated"

Gary Fielding, NYCC Director for Strategic Resource

Delivering supplies

Fire and rescue staff made 230,000 deliveries of essential items to vulnerable people in the community.¹

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with four Cheshire local authorities, Community Pharmacy Cheshire and Wirral Partnership (NHS)

We were proud to be able to support the community pharmacy services by delivering prescription medicines to shielding residents across Cheshire and helping the four Cheshire local authorities to support vulnerable people in the community.



Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

Our fire prevention staff picked up prescription medicines from pharmacies and delivered them directly to households. Using a single point of contact in our service, we were able to liaise effectively with all our partners to ensure timely delivery across our community.

By the end of July 2020, we had helped with over 8,000 medicine deliveries to shielding or vulnerable households across Cheshire.

"Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's response in terms of supporting the Council's People Helping People scheme has been a godsend. I genuinely don't know how we would have managed to cope with the demands of triage in Crewe without your support. The prescription delivery service has complemented our volunteer support and provided it with an element of sustainability"

Joe Cosby, Community Development Officer, Cheshire East Council

Providing food for the elderly

Fire and rescue staff packed/repacked 47,000 boxes of food supplies for vulnerable people.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with Age UK

Early in the pandemic, we helped our Age UK partners by delivering hot meals directly to older people across the county seven days a week. We trained our volunteers to signpost people to other services as necessary, and to report any safeguarding concerns by using our own reporting channels or contacting Age UK direct.

More than 140 members of our staff volunteered to help Age UK across Kent. We provided over 12,000 hours of support, delivering over 35,000 meals during this difficult time.

We have also worked with Age UK staff to understand what to look for when thinking about fire safety in the home.

"Kent Fire and Rescue Service have been excellent partners in supporting Age UK in Kent delivering our service to shielding and vulnerable people."

Chloe Smith, Age UK Ashford



Kent Fire and Rescue Service

4. Supporting health care providers

Distribution

Fire and rescue staff made 17 million deliveries of personal protective equipment.

London Fire Brigade

- in partnership with the NHS

We transformed a former distribution centre in south London into the Operation Seacole distribution hub, where we were able to deliver masks, gloves and eye protection to 33 local authorities and partners, including the Metropolitan Police Service and Transport for London.

Receiving orders for PPE from health care settings, care homes, doctors' surgeries and mortuaries, we were able to process and distribute equipment across London to frontline health and social care workers using our own vehicles.

"By helping to deliver the most vital equipment to London's frontline workers in this pandemic, we not only protect key workers by allowing them to continue to deliver their critical work, but no doubt we are helping to save lives."

Eleanor Kelly, Deputy Chair of London's Strategic Coordination Group

Face mask fitting

Fire and rescue staff fitted 10,000 face masks for frontline health workers.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with North West Ambulance Service

We were asked by the Chief Nurse for North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to help meet the demand for face fit testing for FFP3 masks for frontline health staff, including NWAS staff, and those in care settings. The limited testing capability was directly impacting frontline care. We immediately purchased additional equipment to help meet the demand and sought to supplement our own testers with volunteers.

NWAS trainers delivered a bespoke training plan to 25 volunteers from our service. These volunteers were then qualified to not only test, but also to train others in face fit testing. We then extended the approach across the North West through training hubs ensuring accessibility across the region.

One of our station managers has co-ordinated all the requests for face fit testing and we have tested over 800 people since April 2020.



Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

"We appreciate the professionalism of our colleagues from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service who assisted with the face fit training; it is a testament to all those involved in the Merseyside COVID-19 response that we are able to work so effectively as one team"

Daren Mochrie, CEO, North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust



Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service

Assisting ICU patients

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with four local NHS Trusts

In January 2021 we answered a call for assistance to provide vital support for our NHS colleagues who were fighting COVID-19 on the frontline.

We deployed 27 of our firefighters to work alongside doctors and nurses in intensive care units across our region, working long and demanding shifts in four of the south's biggest hospitals.

Their role during the four-month secondment was to help prone patients; this is a vital technique used in the treatment of COVID-19 that involves turning patients onto their front to relieve pressure on vital organs and assist breathing.

Our firefighters completed more than 400 shifts between them, receiving praise from NHS colleagues for providing invaluable assistance during a very busy time and bringing a much-needed morale boost to hospital staff and patients.

Looking after our own people's welfare while they cared for others was vital, so all those taking part were supported with physical and mental health screening assessments and they received vaccinations and regular COVID-19 tests.

"The Critical Care team and wider Trust were incredibly grateful for the enthusiasm and dedication of the firefighters who volunteered to work with us and our patients. They brought a real boost to our staff and helped support them with a wide range of tasks."

Cate Leighton, Divisional Director of Clinical Professions, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust

5. Assisting the coroner

London Fire Brigade

- in partnership with the London Ambulance Service and Metropolitan Police Service

In the early part of the pandemic, we worked with our partners to establish new units called Pandemic Multi-Agency Response Teams (PMART). The aim of PMART was to ensure a safe response to COVID-19 deaths in the community, at home, in a care home or hospice and to help reduce demand on the London Ambulance Service, enabling them to prioritise emergency cases.

One hundred London firefighters volunteered and were trained to be part of PMART.

Each PMART comprised four volunteers from the London Fire Brigade, the Metropolitan Police Service and the London Ambulance Service. They took on a wide range of roles, including preparing the deceased to be collected by an undertaker, assisting families to make funeral arrangements, death registration and providing families with much needed support at a very difficult time in their lives.

“Working with our partners across the capital has been, and will continue to be, an absolutely crucial part of responding to the coronavirus pandemic and this is another example of incredible support and collaboration from our emergency services and NHS colleagues.”

Dr Fenella Wrigley, Chief Medical Officer, London Ambulance Service

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with Luton Borough Council and Bedford Hospital

We responded to a request from the Mortality Pathway Coordination Group for assistance to set up and crew a temporary mortuary at RAF Henlow.

There was substantial pressure on the two hospitals in Bedfordshire, as well as the local funeral directors, and we were able to offer some relief by providing personnel to oversee the temporary facility.

Three of our staff were on site every day to ensure that the mortuary was safe and accessible for those taking care of funeral arrangements.

“I would like to thank Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service for your assistance over the last few weeks. We would certainly not have been able to activate the facility without your assistance at very short notice; the speed in which you made things happen was extremely impressive. The professionalism, care, respect and dignity every member of your staff showed to the deceased in our care, can only be commended.”

Tony Green, Luton Borough Council

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with HM Coroner

Our support for HM Coroner came in two phases. In the first phase we had many volunteers who were willing to undertake mortuary work and body recovery. We made sure that we assessed the mental health of the volunteers before selecting who would be doing this sensitive work. Our 24/7 operation included an administration team, a dedicated phone line, a welfare facility and lease vehicles retrofitted for the task.

The coroner's team provided training, and team leaders were selected based on skill set and job role. The body recovery team operated in pairs, three during the day and one at night. We worked alongside volunteers from Gloucestershire Constabulary. All our volunteers received ongoing welfare support throughout the period.

In the second phase, we re-evaluated our staff and ensured they were ready to undertake the function again. This time, five of our volunteers worked in the mortality cell, on a 9 to 5 Monday to Friday basis. At the end of this phase, our team of volunteers were stood down and we took part in a strategic debrief led by HM Coroner.

By the beginning of June 2021, our volunteers had assisted HM Coroner with 679 deceased casualties.

“During the pandemic, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service supported mortality planning and the excess death response. This included transport of the deceased from community and hospital settings to the temporary storage facility. Staff within the temporary facility supported the police in the day-to-day running of the site and this included body handling responsibilities.”

The staff deployed were a credit to the organisation; this was and should be viewed as a real example of interoperability at work and was replicated again during the second phase of the pandemic.”

Andy Woodward, Joint Operations Team, College of Policing

6. Working with ambulance services

Driver training

Fire and rescue staff completed 18,000 ambulance shifts, providing 121,000 responses to assist the public.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with East of England Ambulance Service Trust

Following a call for help from the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST), our driver training team stepped forward to assist.

EEAST needed support to train new resilience ambulance drivers to ensure they could meet the demands of the pandemic. Our team initially spent three weeks delivering training to staff to ensure we had enough trained, blue light drivers to respond to emergencies, as well as some contingency for resilience.

We trained a range of on-call staff and were joined by a new wholetime firefighter who had previously been a paramedic. His experience was a huge help.

Our team worked closely with the ambulance team, relocating to their base in Peterborough for the next six weeks. In that time, they were able to get more than 500 ambulance drivers from services across our region trained and on the road.



Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Using on-call firefighters

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with East of England Ambulance Service Trust



Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

During Easter 2020, 19 of our on-call firefighters began working as ambulance drivers with the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST). This followed two days of high-intensity training that included blue light ambulance driving practice, equipment familiarisation and first aid.

These on-call firefighters came from stations and communities across Essex and were selected from a group of more than 90 volunteers. They worked on an initial two-month secondment, providing 12-hour shifts.

Within the first two weeks, two of our firefighters helped to deliver babies. Our volunteers attended hundreds of incidents in all weathers, including helping patients suffering cardiac arrests and those critically unwell with COVID-19.

By April 2021, our on-call firefighters had volunteered 7,770 hours of time and crewed more 700 ambulances across the county. One of our volunteers gave more than 2,000 hours of support.

To help create even more capacity for EEAST, two of our driving instructors trained 27 students to become non-emergency ambulance drivers.

"The support firefighters have provided to us has been invaluable and has helped keep our patients, staff, volunteers and the wider public safe during this challenging time."

Marcus Bailey, Chief Operating Officer,
East of England Ambulance Service Trust

Taking a regional approach

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with East Midlands Ambulance Service

We led the regional support for the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) Urgent Care function that involved all six fire and rescue services in the area: Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Humberside and Nottinghamshire.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the regional Chief Fire Officers and the CEO of EMAS held a virtual meeting to establish a regional approach to the provision of fire and rescue service drivers for EMAS's urgent care ambulances. EMAS's urgent care function deals with patients within a 4-hour response time.

Our arrangement was unique, as all our preparations and delivery activity were managed as a region. We were able to provide significant support for EMAS frontline paramedic-crewed ambulances.

Our volunteers covered over 400 shifts and transported nearly 1,500 patients during the year when we supported EMAS.

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

We provided ten firefighters to assist with ambulance driving, until they were no longer required by EMAS. Our volunteers drove urgent care ambulances to alleviate the demand on emergency ambulance drivers.

We seconded our volunteers to work for EMAS for the duration and they became part of the shift programme. By providing drivers for urgent care ambulances, emergency ambulances remained fully staffed.

"Our fire and rescue service colleagues have been absolutely amazing. They've helped us provide services to the most vulnerable patients when they have needed us the most."

Dave Williams, East Midlands Ambulance Service



London Fire Brigade

Ambulance Driver Assist

London Fire Brigade

- in partnership with London Ambulance Service

We set up Operation Braidwood, where over 500 of our staff were involved in the largest deployment of firefighters outside of the London Fire Brigade and the longest sustained operation we have seen since the Second World War.

Our volunteers helped deliver vast amounts of PPE, firefighters drove ambulances to thousands of incidents and staff also delivered food and medicine to vulnerable people.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dave O'Neill was awarded an MBE for his work heading up the Operation Braidwood team. PMART, detailed above, was part of this work.

Over 300 firefighters worked as part of the London Ambulance Service. This has reduced the external pressures on the London Ambulance Service during peak times, freeing up qualified paramedics to attend to patients, as the firefighters acted as drivers and support.

"We continue to be grateful for the support that London Fire Brigade have been giving us since the first peak of the pandemic in the spring of last year. Back in April 2020, we trained over 300 firefighters to support our frontline colleagues, and we're delighted to have some of them, along with some newly trained firefighters, driving trucks for our clinicians who are working harder than they've ever worked in the most challenging of conditions."

Garrett Emmerson, CEO London Ambulance Service

7. Supporting mass testing

Setting up test sites

Fire and rescue staff spent 30,000 hours carrying out 70,000 COVID-19 tests.

County Durham and Darlington

- in partnership with Durham County Council

We worked with Durham County Council to set up six community lateral flow testing sites across County Durham, while the Council recruited permanent staff. One of our officers worked with the Council's lead officer to identify and risk assess venues, train staff, manage resources and ensure appropriate messaging to the public.

Many of our staff worked at the testing sites covering a wide range of roles. Operational and corporate staff volunteered outside of their role and contributed to the successful running of the sites.

The sites operated for eight weeks, during which time over 100 of our staff worked at the sites totalling over 3,500 hours of leadership and support for over 7,000 lateral flow tests

"County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service colleagues were key to helping us establish the first six community testing sites across County Durham. The team were professional, proactive and were excellent partners in this challenging work. I am incredibly grateful for the support the Service has provided to help prevent the spread of COVID-19."

Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health, Durham County Council



County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Testing in hospitals

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with Leighton Hospital and Warrington & Halton Hospital

Since July 2020, our staff have been providing pre-operation COVID-19 swabbing at two of Cheshire's largest hospitals. Our fire prevention staff were given a daily list of addresses for patients who needed to take a PCR test prior to admission for medical procedures. Having delivered the PCR test kit, our staff would wait for the patient to take the test in their own home and hand it over in a securely sealed bag.

The completed swabs were taken for testing at the hospital pathology laboratory. Those patients who tested negative would be allowed to have their planned procedure. So far, we have delivered over 1,300 PCR tests and this work is making a significant contribution to the broader medical agenda across Cheshire, by allowing patients to receive their planned medical procedures and to protect the hospitals, staff and patients from COVID-19 infection.

“This service has been absolutely invaluable to the Trust and ensured that patients have been treated in a timely and safe manner prior to their surgery. Without this offering we would not have been able to support as many patients as we have. Nothing has been too much trouble for the service and the collaboration has worked exceptionally well.”

Paula Bradley, Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

West Midlands Fire Service



Testing in care homes

West Midlands Fire Service
- in partnership with Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group

We worked with colleagues from Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service to provide a ‘drop and collect’ testing service for care homes. During this period of the pandemic, care home residents and staff were prioritised as the most vulnerable group within a health care setting.

We set up a task group with staff from both services to make sure that we had the right risk assessments in place and guidance for our staff. We quickly identified and deployed volunteers to visit care homes across the county.

At a period when many care home residents and staff were feeling at their most vulnerable, we offered support and reassurance that they were safe within the care home setting. This also meant that residents could receive the care and attention they needed during this difficult time.

“The fire and rescue service staff were amazing; we are so thankful that they are helping keep our staff and residents safe by delivering testing kits. We have been waiting for so long to get help and support. We can’t thank the fire crews enough for delivering testing kits to us, we know that we are safe and can look after our residents knowing they are safe too.”

Kalbinder Gill, Manager, Wood Way Lodge care home, Coventry

Testing in schools

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with the Cumbria Director of Public Health

In January 2021, we led, managed and supported a pilot to see how community testing could be achieved across Cumbria. With over 240 volunteers based in 16 secondary schools, we tested thousands of students and teachers after the Christmas break.

Our volunteers carried out a range of tasks, including assessing each school site and devising a site plan that embraced COVID-19 secure building guidance. Our staff, along with others, worked many additional hours over the Christmas and New Year period, sacrificing time with their families to ensure the programme was planned and ready for the benefit of others.

Each test site was led by one of our station managers acting as the ‘officer in charge’ to ensure we complied with national guidance; health, safety and well-being remained at the heart of everything we did.

The pilot was a huge success, testing over 5,000 people during the first few days, continuing when the country was placed into the second lockdown. We identified a significant number of positive asymptomatic COVID-19 cases that resulted in prompt self-isolation to prevent the transmission of the virus in Cumbria.

The pilot’s success contributed to the national policy decision to roll out lateral flow testing across all secondary schools in the country.

“Every member of the Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service team should be proud of their contribution; it has certainly made a positive difference to our communities. Thank you and well done.”

Colin Cox, Director of Public Health, Cumbria



Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

Surge testing

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

When the Beta variant of COVID-19 emerged, one of our local authority partners asked us to provide staff to work alongside public health colleagues to distribute and collect surge testing kits. There was an outbreak in an area of Sefton, so we had to act quickly to set up and administer tests at a time when the local authority was under considerable pressure.

Working on a rota over three weeks, more than 40 of our staff from fire stations, fire prevention and fire protection teams supported surge testing. We worked out that our staff contributed over 500 hours to support this activity.

We received positive feedback from residents who were reassured by the presence of the fire and rescue service within their communities at a time of need, with 89 per cent of tests taken and returned.

“Over several days in wind, rain and snow a dedicated group of Council staff, fire and rescue staff and volunteers have pulled out all the stops to make this operation a reality and I cannot thank each and every one of them enough.”

Margaret Jones, Director of Public Health, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

8. Vaccination

Setting up vaccination centres

Fire and rescue staff spent 187,000 hours administering 383,000 vaccinations.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with Oxford NHS Foundation Trust

Madejski Stadium is the home of Reading Football Club, which during the pandemic was repurposed as a vaccination site. We were asked to work as part of a project team to establish the facility.

During their time at the site, our volunteers offered project management and logistical support, worked on familiarisation and clinical skills inductions for those working on site, as well as assisting with workforce planning, centre risk assessments and identifying stock required to run the centre.

The site, which went live on 22 February 2021, is a major part of the vaccination programme in the Berkshire area. The Madejski site has the capacity to deliver thousands of COVID-19 vaccines each week. By the end of March, the site had administered over 100,000 vaccinations, supporting the biggest mass vaccination programme in the history of the NHS.

“The commitment, teamwork and flexible can-do attitude from the RBFRS team were critical success factors of the project, and we are really grateful the opportunity arose for the RBFRS team to work alongside NHS colleagues to form an integral part of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West vaccination programme.”

**Nicola Leavesley, Deputy Operational Director (COVID-19),
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust**

Providing marshals

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

We wanted to provide support to other partner agencies at the frontline of the public sector response to the pandemic crisis. We were keen to support our community as it would increase the numbers of vaccinations administered and help protect the most vulnerable people, ultimately reducing the spread of the virus and reducing deaths.

Our staff supported the daily logistical challenges of channelling large numbers of the public through the two major vaccination centres in our area. Members of the team provided engagement, discussion, and reassurance to members of the public to effectively process large numbers through the centres.

Volunteering outside of their usual roles, operational and corporate staff contributed to the successful running of the centres. In total over 150 staff worked at the centres providing over 3,700 hours of support.

“I’d like to thank County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service colleagues who have been instrumental in ensuring we have staff on the ground to help us vaccinate our population.”

As we continue to vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, it’s been enormously helpful to have the support and energy of the fire and rescue service to provide that valuable professional and caring manner to people who have come for their vaccines.”

**Professor Neil Watson, Chief Operating Officer,
NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, North East and North Cumbria**



Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

Carrying out vaccinations

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

- in partnership with many NHS Trusts in the North West

As the vaccination programme stepped up across the country in November 2020, we felt we had a lot to offer as an organisation. We asked our staff to volunteer to be vaccinators; we had no set criteria and just wanted our volunteers to complete the training successfully and be willing to help. We ended up with around 50 staff qualified as vaccinators, offering support across all five mass vaccination sites seven days a week.

We have supported the vaccination project since receiving the Pfizer vaccine in early December 2020. At the start of this national programme, we refocused our prevention teams and prioritised staff to work in this vital and time-critical area.

Initially, Lancashire provided logistical support at five primary care sites. Due to the success and effectiveness of the work, we soon managed and supported 28 different sites, not just vaccinating but marshalling, helping with administration and logistics.

This work evolved into the five mass vaccination sites where we supported the NHS in giving 350,000 vaccinations, with our own staff vaccinating 40,000 members of the public. The mass vaccination site programme was a mammoth national task and the collaboration between us and the NHS at these sites ensured Lancashire was at the forefront of this programme.

“I am writing to say a massive thank you for letting some of your staff work with us at Colne Health Centre during the COVID-19 vaccination clinics. Every one of them was brilliant.”

Not only did they help us keep the patients flowing, but they did so with great humour. The patients loved it, and I have received lots of positive comments from staff about how they helped to lift spirits during the clinics.

They really made a big difference and we all appreciated having them work with us.”

Kathryn Phillips, Business Manager, The Pendle Medical Partnership

Fire stations as vaccination centres

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with Solent NHS Trust

When NHS partners asked if Basingstoke Fire Station could be transformed into a vaccination centre, we were very happy to help. Our property and facilities team worked closely with our ICT department and teams from Solent NHS Trust to ensure the station could be adapted to play a pivotal role in fighting COVID-19.

In February, we welcomed the first visitors to Basingstoke's new-look appliance bays and started our programme of vaccination. Our teams worked hard to provide a vaccination service, while continuing to provide a fully operational fire station.

By mid-June, we were proud to reach the incredible milestone of 100,000 vaccinations delivered at Basingstoke Fire Station. We are so thankful to our staff for stepping up, and to be able to work with our partners, making a huge difference to our community.

"The scale of vaccinations happening every day across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is thanks to the hard work and dedication of all the staff and volunteers involved. We are especially grateful to our partners who are offering mutual aid to help us vaccinate as many people as possible."

Dr Dan Baylis, Chief Medical Officer, Solent NHS Trust



Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Encouraging take-up

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- in partnership with Midlands Partnership NHS Trust and Staffordshire County Council

We were really pleased to be able to support the Staffordshire Vaccination Equality Group, by helping with pop-up vaccination clinics.

The Targeted Vaccination Team was set up in May to focus on vulnerable groups and offer wider community help for those who are unable to access the vaccine. Our pop-up clinic is run by a mixture of five or six staff from our service and the Trust. Early on, we visited the Burton Caribbean Association centre, vaccinating 88 people and within two weeks we had vaccinated 116 in total.

Particularly in rural locations, some community members are having difficulties accessing the designated vaccination centres. This outreach programme was part of our solution, to ensure that every community member has equal access.

"We've promised that we won't leave anyone behind during the largest vaccination programme ever undertaken. Some are harder to reach for diverse reasons, such as language spoken or rurality, but we are determined they will not be left behind. The Mobile Vaccination Team and pop-up clinics are excellent examples of how we are achieving this."

**Dr Paddy Hannigan, Clinical Lead,
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Vaccine Programme**

Saying thank you

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

As part of our work to highlight the need to get vaccinated and adhere to the COVID-19 guidance and rules around social distancing and infection prevention control, we worked as part of our Strategic Co-ordinating Group to brand ten of our fire appliances with thank you and information messages (seen here). This was part of our co-ordinated communications campaign with our partners to ensure we reinforced safety messages throughout the pandemic.



Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

9. 'Ready, Willing & Able' - supporting the pandemic

Helping vulnerable people

Cheshire

Assisting local councils to provide food supplies to shielding and vulnerable people.

Organising and distributing Christmas hampers to care homes across the county, lifting the spirits of elderly residents isolated by the pandemic.

Delivering school meals and education resource packs to families to support learning at home.

Supporting Merseyside and Cheshire Blood Banks to deliver vital blood and tissue samples, as well as breast milk donations to those in need.

Derbyshire

Delivering pharmacy supplies to self-isolating members of the community.

Hertfordshire

Participating in the Hertfordshire 'day of action', checking on the well-being of residents who were self-isolating.

Lincolnshire

Visiting residents to carry out welfare checks, asking them how they were, about their access to medication and food, as well as asking about their own fire safety and passing on the COVID-19 helpline number.

London

Working with local supermarkets, fire cadets set up a foodbank for families during October half-term.

Assisting a local community group to unload and repack food, assisting in the sorting hall so that parcels could be sent out to charities and families.

Nottinghamshire

Partnering with local organisations to deliver over 12,000 food parcels and medicines to vulnerable people across the county.

Royal Berkshire

Using data provided by a local borough council, on-call firefighters visited residents who had previously not responded to the council, checking on their welfare and passing on information about how to get further assistance.

Suffolk

Carrying out welfare visits to vulnerable people who were self-isolating in the first phase of the pandemic.

Tyne and Wear

Helping the Salvation Army to receive food supplies at their premises and then assisting in the distribution of much needed food parcels to vulnerable people in the community.

Warwickshire

Working with local health care providers to transport discharged patients from hospitals to their homes and delivering care packages with food and medical supplies.

West Midlands

Supporting a local Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver critical medication to individuals who were receiving end of life care.

West Sussex

Carrying out a range of activities to support the local community, including urgent welfare checks by phone, delivering medical supplies and food parcels and visiting homes to carry out shielding doorstep checks.

Supporting health care providers

Cheshire

Providing volunteers to assist with face mask fitting for ambulance staff, NHS staff, dental care providers and personal care workers.

Distributing over 95,000 items of PPE to social care teams, care providers, schools, other health care settings and undertakers in the community.

Gloucestershire

Transporting PPE and IT equipment to schools, assisting the local authority with changes to street signage and awareness campaigns.

Hereford and Worcester

Collecting bulk supplies of PPE from central locations to NHS hubs in the region.

London

Constructing face masks for NHS staff, making face shields for local hospitals in South London.

Royal Berkshire

Setting up a warehouse to receive and dispatch PPE to partners in the area seven days a week.

Tyne and Wear

Establishing a bulk delivery site at a fire station and using service staff to break the loads down and arrange delivery to those in urgent need of PPE.

Assisting the coroner

Lincolnshire

Organising and co-ordinating the movement of the deceased as well as liaising with councils, funeral directors, and hospital mortuaries.

Merseyside

Providing strategic command for the Death Management group in the region; offering planning, support and assistance for the decision-making process and modelling used by other areas of the country.

Northamptonshire

Offering logistics and resource management to assist in the transport of the deceased to temporary mortuary facilities.

South Wales

Deploying volunteers to assist at temporary mortuaries.

Working with ambulance services

Avon

Training on-call and wholtime firefighters to drive frontline ambulances, covering over 2,000 shifts.

Devon and Somerset

Crewing five ambulances throughout the pandemic.

Dorset and Wiltshire

Driving for over 2,500 shifts, transferring patients to and from hospital alongside a clinician, acting as first responders for some life-threatening calls.

Royal Berkshire

Crewing ambulances, with one paramedic, one firefighter, boosting capacity for the ambulance service; volunteers were already qualified Emergency Response Drivers and were fully trained in Immediate Emergency Care and manual handling.

Shropshire

Seconding operational on-call staff to support non-emergency patient transfer using fire service vehicles and offering a modified safe and well check at the beginning or end of the journey.

Supporting mass testing

Buckinghamshire

Overseeing the tactical co-ordination and deployment of surge testing in target areas of the county as part of Operation Eagle, a surge testing and contact tracing exercise, to determine if the Delta variant was present in an area.

Cleveland

Setting up a local testing centre staffed jointly by on-call firefighters and local authority employees, to encourage the local rural community to be tested.

Essex

Working with local authorities on Operation Eagle, engaging with residents in 258 homes in one day, collecting 211 tests the following day.

Hertfordshire

Carrying out a lateral flow test 'day of action' by working with public health and local authorities to hand out tests to the public in areas with high footfall and promote regular testing.

Kent

Assisting Public Health England to deliver and collect home testing kits to 10,000 residents over the age of 16 in an area of Maidstone over a period of five days, resulting in a return rate of 85 per cent.

Lancashire

Working alongside the military to set up the first drive-in mass testing site in Preston, setting the model that was replicated across the county and beyond.

Lincolnshire

Liaising with Public Health England to identify areas of the county with limited testing provision, setting up community-based testing sites at three fire stations run mostly by on-call firefighters.

Merseyside

Providing over 40 staff for a period of three weeks, working alongside Public Health England staff to distribute and collect surge testing kits in the Sefton area.

Nottinghamshire

Detaching a team of six staff from different roles to support the roll-out of community testing on a full-time basis, trained by the military and working directly with the council to assist in 20 testing centres and then train other volunteers.

Contributing to surge testing linked to the Delta variant across Nottingham City, with staff training more volunteers in 'drop and collect' procedures for tests as well as delivering over 1,000 PCR tests in the county.

Oxfordshire

Planning and delivering a surge capacity testing capability across the county, establishing community testing stations and supporting this with logistical and command expertise.

Royal Berkshire

Working with staff from the borough council for over eight weeks, to set up easily accessible lateral flow testing sites and then replicate in other areas of the community.

Tyne and Wear

Creating two lateral flow testing pick up sites leading to the distribution of nearly 13,000 lateral flow tests across the community.

Supporting surge testing by deploying firefighters, fire prevention and education staff to targeted postal addresses to deliver 1,300 lateral flow tests in just two days.

Vaccination

Cheshire

Providing 139 members of staff to be trained as vaccinators who have administered over 54,000 vaccinations and counting.

Cleveland

Establishing a tactical support vaccination team for the centres across Cleveland, averaging 160 hours of volunteer support a week, including working as marshals and giving vaccinations.

Cumbria

Providing non-clinical management with marshals to support the daily organisation of the vaccination centres in Kendal and Penrith, helping them to stay open 12 hours a day, 7 days a week since February 2021.

Training 14 staff to become vaccinators to administer over 8,000 vaccines since opening the Penrith Mass Vaccination Centre in March 2021 and continuing to deliver to this day.

Essex

Training 15 volunteers to become vaccinators, undertaking 50 hours of online learning, practical training and assessments, to then commit to do at least one shift a week to support the vaccination centres.

Hertfordshire

Playing a central role in opening the East of England's first COVID-19 vaccination centre in Stevenage, providing logistical support, working with contractors and turning a conference centre into a vaccination hub, the first of eight facilities to be established.

Lincolnshire

Supporting the build-up of vaccination centres across the county, moving equipment, constructing furniture, designing room layout and marking out pedestrian walkways.

Merseyside

Recruiting 200 volunteers jointly trained by St John Ambulance and the NHS to administer vaccines at different vaccination sites across Merseyside, including a vaccination bus that has travelled across low vaccine uptake areas. Staff and volunteers having drawn up/administered over 41,000 vaccinations up until the end of May 2021.

Nottinghamshire

Seconding 24 members of staff to perform vaccinator roles on a full-time basis at seven vaccination sites across the county, with staff expected to administer over 80,000 vaccines by the end of July 2021.

Shropshire

Training 69 members of staff to administer over 17,000 vaccines and counting, as well as providing marshals and logistical support across three mass vaccination centres.

Tyne and Wear

Deploying a team of staff to Newcastle Racecourse to co-ordinate the site and run the facility to vaccinate the local population, spending over 7,000 hours administering 17,000 vaccinations.

Joining Inspire South Tyneside community engagement teams over four days in June to engage with members of the community about the vaccine and understand why they were not able to or were unwilling to have the vaccine.



Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

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NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

The National Fire Chiefs Council was established
and is owned by The Chief Fire Officers Association