

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

Engagement Strategy 2018-22

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Introduction

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to **working together, saving lives and reducing harm**. Our objectives and Strategies focus on home safety, road safety, assisting businesses, responding to emergencies, and protecting the wider community from the impact of major events.

In doing so we have developed this engagement strategy which sets out principles by which we will develop and implement the Service's internal and external engagement and communications over the next four years.

This strategy reflects the Service's internal and external customer promise and corporate priorities. It aims to put customer focus at the core of the Service's interactions. By striving for a better understanding of their priorities and motivations we aim to treat our customers with fairness, respect, providing clear information and guidance to enable them to access our services and to keep themselves safe.

The strategy provides a framework to allow the Service to keep our customers – both internal and external – informed about our work, plans and safety messages. It lays out our plans to seek out and listen to feedback and the opportunities to co-design services. It also outlines the role communication plays in supporting our statutory duty to warn and inform during emergencies. It ensures that everyone that works for us takes responsibility to keep themselves informed and up-to-date on important and relevant issues, and offer feedback and ideas as part of their role

Our definitions:

Communication: sending or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium which helps internal or external customers gain information and clarity. Great employees want to know where the organisation is going and how their contribution plays a role. One of the best ways to keep everyone that works for us headed towards the same goals is to increase the level of communication between senior leaders and our people.

Engagement: We want to go further than imparting good information. We want both internal and external customers to design services they need, and that needs mechanisms which allow for exchange of ideas and challenge. It requires that we take time to understand the needs of different customers and respond accordingly. Lastly it requires that we remain open to changing needs and issues. That requires constant attention to what people are saying, and creating mechanisms which allow for people to feed back to us in a way which meets their needs.

Audiences

Our target audiences are:

Our customers: Including those who have used our services in an emergency; those who we have provided advice or information to; and local taxpayers.

High risk groups:

- High risk vulnerable residents;
- Protected characteristic groups;
- Young people.

Local businesses

News media: National, regional, local and specialist media.

Stakeholders:

- Home Office, Fire Minister, civil servants;
- Elected Members across Kent and Medway including Members of Parliament, Members of Kent County Council, Medway Council, District and Borough Councils in Kent, Parish and Town Councils and the Kent Association of Local Councils;
- Representatives of the voluntary sector in Kent and Medway, and relevant voluntary and community groups;
- Local partners including Kent Police, SECAmb, Public Health teams in Kent County Council and Medway Council;
- Schools and colleges;
- Other fire and rescue services across the UK.

Internal customers:

- KFRS staff;
- KMFRA Members;
- Our volunteers.

External engagement

Our brand and key messages

The KFRS brand promise outlines what the Service aims to do for its customers. It connects the Service's purpose and overall strategy to customers' experience and image of the service it delivers.

There when you need us

Putting customer needs at the heart of what we do. This remains the core message representing the whole range of our work – e.g. our emergency response during or after a fire or RTC, providing support at a medical emergency, or fire safety advice to someone in their home.

Helping keep you, your family and your business safe

Providing our customers with the information and support they need to keep themselves, their family, business and property safe.

Common sense collaboration and value for money

Taking opportunities to demonstrate our common sense collaboration with Kent Police, SECAmb, public health, parishes, etc, and how this enables us all to deliver a more cost-effective, efficient and joined-up service to local people.

Our approach to external customers

We have published a [Customer Promise](#) and an Internal Customer Promise (published on our intranet) that outlines our commitment to our customers and everyone that works for us. We aim to put customer focus at the core of our communications by:

- Seeing things from the customer's perspective, understanding their priorities and motivations so we can develop a more measurable approach to our communications and prevention activity.
- Treating everyone with fairness and respect, and reaching out to all communities with appropriate, accessible information to enable them to access our services and keep themselves safe.
- Communicating in an open, transparent way and being accountable to our local communities.
- Understanding that communication should be a two way process by putting measures in place to encourage meaningful dialogue/feedback that can influence the work of the Service.

We know we need to do more to ensure that our engagement work is better informed and evaluated. Our aim is to develop prevention activities based on audience insight in order to

effectively influence behaviour and ensure meaningful evaluation is built into the planning process.

We have been working with the National Social Marketing Centre (NSMC) to provide independent research to develop a better understanding and insight to review our engagement work, as well as using other published research, e.g. the national “FireKills” campaign, to inform our work.

We have conducted research around home safety visits with key vulnerable groups including older people, young families on low incomes, and young people in rented accommodation. Conducted by the NSMC, this gave us valuable information on these key audiences and led to a review of our approach to home safety visits.

Other research has included a review of our multi-agency road safety initiative “Licence to Kill” (L2K), aimed at young people. This resulted in amendments to the theatre-based programme to ensure that young people leave with clearer messages about the specific behaviours they need to change to keep themselves safe.

We have also undertaken a review of schools education which is currently being implemented.

We regularly do market-testing of campaigns with target audiences.

Future planned research includes a multi-agency review of road safety activity aimed at young people.

Insight from our social marketing research has allowed us to start to tailor safety materials towards specific groups, eg young families and older people.

We have also joined the Institute of Customer Service as a means of getting support to benchmark and develop services against not just the public sector but also the best in class private sector companies.

Accessible communications

Table 1: Accessible Communications and Target Audiences

Target	Objectives and action plan	When	Channels
Community engagement	<p>Increase our outreach and engagement with our diverse communities in order to listen and identify their needs and increase their awareness of the services we offer through new post of Customer Liaison Officer who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuously develop an engagement plan for KFRS with people; Identify and meet community groups, including those from protected characteristic groups, in order to look for engagement opportunities, assess needs, coordinate meetings and activities as needed; Develop an information hub of contacts and insight/intelligence on community groups to assist KFRS staff (including stations and community safety) engagement activities; Provide a coordination point for engagement, promoting the need for evaluation and maintaining a log of activity; Identify training needs within the Service as needed on engagement issues; Identify the most appropriate communications methods for particular audiences. 	From Jan 18	Face-to-face
Recruitment	<p>Targeted social media advertising to promote on-call recruitment and other job opportunities to under-represented groups.</p> <p>Images and language that challenge stereotypes.</p> <p>Facebook live sessions hosted by firefighters representing under-represented groups who can answer questions and demonstrate that KFRS is a good place to work.</p> <p>Engagement with community groups, talks and events.</p> <p>Work with Police and Ambulance on Kent emergency services events.</p> <p>More active involvement in careers events with schools, colleges and job fairs.</p>	Ongoing	Social media Promotion / ads Social media Face-to-face
BME and new to UK communities	<p>Social media is used as a channel to reach diverse communities through advertising targeted at a range of audiences so our customers have an understanding of and equal access to our services.</p> <p>Continue with BME visual adverts re 999 free service.</p> <p>Adapt with translated ads directly linking to leaflets in that language.</p>	Ongoing June 18	Social media

Target	Objectives and action plan	When	Channels
Promotional literature, web, social media	<p>Strive to ensure that the language and images used within our communications promote inclusion.</p> <p>Develop materials more closely targeted at audience lifestyle eg elderly, young families.</p>	Ongoing	All Promotion / ads
Accessibility, language	<p>The website follows internationally set AA accessibility standards.</p> <p>An audio-enablement function allows 'read aloud' facility of text for users with visual impairment http://www.kent.fire-uk.org/hidden/accessibility/ .</p> <p>All pages of the website can be translated into over 70 languages with some of these being able to be in a “read aloud” format.</p> <p>There is a section on the website with safety advice in Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu, Slovak, Lithuanian, Polish and Mandarin. These link to the government’s safety advice leaflets in those language.</p>	Ongoing	Website

Digital communications

Channels of communication have changed dramatically over the last decade, as have customer expectations in how they receive news and information. Social media means that we can reach audiences in new ways and effectively be our own publisher. Though we no longer need to rely on news media as the main channel to reach a mass audience, the need for news media management continues. Fast-moving, 24-hour news means greater demand for content. Social media and citizen journalists provide a constant and immediate feed direct to local and national news desks, and local stories can be picked up quickly by national and even global media.

In this fast-changing environment, this strategy also looks forward at how the Service will continue to evolve in order to stay relevant, to keep up with this changing environment, delivering innovative engaging content.

We have an integrated approach to social marketing and digital communications, and integrate digital methods into marketing and communication campaigns. Examples are the use of targeted social media advertising to reach under-represented groups and the use of Facebook live sessions during our wholetime recruitment campaign in 2017.

We will continue to use social media and social media advertising to reach customers with safety messages and drive them to our website and other digital channels for further information.

Our website www.kent.fire-uk.org is a base for information to support all communications, community safety and news media information. It is also used as the main publishing platform to meet legal obligations under transparency and governance rules.

Emergency and crisis communications

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) includes public awareness, and warning and informing, as two distinct legal duties for first responders (which include fire and rescue services), advising the public of risks before an emergency and maintaining arrangements to warn and keep them informed in the event of an emergency.

We provide these services on a 24/7 basis through an out-of-hours service, with the capacity to deliver an online service during a business continuity event that has affected the Service's IT infrastructure. This will be primarily via the website and social media. It includes management of news media and social media during a major incident, emergency, business continuity event or any other issue that could have an impact on the reputation of the Service.

Table 2: External Customer Engagement and Communications Action Plan

Corporate objective	Action	Timing
<p>Core activities</p> <p>Responding effectively when you need us</p>	<p>Deliver innovative messaging through relevant and engaging content using a range of channels.</p> <p>Crisis communications and reputation management and communications management during emergency incidents, and managing and monitoring news media and social media, including the delivery of our statutory warn and inform duties.</p> <p>News media management including response to news media enquiries, requests for interviews, media training for KFRS managers.</p> <p>Digital communications including managing and development of KFRS website, video, animation and AV production.</p> <p>Managing corporate brand and identity, and design, print and advertising.</p> <p>Horizon-scanning and maintaining a relevant industry-standard of communications through innovation and methodology.</p>	
<p>Responding effectively when you need us</p>	<p>Supporting KFRS to employ and retain more on-call firefighters by implementing an effective recruitment advertising campaign to attract suitable candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, including under-represented groups. Promoting the benefits of the job and breaking down stereotypes of the role.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2018</p>

Corporate objective	Action	Timing
Promoting behaviours which help you stay safe and well in your home	Supporting CS department through campaigns, marketing, design and publicity materials.	Ongoing
Encouraging you to adopt behaviours which keep you safe on the roads	Supporting CS department through campaigns, marketing, design and publicity materials. Supporting the development and marketing of the KFRS Road Safety Experience. Work with partners such as KCC, Medway, Kent Police and Highways England on integrated campaigns.	Ongoing
Supporting businesses to help people stay safe and comply with legislation	Work with the business team to review their communications to businesses including the website, social media and marketing. Safer Living – increasing safety for residents of specialised accommodation. Safer Care – promoting safety in residential care homes.	2018-19
Increasing opportunities for transparency	Promote the KFRS customer promise via our website and other channels. Promote offer to sign up to incident alerts and newsletters from our website to increase opportunities for the public to better understand the scope of the Service. Develop a twice yearly e-update with opportunity for public to sign up via social media and our website. Review and update KFRS website to ensure information is easily accessible. Develop a multi-agency plan to explore opportunities for integrated campaigns and collaboration with Police, SECAMB, public health, parishes, etc, and how this provides value for money and a joined-up service for local people.	2018 2018 2018-19 2018-19

Internal engagement and communications

Our approach to engaging across KFRS

We have a high performing, committed workforce who are focused on achieving the best for our customers. We want everyone that works for us to feel valued, that they have a voice, are well informed and able to be ambassadors for the Service. In particular our approach to workforce engagement is that KFRS welcomes and encourages feedback, ideas, critiques and comments from across the whole workforce. This input has already had a great deal of influence on the organisation in terms of our strategic plans, the equipment we use and our workforce planning and strategy.

However we want to increase opportunities for workforce involvement because the prize is our ability to deliver a better service for the people of Kent and Medway - our customers. Examples of how this is being achieved and encouraged include:

- **Management skills:** Managers are offered training, coaching and support to learn collaboration skills such as listening, checking understanding, challenging unconscious bias, asking open questions, as well as promoting feedback through interactive team meetings and encouraging colleagues to put forward their ideas and issues.
- **Operational Assurance:** Operational Assurance (OA) is about reviewing what we do to improve our operational effectiveness and enhance the service we give to our customers, which is why our own people need to be at the centre of the process.

We want to have a shared understanding within our workforce of how people act in incidents, e.g. how survivors escaped and did they understand the advice they were given. Ensuring the best possible quality of service to our customers means encouraging all staff to take responsibility for identifying learning from operational incidents or projects to help us improve and protect the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone that works for us, and those that work for the sector nationally.

We have well-publicised mechanisms for staff to provide feedback on any aspect of operational incidents, including call-handling, equipment issues, training, policy or procedure. The OA team evaluate all feedback and ensure it is discussed with the appropriate project lead or raised at the appropriate meeting. And feedback is given to those that raised the issue in the first place.

- **“You said – we did” panel:** We are introducing a more formal way of hearing ideas through a quarterly “you said - we did” panel. The panel will be chaired by the Chief Executive with other senior officers, and has union representation and three members of frontline staff. People are invited to attend the panel or take part via webinar.

Anyone can present their ideas to the panel in person or send them via email, audio or video. The panel commits to review all ideas and concerns, and to give clear updates on progress or explanations if the suggestion cannot be taken forward.

- **Forums:** We have online IT forums on a range of areas, e.g. operational issues and IT. We are reviewing these with a view to increasing their use by promoting issues raised through the KFRS staff weekly ebuletin and by encouraging wider use of the forums by managers as a mechanism for staff consultation and engagement.
- **Team and station visits:** Face to face engagement is often cited as the way people that work for us want to receive information and to be engaged with. CMB members and senior managers visit teams and stations regularly and welcome invitations to meet crews and teams. The aim is to encourage an open debate and for any issues of concern to be raised. These are monitored centrally via an action log and any trends are addressed in the most appropriate way, eg via monthly webinars or through the Chief's Update.
- **Involvement in corporate projects or new policy development:** We have a good record of involvement in projects at all levels from station closures to new equipment, sharing data, information and asking for input from colleagues as acknowledged local experts. Project managers are encouraged to involve colleagues at all stages from scoping through the life of the project. This is done in a variety of ways, eg online consultation, station visits, focus groups, user panels and as project team members.
- **Engaging with Accredited Representatives:** We recognise a number of unions and ensure we have regular dialogue with their representatives. We have positive relationships and have worked together to ensure we support people across the organisation through change and individual issues.
- **Staff forum representatives (Green Book):** We have a service support (Green Book) forum with five elected representatives who are tasked to canvass staff views and make them known to management, enabling open and honest dialogue, exchange of views, effective communication and consultation on matters of mutual concern. They meet regularly with management and are a channel to encourage staff consultation on key policy documents.

KFRS approach to staff surveys

Though we do a lot of engagement and consultation on specific topics, we have purposely not done a large-scale staff survey for some time. We believe that these often do not give meaningful benefit to the organisation. As the purpose of feedback is to gather information to help make better decisions, this cannot be best done through unidentified feedback without context.

However we will continue to do topic specific surveys and focus groups that we believe provide information that can have a more direct input into projects and areas of the Service that are being developed.

Table 3: Internal Engagement Channels

Channel	Audience	Frequency	Purpose
Fire Futures operational managers workshops Green Book workshops for all non-operational staff	Operational managers and senior support staff. All Green Book staff.	Quarterly	Providing managers with information direct from CMB that they can cascade down to their staff, as well as being able to give feedback from their teams and debate issues.
Webinars	Monthly managers webinar with CMB. Group webinars on operational issues. Others for training, project updates etc.	Monthly Monthly As needed	Enabling messages to be communicated and demonstrated to a widespread workforce with the ability to have two way conversation.
CMB and senior manager visits to stations	WMs, CMs and FFs.	Monthly	Opportunity for staff to meet the Chief Executive and CMB members and ask questions and give feedback.
“CMB for a day” – “back to the floor”	All + senior managers	2018	Opportunity for staff to get a first-hand view of corporate issues by shadowing CMB and for CMB members to take part in a “back to the floor” at stations.
Operational assurance using a variety of channels including email, forums, focus groups	All	Ongoing	Opportunities for feedback on any aspect of operational incidents, including FRCC, PPE, equipment, training, policy or procedure.
‘You said we did’ panel to consider staff ideas and concerns in person, in writing, and via video	All	Quarterly	Opportunity for staff to put forward ideas or concerns to panel chaired by CE, with CMB, union and accredited representatives.
Face to face managers team meetings	All	Monthly	Cascade of information and opportunity for two-way conversations.
Feedback via intranet	All	Ongoing	“Listen to improve” section on intranet allows people to give feedback on news, policies and proposals.

Channel	Audience	Frequency	Purpose
Intranet online suggestion box	All	Ongoing	People can make suggestions and others can comment.
Staff discussion forums	All	Ongoing	People can make suggestions and others can comment.

Table 4: Internal Communication Channels

Channel	Audience	Frequency	Purpose
Chief Executive's emailed update	Monthly	All staff	An update on current issues direct from the Chief Executive to all staff.
Intranet	24/7	All staff	Facility to sign up to news alerts for topics of interest. Departments have been encouraged to distribute their news items through this rather than all user emails.
Emailed e-bulletin	Weekly	All staff	Pulls together the latest news from the previous week from the intranet into a "quick read" form. Items have brief summaries with the option to click through to read more content.

Focus for 2018-20

- Introduce "you said we did" panel.
- Increase engagement opportunities for all through corporate projects.
- Improve communications with on-call firefighters including trial of corporate update during drill nights.
- Develop intranet home page/one-stop shop specific to on-call firefighters with limited time.
- Work with Operational Services team on rationalising current channels used.
- Work with HR department to promote wellbeing via intranet, posters, other materials.