



HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

21st December 2022

REPORT TITLE:	FIRE, HEALTH AND DEPRIVATION
REPORT OF:	MARK THOMAS, DIRECTOR OF PREVENTION MFRS

REPORT SUMMARY

The Vision of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) is *'To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK. One team, putting its communities first.'*

Our staff are recognised for their ability to lead - saving, protecting, and improving lives - helping those who need us. We are driven to transform the lives of our communities and our corporate ambition is to tackle the inequality that puts our most vulnerable at risk. The Service Organises to Protect, Prevent and Respond. In relation to Prevention, the Service commits to undertake 60,000 home safety visits every year – 9,000 of these visits are delivered in Wirral.

This report is constructed in relation to Prevention activities, through which, MFRS will contribute towards:

- Reducing the number of fatalities, serious injuries, and Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF).
- Identifying, targeting, and visiting the most at risk community members through information sharing agreements, direct partner referrals and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data.
- Ensuring through quality assurance, we will deliver professional, high quality and effective interventions to the communities in Merseyside.
- Raising awareness of the importance of having working smoke alarms installed and fire safety education through targeted HFSC visits.
- Providing improved health and well-being for community members in Merseyside through Safe and Well interventions.
- Developing and sustaining a highly skilled, effective, and competent workforce.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the contents of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

This briefing is for the information of Board members only, to enable Board members to understand the strategy adopted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to identify how the Service reaches those most vulnerable from fire. To demonstrate the clear link between Fire and deprivation. To highlight the need for joint working in targeting those in our society who are most vulnerable and to request support of the Board in this respect.

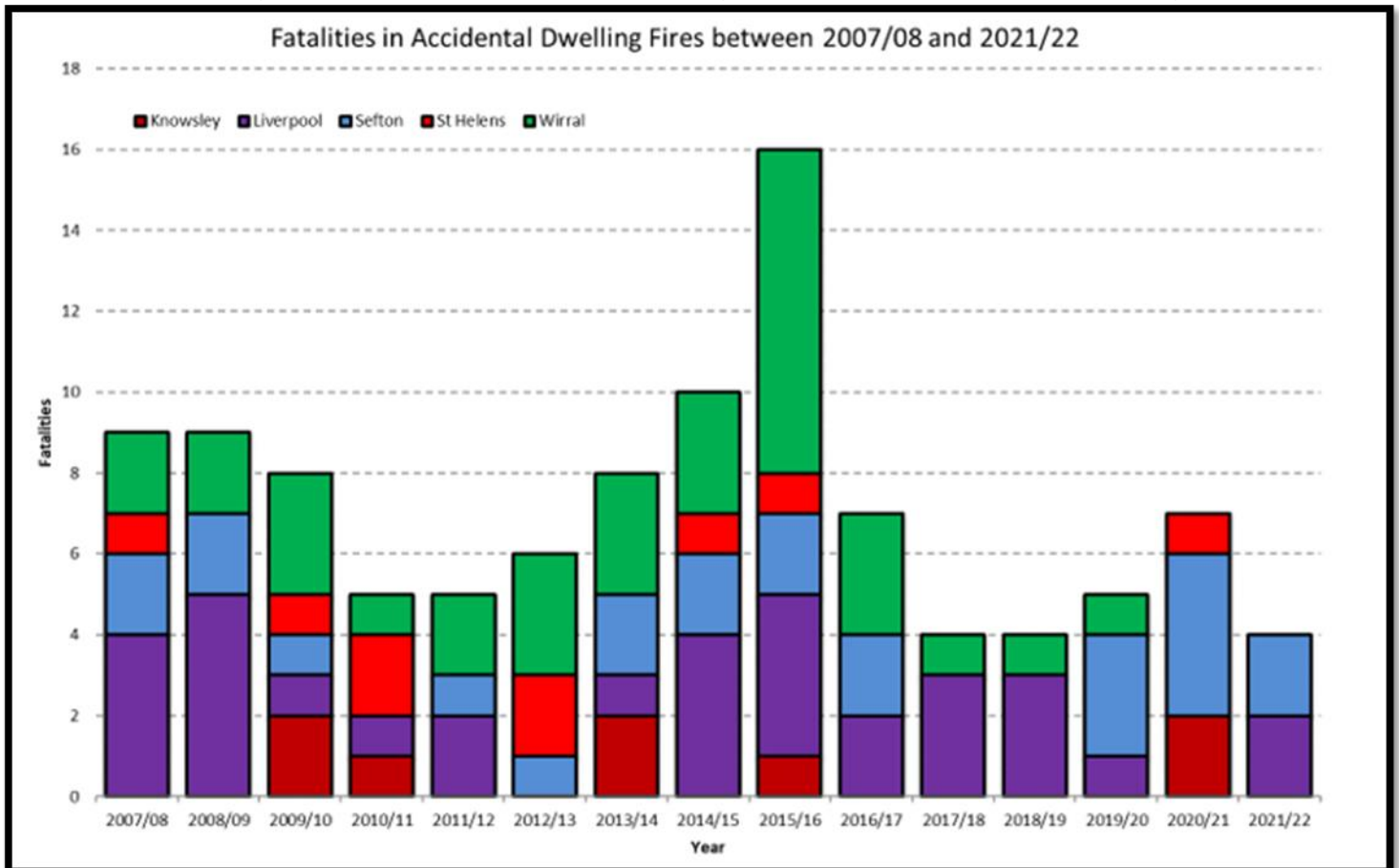
2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The report is for information and no other options had been considered.

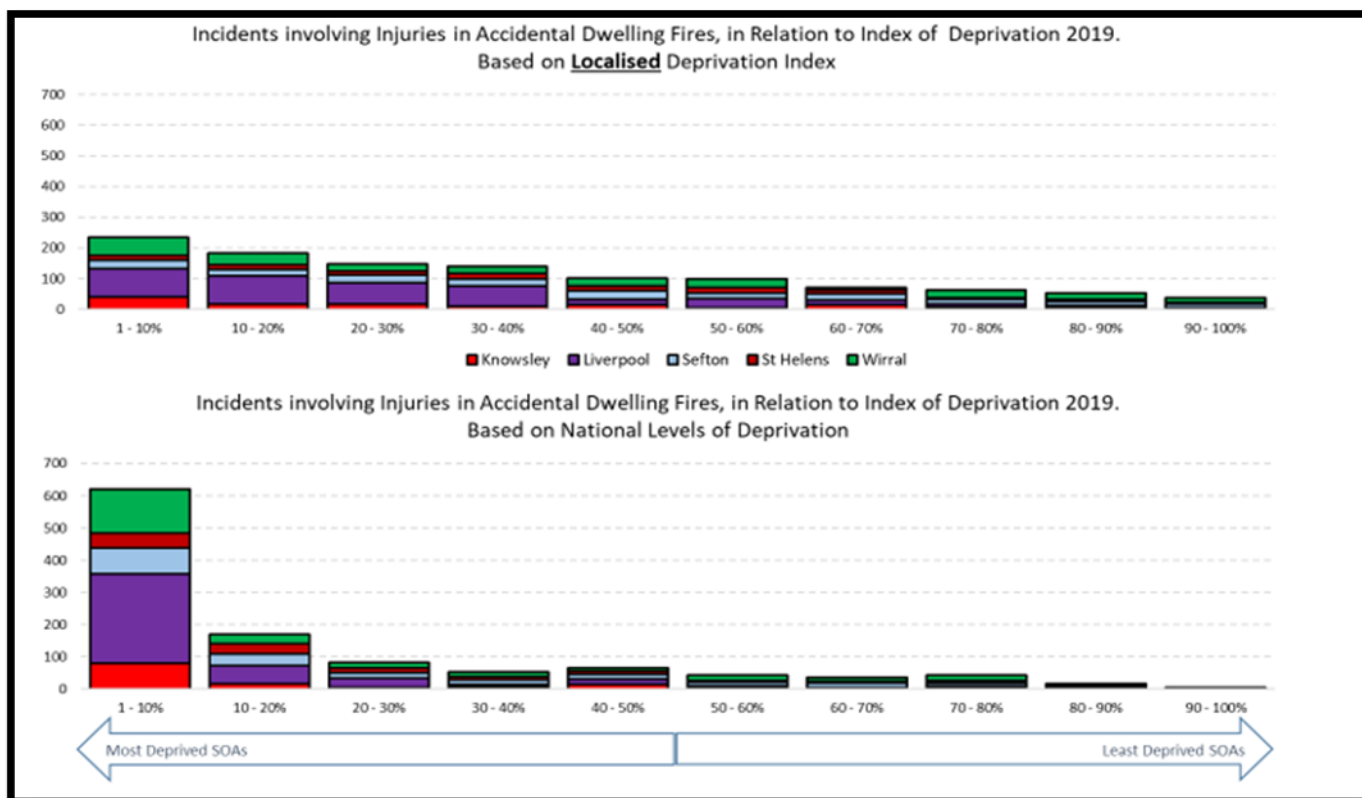
3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 In the last 15 years there have been 108 fire fatalities in Merseyside – 31 of these have taken place in Wirral.

3.2 As indicated in the chart below, in Merseyside, from 2012-13, the count of fatalities increased year on year leading to a 10 year high of 16 during 2015/16. Implementation of the Home Safety Plan in 2015 led to more effective and targeted working. Fire fatalities reduced to 7 during 2016-17 to a new low of 4 during 2017-18.

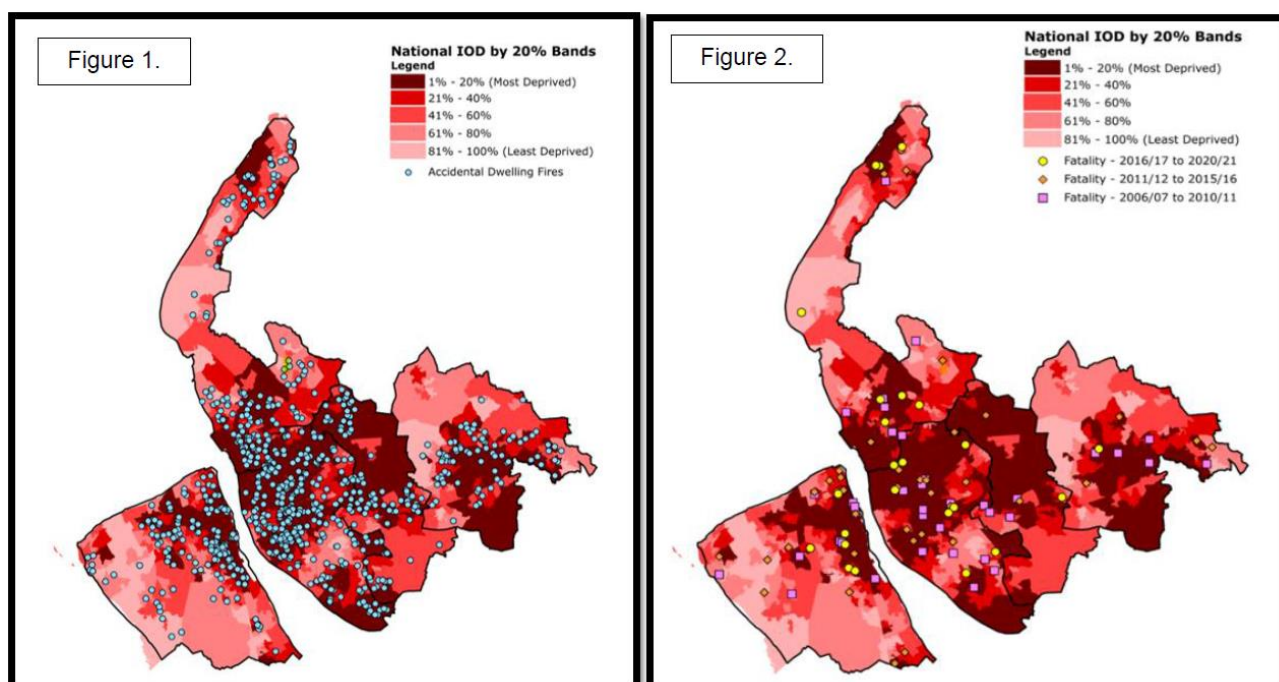


3.3 The chart below identifies that when using national IMD 2019 data there is a clear link between fire injuries and deprivation, with most injuries occurring within the most



deprived decile. When a localised deprivation index is applied the chart is flatter in shape, though there is still a clear link between there being more fire injuries in more deprived areas than not.

3.4 Deprivation and fire



The charts above show Index of Multiple Deprivation data in respect of accidental dwelling fires (fig.1) and Fire fatalities (fig. 2)

Our plans

- 3.5 The Home Safety Plan 2015-2018 was introduced in response to the rise in fire fatalities, serious injuries, and accidental dwelling fires across Merseyside. Our newest plan, 2021-2024 seeks to adopt a more agile and flexible approach to respond to emerging issues because of our learning from the Covid-19 pandemic (2020/21).
- 3.6 Operational Crews utilise status reports that are populated using NHS Exeter Data which targets individuals who are over 65 years of age and have either never been visited by MFRS, or not received a visit in the last two years. Our priority is to engage with over 60% of over 65's during our Home Fire Safety Check visits
- 3.7 In respect of high-risk individuals, MFRS have a centralised referral system which is managed by our contact centre Fire Service Direct. This has introduced a consistent and effective process that has seen performance increase by over 50% with approx. 10,000 high risk (Safe and Well Visits) delivered annually by Prevention Advocates.
- 3.8 Whilst a targeted and intelligence-led approach has proved successful, the power of a direct referral from a partner agency – detailing the exact issues and vulnerabilities - cannot be underestimated, this will remain a key objective of our Plan.
- 3.9 The purpose of our Home Safety Plan is to provide a framework to direct the delivery of MFRS resources for the purpose of preventing accidental dwelling fires and associated fire fatalities or injuries in line with the Services Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).
- 3.10 Our Plan for 2021-2024 will build on the success we have achieved over the last three years and by using the analysis set out in our Historical Analysis of Fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires between 2006/07 – 2020/21 document, we will focus on the priority areas below:

INTELLIGENCE LED AND TARGETED APPROACH TO INDIVIDUALS AT RISK OF FIRE IN THE HOME

- 3.11 We will build on the collaborative work we are currently involved in with our partners to enhance our Vulnerable Persons Index and through the use of the IMD and Information Sharing Agreements we will target properties that meet one or more of the criteria below:
 - An individual who lives in the top 2 deciles of the IMD.
 - An individual over 65 who has never been visited/not been visited in the last 24 months.
 - An individual known to Adult Social Care.
 - An individual known to Revenue and Benefits filtered by Disability or Lone Occupancy.
 - An individual known to have extreme mobility issues.
 - An individual who is known to have fuel poverty or isolations issues.This will allow our Operational Crews to target those most at risk from fire in our communities and generate high risk visits for our Vulnerable Person Advocates to

follow up by completing a more holistic Safe and Well visit. Additionally, we will continue to consider other data sources that can enhance the intelligence led targeted approach.

3.12 Expected outcomes for this priority will be:

- A reduction in fatalities and serious injuries from Accidental Fires in the Home.
- A reduction in Accidental Dwelling Fires through appropriate fire safety education.
- Ensuring that properties visited have working smoke alarms installed.
- Enhanced partner working and shared understanding of the risk and vulnerability profile.

ENGAGING RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS TO INFLUENCE DIRECT REFERRAL PATHWAYS

3.13 We will ensure that Information Sharing Agreements provide us with an overarching view of high-risk people living in Merseyside. We know the most effective way for us to identify high risk people and in turn be able to provide an appropriate preventative intervention at the earliest opportunity is through our partner agencies and other professionals working in the heart of our communities using a direct referral pathway to our Fire Service Direct contact centre to allocate to one of our Vulnerable Persons Advocates. To achieve this, we will:

- Use our membership at strategic, tactical and service delivery meetings to raise the awareness of our work and the benefits of early identification and intervention.
- Continue to engage with domiciliary care workers, housing provider frontline staff and other relevant partners who deliver services directly with vulnerable people to ensure they can identify fire safety issues and refer appropriately.
- Promote collaborative working to encourage where possible joint visits ensuring that all relevant key agencies can engage with vulnerable individuals.
- Through Safe and Well Checks encourage a two-way referral process with health professionals identifying those who require assistance with their health and wellbeing.

3.14 Expected outcomes for this priority will be:

- Ensuring those most vulnerable in our communities are identified and receive effective interventions at the earliest opportunity.
- Reacting appropriately to the continued impact of an ageing population and people living independently in our communities.

ENGAGING WITH SPECIALISED HOUSING, REGISTERED PROVIDERS AND PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

3.15 The National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC launched) 'The Fire Safety in Specialised Housing' guidance to reduce the risk of fire for vulnerable residents in Sheltered Accommodation, Extra Care and Supported Living. It's aim is to clarify and build upon existing working practices to adopt a person-centred approach to identifying risks to vulnerable residents in these types of premises. MFRS suffered 3 fatal fires in Specialised Housing in April 2020 and have created a methodology to address these risks in 2021. To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure a collaborative approach between MFRS Protection and Protection Teams to support the responsible person for specialised housing in completing a person-centred fire risk assessment for individuals who demonstrate the characteristics, behaviours and capabilities that may lead to a fire in the premises.
- Engage with Registered Providers and Private Rented Sector Landlords to identify tenants who are at risk of having a fire in their property.
- Work with Local Authorities, Registered Providers and Private Sector Landlords to raise fire safety awareness and environmental standards in the Rented Sector, particularly in accommodation above commercial premises.
- Refresh the Cost Recovery initiative to generate income from Registered Providers, Private Landlords, and low risk individuals in respect of the provision and installation of smoke alarms and other risk reduction equipment.

3.16 Expected outcomes for this priority are:

- To improve environmental and safety standards within private rented properties and ensure vulnerable tenants receive a Home Fire Safety Check and understand the risk of fire in the home.
- To raise fire safety awareness and compliance levels in respect of The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations in the Private Rented Sector.

3.17 **REVIEW AND EVALUATION**

This Plan will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Authority, business community and the people of Merseyside. Monitoring will also give confidence that the Plan delivers against its stated goals, is effective and provides best value to the communities of Merseyside.

4.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Fire and associated injury/fatality, as well as being traumatic for those immediately involved, carries a significant cost to the community, both in terms of direct costs and those funds required to support a return to community cohesion.

5.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 MFRS activity in relation to Prevention discharges the duty of the Authority placed under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Serious Violence duty and other statutory legislative requirements including the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018, which outlines expectations upon FRS to target their prevention resources on those individuals or households who are at greatest risk from fire in the home.

6.0 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 Using data with our partners with an intelligence-led methodology will result in broader access to fire safety information which will develop better understanding of fire risk leading to fewer fires attended delivering efficiency providing a value for money Service and less cost to the community.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Prevention activity saves lives, whatever the context. Fire prevention is no different. The delivery of targeted Home Fire Safety activity and Safe and Well visits to ensure that those most vulnerable to fire are engaged with and supported will ensure risk to the community is addressed and controlled to its lowest possible level.

ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 MFRS are a key strategic partner within the Merseyside local resilience forum. The Authority delivers its services through its Service delivery Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan. Details of our targeted prevention activity are included in this plan. We consulted on our latest IRMP between 1st March and 24th May 2021. Full details of the consultation outcomes are available by emailing consultation2@merseyfire.gov.uk.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The fatal fire analysis identifies that people with protected characteristics such as age and disability are disproportionately at risk of fire. Over 15 years most fatal fire victims were also White British. The continued monitoring of data is used to underpin and influence our targeting strategies. Working together to identify those most vulnerable, ensures partners deliver services consistently and equitably.
- 9.2 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Not applicable.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 MFRS officers are actively engaged with the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) to inform Prevention policy, directly influencing the professionalising of Prevention activity, and sharing MFRS good practice across the County. Promotion of healthier, well and fire safe communities will allow those communities to prosper.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

MFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-2024
The case for adopting the Socio- Economic Duty (LCR)
Wirral Plan 2022-26

- Safe and Vibrant Communities
- Active and Healthy Lives

Wirral Plan 2022-2026:

https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/3634/wirral_plan_refresh-2022.pdf

English indices of deprivation 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

MFRS IRMP: <https://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/about/our-plans-and-performance/integrated-risk-management-plan-irmp/>

Health Equity – The Marmot review 10 years on:

https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/upload/publications/2020/Health%20Equity%20in%20England_The%20Marmot%20Review%2010%20Years%20On_full%20report.pdf

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date