Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025 – 2030
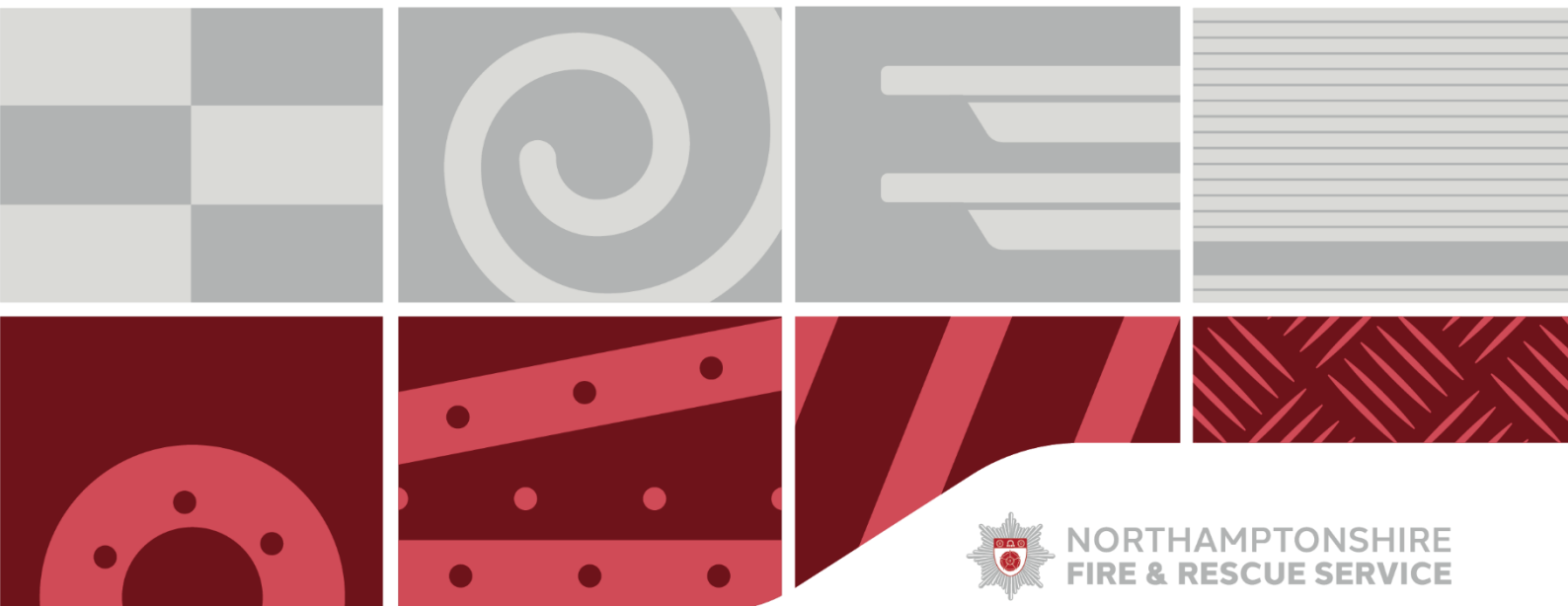
Consultation Summary Report

July 2025

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Executive Summary

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) is the Fire Authority for Northamptonshire and is required through the National Framework for England to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP); to identify risks within its areas of responsibility and outline its plan for mitigating these risks and keeping residents safe.

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) lead on the risk analysis and production of the draft plan for consideration and approval by the PFCC. The draft CRMP was subject to public consultation for six weeks, running from 09 April 2025 to 21 May 2025. During this consultation, we also asked participants to give their views on the proposed changes to the Standards of Response (SOR) for NFRS and broader questions around their understanding and awareness of fire safety and risks in the community, perceptions of the service and in relation to recruitment.

We would like to thank all individuals and groups who have expressed their views and opinions as part of this consultation. The consultation highlighted how highly regarded the service is, with 94% of respondents to the survey were confident that NFRS will respond effectively in an emergency. It is for us to sustain this trust, and further for us to respond to those areas where concerns or suggestions have been made. This summary report is one of the ways in which we can demystify our decision making.

It is three years since our last full public consultation, and we set out to make sure that this consultation was meaningful - for it to be representative and to provide us with greater insights and understanding to inform our planning for the development of the Community Risk Management Plan and beyond.   An external company was commissioned to provide independence in facilitating public focus groups and of the analysis, their report is included in full in Appendix 1.

In this consultation, the public and key stakeholders were invited to give their views on the draft CRMP - to consider whether all the major risks facing our communities

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had been identified, and whether the activities and proposals outlined were the right focus. Four focus groups were held involving members of the public, this provided an opportunity to specifically invite groups who have previously been less engaged – weighting groups towards rural residents, female and ethnic minorities (seen as being underrepresented within NFRS) and a further group, facilitated through AGE UK with over 70's.

In total, 1345 survey responses were received, with 645 people/organisations taking part in the online consultation and a further 750 residents who took part in the survey over the phone. In summary, the results of combined survey responses show that 88% of respondents agreed that the proposed CRMP priorities were the right focus for the Service for the next five years, including 30% who strongly agreed and 58% who agreed.

In relation to the draft SOR –
- 78% of respondents considered that different standards, based on the type and risk level of the incident, is the correct approach for measuring how quickly the service responds to incidents.
- 75% of respondents agreed that changing the way response times are reported, moving from using the average (mean) to the median, would give a fairer picture of typical response times
- 66% of respondents agreed with the proposal to measure response time from the moment the first fire resource arrives.

These survey results show that there is broad agreement to the CRMP; to its assessment of risk, identified priorities, proposals and ongoing activities, this agreement was echoed in the staff sessions and focus groups.

Overall, participants in the focus groups saw the CRMP as broadly positive but sought greater transparency about implementation. When discussing proposed changes to the SOR, there was general support for prioritisation in principle, but concerns were raised about what might be driving the change and what improvements it delivered.

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RECOMMENDATION – Adopt proposed CRMP Priorities without amendment

RECOMMENDATION – Adopt proposed changes to Standards of Response (SOR)

RECOMMENDATION – Incorporate public perception of risk into refresh of Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR)

This summary report provides an overview of the feedback received through consultation and outlines the management consideration and response. Throughout this report we make clear statements of intent, the detail of these actions will be captured within our annual delivery plan as this provides the public with transparency around what we say we will do.

We will revisit these actions at the end of this first year of the CRMP through our annual (progress) report – specifically considering what difference this has made and any further learning against our strategic outcomes.

Our Strategic outcomes

+ Reduce deaths, injuries and damage caused by fire and other hazardous events to our communities.

+ Deliver the best value to the public with the least impact on the environment.

+ Develop and maintain a diverse, high performing, and healthy workforce.

Methodology

In this consultation, it was decided to take a mixed methodology approach – combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to achieve a comprehensive and nuanced understanding.

An external social research company (SMSR) was commissioned and using a variety of consultation methods internally and externally, engagement and

We identified and included the following stakeholders:

- General public who live and work in Northamptonshire
- Senior leaders in NFRS and Northamptonshire Police
- Representative bodies
- Fire Officers, staff and volunteer
- Neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to NFRS or within the region
- Local Authorities

consultation were tailored to each of these stakeholder groups to increase participation and feedback.

Consultation Methods

We utilised both internal and external engagement to maximise responses to the CRMP consultation. A summary of this can be found in the table below:

External Channels	Audience
Social media posts across Facebook, Instagram, X, Nextdoor (both NFRS and OPFCC channels)	Northamptonshire residents Stakeholder database (PLRs, Town and Parish Council clerks, local organisations, Neighbourhood Watch, Residential organisations, faith groups, schools and colleges, businesses, ICVs, road

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Articles across local newspapers	safety panel, rural groups, hotels, local publications)
Appearances on local radio stations	
Four emails sent through Northamptonshire Talking	

Internal Channels	Audience
Chief's vlog/blog Staff Weekly Bulletin	Senior leaders
	Managers/supervisors
Fire intranet (Fireplace)	
	Firefighters and staff
All NFRS email	
	Countywide stakeholders and partners
Team Leader/Manager cascade	
	PFCC staff
Microsoft Teams drop-in sessions	Police staff
CFO Monthly (Teams) call	
Police intranet (Forcenet)	

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The survey was promoted widely and through various social media platforms and targeted emails, phone calls, and focus groups facilitated by our Communications Team as well as SMSR.

We estimate that through our social media engagement (47 posts across Facebook, Instagram, X, Nextdoor and both NFRS and OPFC Channels), we reached approximately 55,800 residents.

Through the Northamptonshire Talking platform, we were able to contact upwards of 30,000 residents on four occasions.

644 people took part in the online survey, with a further 750 residents engaging via telephone.

In total, this number of responses would be considered large enough to be representative of the Northamptonshire population using 95% confidence intervals with a 3% margin of error.

Internally, seven individual sessions were held with managers throughout NFRS, and PFCC. This provided an opportunity to discuss the priorities and changes within the documents and allow managers to raise any queries and seek clarification. Queries were addressed in these sessions and developing into an internal Frequently Asked Questions document, published on the intranet. Managers cascaded the key messages down to team members and encouraged feedback through the survey.

Prior to meeting with managers, union representatives were consulted on the content of the plan.

CRMP Results Summary

Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Priorities

Insight from CRMP Consultation Report (Appendix 1)

The findings of the public survey outlined widespread support for the strategic priorities. 88% of respondents agreed with the five proposed priorities set out in the CRMP, with a minority offering constructive feedback on areas for further focus, including education, communication and community engagement.

The CRMP was seen as broadly positive by the focus groups, but participants sought *"greater transparency about implementation, particularly in relation to people and culture".* Some participants "*highlighted the need for better communication about the full breadth of the NFRS's role and the potential of technology, partnership working and regulation to improve outcomes".*

Senior Leadership Team consideration of feedback

RECOMMENDATION – Adopt proposed CRMP Priorities without amendment

SLT recognised the strong support for the strategic priorities, indicative of alignment with the direction and focus of the plan. Consideration was given to the additional comments and suggestions provided, notably the thread which runs through the report from SMSR regarding levels of service communication and engagement and our presence within the community. These additional comments are considered more fully on page 11.

SLT recognised the nuance around these different terms, of the different perceptions, levels of awareness and expectations. How these vary across the geography of the county and amongst different demographics. This comprehensive consultation provides the service with a benchmark of where we are now.

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It was felt that there was not enough public awareness of the work we are already delivering and of our broader role beyond response, notably of the support we offer to our most vulnerable residents through Home Fire Safety Visits and to the commercial sector around fire safety – our success in these areas over the last 10 years has helped to reduce the number of incidents we attend and yet this feedback indicates that this is not widely known by the public. SLT considered that it was not simply about increasing communications about this core function, we want to build capacity to meet any potential growth in demand that greater awareness might bring.

Over the term of the CRMP, we will produce Annual Delivery Plan's and at the end of each year, report progress through an Annual Report. Through these documents we will be more specific about the detail of our work, with a greater focus on where this contributes to improving outcomes.

Key to our learning, now and in the future, has been the value of having feedback. We recognise that we should more regularly seek feedback from the public to gauge how we are doing, and of the need to build this type of listening engagement into our core activity.

Proposed Standards of Response (SOR)

Insight from CRMP Consultation Report (Appendix 1)

Within the findings of the public survey, it outlined strong endorsement of risk-based response standards with more mixed views on measuring response times.

Proposal	What people told us
Different response standards based on type and risk level of the incident	**78% supported the introduction of different standards** 15% preferred a single universal standard 7% were unsure or had no preference

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Aims to give a fairer picture of typical response times	**75% strongly agreed or agreed** 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed 20% neither agreed nor disagreed
To measure response times from the moment the first fire resource arrives	**66% strongly agreed or agreed** 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed 16% neither agreed nor disagreed

Of the three proposed changes to the SOR, the proposal to measure response time from the moment the first fire resource arrives had the lowest level of agreement. Through the survey, respondents were asked to clarify where they disagreed - most of these responses received centred on the 'stopping the clock' proposal which have been further themed. The most common theme was determined to be 'Fire engine as the only appropriate responder' where the majority of respondents felt that *"only a fully crewed and equipped fire engine should be considered as an appropriate first response. Other response cars or vehicles were repeatedly viewed as insufficient to deal with real emergencies"*.

There was general support for prioritisation in principle by the focus groups, but participants *"expressed concern that it might be driven by cost-cutting or lead to slower responses for less urgent incidents. "Participants were divided on the use of the mean or median for reporting response times. Some felt it would aid comparability with other emergency services, while others questioned its clarity and purpose"*.

Further, there was *"nuanced debate"* regarding the proposal to stop the clock upon arrival of the first resource, "*with some recognising its efficiency benefits and others perceiving it as an accounting mechanism rather than a meaningful operational improvement"*.

However, participants in the focus groups emphasised the importance of *"clear communication, consistent community presence, and transparency in performance reporting"*.

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Senior Leadership Team consideration of feedback

RECOMMENDATION – Adopt proposed changes to Standards of Response (SOR)

SLT carefully considered the breadth of feedback received around these proposals, and in reaching its recommendation it was mindful of the broader themes identified as part of the full consultation. More specifically, the exceptionally high levels of trust and confidence in NFRS, the limited awareness of our broader role and of residents seeking *"clearer explanations of what would be done differently and how change would be measured"*

As a service, we have set a priority for response and are committed to this. In seeking to change our SOR, we wanted to be more transparent about the service that we are delivering, and

Response

We will respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents.

to demonstrate this commitment to providing the fastest response to those emergencies that pose the greatest risk to life, property and the environment. The creation of four risk categories will provide us with a reporting structure which enables us to more closely monitor our response and so will provide us with greater insights in the future.

SLT considered that the recommendation it reached around measuring response should help the public to better understand the broader role of the service today, be easily understood and not compromise the trust and confidence that the public has in NFRS.

Consideration was given to amending the measure from the proposed first resource to instead be for the first fire engine, we know that this is by far the most likely resource to arrive on scene first - based on our analysis, over 95% of all incidents have a fire engine first. However, it was felt that this missed an opportunity to reflect the diversity of the modern fire and rescue service, and to demonstrate that we respond to different incidents and that a fire engine might not be the most appropriate resource – for example, specialist officers are often mobilised to multi-

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agency incidents first, to work with and advise Police and other partner agencies. These incidents can sometimes be resolved with no further Fire resources assigned.

Consideration was also given to evolving the measure to distinguish between different types of incidents and the different (first) resource that might attend, this would include measuring the response time of a *fire engine* to primary dwelling fires. However, it was felt that this added more detail and complexity to the reporting and would be another layer, which may further complicate public understanding.

It was therefore determined that the proposed measure would be adopted, but that in doing so, we must clearly explain what measuring the SOR means for the service and what the public should expect as a response. Furthermore, it was agreed that we would explore how we might be even more transparent around our SOR and response delivery in the future, for example publishing our SOR performance reports more regularly and doing more to signpost to this information. SLT recognise the very high levels of trust and confidence that the public has in the service, and how important it is to preserve this whilst also de-mystifying the decisions we make.

Assessment of Risk

Insight from CRMP Consultation Report (Appendix 1)

Through the survey, respondents were asked about their perceptions of risk and awareness, showing good awareness of common household risks such as electrical faults and cooking. Just 42% of respondents felt the service provided enough information about risks in the community.

Focus group participants were asked to consider any risks or challenges they considered to impact service delivery - identifying changing weather conditions especially flooding and wildfire, traffic accidents (with specific reference of the A45) were mentioned frequently and provided a particular understanding of how incidents might impact differently in rural location or specific rural risks such as those associated with farming. All four focus groups mentioned the increasing population in Northamptonshire and its significant growth as a county.

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A small number of individuals contacted the service directly during the consultation period to provide their input, outside of the survey. These are detailed within Appendix 2 and include reference to specific areas perceived as flood risk and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) developments.

In its executive summary, the SMSR report provided the insight that *"awareness-raising, therefore, must go hand in hand with education and storytelling about risk and service delivery"*

Senior Leadership Team consideration of feedback

RECOMMENDATION – Incorporate public perception of risk into refresh of Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR)

SLT considered the detail of the individual feedback received and noted the various insights based on demographic and geographic trends from the survey and focus groups. As part of the planning cycle for the Community Risk Management Plan, the service undertakes a Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR). SLT felt it important to reflect this public perception of risk through its planning, and so these insights will be included as part of the annual refresh of the SAR. Additionally, the service will respond directly to those individuals who took the time to share their views with us outside of the survey route.

SLT noted that those risks associated with climate change, including flooding were most commonly identified by the public. This echoed our internal assessment of risk, which identified that weather-related incidents were increasing in frequency and severity and continue to be seen as an emerging risk.

- As a service, we have already implemented some changes to mitigate the risk of wildfire, introducing new equipment and gathering more intelligence about our rural areas of risk. As the sector gains further experience and learning from these incidents, we will continue to review and adapt our approach.

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- Whilst fire and rescue services in England do not have a statutory duty to respond to flooding incidents, we are committed to working with our partners as part of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to prepare and manage local emergencies and events such as flooding.

SLT acknowledged that less than half of respondents felt that the service provided enough information about the risks in the community, this was considered more fully as part of the discussion around communication and engagement below.

Area of discussion - Engagement/Visibility/Communication

Insight from CRMP Consultation Report (Appendix 1)

As part of the brief given to the SMSR, the service wanted to understand public perceptions of the service, to understand levels of awareness of NFRS and our activities, alongside an understanding of communication preferences. These were explored through the survey and in greater depth within the focus groups.

The survey response indicated high levels of confidence and satisfaction with almost all respondents (94%) expressing confidence in NFRS's ability to respond to emergencies, and 82% rating the service as doing a good or excellent job. Satisfaction was particularly high among those with direct contact.

"Overall perception of NFRS was very positive across all four………..This was despite low levels of awareness and personal experience."

"Community engagement was discussed frequently with very positive feedback from those who had experienced the service at events such as open days and fetes.

A key theme identified within the focus groups was the "general lack of awareness of the service" with the majority of attendees suggesting that "improved communications would lead to better understanding and interest in the service".

Communication and engagement, alongside service visibility is a thread which runs throughout the report and has provided the service with a depth of rich data and

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feedback, which will be considered internally more widely. By our service delivery areas of Prevention, Protection and Response and our Communications Team, in order to inform activity relating to these areas. For now, consideration has been given to how the feedback around these themes might influence decision making in relation to the final draft of the CRMP.

More specifically, the SMSR report presented *"broad support for the CRMP's direction and priorities, though participants found some of the language…..too vague or corporate"*, with residents seeking *"clearer explanations of what would be done differently and how change would be measured"*.

Senior Leadership Team consideration of feedback

SLT considered the overlap and the nuance across these themes and the relationship between communication, engagement and the feedback elsewhere in the report of residents limited awareness of the broader role of NFRS. SLT noted the summary point that "consultation findings reveal a consistent desire for greater transparency, clearer performance reporting, and deeper community engagement".

SLT considered that there is much to unpick and explore amongst these themes and felt that the perception by the public of communication and engagement was perhaps as two distinct areas, and that the service often considers these as the same.

In terms of the CRMP, it was felt that the feedback was not indicating that we do it differently, rather that we could do it better and there are improvements to be made. It was considered that the public perception around these areas was not negative or viewed as insufficient, rather that there are improvements to be made. Communication and engagement and collaborating with others are at the very core of how we deliver the service. This independent report provides us with insights from the public perspective and we are committed to using this knowledge across the service – strengthening our current approach to engagement and being more targeted in communications.

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As previously mentioned, this comprehensive consultation provides the service with a benchmark, and over the term of the CRMP, the service will continue to engage and communicate our activity with the public as part of our core function – seeking to evaluate and re-assess public perceptions in the future. In this first year, the creation of a new website provides us with an immediate opportunity to improve. Furthermore there is opportunity for us to specifically use our resource and address the "greater need to educate and engage with older residents and ethnic minority communities as awareness and understanding of service delivery is lower among these groups".....

SLT noted the strong levels of support for the strategic priorities of the CRMP and reflected on the specific feedback about the language used. It considered the feedback valid, whilst also recognising that the CRMP is a corporate document intended to drive the strategy for the service over the next five years. It considered that the language and broad nature of the priorities were appropriate for this type of document. However, this would not provide those residents seeking clearer explanations with any more detail.

SLT have committed to using simpler and more plain language in the future and within the additional corporate documents that are currently under development, including the publication of several individual strategies due to be refreshed during this first year of the CRMP. Furthermore, for each year of this CRMP term we will produce two succinct and focussed reports – to outline what we are doing (Annual Delivery Report) and at the end of each year, what we have done (Annual (Progress) Report). We will explore how to involve the public and/or a broader range of staff and partners as a 'test audience', during the early development of key corporate documents.

Area of Discussion – Engagement and recruitment

Insight from CRMP Consultation Report (Appendix 1)

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As part of the brief given to the SMSR, the service wanted to understand more about the perception of NFRS as a potential employer and any barriers to recruitment. Just 12% of respondents had considered joining the Service, with barriers such as age, physical fitness, and lack of confidence cited. Younger and ethnic minority respondents were more open to considering a role, suggesting opportunities to improve inclusivity and awareness of recruitment pathways.

"Perceived levels of fitness and awareness of roles and responsibilities within the organisation were also cited a barriers to recruitment."

The majority of participants within the focus groups said that the workforce did not represent the local community with many who held the perception that the organisation was male dominated, which was considered a significant barrier to female recruitment. There was no awareness amongst these groups of NFRS being led by a female Chief Fire Officer with the suggestion that more promotion of this and female officers and staff in general considered to be important.

"There was a strong argument across the groups that any effective recruitment or raising awareness of working for NFRS should be aimed at young people and educational establishments, especially when trying to achieve better diversity."

Senior Leadership Team consideration of feedback

SLT considered this area of the report and the insights it provided especially valuable. Key to achieving our vision of providing exceptional fire and rescue services for all, is through our people. Attracting a workforce that better reflects our community is an essential part of this and a cornerstone of our People and Culture strategy.

The breadth of this feedback will be shared and considered internally in more detail. By our Communications Team and the leads for Recruitment and Cultural Change.

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Appendix 1

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service
Community Risk Management Plan consultation
V3

Prepared by SMSR Research
on behalf of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service

Contents

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1.0   Introduction

The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018 requires that Fire Authorities, create and consult on a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which identifies and assesses foreseeable fire and rescue risks for their local communities.

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) Community Risk Management Plan identifies the key risks and challenges facing Northamptonshire's communities, along with strategies to address them. The plan introduces the service's areas of focus to achieve their Vision - to provide exceptional fire and rescue services for all. It also includes the Mission - to prevent, protect, and respond to keep communities safe.

Within the plan NFRS have set out the current position and their assessment of the risks in Northamptonshire and how they aim to ensure that local communities must feel safe and confident in accessing a quality service and be assured of the way in which the service is delivered.

As part of the plan the service are looking at how they measure their response to incidents. Every Fire and Rescue Service must set and publish response standards so the public can see how they're doing against their own targets and compare this to national trends.

The last CRMP (2019-2022) set a single Standard of Response (SOR) – to attend all incidents within an average of 10 minutes. For the CRMP 2025–2030 NFRS are proposing to update their SOR so that they are risk-based, transparent and more easily monitored.

NFRS acknowledge that to develop the CRMP effectively, they must engage with and listen to their staff, local communities, partners, representative bodies, and other stakeholders.

As part of a wider consultation that the Service conducted taking all stakeholders views into account, NFRS commissioned SMSR Research, an independent social

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research company to undertake a series of four focus groups and a representative survey with 750 residents.

The main aims of the public facing research were as follows:

- To understand perceptions of NFRS
- To measure confidence and trust with NFRS
- To understand drivers to confidence and trust
- To evaluate any experience of the service delivery
- To measure perceived risk locally
- To measure levels of support for the CRMP main priorities
- Measure levels of agreement SOR
- Understand levels of awareness of NFRS and activities
- Understand communication preference and recall

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2.0   Executive summary

This report presents the findings from four public focus groups conducted on behalf of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) to inform the development of its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and to measure support for proposed standards to response. The consultation explored public perceptions of the service and their views on several proposed operational and performance changes, including response categorisation, the use of mean/ median response time measures, and the introduction of a 'stop the clock' mechanism.

Perceptions and trust

Participants expressed exceptionally high levels of trust and confidence in NFRS. The Service was described as reliable, responsive, and composed of individuals who act with professionalism and integrity.   Trust was shaped not only by personal or observed experience but also by a general belief in the values and dedication of frontline personnel. The fire service stood out favourably when compared to other emergency services, often perceived as more bureaucratic or less community focused.

Despite this trust, most residents admitted to limited awareness of NFRS's broader role beyond fire response and road traffic collisions.   This 'silent service' status, though associated with quiet competence, was also seen as a missed opportunity to promote prevention work, increase visibility, and improve understanding of how the service operates across a wide range of risks and scenarios.

Awareness and understanding

Participants welcomed the opportunity to learn more about NFRS's community work and strategic direction. However, this interest varied, with some residents expressing satisfaction with their current level of understanding, while others – particularly those from the ethnic minority community, sought more information. A key insight was the tension between asking residents if they *'want to know more'* and recognising that many may not yet know what they do not know. Awareness-raising, therefore, must go hand in hand with education and storytelling about risk and service delivery. There is a real opportunity to develop closer relationships with

diverse and emerging communities, coupled with a greater appetite to understand the service more.

Reaction to CRMP content

There was broad support for the CRMP's direction and priorities, though participants found some of the language, particularly under '*people and culture',* too vague or corporate. Several themes felt familiar or '*recycled'*.   Residents sought clearer explanations of what would be done differently and how change would be measured. Inclusivity and modernisation were broadly welcomed, though some expressed concern about perceived emphasis on representation over capability. Many highlighted a need for better communication about the role of technology, regulation, and partnership working in improving safety outcomes.

Response categorisation and performance metrics

Participants supported the concept of prioritising emergency response based on risk and urgency, though some worried this could delay help for non-critical incidents. There was strong trust in crews' judgement to attend swiftly regardless of category. However, concerns emerged about whether categorisation could be used to mask service reductions or justify slower attendance in less populated areas.

The proposed shift to mean/ median response time reporting prompted mixed views. Some welcomed the statistical clarity and consistency with other emergency services, while others found it confusing or disconnected from what matters most, timely help in real-world emergencies. Similarly, the 'stop the clock' mechanism was recognised by some as operationally efficient but by others as potentially misleading without clearer communication about what constitutes a *'response'.*

Implications for communication and engagement

The consultation findings reveal a consistent desire for greater transparency, clearer performance reporting, and deeper community engagement. Participants emphasised the importance of proactive communication, including use of social media, school visits, and outreach events. These were seen not only as tools for raising awareness and trust, but also for inspiring the next generation of recruits and improving safety through education.

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There is a greater need to educate and engage with older residents and ethnic minority communities as awareness and understanding of service delivery is lower amongst these groups. Home safety visits are a prime example of where this could be promoted more effectively.

In summary, trust and confidence in NFRS remains high, rooted in a strong public belief in the professionalism and dedication of its workforce. To sustain this trust through periods of strategic change, the service should focus on demystifying its decision-making, reinforcing its operational ethos, and engaging more visibly with the communities it serves.

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3.0 Public survey findings

3.1 Summary

High levels of confidence and satisfaction: almost all respondents (94%) expressed confidence in NFRS's ability to respond to emergencies, and four fifths (82%) rated the Service as doing a good or excellent job. Satisfaction was particularly high among those with direct contact.

Widespread support for strategic priorities: Almost 9 in 10 (88%) agreed with the five proposed priorities set out in the CRMP, with a minority offering constructive feedback on areas for further focus, including education, communication, and community engagement.

Strong endorsement of risk-based response standards: More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) supported replacing a universal response time with standards based on incident type and severity. Similarly, three-quarters (75%) agreed that using median response times would offer a fairer view of performance.

Mixed views on measuring response time: While two-thirds (66%) supported the proposal to record response time from the arrival of the first fire resource, some expressed concerns about transparency and the adequacy of non-appliance resources.

Perceptions of risk and awareness: Respondents showed good awareness of common household risks such as electrical faults and cooking. However, less than half (42%) felt the Service provided enough information about risks in the community, indicating a need for improved communication and outreach.

Engagement and recruitment: Just over a tenth (12%) of respondents had considered joining the Service, with barriers such as age, physical fitness, and lack of confidence cited. Younger and ethnic minority respondents were more open to

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considering a role, suggesting opportunities to improve inclusivity and awareness of recruitment pathways.

The consultation findings provide strong endorsement of the CRMP's direction while also highlighting areas for improvement, particularly in public communications, engagement, and reassurance around performance measures.

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3.2   Methodology/ sample

A questionnaire was designed by staff at Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue with support from SMSR Research during a thorough development phase with input and feedback provided by staff at both organisations to validate the script. The approach was as follows:

Residents across Northamptonshire were invited to participate in an interviewer led, telephone survey using random quota sampling. Quota targets for age, gender and ethnicity were set using 2021 census figures for each of the five authorities the service covers. Fieldwork ran from April 2025 to May 2025. In addition, an online version of the survey was offered through digital streams and promoted by Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue. A total of 750 respondents participated in the telephone consultation and a further 644 residents responded to the online survey. With a sample size of 750, the results from the representative survey can be considered accurate to within ±3.6 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

The results were combined with the reporting focussing on the representative sample. The breakdown of residents interviewed was as follows:

Representative Sample

Gender	Count	Percentage
Female	375	50%
Male	373	50%
Non-binary	1	0%
Trans woman	0	0%
Trans man	0	0%
Other gender identity	0	0%
Prefer not to say	1	0%

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Age	Count	Percentage
16 to 24	63	8%
25 to 34	111	15%
35 to 44	129	17%
45 to 54	141	19%
55 to 64	132	18%
65 to 74	133	18%
75 or above	37	5%
Prefer not to say	4	1%

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
White	664	89%
Ethnic Minority Group	79	11%
Prefer not to say	7	1%

Disability	Count	Percentage
Yes	117	16%
No	627	84%
Prefer not to say	6	1%

Area	Count	Percentage
West Northamptonshire	393	52%
North Northamptonshire	357	48%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

Public Survey Sample (Online)

Gender	Count	Percentage
Female	245	45%
Male	262	48%

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Non-binary	2	0%
Trans woman	2	0%
Trans man	0	0%
Other gender identity	1	0%
Prefer not to say	31	6%

Age	Count	Percentage
16 to 24	21	4%
25 to 34	45	8%
35 to 44	61	11%
45 to 54	73	13%
55 to 64	118	22%
65 to 74	119	22%
75 or above	84	15%
Prefer not to say	25	5%

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
White	490	90%
Ethnic Minority Group	15	3%
Prefer not to say	40	7%

Disability	Count	Percentage
Yes	113	21%
No	377	71%
Prefer not to say	43	8%

Area	Count	Percentage
West Northamptonshire	266	49%
North Northamptonshire	236	44%
Prefer not to say	37	7%

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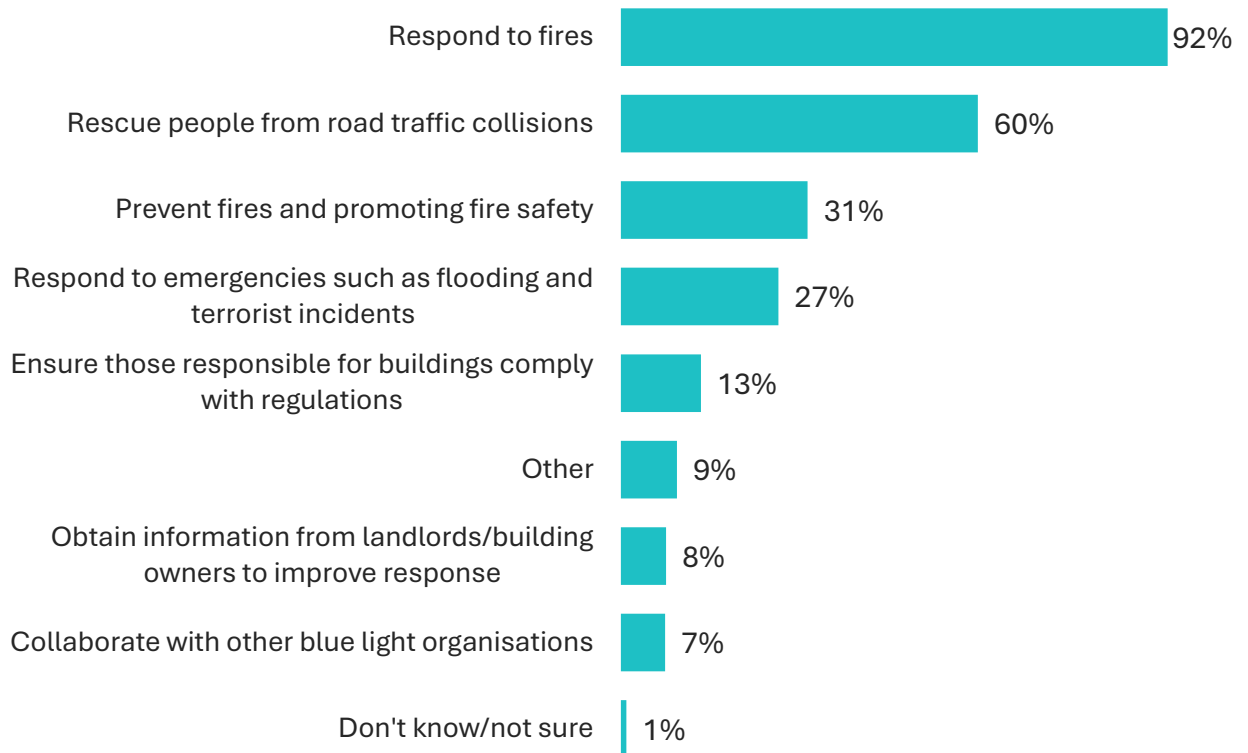| Are you the following?	Count	Percentage
NFRS employee	4	8%
Business / Organisation	23	4%
Councillor	25	5%
None of the above	435	83%

3.3 Key Findings

This section includes headline findings for each question combined with insight based on demographic and geographic trends. It should be noted that when the results are discussed within the report, often percentages will be rounded up or down to the nearest one per cent. Therefore, occasionally figures may add up to 101% or 99%. Due to multiple responses being allowed for the question, some results may exceed the sum of 100%.

Risk

Firstly, respondents were asked what they feel Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue does and what perceived risks are present in their home and community:

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What do you think Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service does?

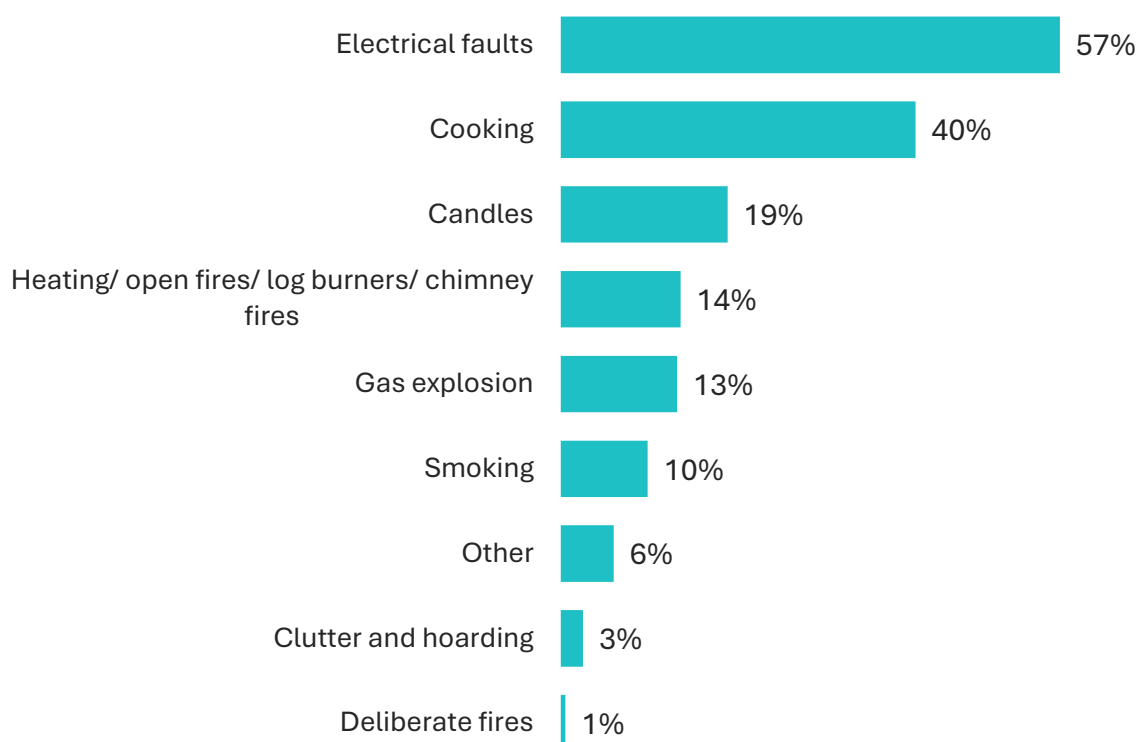| Category	Percentage
Respond to fires	92%
Rescue people from road traffic collisions	60%
Prevent fires and promoting fire safety	31%
Respond to emergencies such as flooding and terrorist incidents	27%
Ensure those responsible for buildings comply with regulations	13%
Other	9%
Obtain information from landlords/building owners to improve response	8%
Collaborate with other blue light organisations	7%
Don't know/not sure	1%

More than 9 in 10 respondents (92%) associate Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service with responding to fires, reflecting strong public recognition of its core operational role. Three-fifths (60%) also recognised the Service's involvement in rescuing people from road traffic collisions, suggesting that many residents understand the wider emergency response remit of the force beyond firefighting.

Awareness of the Service's preventative, regulatory, and collaborative functions was notably lower. Fewer than one in three respondents (31%) identified preventing fires and promoting fire safety as part of the Service's responsibilities, while around a quarter (27%) recognised the Service responds to other emergencies. Public understanding of other activities, such as ensuring public and commercial building regulations are met, engaging with landlords, or working with other emergency services, was more limited. Only 1% of respondents said they were unsure what the Service does.

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Younger respondents (aged 16–34) were significantly more likely to mention that the Service works to prevent fires and promote fire safety, with almost half (47%) selecting this compared to around a quarter (24%) of those aged 35–54 and 30% of those aged 55 and above. This was also more commonly mentioned by those who had recent contact with the Service, with almost half (49%) identifying it, compared to three in ten (30%) of those who had no recent contact. Additionally, younger people were less likely to mention the Service's core emergency functions, such as responding to fires and rescuing people from road traffic collisions, but more likely to highlight broader aspects of the Service's role.

It's important to note that participants in the representative sample were asked this question unprompted, whereas those in the online sample were shown a list of options. As a result, awareness of the wider responsibilities of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service appears much higher among the online group. While both samples widely recognised the core role of responding to fires (92% representative vs 99% online), prompted respondents were far more likely to mention activities such as rescuing people from road traffic collisions (97% online vs 60% representative), promoting fire safety (95% online vs 31% representative), and ensuring building compliance with regulations (91% online vs 13% representative). These differences are likely due to the format of the question rather than a fundamental difference in knowledge between the two groups.

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What do you think are the biggest risks of fire in your home?

Risk	Percentage
Electrical faults	57%
Cooking	40%
Candles	19%
Heating/ open fires/ log burners/ chimney fires	14%
Gas explosion	13%
Smoking	10%
Other	6%
Clutter and hoarding	3%
Deliberate fires	1%

When asked about the biggest risks of fire in the home, respondents were most likely to identify electrical faults, with almost three-fifths (57%) selecting this option. This was followed by cooking, mentioned by 4 in 10 (40%), suggesting that everyday domestic activities are front of mind when residents consider potential fire hazards.

Other perceived risks included candles (19%), heating systems such as open fires or log burners (14%), and gas explosions (13%). Smoking was seen as a risk by 10% of respondents. Lower levels of concern were expressed around issues such as clutter and hoarding (3%) or deliberate fires (1%). These findings indicate that while some higher-risk behaviours are well recognised, other fire safety threats - particularly those less visible or less commonly discussed - may require greater public awareness.

When asked about the biggest fire risks in the home, perceptions varied across demographic groups, often reflecting differences in lifestyle and experience. Females were more likely than males to mention candles (23% vs 13%), which may relate to

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greater use of candles for relaxation or ambience. Younger people aged 16–34 were particularly alert to risks associated with cooking, with six in ten (60%) mentioning it compared to 30% of those aged 35–54 and 37% of those over 55. This group was also more likely to highlight heating appliances or open fires (24%), smoking (28%), candles (32%), and gas explosions (25%), possibly reflecting shared housing, urban living, or closer exposure to such risks.

In contrast, older respondents were more likely to cite electrical faults, with two-thirds (66%) of 35–54-year-olds and 55% of those over 55 raising this issue, compared to just 44% of younger respondents. This could be linked to longer-term experiences with household maintenance or older housing stock.
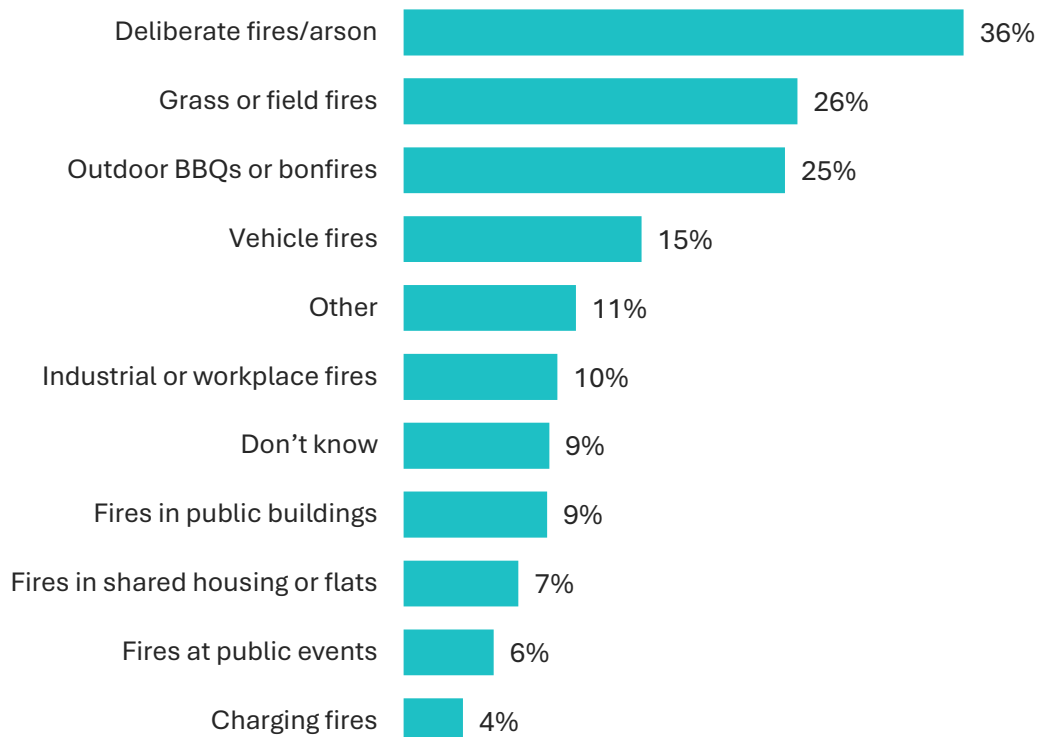
Clear differences were also seen across ethnic groups. Ethnic minority respondents were more likely to mention cooking (65% vs 38%) and candles (35% vs 17%) than white respondents, potentially due to specific cultural practices or cooking methods, but were less likely to mention electrical faults (33% vs 59%).

Finally, those who had contact with the fire service in the last 12 months were more likely to mention heating-related risks (25% vs 13%) and smoking (17% vs 9%), suggesting that recent engagement with fire safety messaging or incidents may increase awareness of certain hazards.

As with the previous question, responses varied significantly between the representative and online samples, which may be down to the differing methodologies. Despite this, electrical faults and cooking were the most frequently mentioned risks across both groups. However, the online sample was more likely to cite a wider range of potential causes. For example, 84% of online respondents mentioned electrical faults compared to 57% of the representative sample. Similarly, 71% of the online group mentioned cooking as a risk, versus 40% in the representative sample.

Awareness of other risks was also far higher in the online group: candles (55% online vs 19% representative), chimney fires/log burners (47% online vs 14% representative), and smoking (40% online vs 10% representative).

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And what do you think are the biggest risks of fire outside your home in your local area?

Risk	Percentage
Deliberate fires/arson	36%
Grass or field fires	26%
Outdoor BBQs or bonfires	25%
Vehicle fires	15%
Other	11%
Industrial or workplace fires	10%
Don't know	9%
Fires in public buildings	9%
Fires in shared housing or flats	7%
Fires at public events	6%
Charging fires	4%

Deliberate fires and arson were perceived as the greatest fire risk in respondents' local areas, cited by over a third (36%) of participants. Grass or field fires (26%) and outdoor BBQs or bonfires (25%) were also seen as significant risks by a quarter of respondents.

Other concerns included vehicle fires (15%) and industrial or workplace fires (10%), while a smaller proportion mentioned fires in public buildings, shared housing, or at public events. Just 4% of respondents identified charging fires, such as those related to batteries or e-scooters, as a risk, suggesting this may be an area where awareness is still developing. Around one in ten respondents (9%) were unsure about fire risks in their local area.

Perceptions of fire risk in the wider community also varied by age, ethnicity, and geography. Younger people aged 16–35 were more likely to identify vehicle fires (30%), fires in public buildings (28%), fires in shared houses (24%), and outdoor BBQs or bonfires as key risks. This may reflect their greater presence in urban

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spaces, use of shared accommodation, or closer proximity to communal social settings where such risks are more visible.

Ethnic minority respondents were also more likely to mention vehicle fires (28% vs 14% white respondents), fires in public places (20% vs 8%), and outdoor BBQs or bonfires (44% vs 23%), suggesting either lived experience or greater concern about fire-related anti-social behaviour in the areas where they live.

A geographic difference also emerged, with residents of West Northamptonshire more likely to mention vehicle fires (18%) than those in North Northamptonshire (13%), hinting at possible localised issues or recent incidents that may have shaped perceptions.

Responses to this question again revealed noticeable differences between the two samples. Deliberate fires or arson were seen as the biggest external fire risk by both groups, but far more so by the online sample (72%) than the representative sample (36%). The same pattern appeared for grass or field fires (56% online vs 26% representative), vehicle fires (53% online vs 15% representative), and outdoor BBQs or bonfires (61% online vs 25% representative).

Mentions of more specific or less frequently considered risks – such as charging fires from e-bikes or scooters – also appeared more commonly in the online sample (56% online vs 4% representative). This suggests that online respondents may have engaged with a broader range of potential risks or were prompted by being able to see potential risks when completing the survey.

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Do you think the Service provides enough information
about what risks there may be in your community?
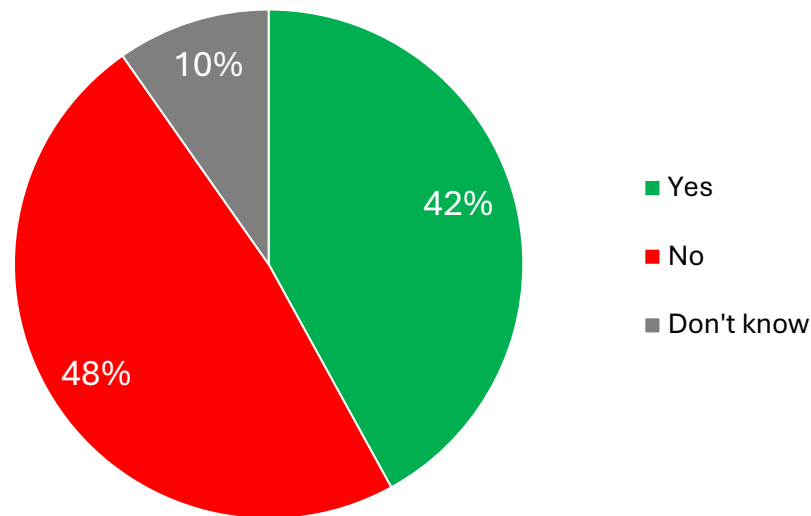
When asked whether the Service provides enough information about the risks that may exist in their community, just over two-fifths (42%) said yes. However, a slightly larger proportion (48%) did not feel that enough information was being provided, suggesting a gap in public engagement or awareness around local fire and rescue risks. A further 10% of respondents said they were unsure.

These results indicate that while many residents feel informed, there is a significant portion of the population who either do not receive or do not recall receiving information about local risks, highlighting a potential opportunity for the Service to review how it communicates risk awareness across different communities.

When asked whether the Service provides enough information about risks in the community, there were no significant differences across demographic groups, suggesting a consistent perception of information provision regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics.

Just under half of all respondents (48%) felt that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service provides enough information about risks in their community, while 46% did not and 6% were unsure. Views varied between the two samples: 55% of the online respondents said the Service provides enough information compared with 42% of

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the representative sample. However, a notable proportion in both groups felt that more could be done.

More than two-fifths (43%) of online respondents and almost half (48%) of the representative respondents said the Service does not provide enough information. This highlights a clear opportunity to improve public communications around risk.

Do you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (not including the loft)?
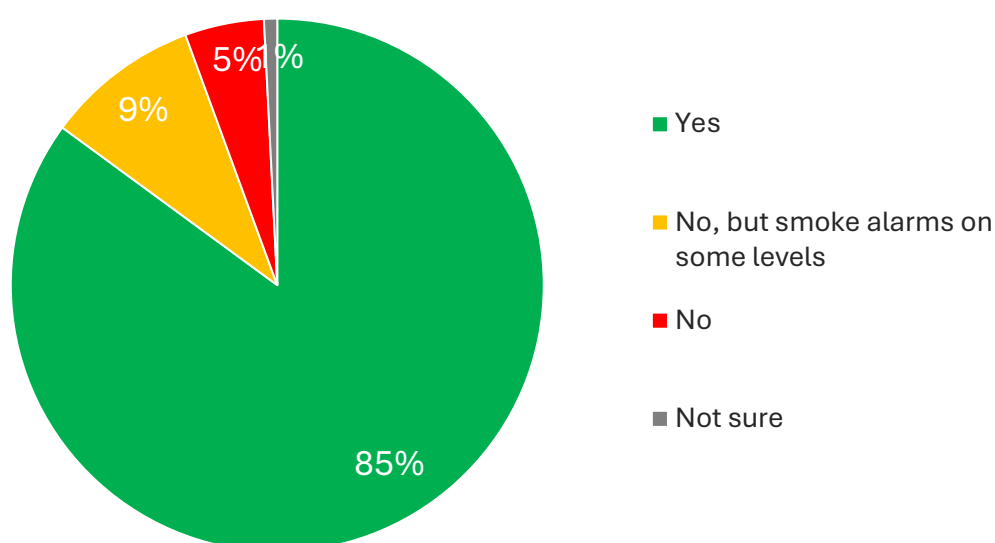
Most respondents (85%) reported having working smoke alarms on every level of their home, indicating strong overall compliance with this key fire safety measure. A further 9% said they had smoke alarms on some levels but not all, while 5% reported having no smoke alarms in place. Just 1% were unsure.

While the majority appear well-protected, the findings suggest that a small minority may remain at greater risk due to incomplete coverage or lack of alarms altogether.

Older people were significantly more likely to report full coverage, with nearly nine in ten (89%) of those aged 55 and over saying yes, compared to around three-quarters (72%) of 16–24s and just three in five (59%) of those aged 35–54. This may reflect that older residents are more likely to own their homes and have lived in them longer, allowing time for fitting additional alarms, or may be more safety-conscious due to increased vulnerability.

Younger respondents were also more likely to report only partial coverage, with around one in six (17%) of under-35s saying they had alarms on some levels but not all. People with a disability were more likely to report full coverage than those without (91% vs 84%), which could be linked to targeted fire safety support services available to vulnerable individuals. Geographically, residents of West Northamptonshire were more likely than those in North Northamptonshire to report having alarms on every level (91% compared to 79%), potentially reflecting differences in housing stock or the reach of fire safety campaigns across the two areas.

More than four-fifths of all respondents (84%) reported having working smoke alarms on every level of their home, consistent across both the representative sample (85%) and the online sample (84%), suggesting widespread compliance with this basic fire safety measure. However, 11% of all respondents (9% representative; 13% online) indicated they only had alarms on some levels, while a small minority 4% overall (5% representative; 3% online), said they had no smoke alarms at all. These figures suggest there is still an opportunity to promote the importance of having full coverage across every level of the home. It should also be noted that this question could potentially carry a degree of social desirability bias, with some respondents potentially overstating their level of compliance.

IF YES: How often do you test your smoke alarms?

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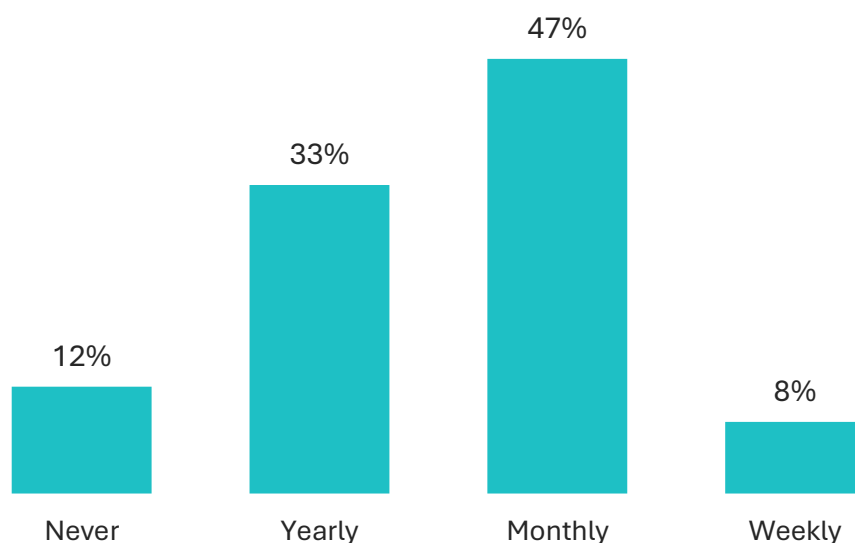
Among those who said they had smoke alarms, just under half (47%) reported testing them on a monthly basis, while 8% reported testing them weekly. This means that more than half of those with smoke alarms in their home align with recommended safety guidance. A third (33%) said they tested their alarms yearly, however, more than a tenth (12%) admitted to never testing their alarms, highlighting a potential gap between ownership and regular maintenance.

There were notable age-related differences in how often people tested their smoke alarms. While weekly testing was relatively uncommon overall, it was more prevalent among older respondents — with one in ten of those aged 35–54 (10%) and 9% of those aged 55 or over saying they tested their alarms weekly, compared to just 1% of those aged 16–34.

In contrast, younger people were the most likely to test their alarms monthly, with three-fifths (60%) of 16–34 year olds doing so, compared to just over two in five (42%) of 35–54 year olds and 45% of those aged 55+.

Just under half of all respondents (46%) said they test their smoke alarms monthly, in line with UK fire safety guidance. A further third (33%) test them yearly, while 12% admitted they never test their alarms. These patterns were similar across both the representative (47% monthly) and online (45% monthly) samples.

As with other questions using an interviewer led methodology, there may be some social desirability bias in these responses, with actual behaviours potentially differing from those reported.

How confident are you that Northamptonshire Fire and
Rescue Service will respond effectively in an emergency?
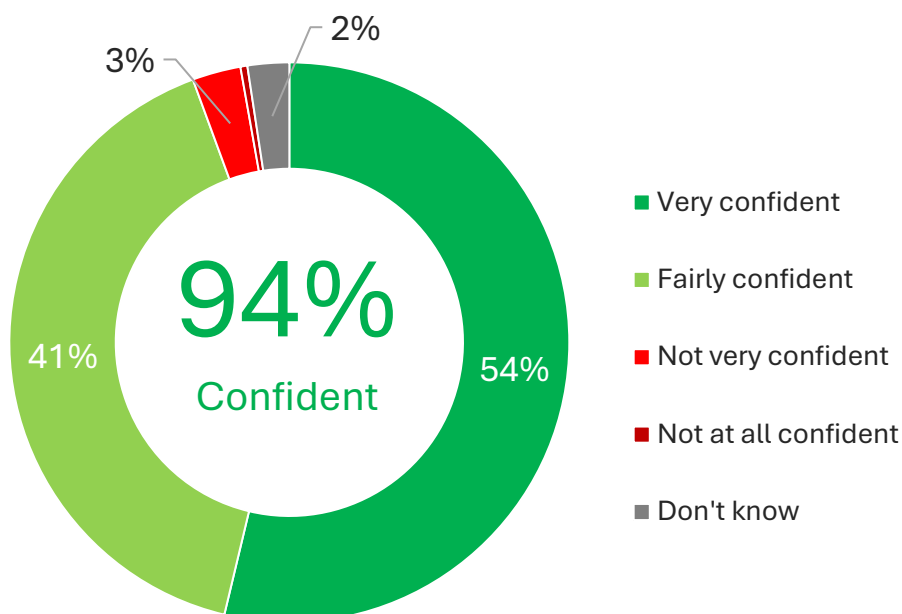
- Very confident
- Fairly confident
- Not very confident
- Not at all confident
- Don't know

Confidence in Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's ability to respond effectively in an emergency is extremely high. A total of 94% of respondents said they felt confident, with over half (54%) saying they were very confident and a further 41% fairly confident.

Just 3% of respondents said they were not very confident, and only 1% expressed no confidence at all. A small proportion (2%) said they didn't know. These results indicate a exceptionally strong level of public trust in the Service's emergency response capabilities and reflect positively on its perceived professionalism and reliability.

Confidence in Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's ability to respond effectively in an emergency was high overall, though there were some differences by age and experience with the Service. Nine in ten (90%) of 16–34 year olds said they were confident, which, while still an extremely strong result, was slightly lower than the 96% confidence recorded among both 35–54 year olds and those aged 55 and over.

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Direct interaction with the Service also played a role. Respondents who had contact in the past 12 months were more likely to say they were very confident (65%), compared to just over half (52%) of those with no recent contact. This suggests that personal experience with the Service may help to strengthen trust in its emergency response capability.

Overall, more than nine-tenths (92%) of all respondents said they were confident in the Service to respond effectively. The results were consistently high across both samples, with 94% of the representative sample and 90% of the online sample indicating confidence.
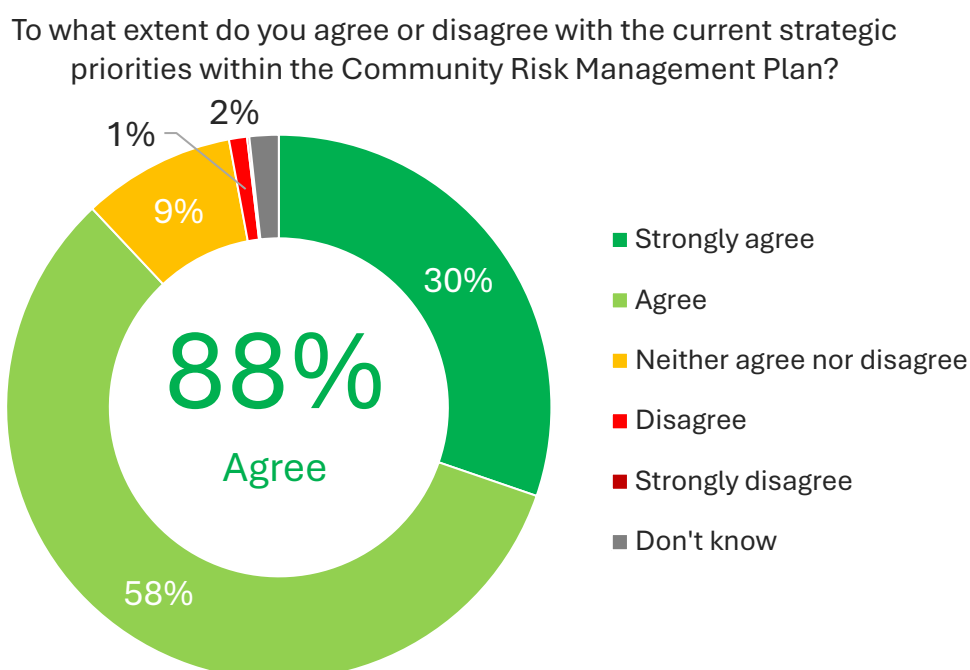
Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is a five-year strategy that sets out how the Service will identify and address the key risks and challenges facing communities across the county. The plan supports the organisation's overarching vision of *providing exceptional fire and rescue services for all*.

The CRMP is built around five strategic priorities:

- Prevention: Helping people stay safe from fire and other emergencies
- Protection: Improving fire safety in buildings where people live and work
- Response: Responding immediately and effectively to emergency incidents
- People and Culture: Continuing to develop and support the workforce
- Sustainability and Resilience: Managing and investing in the Service to ensure it is agile and fit for the future

The survey included a series of questions designed to understand public awareness of and support for the CRMP's key proposals and priorities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the current strategic priorities within the Community Risk Management Plan?

There was strong support for the strategic priorities set out in Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan. A combined total of 88% of respondents agreed with the priorities, including 30% who strongly agreed and 58% who agreed. Just 3% expressed disagreement, while 9% said they neither agreed nor disagreed and 1% were unsure.

These findings suggest that the overarching direction of the CRMP, spanning prevention, protection, emergency response, workforce development and long-term resilience, is broadly aligned with public expectations and enjoys a high level of public endorsement.

Support for the strategic priorities was strong across all age groups, though older residents were notably more likely to express agreement. Almost all respondents aged 55 and over (93%) agreed with the priorities, compared to around nine in ten (86%) of those aged 16–35 and 84% of those aged 35–54. While levels of agreement were high overall, this suggests that older residents may feel a slightly stronger alignment with the direction and focus of the plan.

A large majority of all respondents supported the current strategic priorities outlined in the CRMP, with 85% of all respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with them. This level of agreement was high across both sample groups, though slightly stronger among the representative sample (88%) than the online sample (81%).
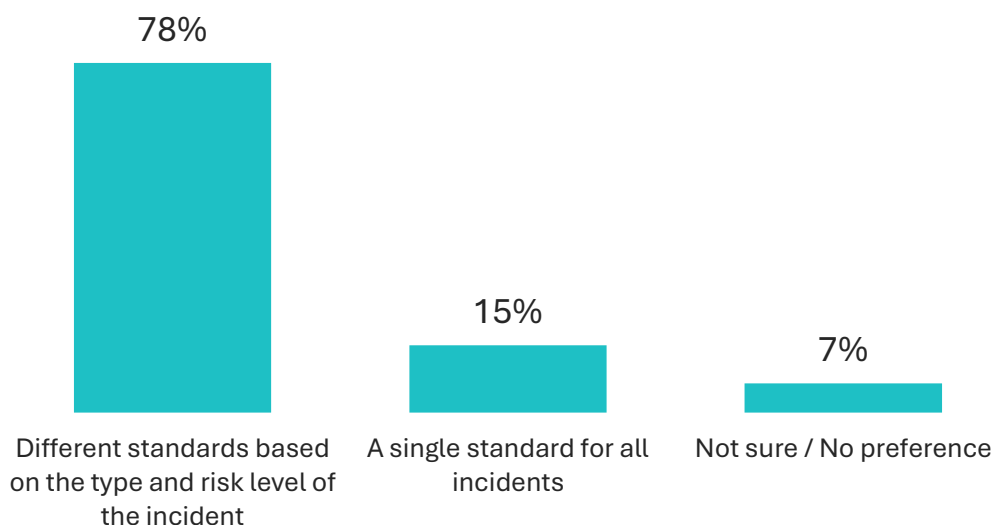
Although the majority of respondents were satisfied with the proposed strategic priorities, around one in four provided additional comments or suggestions. These responses highlighted a range of ideas and areas of focus. The main themes are summarised below:

Theme	Description
Education and awareness	Emerged as the most common theme, particularly around increasing fire safety education in schools and raising awareness among vulnerable groups such as older adults, children, and those with language barriers. Many felt more

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	regular school visits, public campaigns, and community events could help embed key safety messages.
Improved communication	Communication with the public was also raised frequently - respondents wanted more accessible information about the Service's role, response procedures, and preventative advice, especially around new and emerging risks such as electric vehicles, battery storage, and e-scooters.
Greater presence in the community	A greater presence in the community was encouraged, both in terms of patrols and involvement in local events. Some respondents noted that visibility and engagement would build trust and help identify local risks earlier.
Access and infrastructure issues	Access and infrastructure issues were also highlighted, with several residents pointing to problems such as irresponsible parking, which could block emergency vehicle access, and the risks associated with high-density housing or houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

As part of its revised Community Risk Management Plan, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is proposing to replace its current single response time target with a more risk-based approach. Instead of aiming to attend all incidents within a single standard time, the new model sets different response time standards depending on the type and severity of the incident for example, prioritising faster attendance at primary dwelling fires and life-risk road traffic collisions. The following question explored public views on whether this approach was appropriate:

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Which approach do you think is better for measuring how quickly the fire service should respond to incidents?

78% — Different standards based on the type and risk level of the incident

15% — A single standard for all incidents
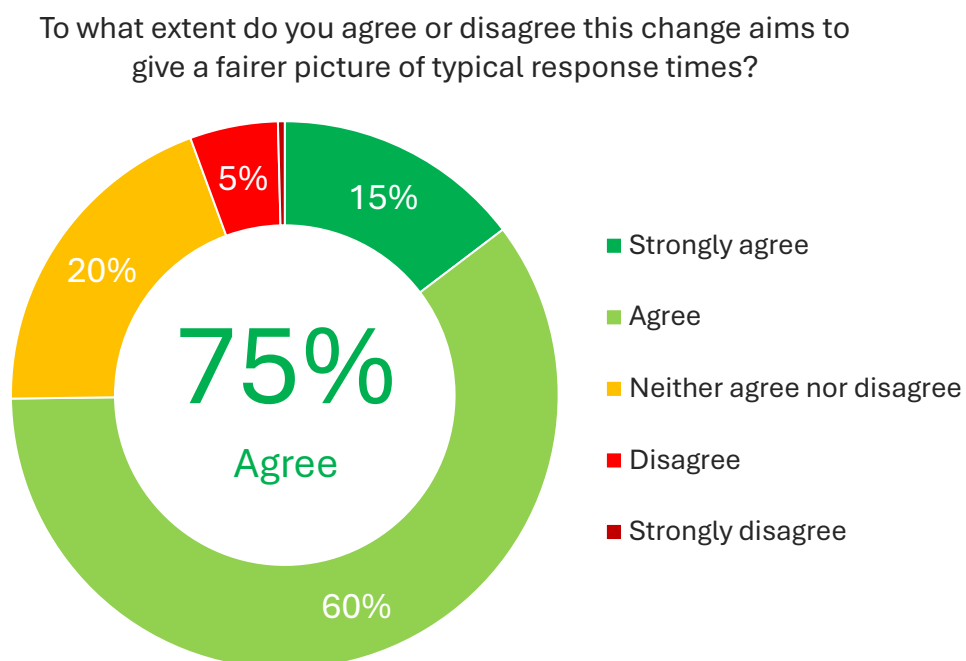
7% — Not sure / No preference

More than three-quarters (78%) supported the introduction of different response standards based on the type and risk level of the incident, rather than a single standard for all incidents. Just 15% preferred a single universal standard, while 7% were unsure or had no preference.

These findings suggest strong public endorsement of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's proposed move towards a risk-based approach to response times as set out in the CRMP. This more tailored model seems to align well with public expectations for a proportionate and effective use of resources.

While the majority of respondents supported using different response time standards based on the level of risk, support varied across age and ethnic groups. Support was strongest among older respondents, with 83% of those aged 55 and over and 80% of those aged 35–54 in favour. In contrast, around two-thirds (67%) of 16–35 year olds agreed, with a greater proportion of this younger group preferring a single standard for all incidents (28%, compared to 12% of 35–54s and 10% of 55+). Ethnic minority respondents were also less likely to agree with differentiated standards (61%) than white respondents (81%).

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More than three-quarters of all respondents (77%) preferred an approach that uses different standards based on the type and risk level of the incident. This view was shared by both sample groups - 78% of the representative sample and 76% of the online sample. Less than a fifth (16%) of all respondents favoured a single standard for all incidents (15% representative, 17% online). These results indicate strong and consistent support across both groups for a risk-based approach to measuring response performance.

Alongside the introduction of risk-based response standards, the CRMP also proposes a change in how response times are reported. Rather than using the current method of reporting average (mean) response times, which can be skewed by unusually long or short incidents, the Service is proposing to use median response times. This approach provides a more representative measure of typical performance, offering a clearer and fairer reflection of how quickly crews are likely to arrive at different types of incidents. The following question gauged public views on the fairness of this proposed change:

To what extent do you agree or disagree this change aims to give a fairer picture of typical response times?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Three-quarters (75%) agreed that changing the way response times are reported, moving from using the average (mean) to the median, would give a fairer picture of typical response times. This includes 15% who strongly agreed and 60% who

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agreed. One in five (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while just 5% disagreed with the proposal.

These results suggest that most residents support the use of median response times as a more representative and transparent way to report performance. The findings indicate an understanding that averages can be distorted by outlier incidents, and that a median figure may offer a more accurate reflection of how quickly the Service typically responds.

Views on whether the change aims to give a fairer picture of typical response times varied by area type. While overall agreement was high, those living in rural areas were less likely to agree (66%) compared to 77% of those in urban areas. This may reflect concerns about slower response times in rural communities and a perception that median-based reporting could mask local disparities.

Around three-quarters of all respondents (72%) agreed that the proposed change would give a fairer picture of typical response times. This included 75% of the representative sample and 69% of the online sample. Strong agreement was more common among online participants (25%) than among those in the representative group (15%).

As part of its changes to how response performance is measured, the CRMP also proposes adjusting the point at which response time is recorded. Under the new approach, the "clock" would stop when the first fire resource arrives at the scene, rather than specifically waiting for a fire engine. This change is intended to better reflect the speed at which assistance begins, particularly in cases where smaller or specialist units are deployed ahead of larger vehicles. The following question explored public views on this proposal.

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to measure response time from the moment the first fire resource arrives?
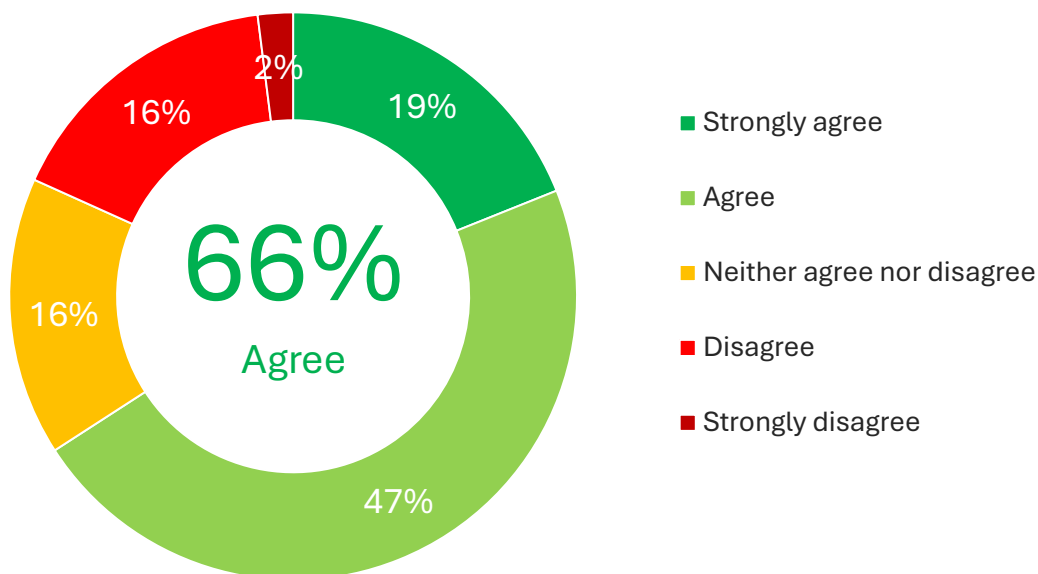

Two-thirds of respondents (66%) agreed with the proposal to measure response time from the moment the first fire resource arrives at the scene, with 19% strongly agreeing and 47% agreeing. However, a significant proportion either disagreed (18%), or neither agreed nor disagreed (16%).

Agreement with the proposal to measure response time from the moment the first fire resource arrives was stronger among residents in West Northamptonshire (69%) than those in North Northamptonshire (62%). A similar pattern emerged by area type, with those in urban areas more likely to agree (67%) compared to 58% of rural respondents. These differences may reflect greater satisfaction with response times in more densely populated areas, where resources tend may be closer at hand.

Just under two-thirds of all respondents (64%) agreed with the proposal to measure response time from the moment the first fire resource arrives. Respondents in the representative sample were more positive (66% representative vs 62% online). A fifth of all respondents (20%) disagreed with the proposal: 18% of the representative sample and 23% of the online sample.

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These findings suggest broad support for the proposed change, though also highlight a degree of uncertainty or concern among a third of respondents. The results may indicate the need for further public communication to clarify what constitutes a "fire resource" and to build confidence in the effectiveness of the wider range of emergency assets used by the Service.

Respondents who disagreed with any of the proposed changes to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) were invited to explain their views in more detail. Their comments highlight a number of recurring concerns and points of contention, summarised in the chart below:

% of SOR Disagreement Themes (n=133)
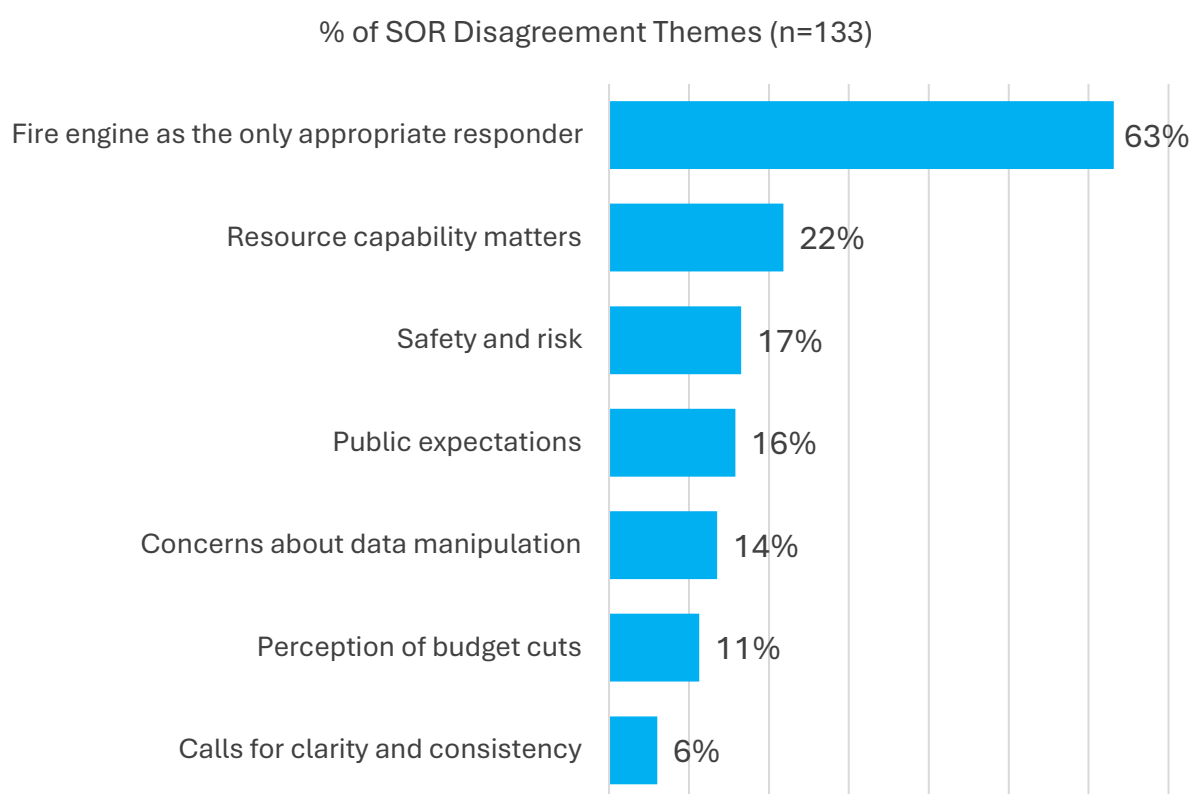
The most frequently raised concern, mentioned by nearly two-thirds (63%), was that only a fire engine is an appropriate responder to emergencies. Many felt that stopping the response time clock upon the arrival of a vehicle without firefighting capability, such as a response officer, misrepresents service performance and fails to reflect the actual moment help begins. Related to this, 22% highlighted the

importance of ensuring that the attending resource has the necessary personnel and equipment to manage the situation effectively.

Other concerns centred on safety, transparency, and public trust. Around one in six (17%) raised safety and risk issues, warning that sending under-equipped resources first could endanger both staff and the public. A similar proportion (16%) referenced public expectations, believing that the proposed changes could cause confusion and reduce confidence in the service. Additionally, 14% expressed concerns about manipulating data to present a more favourable picture, and 11% believed the proposals were financially driven and reflected broader budget cuts. A smaller group (6%) called for more clarity and consistency in how performance is measured and reported.

The following quotes highlight the themes in more detail both for both the representative and online cohort:

Theme: Fire engine as the only appropriate responder (84 mentions, 63%)

The majority felt that only a fully crewed and equipped fire engine should be considered as an appropriate first response. Other response cars or vehicles were repeatedly viewed as insufficient to deal with real emergencies.

Example quotes:

> *"The fire cannot be tackled until fire engines arrive."*

> *"If I have a fire I want an engine."*

> *"A car cannot put out a fire."*

> *"It should be the fire engine that is measured as that is the biggest reason someone calls the fire and rescue service."*

Theme: Resource capability matters (29 mentions, 22%)

Respondents emphasised that the clock should only stop when a resource arrives that is capable of directly managing the incident. Sending a resource that cannot actively resolve the emergency should not count.

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Example quotes:

> *"It would need to be something applicable to the situation."*

> *"The resource that arrives should be able to deal with it and if it can't then they haven't responded properly."*

> *"Measured on the first appliance that can help the situation."*

Theme: Safety and risk (22 mentions, 17%)

Concerns were raised that sending response cars or non-equipped resources increases risks to public safety and potentially to staff. Full fire appliances were seen as essential to handle unpredictable and serious incidents.

Example quotes:

> *"Human life safety should be first not the cost cutting."*

> *"We can't risk with less resourceful staff."*

> *"Fire engines need to be with personnel otherwise they can't do anything."*

Theme: Public expectations (21 mentions, 16%)

Some respondents highlighted that the public expects a fire engine to attend when calling 999. Sending lesser-equipped vehicles risks undermining trust and confidence.

Example quotes:

> *"When you call for a fire engine you expect one to arrive."*

> *"If a fire you need a fire engine."*

> *"If I reported a fire I want the most suitable resource not the quickest."*

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Theme: Concerns about data manipulation (18 mentions, 14%)

Some felt the proposal risked artificially improving response time statistics without reflecting the actual service being delivered. There was concern this would mislead the public and mask true performance.

Example quotes:

"I feel it is just a way for them to play around with numbers."

"Ticking a box for them and benefitting their criteria and statistics."

"This only makes the service look better not actually their functionality."

Theme: Perception of budget cuts (15 mentions, 11%)

A smaller number of respondents believed financial considerations were driving the proposals, expressing concern that cuts to resources or staffing could affect service quality.

Example quotes:

"It just sounds like budget cuts to me rather than cost management."

"They need more fire engines and staff to deal with the demand."

"Feels like a lesser or reduced service."

Theme: Calls for clarity and consistency (8 mentions, 6%)

A small minority called for clearer national standards and greater consistency in how response times are measured and reported.

Example quotes:

"Everyone needs to be trained in the same way across the nation so there is no confusion."

"It's very confusing – all forces should count from when main equipment arrives."

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The **online cohort** generally mirrored the representative sample in themes and frequency:

Fire engine as the only appropriate responder (92 mentions, 80%)

> *"If I am in need of a rescue I want a Fire appliance and a team that can save me. Not a person in a car that cannot."*

> *"It should 100% be when the engine arrives. A response car cannot tackle a fire."*

> *"An officer arriving in a car cannot extinguish a fire."*

> *"A fire resource is not necessarily a fire appliance. A cover officer cannot do anything but assess an incident."*

> *"The first arrival may not be the appropriate one in the particular circumstances. To be extreme, if a guy rolls up in his response car to a train crash you can hardly say that's an effective attendance so stop the clock."*

Resource capability matters (56 mentions, 48%)

> *"The first resource may not be able to have any meaningful impact."*

> *"Specialist appliances and officers can be limited in what they can do."*

> *"Having a response car arrive may lack the full range of capabilities of a fire appliance."*

> *"Simply some resources do not have the equipment to effect immediate rescues etc."*

> *"It should only count if a fire engine or specialist appliance arrive at the scene."*

Concerns about data manipulation (41 mentions, 35%)

> *"Stop lying to the public… stopping the clock here gives a false reality."*

> *"This approach is being used to 'skew' the numbers."*

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"It wouldn't be fair to the fire service, as a delay prior to arrival would reflect on those attending."

Public expectations (30 mentions, 26%)

"The public want a fire engine with the right equipment and trained personnel arriving, not someone to simply stop the clock."

"People don't understand medians – they just want to know how long it will take to arrive."

"The public would rather a fire engine turn up in 10 minutes like it currently does than someone on their own in 12."

"The public want to know when action to address the problem starts not when the first person arrives to look at what is happening."

Safety and risk (28 mentions, 24%)

"It is unsafe due to having a moral side which can cause the officer to put themselves in danger."

"You are putting them in a situation where the public will expect them to do something."

"Potential for individuals to be turning up to incidents by themselves and not being able to deal with it."

"Officers should not be attending jobs before fire engines."

"A life risk is a life risk. I wouldn't want to wait longer bleeding out in a RTC."

Perception of budget cuts (18 mentions, 16%)

"How come a fire engine had to be at an incident in less minutes than now years ago? I know… cuts!"

"This is nothing more than covering for the cuts to the fire service over the years."

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"The CRMP is leaving it up to interpretation by purposefully not mentioning pump numbers or strategic areas."

Calls for clarity and consistency (10 mentions, 7%)

"Should also be based on incident type."

"Generally if there's a fire we need a fire engine. Not a PC pleb."

"First priority should be an appliance not an observer/officer."
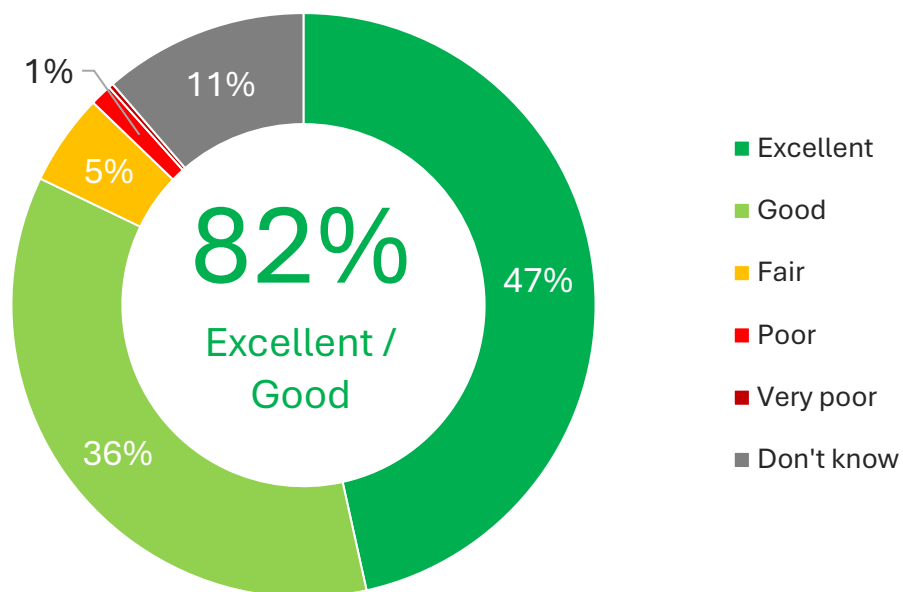
"If you can 'response standards' more specific, so can this be."

"This I feel should be the correct resource for the task."

Perceptions of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions of the force together with how informed they felt and if they had ever considered joining the Service:

In your opinion, how good of a job do you think Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service are doing?

1%

11%

5%

82%
Excellent / Good

47%

36%

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor
- Don't know

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Public perceptions of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service are highly positive. More than four in five respondents (82%) said the Service was doing an excellent or good job, including 47% who rated it as excellent and 36% as good. A small proportion of respondents (5%) felt the Service was doing only a fair job, while just 2% rated its performance as poor or very poor. A further 11% were unsure.

Perceptions of how well Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is performing were generally positive, though varied across demographic groups. Around nine in ten of those aged 35–54 (87%) and 55+ (88%) rated the service as doing an excellent or good job, compared to just under two-thirds (64%) of younger people aged 16–34. Younger respondents were also more likely to say the service was doing a fair job (14%) or to say don't know (18%), suggesting less certainty or familiarity.
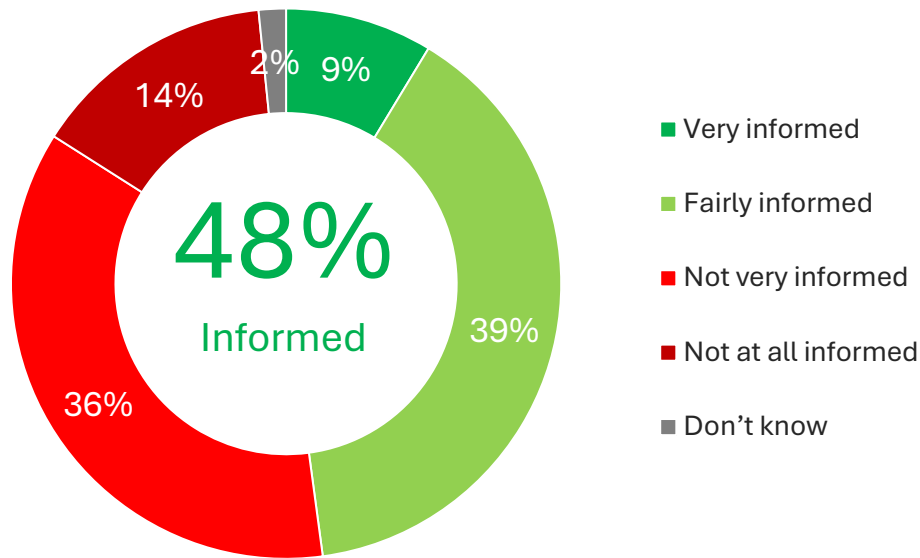
Differences were also observed by ethnicity, with ethnic minority respondents less likely to rate the service positively (62% vs 85% white), and nearly a quarter (23%) saying they didn't know. Interestingly, those with a disability were more likely to rate the service positively (89%) compared to those without (81%), indicating potentially stronger experiences or perceptions among this group.

Across all respondents, 8 in 10 (81%) felt that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is doing either an excellent (42%) or good (38%) job. This positive perception was slightly higher among the representative sample, where 82% rated the service positively compared to 79% in the online sample. Just 2% of all respondents rated the service as poor or very poor.

These results reflect a strong level of public satisfaction and trust in the Fire and Rescue Service, building on the confidence already shown in its emergency response capability. Respondents were invited to explain their reasoning. The vast majority of comments were positive, with many people praising the dedication of fire service staff and the reliability of the response. While most had no direct experience, their views were shaped by reputation, media reports, and second-hand accounts. A small number of responses did highlight concerns, particularly around resources and response times. The key themes are summarised below.

Theme	Sentiment	Description
Strong Trust and Respect for the Service	**Positive**	Many respondents expressed deep admiration for the fire service, citing the bravery and dedication of staff. Even without direct experience, people often assumed a high level of competence and professionalism based on the service's reputation and the nature of their role.
Positive Perceptions Based on Visibility and Media Coverage	**Positive**	Respondents frequently mentioned seeing the fire service out in the community or in the media, usually framed positively. Their presence at incidents, community events, or on social platforms helped reinforce confidence.
Good Personal Experiences and Word of Mouth	**Positive**	A significant number of comments referred to either direct experiences or those of family and friends. These interactions were nearly always described as efficient, professional, and reassuring, contributing to wider public approval.
Doing Well Despite Resource Constraints	**Positive**	There was a recurring view that the service performs well in the face of financial and staffing pressures. Many felt the Service was doing the best they could under difficult circumstances, with praise for maintaining high standards despite challenges.
Some Concerns About Response Times and Capacity	**Negative**	While the overall tone was positive, a minority raised concerns about delays in response, particularly in rural areas or during major incidents. A few mentioned that the service seemed stretched or in need of more staff, equipment, or funding to maintain its effectiveness.

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Overall, how well informed do you feel about what the fire and rescue service in your local area is doing?

- Very informed
- Fairly informed
- Not very informed
- Not at all informed
- Don't know

48% Informed

2% · 9% · 14% · 39% · 36%

While overall satisfaction with the Service is high, fewer than half of respondents (48%) felt well informed about what the Fire and Rescue Service is doing in their local area. This includes just 9% who felt very informed and 39% who felt fairly informed. By contrast, over a third (36%) said they did not feel very informed, and a further 14% said they were not at all informed. Two percent were unsure.

Perceptions of being informed differed by ethnicity. Half of ethnic minority respondents (50%) said they did not feel well informed, compared to one-third of white respondents (33%). This suggests there may be a need to review communication and outreach efforts to ensure all communities feel equally informed about the work of the service.

Just over half of all respondents (53%) felt informed about what the fire and rescue service is doing in their local area. Online respondents were more likely to feel informed (60%) compared with 48% of those in the representative sample. Conversely, 45% of all respondents felt uninformed, with the figure rising to 51% in the representative sample.

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These results highlight a potential communications gap. Although the Service is viewed very positively overall, many residents may not be fully aware of its local activities, initiatives, or preventative work, pointing to an opportunity to improve engagement and transparency at a community level.

Have you had any contact or interaction with the Service in the past 12 months?
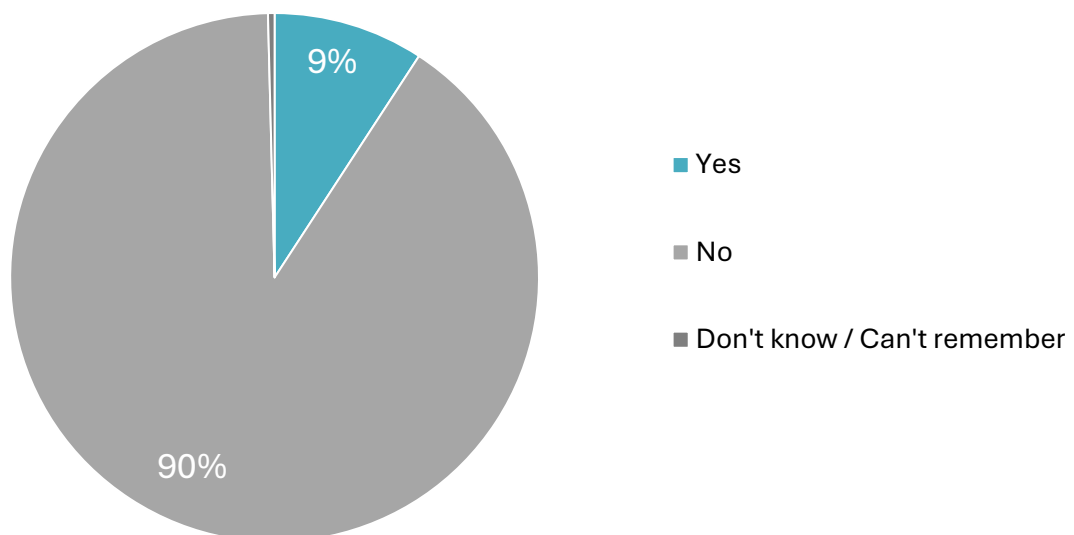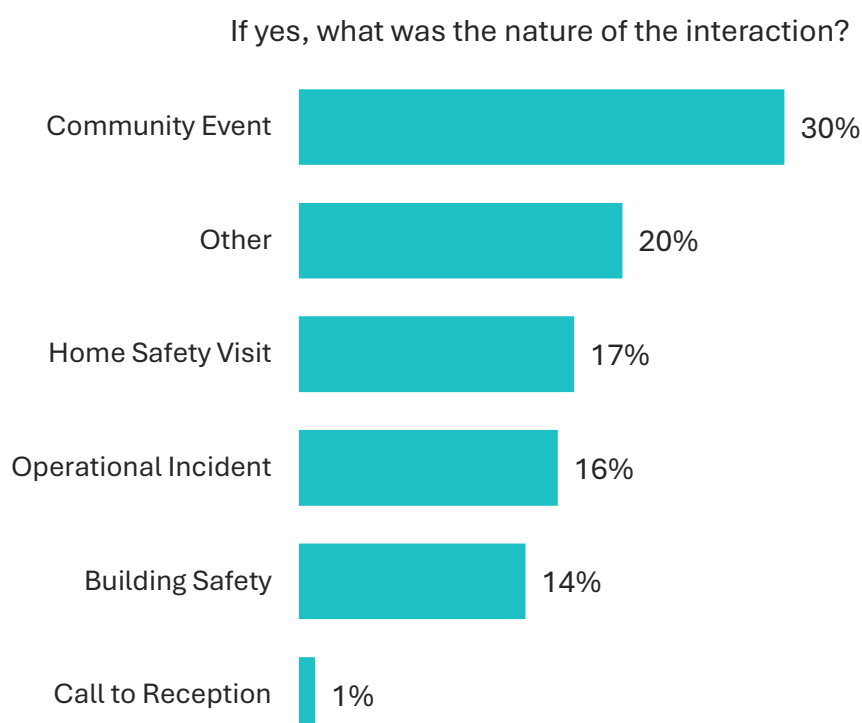

Only a small proportion of respondents (9%) said they had any contact or interaction with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the past 12 months. The overwhelming majority (90%) had not, with a negligible proportion unable to recall.

This limited direct contact is not unexpected given the nature of the Service's work, which often operates in the background unless an emergency occurs. However, it may also help explain why many residents reported feeling less informed - highlighting the importance of proactive communication, education campaigns, and community visibility to strengthen public understanding in the absence of personal experience.

It was noted that contact with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the past 12 months was reported more frequently by residents in North Northamptonshire,

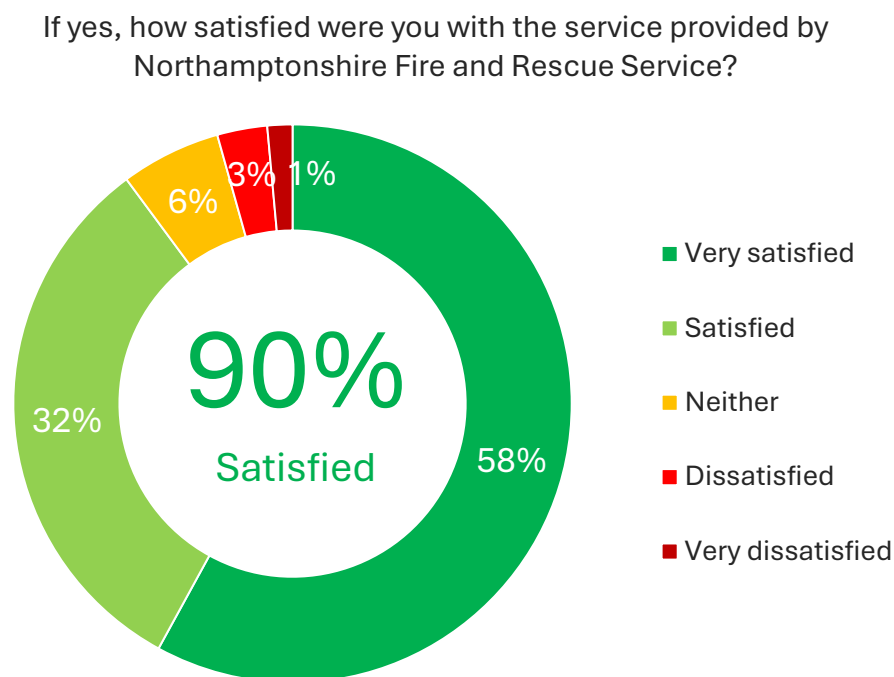NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
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with 13% saying they had some form of interaction, compared to just 6% in West Northamptonshire.

Furthermore, among all respondents, less than a fifth (17%) said they had some form of contact or interaction with the Fire and Rescue Service in the past 12 months. However, this varied significantly by sample type. Just 9% of the representative sample reported recent interaction, compared with 28% of online respondents. This suggests those taking part in the online survey may have had more direct experience with the Service, which could influence their responses.

If yes, what was the nature of the interaction?

Category	Percentage
Community Event	30%
Other	20%
Home Safety Visit	17%
Operational Incident	16%
Building Safety	14%
Call to Reception	1%

Among those who had contact with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the past 12 months, the most commonly reported type of interaction was attending a community event (30%). This was followed by 'other' interactions (20%), which include a variety of less common or forms of contact such as involvement with charity and visibility while outside. Home safety visits accounted for less than a fifth (17%) of interactions, while 16% related to operational incidents. Building safety interactions were mentioned by 14% of respondents, and just 1% had contacted the Service via a call to reception.

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Among all respondents who had recent contact with the Service, operational incidents were the most commonly cited form of interaction (33%). This was significantly more common among the online sample (46%) compared with the representative sample (16%). Community events were mentioned by 29% of all respondents, with little difference between the samples. Home safety visits were cited by 16% overall, appearing at similar levels across both groups.

If yes, how satisfied were you with the service provided by Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service?

Satisfaction with the service provided by Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is extremely high among those who had direct contact. Nine in ten respondents (90%) who had contact said they were satisfied with the service they received, including 58% who were very satisfied and 32% who were satisfied. Just 6% felt neutral, while only a small minority expressed dissatisfaction (3% dissatisfied and 1% very dissatisfied).

These results reflect a consistently strong public experience of the Service and reinforce earlier findings around confidence and overall perceptions. The high satisfaction levels across a range of interaction types suggest that, when members

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of the public do engage with the Service, the quality of service delivery is consistently recognised and appreciated.

Satisfaction levels were particularly high among the representative sample, with nine in ten (90%) expressing satisfaction compared with 83% among the online sample.

Interest in Joining the Fire and Rescue Service

As part of the survey, residents were asked whether they had ever considered working for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. This question aimed to explore perceptions of the Service as a potential employer, as well as to identify any barriers or opportunities for improving recruitment.
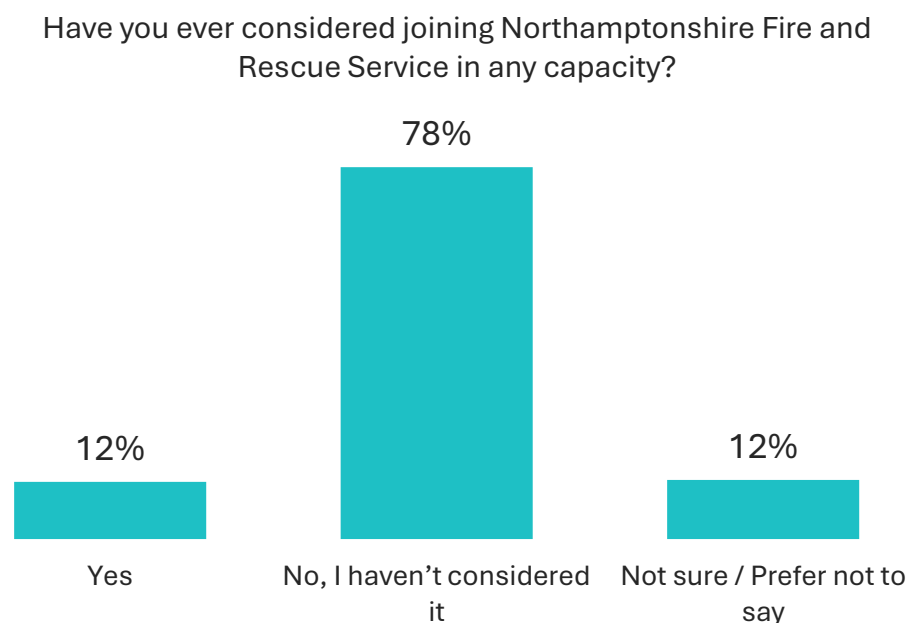
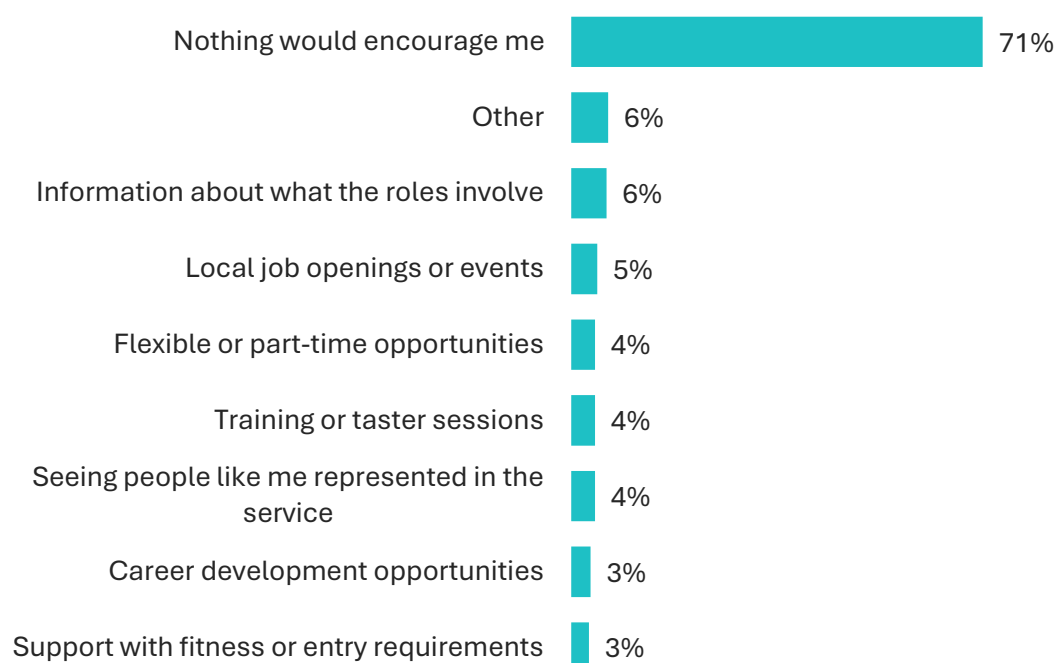Have you ever considered joining Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in any capacity?

When asked whether they had ever considered joining Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in any capacity, just over a tenth (12%) of respondents said they had. The majority (78%) said they had not considered it, while the remaining 12% were either unsure or preferred not to say.

Older respondents were more likely to say they had never considered joining Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in any capacity, with more than four in five people aged 55 or over (81%) and 80% of those aged 35–54 saying so, compared to just under seven in ten 16–34-year-olds (69%). In contrast, ethnic minority respondents were less likely to say they hadn't considered joining (63%), compared to 80% of white respondents, suggesting some differences in openness or awareness of opportunities within the Service across demographic groups.

Around one in ten respondents overall (10%) said they had considered joining Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in some capacity. This was higher among online respondents, where nearly one in five (19%) had considered joining, compared to 12% of those in the representative sample.

While the proportion of residents who have actively considered joining is relatively small, this is not unexpected in a general population survey. However, the result does suggest an opportunity for the Service to raise awareness of the range of roles available and to promote pathways into the organisation more widely.

What might encourage you to consider a role with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the future?

Nothing would encourage me	71%
Other	6%
Information about what the roles involve	6%
Local job openings or events	5%
Flexible or part-time opportunities	4%
Training or taster sessions	4%
Seeing people like me represented in the service	4%
Career development opportunities	3%
Support with fitness or entry requirements	3%

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When asked what might encourage them to consider a role with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the future, 7 in 10 respondents (71%) said that nothing would encourage them to do so.
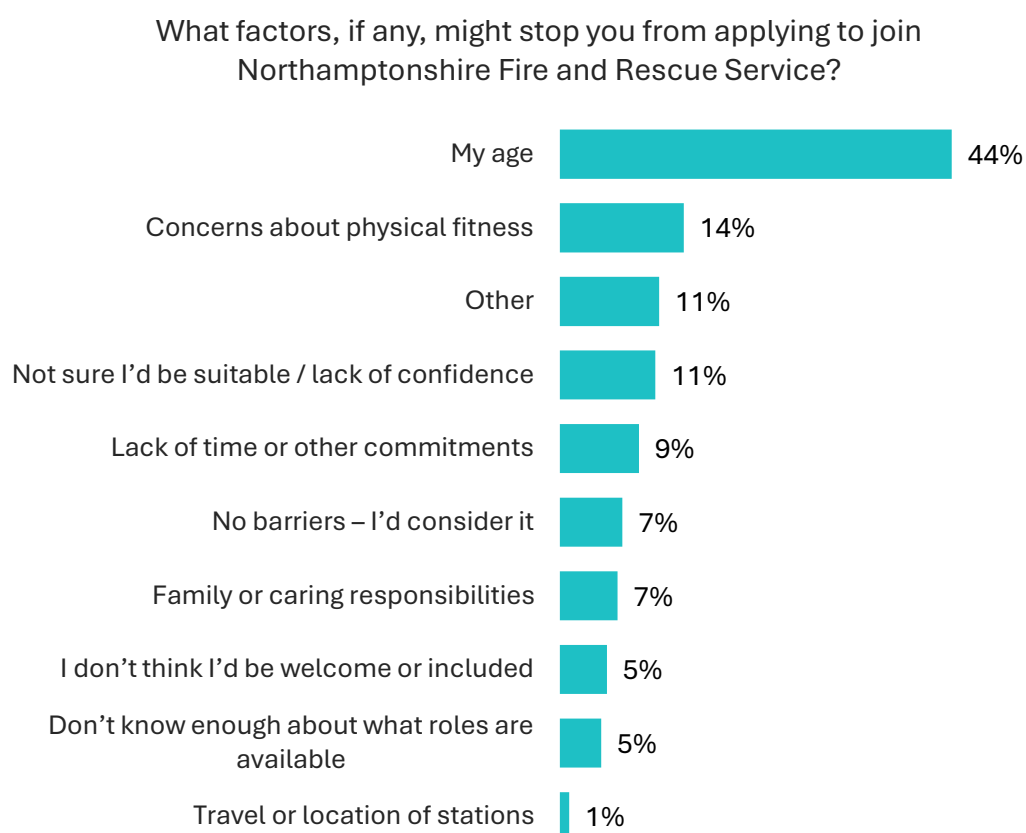
Among those open to the idea, several potential motivators were identified, though in relatively small numbers. These included clearer information about what roles involve (6%), local job openings or events (5%), and flexible or part-time opportunities (4%). Other suggestions included training or taster sessions, seeing greater representation, and support with entry requirements, each cited by 3 to 4% of respondents.

Younger people were notably more open to considering a role with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the future, with just over half (54%) of 16–34-year-olds saying that nothing would encourage them, compared to 70% of 35–54-year-olds and 83% of those aged 55 or over. Younger respondents were also more likely to be motivated by local job openings or events (13%) and seeing people like me represented in the service (13%).

Similarly, ethnic minority respondents showed greater openness, with only 46% saying nothing would encourage them, compared to 74% of white respondents. They were also more likely to highlight information about what the roles involve (20%) and greater representation within the service (15%) as encouraging factors. This points to opportunities to broaden engagement through inclusive communication and visible representation.

More than half of all respondents (56%) said that nothing would encourage them to consider a role with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service in the future. This view was more prevalent among the representative sample (71%) than the online sample (43%). Among those who did identify potential motivators, online respondents were more likely to mention specific incentives, including flexible or part-time opportunities (16% online vs. 4% representative), better information about what the roles involve (18% vs. 6%), and access to training or taster sessions (12% vs. 4%). Notably, those in the online sample who selected "other" (40%) frequently

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cited age as the main reason they would not consider a role, suggesting perceived age-related barriers may be a common concern.

What factors, if any, might stop you from applying to join Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service?

Factor	Percentage
My age	44%
Concerns about physical fitness	14%
Other	11%
Not sure I'd be suitable / lack of confidence	11%
Lack of time or other commitments	9%
No barriers – I'd consider it	7%
Family or caring responsibilities	7%
I don't think I'd be welcome or included	5%
Don't know enough about what roles are available	5%
Travel or location of stations	1%

When asked what might prevent them from applying to join Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, the most commonly cited barrier was age, selected by almost half (44%) of respondents. Other key concerns included physical fitness (14%), a lack of confidence or uncertainty about suitability (11%), and other personal commitments or time pressures (9%).

A small but notable proportion cited family or caring responsibilities (7%) or said they simply didn't think they would be welcome or included (5%). A further 5% said they lacked knowledge about available roles. Encouragingly, 7% of respondents said there were no barriers, and they would consider joining.

Barriers to joining Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service varied notably by age and ethnicity. Younger people (16–34) were more likely to cite lack of confidence

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(20%) and not knowing enough about available roles (15%) as deterrents, suggesting that clearer information and outreach could help address these gaps.

Those aged 35–54 was more likely to feel held back by age (28%) or concerns about physical fitness (23%), while more than four in five people aged 55 and over (81%) saw their age as a major barrier to joining.
Ethnic minority respondents were more likely to feel unwelcome or excluded (22%), compared to just 6% of white respondents. Despite this, they were more open to considering a role in the service overall, highlighting an important area where improved inclusion and representation efforts could have a positive impact.

The most common barrier amongst all respondents was age, cited by almost two-fifths (37%) overall (44% representative, 28% online). Concerns about physical fitness followed at 20%, again higher among the online sample (28% vs. 14%). Other barriers included lack of confidence (13%) and time commitments (12%), both more commonly mentioned by online respondents. Just 8% of all respondents said they would consider applying with no barriers.

These findings suggest that perceptions about age, physical demands, and personal circumstances may be significant deterrents, even among those with potential interest. The data points to a potential need for myth-busting, visibility of diverse role models, and clearer messaging around the range of roles, entry routes, and support available for prospective applicants.

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4.0 Focus Group Findings

4.1 Summary

Overall perception of NFRS was very positive across all four group with the vast majority agreement that the organisation and the service it delivers its hugely valued and appreciated. Not one participant held a negative perception of the service, and all said they had high level of trust and confidence in NFRS, especially when responding to emergency situations. This was despite low levels of awareness and personal experience.

Awareness of specific service delivery and knowledge of the organisation was very limited, with little understanding of any services other than firefighting and attending RTC's although most were aware of both with many indicating that RTC's was now the main demand for the service. Awareness was lower amongst ethnic minority participants, who also indicated the highest levels of interest in further information and engagement. Awareness was also low with the over 70's.

Drivers of confidence and trust varied with the key drivers being the positive perception of the service, personal experience, community engagement and the presence of local fire stations. The latter was particularly pertinent in Daventry and in several rural communities.

Personal experience with the service was limited across the groups, however the vast majority were very satisfied with the service they had received, with recall of emergency response from at least one person in each of the four groups.

Community engagement was discussed frequently with very positive feedback from those who had experienced the service at events such as open days and fetes. The interaction with children and young people in particular was warmly recounted by participants and had a positive impact.

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Many felt community engagement was a really important aspect for the service and the majority flet they should be involved in more work in the local community to help raise their profile and understanding of the service itself.

There was an even greater desire from the ethnic minority participants to see an increase in effective community engagement from the service. There was a willingness and perhaps for some, an expectation that the service has more of a presence at local cultural and religious events and venues. The over 70's voiced a similar message in terms of having a presence at events such as the day session at AGE UK where we held the group.

The majority of participants said that the workforce did not represent the local community with many that held the perception the organisation was male dominated and still seemed to have the image of "the old boys club". This was considered a significant barrier to female recruitment. There was no awareness of NFRS being led by a female Chief Officer and more promotion of this and female officers and staff in general was considered important.

Perceived levels of fitness and awareness of roles and responsibilities within the organisation were also cited a barriers to recruitment.

There was a strong argument across the groups that any effective recruitment or raising awareness of working for NFRS should be aimed at young people and educational establishments, especially when trying to achieve better diversity. Awareness of Home Safety Visits was low, especially across the over 70's and ethnic minority participants. Those that had experienced the service or had family members who had used the service spoke very highly of the service.

Ethnic minority attendees recognised there would be levels of concern from the older generations around the visits in terms of authenticity. Participants stated NFRS would need to be clear in its communications and promotion of the service to ensure greater take-up of the service.

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The over 70's group in particular were very interested in hearing more about the visits and cited AGE UK as the perfect place to learn more about the service or sign up to it. GP surgeries, libraries and community spaces were all seen as effective routes to promote the service.

Places of worship and community events were also cited as effective sources to promote the service.
More effective use of social media was cited as the most effective platform to increase interest and awareness of the service as many said they did not feel well informed. Ethnic minorities and the over 70's showed the most interest in knowing more about service. Equally, others said they were less interested in knowing more and that they were satisfied with their current understanding.

Improved communications were considered key to other areas including recruitment, better diversity and home safety.

A growing population, flooding and adverse weather and the A45 were all mentioned frequently as local concerns and associated with future risk. Rural participants also mentioned ASB, farming specific risk and the quality of rural roads as local concerns that they would like to see NFRS consider.

Overall, participants expressed high levels of trust in the fire and rescue service, underpinned by the belief that operational staff act quickly, competently, and with integrity. However, while this trust remained intact, participants also raised important questions about how strategic intentions would be delivered in practice, with some expressing scepticism about resourcing, visibility, and the motivations behind proposed changes.

The CRMP was seen as broadly positive, but participants sought greater transparency about implementation, particularly in relation to people and culture. While most agreed that inclusivity and modernisation are important, several challenged the emphasis on representation over capability. Others highlighted the need for better communication about the full breadth of NFRS's role and the potential of technology, partnership working, and regulation to improve outcomes – the driver

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for this was a starting position of high levels of public confidence in the service and an appetite to understand more.

When discussing response categories, there was general support for prioritisation in principle, but participants expressed concern that it might be driven by cost-cutting or lead to slower responses for less urgent incidents. Despite this, the public retained strong confidence in the judgement and dedication of frontline staff.

Participants were divided on the use of the mean or median for reporting response times. Some felt it would aid comparability with other emergency services, while others questioned its clarity and purpose. Similarly, the proposal to stop the clock upon arrival of an initial responder prompted nuanced debate, with some recognising its efficiency benefits and others perceiving it as an accounting mechanism rather than a meaningful operational improvement.

Taken together, the findings show that the public's confidence in NFRS remains strong. However, participants emphasised the importance of clear communication, consistent community presence, and transparency in performance reporting. These will be key to ensuring the public understands and supports the Service's future direction.

4.2   Methodology/ sample

Resident engagement sessions were held between 6th May 2025 and 13th May 2025, with groups taking place at various venues across Northamptonshire and included an online group:

- Tuesday 6th May -Online: 6.30pm- 8pm
- Wednesday 7th May - Daventry Fire Station 6.30pm- 8pm
- Thursday 8th May - Rushden Fire Station: 6.30pm- 8pm
- Tuesday 13th May – Age UK, Northampton: 11am – 12.30pm

Three groups were recruited using a telephone methodology with residents called using a data set that was randomised but which focussed on each of the three geographical areas. In addition, specific quotas were agreed with NFRS to ensure those who have previously been less engaged were invited to a group, with the online group weighted towards rural residents, the Daventry group was weighted towards females and ethnic minorities (seen as being underrepresented within NFRS) and the Rushden group included ethnic minorities only.

In addition, AGE UK kindly allowed SMSR researchers to facilitate a group with the over 70's in Northampton.

Twelve residents were recruited for the first three groups to ensure a healthy attendance and account for the natural attrition when recruiting public groups. AGE UK kindly supported the recruitment for the over 70's group.

A total of 40 residents participated across the four groups.

Each group profile is detailed here:

Online (n=10)

	Gender	Age	Rural/Urban
1	Female	24	Rural
2	Male	61	Rural
3	Male	56	Rural
4	Female	63	Rural
5	Male	34	Rural

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6	Male	39	Rural
7	Female	48	Rural
8	Male	37	Urban
9	Female	31	Urban
10	Female	45	Urban

Daventry (n=9)

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
1	Female	38	White British
2	Female	41	White British
3	Female	43	White British
4	Female	44	Black British
5	Female	25	White European
6	Female	33	White British
7	Female	23	White British
8	Male	25	White British
9	Male	38	Black British

Residents who identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community and those living with a disability were also represented within this group.

Rushden (n=9)

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
1	Male	38	Asian
2	Male	18	Black British
3	Male	58	African
4	Male	29	Asian
5	Male	37	Asian
6	Female	25	Mixed
7	Female	31	Black British
8	Female	61	Asian

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9	Female	39	African

Northampton (n=12)

All participants were aged between 70 and 85 years old and we had eight women and four men in total.

All residents were recruited one week before the group took place and were sent an email containing details of the group, including date, time and how to find the venue. Residents were also given a reminder call one hour before the group to ensure that they were still able to attend.

Each attendee was provided with a £50.00 payment to compensate them for any costs incurred and as a thank you for their participation. Incentives are distributed in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

A donation of £250 was also made to AGE UK Northampton for hosting us on the day.

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4.3   Key Findings

Perceptions

Attendees across all four groups held Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) in high esteem, with the vast majority that said they considered the service highly valuable and only had positive feedback and perceptions of the service. This, despite many admitting they had little knowledge of the service specifically.

Many perceived the service and its staff as reliable, essential and brave and there was a high level of confidence in the service, *"if you need them, you know they will be there"*.

> *"They are good, they save lives. I think because nothing bad has happened to us in our job, area or our homes, we think they are just there, but I think positive about them. They save lives, they are amazing. I have nothing bad to say about them".*

> *"My perception of them is a good one, whether that's because, I don't want to glamourise it, but it's almost a hero like status, they're the good guys or girls".*

> *"I'm happy that if I needed to phone them, I would phone them up and I just believe they would be here, I've got no reason to believe they won't. I believe they're well trained and fully skilled and would deal with whatever ridiculous situation I got myself into".*

> *"My perception of the fire service, it's not something I think about very often, but I have a positive perception of them. I remember seeing on the news things about Grenfell and all sorts of things, fires in the news and stuff and I'd think 'thank god we have a fire service that can deal with these kinds of things, and it makes you appreciate the local service".*

> *"It's interesting that none of us know much about the fire service, all our perceptions are positive, and we all think they'd be there quickly, but you wouldn't say the same with the police. Even though we know a lot more about them, so it feels like although you know less, general perception is,*

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whether it's the hero thing, whether it's they come in and save the day, but actually, none of us doubt that they'd be there and it's a great service."

"I can only speak sort of positively really, but I think that's a lot of people have a positive perception of them because they're not like the police force, which more often than not are telling you not to do things, the fire service are there for, only really for a positive reason and that's to help you. I can only speak highly of them really; they are local hero's and provide a fantastic service".

Awareness of Service Delivery

There was little awareness of specific services that the NFRS deliver beyond putting out fires and this was significantly more apparent with the ethnic minority and over 70's attendees. There was a minority that did mention other services with RTC's, and flooding mentioned the most frequently.

"They are quite helpful. I've not had to use them directly but from what you can see, they react to situations quite quickly, like accidents on the A45 or on main roads or whatever, even if there's a fire or whatever".

"I think they do a good job. Nobody sings a song about a bad rep for the fire department. I reckon they do a good job; it's not just fire; it's fire and rescue with water as well as road accidents".

"Not an opinion as such but I think I see them more as rescue rather than fire because I think I see them more at RTAs and that sort of thing rather than fire. I don't think we have many fires in Northamptonshire, do we but I think there's plenty of RTAs all the time so that's when I think they come into their own".

"As far as what they offer, we've already mentioned fire and RTCs. On top of that, you've got sort of flood response, animal rescue, technical rescue, I know they help with the police on some of the large jobs, sort of missing person cases and that side of things they'll step in on that. And then you've

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got their sort of community outreach, which is like putting their fire alarms and doing sort of fire surveys and help from that side of things".

"I know they put out fires and I guess they get cats out of trees and chop you out of a car if you have a big crash. I don't know a huge amount, I'm comfortable there may be things I don't know".

Fire stations

The Daventry group frequently mentioned their local fire station and the majority agreed that this added to their levels of confidence and positivity towards the service. It was described as reassuring, increased feelings of safety and provided a sense of connection with the service.

"Again, I haven't had any direct experience, I don't really know what I think. It's not negative, it's positive, I think having the fire station in Daventry, when you drive past you see people here, whereas the police station you never do and it's locked up, so that's a positive, you feel it's part of the community".

"I live just across the way, so I see them quite regularly in and out and see the engines leaving as well. It's really nice having the station in the town, you feel a bit closer to them".

"It's very reassuring to have the station here, I think it's a very positive thing and when the children were little and they did cubs and that, they've come around and they'd invite the groups round and they'd look around the fire engine which I thought was quite nice. I don't know what the kids thought, I didn't ask".

"I live on the other side of town but it's nice knowing the station is here. I grew up in a house right next to a fire station somewhere else, so it's nice, comforting to know it's about".

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A couple of rural residents also mentioned the importance of having a community fire station in their local area and again how it made the community feel safer and ensured residents had a better relationship and understanding of the service.

> *"I think having that kind of local fire station is good because then A) they've got the communication, they've got the local knowledge of the roads because where we are, there's a lot of roads that you don't want to take a fire station down, a fire station? A fire truck down. And they'll know where some of these places are, whereby if you have it all centralised, I'm sure I know sat-navs are great these days, but they're not going to find some of the places around and again knowing how to get there sat-nav doesn't know that 'OK, this fire truck doesn't go down this lane'. So, I think that's one of the big things about having these local dotted out fire stations is really, really good".*

> *"We are from a village just outside Daventry, and we've got a community, I don't know what the technical name is, like a community fire station, semi manned or volunteers manned. They've been absolutely fantastic. It's nice to know that they're there. I mean, we've never had to call on them. Thank God, even with my cooking. But the actual, the fact that they've been there, they helped with the villages. We've had a couple of fires in the village, flooding. We've had flooding, they're there and they sort it. I mean, the village is like a traditional village anyway, everyone helps each other out. So, I think, yeah, definitely they wouldn't, we wouldn't be there without them".*

Personal experience

Whilst, few had any direct experience of the fire service in terms of an emergency, those that had, were very satisfied with the service they had received. It was clear that positive personal experience was a key driver to higher levels of confidence and trust in the service. Most highlighted the prompt response times and the professionalism of the crews.

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"There was a fire round where I work in Milton Park and I could see the fire and the way they were dealing with it was great, because they diverted the traffic and handled the public safety. That does impress you".

"A couple of months ago my husband decided to light a fire in the garden and I think within seconds of the smoke going up, you guys were there. And when I was a teacher and I set the science lab on fire a couple of times, you've been there. So, I've always had a positive perception of having the fire service here and knowing that somebody is going to turn up and even if it's a false alarm or something like that".

"I phoned them probably last summer. Where we are, we look out over a valley and some kids would set like to all the wood that had piled up under one of the road bridges from flooding and they attended, I think about 12 minutes to attend. It took about 4 or 5 minutes to put it out, so you know it felt fairly reasonable to be fair, as far as the attendance time goes. Considering the Corby station would be the closest and for me to drive, that would be, albeit not under blue light, but that's probably a 10-minute drive, so the fact they respond and got here within 10 minutes or 12 minutes, I thought that was actually pretty reasonable all things considered. I sort of watched from a distance, you know, it was, I saw what went on from probably 600 metres away so I didn't sort of directly deal with them, but it was turn up, right, straight out, hose out within 30 seconds of arriving, you know, there was water or whatever they were using to go onto the fire and it was out. So yeah, it was pretty quick. Pretty responsive. They seemed in general very professional."

"There was a fire in a house over the road, the fridge caught fire. They had to come out, I can't remember what sort of timescale it was, but they were quick. And when you're watching, you see generally massive efficiency. You can tell it's well-rehearsed, it's a formula 1 pitstop when they get out the lorry, everyone just gets on and does what they have to do. I think most people's and certainly my perception of them is very much like x said at the beginning, you just kind of expect them to be there when you call, if you're in a position where you have to make that call, you just expect them

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to be there and you know the only time we've ever had to make that call, they were and it was certainly a reasonable timescale and damage was minimal".

"I say I've not had direct experience but there's an elderly residential home in Wellingborough which is predominantly Asian backgrounds, the lift used to be really rubbish and we got stuck in there once, so they came in and took us out. I was the emergency call, but other than that. It took about half an hour but me stuck in a lift on the ground floor, if someone's house is on fire, you kind of understand. Yeah, longer than I thought but like I said, I think you have to assess the priority of the situation. If someone's house is on fire and there's people inside. They ask you any questions, if you've got any health conditions or whatever and stuff like that, there was that duty of care. I felt comfortable that they'd evaluated the situation".

"I'm possibly one of the only people here that's called out Daventry fire service, they turned up quite quickly and saved my kitchen. I was in the garden with the dog, and I heard the smoke alarm go off, but yes, they were very quick, and they gave me a justified bollocking for wasting their time".

Community Engagement

More residents said that they had experienced the service through community events such as school or village fetes and all were really positive about the interactions, they had experienced, especially with regards young children and the impact the service had on their children and other family members. Many felt community engagement was a really important aspect for the service and the majority flet they should be involved in more work in the local community to help raise their profile and understanding of the service itself.

"I have seen them as well when I've been to school fetes, they did a particularly good demonstration up at Danetre School where they were showing kids how to cut people out of cars. The kids loved it, and the adults were quite entertained, it was informative but also good, that's really

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the only time I've seen them in action. They'd got the engine there so the kids could go into it and turn the sirens on, so it was good".

"When x mentioned about cubs and kids and I remember I have been here before, it was an education thing and they showed the kids around but they did something which I did think was really interesting, they were talking to all the kids and the parents saying 'have you got an escape plan for a fire?'. It was that education, it was something I'd never thought of, if you're stuck upstairs, how would you get out your house? And I did go home and think about 'right okay, so each room, what would we do?'. I've forgotten it a bit now, but it was really a bit of a wake-up call to think actually, if we're upstairs and there's a fire, you need to have this thought before anything happens".

"Obviously like when I was at school and stuff they'd come in for open days and careers fairs maybe and they were really interesting; they should do more of this as it was really impactful".

"Interaction with the fire team, the first time I managed to talk with them was on Stanwick Lake, I took my children there in the summertime and they were doing some education, fire trucks were there, and it was great, it doesn't happen often enough".

"They're the ones that you see out at the low fetes and festivals and they're always there with the fire engines and the bits of machinery, the quad bikes and all the bits with the flashing lights and the sirens to let the kids come over and, you know, you kind of see them and think actually, yeah, it's a great PR stunt, really".

"My wife has just come in and she's a schoolteacher and she said they've been to her school as well".

"Interaction wise I've got two children and my son, he's been to the fire station, the local fire station and had a really good time, you know, met the fire people there. They also do every year they'll do an open day, which is great. So, it's nice about to put like a friendly face to the service and sort of

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see things more from there side of things, they'll put on demonstrations with, you know, the hoses. Jaws of life and they've got wrecks of cars, which they'll, they'll show people what they have to do, which is great for everyone, really, not just the kids to see".

"We live in Harpole which they do a scarecrow trail there every year and like there's a fire engine, they can never guarantee that it's going to be there, I think in case it's obviously needed for a call out, but they'll try and come in over the weekend and kids can go and sit in it and, you know, have conversations. They don't do any big demonstrations or anything, but the kids are just excited to sit in it and obviously it's really good for them and I know they visited my son's school and again he came home excited about 999, he knows what to do in that respect, he knows what to do if there's a fire …but yeah, really, all all-positive things."

"The fire service has been to this session before and I have met them at other community events, and they are always really lovely".

There was an even greater desire from the ethnic minority participants to see an increase in effective community engagement from the service. Many did feel there was a disconnect between the fire service and their local communities, this was most frequently voiced by Asian attendees.

It was argued that if the service wanted to improve awareness and understanding and general relations with other communities, then they needed to be in the community more frequently, and a more targeted approach was said to be required. Many said they never see the service at cultural or religious events or venues, which many felt was an obvious starting point. Attendees argued this would also increase interest in joining the service, accessing the service and understanding of the service.

"I think that time we had a talk with them, and they put my kids in the trucks to take pictures. They were talking about wanting to do a family fun fair, a local event and I said, 'why don't you turn up more socially then so people

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can start seeing you more often and they'll start recognising you as always being there'. They said it's their purpose so the mindset of wanting to be there but they're not going where people can be open with them. That's what I can tell you, if they do things with different cultures or where the community things happen. We do the biggest festival, with the big temple, a whole diverse community come, so that kind of event we need to see your presence".

"If you want to understand the community, understand their culture and that's the point when people start opening up with you. You have to start engaging whether it's Indian culture, Eid, Muslin culture, the people who do the carnivals. In the carnivals when you start getting the Africans for, if you start engaging with the community to be a part of it then people start seeing you more and they're going to start recognising you more".

"I've never had any direct contact with the fire station either or the services, but you mentioned community and me personally, when I think of community, I don't actually think of them in that sense. I always think the police are normally there and like you said, when there's events and stuff, when you're at the temple, the police do usually turn up. You never really see the fire and the rescue service".

"If you want to bring that community, lets understand their culture. They don't come to you, you go to them, you organise the event, let's bring an open day for people to visit, different cultures. People will eventually start understanding you, 'that's a fun job' - and show them some progression as well, if you're going to engage the kids of tomorrow".

"Are they visiting a mosque? Only in a fire? Or are they visiting a temple? How are you going to know if you're not going to that culture? The temple has been there for the last 25-30 years; did you visit any time? You can't say people aren't there, you've not gone to the community, you ignore that community. You should be there".

"I haven't really had an emergency where I've had to call the fire brigade, I see them around school, sometimes you get them handing out leaflets in

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college, but I don't think they're really known in our community. I just feel you never see them socially, you see paramedics about and you see police officers in the town, but you never really see fire and rescue anywhere. So, unless you've had that emergency and you've had to call them up and say 'look, this has happened', you're never really speaking to them. In that kind of way you don't really view them much as part of the community, they're just people kind of there, so I don't know, I think if they were to show up more in social events like you were saying, people would start to humanise them more, they're not just people who are doing a service, they are still going down, unloading the dishwasher when they get home and stuff, they've got their own lives".

"An open day or you could come to the temple, and you can come and explain. You can have an interpreter because elderly people don't know English, so you can translate so they can understand what happens when you have a fire. You can explain it to them, so an interpreter you need".

This led to discussions around the importance of educating those that live in new and emerging communities more effectively. Cooking and kitchen safety in particular was mentioned.

"I think they are part of the community, and they do save lives, I personally haven't had any contact with them but as the guys said, the women are around the kitchen most of the time. In case there's a pan on fire and you don't know how to tackle it but it would be nice if they go to the community and activities and just basic training to some of the family, it can be children above 18 and then you would know which kind, if you maybe have a chip on the fire and if you can use a blanket to protect it, which cylinder you're supposed to have. It could be in the workplace, maybe you're not trained, and you have to call the fire brigade, so this basic training can give you a clue before they arrive".

"It could be even water; it could be water. For instance, maybe when the tap is on and you're asleep. I haven't got personal contact with them, but I was away in Africa and my children didn't know how to turn the water off in

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the whole house and the ceiling came down because it was leaking. They don't know who to contact, instead of them calling the fire brigade or the police, they called me in Africa, and I didn't know what to do or how to help them, but I think we got it under control, they managed to turn the water off. It would be a minor thing but the whole ceiling came down whilst they were in bed".

"I think with basic training in schools, in culture whenever we have cultural activities they can turn up and give us basic training and stuff".

"When you educate the people to engage with them, because don't forget, the way our community is, the woman is in the household, they are at potential risk. This is where they can get basic safety to some of the women because not everyone has been born and raised here, they come from a different mindset. Giving that basic safety, they can spread more awareness in the community".

Recruitment/ diversity

With the exception of the over 70's group, the groups discussed levels of interest in joining NFRS and any potential barriers that currently exist. Participants also talked about their perceptions of the current workforce and its lack of representatives.

The majority acknowledged that the workforce did not represent the local community and whilst this was not an issue for a minority who argued "that as long as the best person fits the role" or "if they save my life I don't care what sex or colour they are", many argued that the current organisational set-up was in itself a barrier to recruitment. This was heavily driven by female respondents.

"It's [FRS] male dominated, and it would put you off".

"It's scary because in the news there's all that stuff going on about how the male teases the female with all the texts they've been sending, and it was all on the news. I think that's off putting because they see them completely different, not as a work colleague, they see them as a female, and they target a female".

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"As a female, I would definitely think twice about going, you hear that they are sexist, and it still feels like the old boys club".

"It would put a dampener on things, the fact it still looks like an old boys club, ot only men can do it but that is still what a lot of people think".

"I think a lot of the problem with the fire service in my opinion is it's still the hierarchy, it's the old men's club at the top, that's how I perceive it. All very secretive and it's all too, almost mason like is how I imagine it to be, and it may not be, but that's my perception of it".

"Again, it's probably a stereotype but you automatically think of a very male orientated service, whether that's true or not now, whether it's a bit more diverse".

"Other than that, I am aware the fire service as a whole, not just Northants, is taking stick about their macho image and lack of diversity within recruitment and retention of particularly women but like I say, from my knowledge, it's not a Northants problem, it's a wider problem across the service. I think it was Hampshire that had a lot of problems".

"Again, it's probably a stereotype but you automatically think of a very male orientated service, whether that's true or not now, whether it's a bit more diverse".

"No, I wouldn't say it affects the way I think about the fire service or the local service anyway, we've got the same problems in the police, we've got the same problems in the military, we've got the same problems in any of these public service organisations because they're historically male and perceived to be quite macho".

"It might be, but it's a case of when people talk about representation, if you only ever see pictures of male fire fighters, than in your head, it's subconsciously, not consciously, it's a male role, so if you see the lady who let us in, if you see female fire fighters and you see on social media putting posts out, you've got male, you've got female, people from all different ethnic backgrounds, you're more likely to go 'oh yeah, that's me'. But as a

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girl, it wasn't even on my radar as a child growing up, back in my day it was you're going to get married or be a secretary. Fortunately, times have changed".

"Maybe those roles need to be slightly, I don't know who's in those jobs but younger, tuned in people who know what their peers, what would appeal to their peers to get them on board. Is it TikTok? Whatever it might be. They need something to get out there because I'm like you, I think of head office as old white men in suits. The only time I've ever seen a woman fire fighter, I think, was at Grenfell was when she had to come on and defend the fire service and she was in a suit. She wasn't there sweaty 'oh my god I've just come out of the fire and now you're interviewing me'. She looked like she'd come out of an office. So that again, doesn't relate, does it?"

It was interesting to learn that no-one across the four groups were aware that NFRS had a female Chief Officer, which most were surprised to hear and all agreed this was very positive for the service as a whole and should be promoted more effectively. This was considered relevant in terms of inspiring and attracting more female into the organisation. Generally seeing more female officers in the community or across any comms was considered really important to support this.

"It's having that exposure and seeing it, she could tell her story on how she got into it, it's quite inspirational and people will look up to her".

"I feel like a lot of women when it comes to FRS, it's 'can I even do this?'. Obviously if you apply for a job, they're not going to say, 'you're a woman, you can't do this', you can't do that anymore, but it's so much 'is it something I'm going to be able to do, is this something I'm going to be targeted for?'. But I think you had a woman coming in when you're little, into schools, when you're in school or college or something like that, it would be a role model. You'd think to yourself 'if you can do it, I can do it".

"I think as well when you go into schools, I only remember male fire fighters, I don't remember ever seeing a woman, so I think integrating it now, because I'm assuming when I was younger, we barely had any

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women but now there's obviously going to be more. Young girls will look up to them, I think that would be a good idea".

Fitness and perceived levels of fitness required was mentioned by a number of younger attendees.

"I've never had to call the fire department, and I don't plan to in the future. The only interaction I've had is at school and that's probably the only time I thought about joining, when I got to sit in the driver's seat with the siren on for 5 minutes, but I have always thought I would not be fit enough".

"Personally, I don't think I have that fitness level to be a fire person".

"For me it was more so the fitness side of things, I heard a lot, and I looked into it at the time, that they get a lot of exercise time and stuff like that, so for me, that's what interested me".

"I just don't think I would be strong enough, I imagine you have to be super fit to get in".

Better promotion generally of the opportunities and entry requirements was cited as important as for a number of attendees (mainly from ethnic minority participants) as they said there was very awareness currently.

"Is there a way to highlight the benefits of joining the service for themselves in the first place? You could have the best social media and community teams on the planet but then you get through to them and they say 'I like the idea of becoming a fire fighter' and then they look up the salary and it's basically minimum wage and they could stack shelves at Tesco for double the money for half as long, you're never going to recruit anyone".

"The advertising, moving it to social media, moving it to TikTok and moving with the times so people know it's an option. Particularly young girls because you might just not think about it, you don't really think about it and then it's like 'oh, actually'. All the fitness benefits and all the other stuff at the moment nobody know anything about what is required".

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"I would consider it, but I just don't know enough about it, and I have never seen anything telling me about it, definitely need to know more or people will never sign up".

There was a strong argument across the groups that any effective recruitment or raising awareness of working for NFRS should be aimed at young people and educational establishments, especially when trying to achieve better diversity.

"What I think is primary level is not the problem; it's the secondary ones. I think that would be a good way to even recruit. I don't know anything about the fire service, other than being a nurse now, I have to do the fire safety training. It's a company that does it, I don't think it's actually the local fire service that does it, so I think what I have not seen for years, and I've been a teacher and a nurse, and I've not seen where the fire service has been present in educating the general youth population".

"That's a really good point about trying to recruit them because if you've got kids who are setting fires as teenagers, maybe those are the kinds of kids you kind of want. If they're interested in fire, maybe you want to be recruiting them and steering them in a positive direction rather than a negative one".

"It feels a bit old fashioned, it's maybe looking out of a modern lens to think 'if you want to get the youth and the younger people to change that diversity, you need to be targeting people early on' through schools".

"I always thought they had the cadets, they have police cadets, I always thought they had the same sort of cadet service for the fire brigade as well, could they promote this more, especially in partnership with local schools".

"Surely they should be at every college, school and even university selling the service and what it has to offer".

One attendee worked at an all-girls secondary school, and she said NFRS had never engaged with the school and were therefore missing out on an obvious opportunity, whilst another teacher at a mixed secondary school also stated there was a lack of presence and therefore interest in the service.

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"I work at an all-girls school, and we've never had an assembly, I know you said your kids did but we've never had an assembly".

"There's so much unemployment going on, the youth don't have anything to do, I've come across a lot of young people who have left high school not wanting to go into college, not wanting to go to university and you're having to send them to careers counselling to find out what they want to do and I've never heard anyone saying 'I'm going to check the fire service out'. It seems like it's an exclusive club, they should push it more at school before they leave".

"I know at the school when they were doing their GCSEs and when they're coming up to their A Levels, they had a careers fair and they had the police there, but I don't think I've ever seen the fire brigade there".

"I'm the same as x and I'm a teacher and I work quite closely with year 11's who are looking at where they want to go, never once had one of them ever said the fire service".

"Yes. There are flyers in the library for the police force but there's nothing for the fire service and to be fair, it's not something I would suggest to them either. I would now I've thought about It".

Communications

A key theme throughout the discussions was the general lack of awareness of the service and the majority said that improved communications would lead to better understanding and interest in the service.

With the exception of the over 70's group, social media was considered to be the most effective platform and the type of media that the majority used the most frequently. Most said that this would be the most likely opportunity to catch the attention of residents. TikTok and Facebook were mentioned the most frequently.

"I think to be fair they need to try and grow their social media presence if anything. I've never seen them before on social media, other than big

events where there's been huge fires and stuff, but I think if they can try to maybe advertise it a bit more, or do charity events or something, then people would really start to be more invested in them".

"They can do more on the social media because they're on social media more nowadays than reading".

"We get most of our news on Twitter, Facebook, that kind of thing".

"On Facebook you see a lot of groups like Luton, Bedfordshire Police, you can join with the groups, but I've not seen anything pop up on Facebook or Instagram about fire fighters, like the Rushden Fire Fighters group. There's nothing there, so if they organised a social media club, people would quite happily join them. I've joined loads of groups just to see what's going around in the area".

"Or leaflets or Facebook is the best option because many people use Facebook".

"I am on TikTok all the time, put something on there and I will see it and watch it".

"When you talk about culture, when it's Diwali for example, the festival of light, there's tea lights and candles all lit up, maybe put a message on Instagram or TikTok".

I feel like of the emergency services, the fire brigade's kind of the sexiest one. Like, I don't generally like, everyone's got issues with the police, the ambulance, whatever else I don't. But when you're saying about them having social media pages, I genuinely didn't know that they did and yet I follow probably 5 different counties police, Facebook pages. But yeah, I don't know, I don't feel like I'm at all aware of their social media presence, which seems strange to me.

The type of information varied based on personal interest and in addition to areas already discussed such as employment information and opportunities and in-home safety around cooking and kitchen hazards, there was significant interest in the

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equipment used by the service and any new technology being utilised and more around what the service attend and how they handle different situations.

> *"Leave the guys that are actually doing the work, the Fire and Rescue team, leave them alone. But obviously if you're monitoring response times and everything else like that, then use it as a good news story".*

> *"I suppose, you know, seeing them develop an advance, you know, be it sort of be technology and if there was like a new type of fire engine for example, that would be great, something they could really push and really promote and say, look, 'you know we're being invested in, this is what we've got going on. Look at this, how amazing is this? This is now what it can do' and explain to people the benefits of that kind of thing or you know that the hoses and something simple and stupid, you know 'that new hoses now push out this much more water'".*

> *"I like gadgets, so I'd be quite interested in that if they had a brand-new fire engine, which was, you know, did something different and then that would be pretty cool to see, you know, and demonstrate it. And yeah, then I'll probably take more of an interest".*

> *"…when you look at them, you'll get 300 likes on a police social media post and 13 on a Fire and Rescue one. Make it far more interesting and engaging and you'll see swathes people are following, you know, I can't remember what he said, you know people follow the police because they want to see the mug shots. You go for the cops to see the, you know comments about people faces when they put the mug shots of the druggies and stuff like that on there. That's why they do it. Unfortunately, the fire brigade needs to do something to make themselves a little bit more appealing for us weirdos that like that kind of thing".*

Although there was an appetite for more information across all four groups, interest was higher with the over 70's group and amongst ethnic minority participants. Others

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argued that they did not want to know any more about the service and were in honest in saying they were not very interested.

"From like a work perspective probably, I feel like I don't really know enough about it to kind of go actually, maybe there'll be other services within like the fire service that actually could work alongside. Like other services, like through the NHS and things like that, because obviously I know what I know, but actually there might be a lot more out there that could support other families and make my job a bit easier".

"I personally probably won't be interested in finding like, going on social media and things like that, but I do feel that they may have a lot less followers on social media and everything because people are just nosy and who's going to post juicy information, the police, not fire service realistically. They're going to post a lot more; they're going to be a bit nosier about seeing what's going on in their community. It's just, I just think that's how it is. I don't think you guys are doing anything wrong in not promoting it in on social media in like a bad way. I just think it's what people are more interested in".

"I did a quick Facebook search while it's on here and found I already did follow them, which is very, very indicative of how much engagement there is in the post on the basis that I didn't even know I actually did. Now I don't use Facebook a lot. I use it predominantly to see where the motocross tracks are open, so I only actually follow probably about 50 people or things, and it still doesn't show up on my feed".

"Just because for example, you're white British, there's still resources out there for you to find out a bit more. Everyone has the internet, and stuff is available, I think it's just willingness to do it as well sometimes. It obviously comes from both parts, you can't just say 'you've missed out my culture', but the culture also has to invite them as well, but I'm not actually massively interested".

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"I don't think I am interested. I wouldn't go on to social media to go. 'Oh, what are the fire brigade doing now?' but I would be interested in hearing what they're doing nationally with big projects that are in the news, you know, like Grenfell and I suppose it's the impact and the team that they're involved in".

"An interesting one I've just pulled up on communication, we've been talking about how they don't communicate, their social media platforms have 10 times less than the equivalent police service. So, the police service has 250,000 people following, they have 27,000 people, but they're posting twice a day across various instants and so on. I just wonder whether it's actually that nobody's, should we say, interested in the same level".

"Even if they put something through my door or if I went on social media, not really relevant unless I had a fire myself or something really drastic had happened or I'm in an area with massive flooding and nothing was going to happen. So, I get those local concerns but at the moment, I haven't had anything personal happen to me that would affect my interest in finding out more".

Local Risk

Participants were asked to consider any risks or challenges they considered likely to impact service delivery for NFRS over the next five years and all groups identified key concerns that they felt the service should be thinking about in terms of risk management and strategic planning.

Whilst no one common theme emerged across all four groups, changing weather conditions was mentioned the most frequently, especially rain fall and flooding. Residents cited local areas that had more recently become prone to flooding and there was an awareness of increased accident and deaths associated with this. Wildfires were also mentioned as a local risk.

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The A45 and traffic accidents was also mentioned at least once in each group as a local risk.

> *"That lake has to be sorted in Wellingborough; it's not only the two deaths last year. I think if you ask the council over the last 10 years, how many cars went in the lake and its always flooding".*

> *"A teenager died recently because of flooding and it's getting worse around here - another teenager died as well".*

> *"A lot of accidents on the A45, far too many".*

> *"It's been a thing forever, but it seems to be getting worse, feels like there is an accident every week almost".*

> *"You'll go into the river and when it's heavy rain it's always flooded, it is getting more and more dangerous".*

> *"We've got two reservoirs here as well and it's not uncommon, it doesn't happen every year, but someone finds themselves in difficulty in the water and they keep flooding".*

> *"Probably just from risk strategy with regards to being sort of more rural is we're getting longer, drier spells of summer. Increased risk of sort of countryside wildfire, crop fire, that side of things".*

> *"You hear more about bush fires than ever before, dry land is becoming more of a concern".*

Rural residents were equally concerned about flooding.

> *"We've been in the village for six years now and there are several places that we've noticed always get flooded if there's heavy rain. But we've noticed from what I've heard, in the last six years that I've heard by the parish council, because other services have been cut back like, you know, they're clean out the drains, the culverts, all that kind of stuff. And other parish council have been trying to like, let's actively get those sorted to try*

and avert some of the flooding, which then obviously wouldn't put the strain on the fire service".

"There's been a lot of flooding in the village and the fire brigade have come with their pumps to try and drain the houses. I know there's almost been like a queue of, oh, they're on the High Street and there's somewhere on the school lane that needs doing, but obviously with flooding, because it's tended to come after a big downpour, everyone in the counties in the same position, so as much as there's been a backlog ,then it is an emergency situation but not your house is on fire and someone needs rescuing, you know, I mean it's not really comparable".

Rural participants also mentioned ASB, farming specific risk and the quality of rural roads as local concerns that they would like to see NFRS consider.

"We do have a lot of combustibles. The biggest risk, other than the stupid Chinese lanterns things which a lot of farmers have had issues with, the biggest risk is teenagers. There's actually a bit of a problem at the moment, there's a few going around burning bins, setting fire to bins and all sorts of stuff. We've got some land, and I went for a walk around the other day and there were some teenagers up there trying to light some fires, so I think that's the biggest risk for us".

"Kids messing around in the village I worry about, I have heard and know of several fires starting by groups of kids at our end".

"I live on a farm we have a barn full of hay so that's something I'm very aware is very vulnerable, so knowing there's a local fire department not far away is more of a relief than having to worry if they're coming from Northampton".

"I think things that could have a negative impact on their response times, you know the conditions of the roads for example, and things like that can slow them down. You know, there's some really bad roads, really bad potholes and you know, you have to either drive around them or if you hit them at a normal sort of speed, then I've seen people have accidents

themselves or I know of a person who, a friend of mine, who had a tyre blow out just from hit a pothole. So, you've got to think of things like that, they have that impact on slowing them down. If the roads are in a good condition, then they're going to, you know, and not double parking and things like, then they're going to be able to get to people quicker".

"I think the roads are a local risk, especially in rural areas, they are not fit for purpose and would be challenging for a fire truck to access".

Also mentioned in all four groups was the increasing populations locally, in all four areas participants said that significant growth was taking place with *"new development happening all the time"* which many argued would put an added strain on the service as a higher population would drive up risk with a higher chance of fires, RTC.s and rescues, in addition to less accessibility and a more vulnerable population identified as the elderly.

"Are they going to increase the size of the fire service? Because they're building new houses everywhere, all the towns are getting bigger, there's going to be more demand or more people, is it going to get more service?"

"How are they going to possibly cope with all the new housing constantly being built. It's only going to get worse".

Wellbeing visits

Attendees across all groups were asked about their awareness of the NFRS Home Safety Visits and if anyone had personally experienced a visit or had any family members who had received a visit.

The majority were unaware of the service provided or the fact it was a free service, this was especially true with the over 70's attendees and ethnic minority participants.

"Mine were fitted when I arrived but they have never been tested. I should test them, but I don't. I would 100% use the service if I had known about it".

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"It sounds fantastic so why don't I know about this? I wouldn't know where to start".

"Never heard of it, which surprises me as I would be the main target by the sounds of it".

Those that had received the service or knew of someone who had received the service were very positive about the experience. Residents felt the visits provided reassurance and said they were often engaging and educational. It also gave family members added reassurance.

"I've also seen them when my dad lived in sheltered accommodation, going around checking the flats with the elderly to make sure there was some sort of prevention things in place. My dad was a heavy smoker, so they put smoking mats down and things like that, so I know a lot of their work is preventative because like we've all said, there doesn't seem to be an awful lot going on emergency wise, which is good".

"So, no real interactions with the fire department in the last couple of years apart from my mum is elderly, they came around and did all the smoke alarms and safety. I'm aware they come out and do a lot of community work in terms of smoke alarms and I think they do the carbon monoxide sensors and things like that as well".

"It's a great service; they come and check your smoke alarms and put new smoke alarms in".

"It's one of those partnership things, isn't it?"

"My dad was in sheltered accommodation, so they just came one day and went around to all the flats".

"I've had them come out with me to someone's house before to kind of go over like fire safety in the family homes and things like that at work, which was very helpful if I'm honest because it was an eye opener to that family as to what the changes that they need to make regarding their home conditions and things like that. So, it was like less of like a fire risk and things like that which I didn't know about. I think a different worker made

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the referral to that team, so if I'm completely honest, I can't remember for the life of me what that service was in the team. But both myself and the family found it really, really helpful".

"My mum received a visit, kind of gave them an eye opener, so what changes needs to be made to make it less of a fire risk and yeah, they took a lot away from it and actually they were able to signpost the family to different services that would be able to better support them as well with that".

"I feel safer knowing it was the FRS that fitted my alarms - you trust them more to do it properly".

One attendee explained that her mother had called 999 to access the service and how the service responded positively.

"My only other real kind of things about it or is that the community thing that I know has been mentioned a couple of time, my mum is in her 80s, gets quite confused, the fire, the smoke alarm in her house started beeping so you know, the battery was going flat. So, what did she do? Did she call her son? No. She called the fire brigade, this is where it would be very easy for them to say, 'what are you doing calling 999? Go away. Sort it out. Go and get a battery.' But no, they looked after her. I only found out this after that she'd had a visit, that somebody came round, checked to make sure all the sensors were working, made sure all the batteries were fine. She had a new carbon monoxide, a bit of advice and that's where they are absolutely brilliant".

Ethnic minority attendees recognised there would be levels of concern from the older generations around the visits in terms of authenticity. Participants stated NFRS would need to be clear in its communications and promotion of the service to ensure greater take-up of the service.

No-one felt there were any issues with allowing firefighters or fire staff into their home, if they felt reassured that it was a genuine service.

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"I think the only reason why probably older people, more vulnerable people are because there's so many scammers, they don't know if they're legit or not".

"I don't think so. If it's somebody's grandparents, you have to bear in mind they would have come in the 60s, 70s, so they've already done it and they've probably never been to a school here, so it needs to be pushed effectively. People will use it".

"Promote it better and in different languages and give that reassurance".

"They could even be in the marketplace; they could have a stand there".

The over 70's group in particular were very interested in hearing more about the visits and cited AGE UK as the perfect place to learn more about the service or sign up to it. GP surgeries, libraries and community spaces were all seen as effective routes to promote the service.

"Even if you had a partnership outside Tesco for example, they've got a massive carpark and then people go in after school, during the day you'll have people, sometimes the elderly go during the day, so you'll be able to reach a lot more people in that way. If they've got kids they'll go 'oh look, there's a fire engine, let's go and have a look".

"Naturally if you've got kids, parents are going to follow and then you're going to end up talking to them about stuff and you'll get your information that way".

"Language is a huge issue for our parents and grandparents; they need to be able to understand what the offer is and how it can benefit them. They don't speak English nor do their family and friends".

Places of worship were also cited as effective sources to promote the service and like other information, engaging with community leaders was considered an important route to promote the service.

"I like your idea; the intention is there to send the message. How are you going to deliver it? if you're going home to home you learn to find the

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community, what particular language they use. A community leader, engage with the leader, that's your job for the community and they will listen more, and this will become a bridge. For example, the community leaders in the mosque, someone from the fire could go and say 'we have this is another language, it's for your safety. The youngsters know everything, but this is for your grandfather, make sure you look after them' and they'd start to be softer".

One attendee said she had been referred the service through the hospital which she welcomed and said this was the first time she had been made aware of the service and its benefits.

Key findings

CRMP

Participants' support for the CRMP's strategic themes is tempered by scepticism over execution and language. There is a credibility gap between ambitions and lived experience. "People and culture" in particular raised questions for being too vague. The concern here is less about disagreement and more about reassurance — residents need evidence of real change. The Service may benefit from grounding strategic messages in local context, using plain language, and highlighting past progress as proof of intent.

The split views on inclusivity further suggest a communications challenge. While diversity is supported in principle, participants needed clearer links between inclusion and operational quality. Framing diversity as a practical strategy to improve service delivery and community connection may strengthen public understanding and support.

Participants viewed the CRMP priorities as logical but expressed a desire for greater clarity about how ambitions would be implemented. The use of high-level language, particularly under 'people and culture', was seen as vague and lacking specificity.

"They obviously consider it more in low budgets and costs and all that, but it would still be good to know what it would be".

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"What's been done differently? I'm sure this was done a few years ago... Actually, what's different? What's going to make a different outcome?"

"If you're going to say, 'we're going to enclose everything', that's our ultimate target. It should be the how, what are you going to do?"

A recurring sentiment was that the priorities felt recycled or generic, with some doubting whether anything materially new was being proposed.

"Kind of covered up but it's the same generic words they probably use every year".

"It doesn't jump out".

"It's really easy to recycle the same stuff than put something new out there".

There were calls for greater visibility and proactive engagement, both to strengthen fire prevention efforts and to enhance community understanding of the Service's work.

"The prevention and protection going out into the community, it will be preventative, but it would also be a way of being more visible".

"The only thing from my point would be where it says people and culture, maybe they just also need to include about the communication because that's one thing we've all said about is how good they are, but actually nobody seems to know everything they do".

The importance of post-Grenfell safety measures was acknowledged, particularly among those with relevant professional experience, and technology was identified as an area of growing relevance.

"Since Grenfell there's been new regulations... so I think that's good, and it shows they are putting things in place that can protect lives".

"Surely with AI and data analysis... there's an important issue because I do think AI obviously is going to be massive across so many levels".

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"Working with all of the different parties to ensure smooth communication and smooth service".

Views on inclusivity were mixed. While some valued representation, others felt that capability should remain the primary focus.

"I don't care who they are. All I care about is how can they do their job to the best it can be done".

"As long as those abilities to do that particular fundamental part of the job are done, genuinely couldn't care what or who turns up".

"They're viewing the fire service as is there a checkbox? When they may or may not necessarily be the best person".

Response categories

Participants largely accept triaging as necessary yet remain wary of its implications. Critically, this does not reflect distrust in the Service, but concern about resource pressure or political influence. Trust remains firm so long as public messaging reinforces that categorisation is about urgency, not exclusion.

The data also demonstrates the importance of consistent reassurance. Participants' confidence is rooted in belief in crews' integrity, not the system's bureaucracy. This distinction suggests that public engagement should focus less on technical detail and more on reinforcing the human judgement that underpins every response.

Participants broadly understood and accepted the rationale for categorising responses based on urgency. However, there was scepticism about whether the categorisation would lead to delays in lower-priority cases or be used as a cost-saving measure.

"Could there be a little bit of scepticism that they might not deal with non-urgent things quite as quickly?"

"You only know what they tell you on the phone, there could be something behind that".

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Although they acknowledged that some form of triage was inevitable, participants felt that community reassurance remained paramount.

"Once somebody is there, people are like 'okay, I know we're looked after".

Participants reiterated their trust in fire crews to respond as quickly as possible, regardless of category.

"They're on autopilot, they're going to do it".

"I've not yet seen a fire crew say, 'Oh, we've got a house on fire, let's stop off at Greggs on the way and get a pasty'".

"Sometimes when they get a call, they don't necessarily know 100% what they're actually going to be attending".

"It can be high risk, a 12-minute call when it's made, but 6 minutes down the line it could easily be an absolute A1 grade".

"They will get to whatever they're called to in the quickest time they possibly can".

Geographic constraints and practical challenges in rural areas were also raised.

"You can get everywhere within Daventry in 10 minutes, but you couldn't in a city centre or villages".

"Geographical restrictions - they might arrive within 250 yards within 3 minutes but can't get the last 250 yards".

"It's all based on distance, roads, conditions, etc. One [emergency] that's two miles away can take 15 minutes".

"Badly parked vehicles might stop them getting to the incident quickly".

Participants also expressed concern that published targets might increase pressure without offering performance benefits.

"Setting it as a target is the wrong way. It's just more stress".

"Publish it afterwards, then react".

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"I've worked in service for years and the only thing KPI was able to give people, was something to give a kick in about".

"They should say, 'Based on the last four years this is what we did…' rather than setting rigid new targets".

Mean/ Median response time measure

The mean/ median metric prompted some initial confusion and a degree of ambivalence. While some appreciated its alignment with national approaches, many questioned its relevance to the public. The key issue is perceived detachment; statistical changes need to be translated into personal meaning.

NFRS should consider whether performance data could be complemented with case studies or real-life examples that bring statistics to life. Doing so may also help manage unrealistic expectations and reinforce the importance of context.

Participants expressed mixed views on the proposal to use the mean or median to report response times. While some understood the statistical rationale and saw it as helpful for cross-service comparison, others questioned its clarity, relevance, and purpose.

"From a statistical point of view, it's helpful because it is more accurate".

"I think they need to do it if that's how the police are doing it, that's how the ambulance is doing it. Otherwise, it's not a level playing field".

"So, in that respect, yes, I think they need to do it, but also, it's not really accurate. It's not representative".

A significant concern was whether the public would understand or care about these distinctions, with some questioning who the measure was really for.

"First of all, using a median instead of the average, well the fact that you've had to explain it first of all is a bit of a problem, because who's this for?"

"Do the public actually mind, do they care? Because they don't".

"It's just rubbishy statements that don't really mean anything".

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Some participants linked the proposed change to broader organisational or bureaucratic motives, rather than to meaningful operational improvement.

> *"This is implemented and thought of, as someone put down earlier on, by the accountants trying to justify a position that isn't really necessarily needed or wanted".*

> *"Is this to rule this out, like when they were getting 400 calls in an hour because of flooding? They're not going to attend all within 10 minutes".*

A few participants raised practical concerns about how the fire service compares to other emergency services, especially in terms of logistics and vehicle types.

> *"You can't compare because police drive high-performance cars, the fire service drive 26-tonne lorries".*

> *"The fire brigade only responded to 20% in 12 minutes, that's the comparison that the public are going to see".*

Overall, participants saw the change as defensible in principle, particularly if it improved consistency in performance reporting across emergency services. However, they cautioned that without careful communication, the measure might confuse or alienate the public.

Stopping the clock

This theme reflects both understanding and anxiety. The public grasps the operational value of early assessment but worry it might mask reductions in service or manipulate performance figures. Crucially, participants felt that communication is key: they want to know who is arriving, what they can do, and what happens next.

The insight here is not opposition to the idea, but a plea for clarity, particularly as the starting position if high levels of trust and confidence in the service and there is a significant appetite to protect this. By clearly explaining what a first response looks like and how it fits into the full response model, NFRS can build understanding and sustain public confidence.

The proposal to stop the clock upon arrival of a first responder, rather than a full fire engine – prompted nuanced discussion. Some participants viewed it pragmatically,

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recognising the efficiency and resourcing benefits of sending an appropriate initial responder depending on the situation.

> *"Fine, because the first moment you get there is about assessing the situation anyway".*

> *"A fire engine would still come so yes I think it's okay".*

> *"They're only going to send a first responder when they've assessed what the level of risk is".*

> *"Surely in them times, if they ring through and you say I don't think it's a fire, a first responder would be absolutely fine".*

> *"This is a better answer... actually sending the correct response".*

However, there was scepticism about whether the change was being driven primarily by performance targets or cost-efficiency.

> *"Immediately when you said that I initially thought about cuts. That's all you hear, the NHS cutting costs, police cutting costs. Is this just another?"*

> *"Are the stats, are they doing it so the stats get better?"*

> *"This is definitely an accounting aspect to get the clock to stop".*

> *"Financially it makes a lot more sense to send a car out rather than an engine with five firemen in it".*

The discussion revealed a tension between efficiency and public reassurance. While participants generally trusted that serious incidents would always receive the appropriate response, they also stressed the importance of being transparent with the public about what to expect.

> *"If it was my house on fire with my children, I think I'd want a fire engine".*

> *"If I'm in a car accident, I probably want somebody to come and talk to me but also have all the correct equipment to help me".*

> *"It goes back to letting the public know. If the public know what's on those first responder vehicles, then they'd have more confidence".*

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> *"What equipment have they got on board? Or is it a guy in a suit that just usually sits in an office?"*

One participant drew an analogy to military protocol, suggesting that a capable, appropriately equipped first responder vehicle can still play a crucial operational role.

> *"Crash 1 would always get there first. That was like a 6-wheeled Range Rover, and it was capable of fighting fires. Now a guy in a marked-up Skoda probably won't, so it is about understanding what that first response is capable of, in this instance".*

Ultimately, many participants felt that sending the right resource for the right job was sensible, provided that public communication made clear that this would not compromise outcomes.

> *"This is moving away from that, slightly. I do think this is actually sending the correct response, but possibly the wrong comms".*

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Appendix 2

During the consultation period, NFRS received eight responses directly, six of these individuals were providing input and asking specific questions in relation to a BESS development site in Braybrooke (West Northamptonshire). The remaining two were from a Towcester Town Councillor providing more detailed feedback in relation to the draft SOR and from East Hunsbury Parish Council.

Internal Engagement

During staff sessions, groups were presented with a summary of the major risks identified within the CRMP, the outline priorities and proposals for change of SOR. Notes were taken of feedback and questions which have been analysed thematically. Below is a summary of these themes

Resilience levels & data sharing

- Individual examples given to raise concern regarding the level of resources at a given time and impact of this on staff.
- Lack of data sharing internally (and with some partners) i.e. for stations to be provided with relevant/timely intelligence from other areas of the service which will aid in their local planning.

Opportunities/suggestions

- Crews want to do more proactive education regarding flooding, wildfire in rural areas and to have appropriate materials to support this.
- Request for more bespoke training for electric vehicles EV's to deal with the complexity of these types of incidents, including access to electric vehicles to practice extrication methods.

Northamptonshire Emergency Service Cadets (NESC) Engagement

A specific session was held with Fire Specialist NESC Cadets, aged between 13 – 18. This was a facilitated session, designed to be more interactive. The group was presented with an overview of CRMP and collectively explored risks in the county

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and their thoughts around the draft plan. Below is a summary of the feedback received.

Priorities

- "agree reasonable and sound right"

- "continue prevention/education"

- "more training in county (makes firefighter role more attractive/accessible)"

What is missing from plan?

- "more accessible ways for public to find info"

- Key risk groups - "target young children & teenagers (10-16), new young adults, homeowners (20 – 30)"

- "more HFSV, not only in home but in schools and offices"

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East Hunsbury Parish Council

East Hunsbury Parish Council are pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025–2030. We appreciate the comprehensive approach taken to assess and address risks across Northamptonshire. However, we would like to highlight specific concerns relevant to our community.

Flood Risk in East Hunsbury

East Hunsbury faces significant flood risks, particularly from surface water and the Wootton Brook. The 2023 Pathfinder Report, commissioned by the Parish Council, identified 83 properties within the flood warning area for Wootton Brook. This highlights the vulnerability of our area to flooding events and the potential impact on residents.

While the draft CRMP acknowledges the growing threat of flooding due to climate change, it lacks detailed strategies for mitigating flood risks in specific high-risk locations such as East Hunsbury. We would like to see targeted actions and resources to support communities at greater risk of flooding within the CRMP.

Community Engagement and Communication

The parish council would be pleased to work with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service to help disseminate important information to residents, sharing suitable materials and messaging through our established channels, including newsletters, social media platforms, and community events.

To support this, we believe it would be beneficial to have a dedicated officer/s assigned to liaise with parish councils, in a similar way to our existing contact with the Neighbourhood Policing Team. This would make it easier for us to help share time-sensitive or critical messages and also to facilitate local engagement opportunities and events in our area on your behalf.

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Towcester Town Councillor

Average Performance

In the proposal to use median rather than mean response times, I can understand the desire to reduce the influence of 'outlier' incidents. The shape of the proportion of incidents attended in one minute time bands (national average shown below from link provided) shows that approximately half of the incidents lie beyond the median average. Using the median, incidents in rural locations which take longer to get to will never influence this statistic.

Reducing the time taken to get to these harder to get to incidents still matters, as the faster you get there, the lower the risk to life and property. They should therefore be represented in the key statistic of "average response time". I would suggest therefore that using the mean response time of all incidents which took less then 20 minutes to attend, or the mean of all incidents which fall within the 98th percentile (so does not count the 2% of incidents with the longest response times, as these are likely to be 'incidents with unusual circumstances'. The value of 20 for minutes and the 98 for the percentile are merely my suggestion of a reasonable value.

Figure 4.1: Proportion of primary fires in dwellings attended by FRSs in one-minute total response time bands, England; year ending March 2013, year ending March 2018, and year ending March 2023
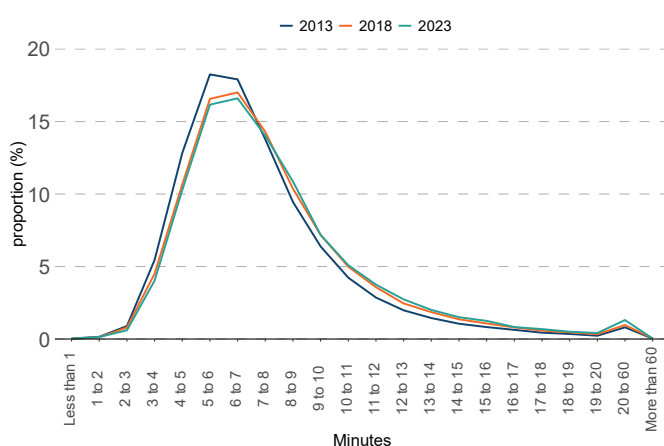
Incident Standards

I completely agree with the proposal to split the response standard into the four broad categories identified.

Stopping the clock

An officer who arrives in a fast response car ahead of other resources can certainly take immediate action to control the scene. However, I would argue that what matters more, is the time it took to get the last resource that was required at the start of the incident, to the site of the incident.

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