

# EVERY CONTACT COUNTS 2023-2024

---

OUR IMPACT WITH THE PUBLIC



**East Sussex**  
Fire & Rescue Service

---



# OUR VALUES

We are **PROUD** of the service we provide

## Proud



## Accountable



We are **ACCOUNTABLE** for our actions

Each year, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service meets thousands of people, whether through our work to prevent emergencies, to protect buildings through fire safety work or when we respond to 999 calls.

We show **INTEGRITY** in our work

## Integrity



We **RESPECT** our colleagues and members of the community

For us Every Contact Counts.

And that's not just contact with the public, but with our own colleagues, volunteers and cadets.

Our Values run throughout all our work.

## Respect



# FACTS AND FIGURES

10,562 incidents attended – an increase from the previous year's 10,440.

434 accidental dwelling fires – an increase from the previous year's 412.

88.9% of accidental dwelling fires were confined to the room of origin. The number of primary fires has decreased from 1,012 to 1,011, and the number of deliberate fires decreased from 729 to 688 – these are areas we are now focusing on. We have met our targets when it comes to arriving at incidents promptly.

- 78.13% of the first arriving appliances at any incident from an 'On-Station response' within 10 minutes.
- 75.22% of the first arriving appliances at any incident from an 'On-Call response' within 15 minutes.





# PREVENTING EMERGENCIES - HOME SAFETY VISITS

We visit people in their homes to offer advice, support and equipment including specialist smoke alarms. In 2023/24 we visited 9,075 properties. 91.2% of these home safety visits were to vulnerable people within our community.

These visits are carried out by both our firefighters, and our highly trained specialists in our support teams.

**"You were lovely caring and considerate around my wife who has dementia. You made what could have been a difficult visit very pleasant."**

**"I had problems with one of my fire alarms. Firefighters came and were a brilliant help. The service you give is nothing short of magnificent. A very, very big thank you to your wonderful crew."**

**"It was lovely to have you, you were very efficient with putting the alarms up. It made a real difference to my husband's day – a real tonic."**

**"I am very, very, very grateful for your visit to a faulty smoke alarm and home safety visit."**

**"I am hearing impaired. Thank you for providing a vibrating under-pillow pad. I was very impressed with your prompt response."**

**If you would like to find out more about a Home Safety Visit, you can: Call us on 0800 177 7069 or fill in the form on our website: [www.esfrs.org/HSV](http://www.esfrs.org/HSV)**

# WHY WE INVEST IN SMOKE ALARMS

We have many stories about how working smoke alarms can avert a potential tragedy.

One such case happened in January 2024. We were called in the early hours of the morning to reports of a fire at a home in Lansdown Place, Lewes.

Embers from seemingly extinguished ashes under garden decking sparked a fire that reached the house. Thanks to having smoke alarms installed, the occupants were swiftly alerted, enabling a safe evacuation and prompt response from the fire service.



## Smoke alarm advice:

Fit at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home.

Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your alarm if it goes off by mistake.

Test your smoke alarms at least monthly, we recommend every Tuesday on #TestItTuesday.

Test them by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If it doesn't sound, you need to replace the battery or the alarm. And don't forget to check the device expiry date.

Lightly vacuum your smoke alarms to remove any dust.

If a smoke alarm starts to beep on a regular basis, you need to replace the battery or the alarm immediately.

If it is difficult for you to fit your smoke alarm yourself, ask a family member or friend to help you or contact us to see if you are eligible for a free Home Safety Visit on 0800 177 7069.

The easiest way to protect your home and family from fire is with working smoke alarms. Get them. Install them. Test them. They could save your life.



# PREVENTING EMERGENCIES - HOLIDAY FOOD AND FUN

Holiday food and fun is part of the national Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) funded by the Department for Education and we are proud to be delivering activities on behalf of local authorities. It's aimed at children on benefit-related free school meals.

During the week beginning 18 December 2023, we hosted events at Seaford, Mayfield, Hailsham, The Ridge and Eastbourne Community Fire stations.

During the week, 77 children between the ages of 5 – 15 attended. The children really enjoyed meeting the firefighters and looking at the fire engine and that was evident in their feedback. They also learnt about fire, road and water safety.

We must say a special thank you to our Community Volunteers who supported the events so well, we could not have managed without them.



# WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE - CADETS

The Service currently has three units – for Eastbourne, for Uckfield and for Hastings and Bexhill.

These give young people aged 13-17 a chance to learn a range of skills including:

**Fire Safety** – learn how to keep themselves and others safe by understanding hazards, risks, and control measures.

**What to do in an emergency** – learn about fire safety in the home and create a fire plan as well as how we work with other emergency services.

**Basic first aid** – how to help people in an emergency.

**Firefighting skills** – what firefighters do, the equipment we use, and how we help others.

**Life skills** – how to be a positive citizen and an active member of your community.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Charitable Trust associated with the Worshipful Company of Firefighters who made a significant donation to support this work.

If you would like to find out about the scheme and sponsorship, please go to [www.esfrs.org/cadets](http://www.esfrs.org/cadets)



**"Our son has a very clear bond and excitement for Fire Cadets, all thanks to the way in which you have welcomed him, and for your ongoing understanding and care. So many clubs are either not accessible for him, or indeed some that are have not clearly understood the adjustments that need to be made to support children like him. It makes all the difference."**

**"Thank you for supporting my daughter at a difficult time in her life. Without Cadets this last year may have ended very differently for her."**



# NOT JUST FIRES - ROBBIE'S STORY

Our work isn't just about fires.

Alongside the National Water Safety Forum, HM Coastguard and the RNLI, we worked with water safety advocate Robbie Jones to launch a powerful film about the devastating impact of the loss of his father to drowning.

Gareth Jones, 69, was reported missing by his family in January 2021 after he did not return from a walk, in bad weather, with the family dog in Hove, East Sussex.

The hope is that the tragic incident can help to educate people on the dangers of open water in bad weather and prevent anyone else suffering the same fate.

It aims to reduce water-related incidents and fatalities by talking about the impact his death has had on those left behind, particularly his son.

Robbie said: "I lost my rock that night, at just 24-years-old I lost the guy I could talk to about anything and get crucial life advice. My dad was everything to me and to our family.

"Dads die, but they aren't meant to drown. And not so young.

"I don't want anyone else to ever have to go through that and if talking about it can help, then it is important I do it.

"It is my way of honouring him and making something positive out of the worst thing to happen."

Watch the video at [www.esfrs.org/robbies-story](http://www.esfrs.org/robbies-story)

## Remember:

If someone is in trouble in the sea, call 999 and ask for the coastguard.

For inland waters, ask for Fire and Rescue Service, however be aware HM Coastguard have delegated responsibility for Search and Rescue coordination for some inland waters.

Call 999 immediately as the operator will know the appropriate emergency service, but local signs can also help.





# ENFORCEMENT

New legislation and regulations continue to be rolled out and implemented following the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's recommendations. The Inquiry was established following the devastating Grenfell Tower Fire in 2017.

The Service worked hard to make sure that the local community knew about its responsibilities through engagement and communication.

It also continued its work on inspections and fire safety checks.

Number of inspections of high-risk premises - 524

Number of fire safety checks by operational crews - 858

We follow a comprehensive process to assess whether legal action needs to be taken. More than thirty legal cases have been explored. Of note:

- 1 legal case that resulted in `Guilty` plea for 12 offences at Brighton Magistrates
- 2 cautions served following guilty pleas
- 5 were progressed to prosecution at magistrate's court being dealt with by legal counsel to draft summonses.

## Primary Authority Partnership

Our Primary Authority Partnership function is to develop partnerships with the business community in order to promote consistent fire safety advice. These partnerships aim to improve compliance and reduce fire risk in the built environment.

The Service has more than 20 active partners, including care homes, trade associations, and the hospitality industry.

Activities include interactive workshops for staff, site visits and giving fire safety advice including coverage of fire alarm systems, and observed fire drills, and supporting them through FRS issued notices. More site visits are to be arranged soon.

# CAMPAIGN - WILDFIRE READY

Wildfires are unpredictable, can spread quickly and can have a devastating impact to homes, land, wildlife and the community. We want people to enjoy our beautiful surroundings in East Sussex so it's vitally important to take precautions and check your home for risks in order to keep you and your loved ones safe.

A new leaflet was created and distributed, with the support of Ashdown Forest Rangers.

We also ran a social media campaign between 17-25 June National Picnic week dates, resulting in an increase in hits on the website and social media interaction.

This was a generally well received campaign on social media and we saw positive levels of engagement online:

- Facebook – 41,782 people reached with 918 engagements
- Instagram – 2,188 overall people reached with 148 engagements
- Twitter – 23,563 overall impressions with 400 engagements

Read more at [www.esfrs.org/wildfire-ready](http://www.esfrs.org/wildfire-ready)

**We're Wildfire ready...  
Are you?**



**Find out how you can protect  
yourself, property and the  
community from the risk of  
wildfire**

**[www.esfrs.org](http://www.esfrs.org)**



# RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

**"I would like to pass on my huge thanks to the team who attended the scene of my son's car accident. I am pleased to say that he is doing very well overall and has a very positive ultimate prognosis which, considering how things looked initially, is just fantastic. I just wanted to express how incredibly grateful I am to the team for all they did on what was a grim, dark, wet, and windy night. It is very clear to me that the care provided on scene in helping to safely extract my son from the car without exacerbating his injuries will have played a big part in his ultimately positive outcome."**

**"We had a chimney fire and wanted very much to say thank you to the firefighters who came to help. They were extremely efficient; helpful and supportive. I was particularly impressed at how much care they took in covering nearby carpets to prevent the water from spilling out of the wood burner and in making doubly sure that the fire was out. They seemed to go the extra mile for us."**

**"I would like to say thank you for your care, support and efforts in the extraction of my elderly mother from her home. My mother was very seriously ill and paramedics advised she was unlikely to survive. However, all the emergency services worked together to get her into the ambulance and off to hospital very quickly. I am pleased to say that by Saturday morning she was sitting up in bed laughing and joking and disappointed to have missed all the excitement! Please pass on our family's heartfelt gratitude for their hard work and professionalism."**



**"I want to say thank you to those who came to the rescue and put out my burning VW van. You arrived so quickly and were top notch throughout. I have never encountered such good spirited, confident and proficient work before. I genuinely felt in safe hands. It has finally dawned on me what actually happened and how much worse it could have been. Your amazing service must never be taken for granted."**

**"Thank you for rescuing our horse Rocky! When the gate was left open and he ran out of his field into the road, we were terrified he would collide with a car and hurt himself and others. It was only through your efforts and your brilliant knot-tying that he came home safe and sound. He is lucky he ran past your fire truck! He is happily back in his field, recovering with only a scraped knee. He has promised me not to make another break for freedom in the near future."**



# OUR PEOPLE - FIREFIGHTERS

We've welcomed new On-Call firefighters, with 20 joining in 2023/24.

On-Call firefighters are ordinary people who combine their day jobs with being On-Call for Fire and Rescue situations and emergencies.

When the call comes in, they drop what they are doing and become part of the East Sussex Fire and Rescue team. It's a huge commitment, but an immensely rewarding way to serve the community, keep the public safe and earn an extra income.

All had to complete intensive training at our Service Training Centre.

While there, they learnt and applied a wide range of practical skills including hose running, pumping from both pressure fed and open water supplies and safely pitching a variety of fire service ladders.

They have also had input in First Aid, Manual Handling, and the safe operation of fire extinguishers. In addition to the practical aspects, our trainee firefighters have had to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through a sequence of written assessments.

Once they reached the halfway point in their training, they are trained in road traffic collision, working at height and water safety, culminating in a two-week breathing apparatus course.

It takes a huge amount of commitment and effort to be an On-Call firefighter.

Our new recruits should be proud of their achievements and will be an asset to the Service and their local communities.

Find out more about joining us at

[www.esfrs.org/careers](http://www.esfrs.org/careers)



# OUR PEOPLE - COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

We would like to thank our fantastic Community Volunteers and recognise the tireless volunteering work they have completed this year. Here's a selection of what they've been up to!

## Safety In Action

These events are aimed at children and are held throughout the year at various locations. Volunteers undertake various roles including fire safety, electrical safety, road safety, and meeting and greeting the children. 4,617 children have been provided with safety advice, which would not have been possible without the Volunteers continued support.

## Holiday Activity Food

These sessions run across the Service area in school holidays, Volunteers support the set up and delivery of activities which include badge making and games, as well as assist with preparing food.

## Electric blanket testing days

Volunteers help with publicity, including mailing out letters, and distributing and displaying posters in key locations. On the day of testing Volunteers direct the public to the testing area, complete the paperwork to register the electric blankets whilst managing the public's movement on site. They also generate Home Safety Visits.

## Fire Cadets

There are currently 12 Volunteer Fire Cadet Leaders who support the term time sessions across the three fire cadet groups which equates to over one thousand hours volunteer cadet leader hours during the Service year.

## Foodbank Projects

Since its inception, Volunteers have visited 60 foodbank / lunch club projects and have generated 446 Home Safety Visits.

## Telephone Befriending

This service is delivered solely by 8 Volunteer Telephone befrienders who have spent 557 hours speaking with those involved in the scheme, helping reduce isolation and provide company.

Our Volunteers say:

"Volunteering for ESFRS is a unique and privileged opportunity, I enjoy establishing a sense of engagement with the community."

"I get a real buzz when helping and educating the public. It's a uniform to be proud of wearing and a great organisation to be involved with."



# GIVING BACK - THE FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY

We support The Fire Fighters Charity throughout the year in many ways and so do you. You may have attended one of our charity car washes or taken a trip to one of our special clothing banks that are available at our community fire stations listed at [www.esfrs.org/clothing-banks](http://www.esfrs.org/clothing-banks)

A special mention for all the support we received over Christmas 2023.

Here are some highlights of what's been going on:

Battle Fire Station didn't let a little rain dampen their Christmas spirit with their Saving Santa event! They opened the doors to the community with some family fun including hot drinks and food stalls, a raffle, meet the local Fire Fighter, home safety visit information and a Santa's Grotto! For the main event, members of the public cheered crews on to rescue Santa from the Grinch during a rope rescue demonstration, raising £350.

Santa and some of our firefighters headed to areas in and around Eastbourne between 14th and 23rd December 2023 spreading Christmas cheer and raised over £2,600. They also held an event at the Station on 22nd December, for those who may have not been able to catch Santa out and about, where over 120 people attended.

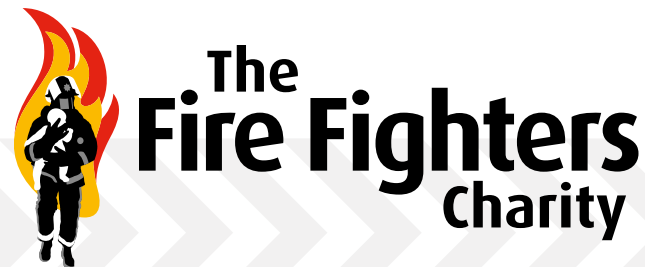
On 21st and 22nd December 2023, crews, Community Volunteers and other support from across East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service carried out their annual charity collection in and around Preston Circus Fire Station, Brighton, raising an incredible £3,876.89.

Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive Dawn Whittaker challenged staff to grow her donation of £800, to mark The Fire Fighters Charity 80th birthday year, by hosting other festive fundraisers across the Service. This was kickstarted by a bake sale raising £60, followed by Uckfield Fire Cadets running a tombola at the Uckfield Christmas shopping evening raising £165, a staff Christmas Carol Concert, a plant sale, a staff quiz, and our Youth Engagement & Education team holding a raffle as part of the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme raising £72. The sum raised topped £1,700 in the New Year.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

You can find out more about the work of The Firefighters Charity here:

**[www.firefighterscharity.org.uk](http://www.firefighterscharity.org.uk)**



# HALL OF FAME

Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (iESE) celebrated their 15th Anniversary of the Public Sector Transformation Awards in March 2024.

The annual iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards are an opportunity to celebrate and recognise public sector organisations for their efforts in improving and transforming local public services.

As part of this year's annual awards event, the 'iESE Hall of Fame' was launched acting as a hallmark for some of the most outstanding public sector organisations that have ranked the highest in judging and scoring for previous nominations.

We are honoured and delighted to have received the award to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame Award is now placed proudly alongside our previous year's awards:

- 2017 Gold Award for Project of the Year.
- 2021 Gold Award in the Data Insight category.
- 2021 UK Fire and Rescue Service of the Year.
- 2022 Silver Award in the Data Insight category.





# FIRE STOPPERS

We have joined the national initiative, FireStoppers, inviting members of the public and businesses in a concerted effort to combat acts of arson and deliberate fire setting.

FireStoppers encourages people to share intelligence about people they suspect are responsible for incidents of arson, anonymously, 24/7, 365 days a year.

National statistics show that deliberate fires account for around 45% of all the fires attended by fire and rescue services in England. In the last five years, East Sussex crews have attended over 3,500 deliberate fires, and incidents have increased by 9.13% in 2022/23, with 729 fires attended compared to 668 the previous year.

Help us tackle arson:

Arson and deliberate fires are a problem for the Fire Service, the Police, and the Ambulance Service. They endanger lives and divert valuable resources.

FireStoppers gives you a way to report what you know about deliberate fire setting, 100% anonymously.

Call: 0800 169 5558

Or complete the online form: [www.firestoppersreport.co.uk](http://www.firestoppersreport.co.uk)

'Speak up. Stay safe. Working together to keep communities safe'.



**East Sussex**  
Fire & Rescue Service

**Be a FireStopper.**  
Deliberate fires destroy lives.

**FireStoppers.**  
**0800 169 5558**  
[firestoppersreport.co.uk](http://firestoppersreport.co.uk)