



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report 10.3: Reduce the number of wilful fires by 10% by 2022
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Governance Group	CPA Board – 19 April 2023

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 10.3 which aimed to reduce the number of wilful fires by 10% by 2022 and seeks approval to end project.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Wilful, or deliberate fires account for 10% of all incidents attended by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) in Aberdeen and is a considerable pull on SFRS resources as well as that of other emergency response colleagues. As a sub-division of this overall figure, secondary fires (grass, rubbish, bins, bonfires etc) account for 73% of all deliberately set fires.
- 1.2 Deliberate secondary fire-raising is an indicator of wider anti-social behaviour, consequently, actions taken to address deliberate secondary fire-raising can have a positive impact on wider societal issues.
- 1.3 Wheelie bins and grassland are the 2 highest occurring property types involved in deliberate secondary fire raising in Aberdeen. The cost of replacing wheelie bins is met by ACC while grassland fire in areas such as The Gramps can have a devastating effect on local wildlife

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 Against this background, on April 2021 the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to Reduce the number of wilful fires by 10% by 2022. Initial testing in Torry, Ferryhill ward then gradually scaling up city wide.

2.2 The aim of the project consisted of 2 areas of focus; changing human behaviours through engagement, education and interaction and, secondly, better management of available combustible materials to reduce opportunistic fire-setting.

2.3 The baseline for the project was taken as a 10% reduction in the previous 5yr average from 2016-2020 to ensure that it was representative and reflective of impact Covid-19 restrictions had on the data. As such a 10% reduction would be 334 calls or less by the end of 2022.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

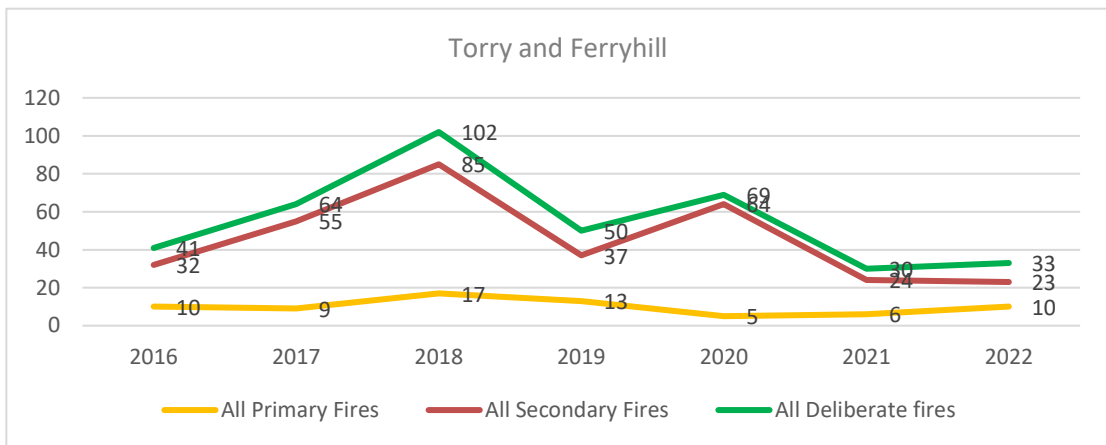
3.1 During the tenure of the project, the multi agency team worked collaboratively to identify incident trends, allowing for the identification of viable engagement opportunities and initiatives in which to test change ideas. These change ideas included;

- 1 Establishing and delivering Fire Skills courses targeting youths in areas of high deliberate fire activity to attend through strong referral pathways with Police Scotland, local schools and Sport for Aberdeen.
- 2 Regular joint messaging and communication advising of the risk in leaving refuse and refuse containers for prolonged periods. Media article published in the Press and Journal conducted with partners from Op's Fawkes strategy in November in relation to bonfire / fireworks thematic action plan. Ongoing engagement work through our community safety team and partners on social media and through local schools on the dangers of fire setting. Leaflets, posters and video presentation sent to 21 schools throughout the area.
- 3 Early intervention and prevention through a "virtual" community fire safety programme provided to schools and youth community groups at a time when direct engagement activity such as 'walk and talks' was curtailed to equip them with the tools and knowledge to stay safe and provide insight into the potentially devastating consequences of deliberate fires
- 4 Gramps school engagement developed and delivered by SFRS, Police, SAS and city rangers continued throughout 2021/22, reaching a varied age range of young people in primary and secondary schools within the Torry & Ferryhill ward area. These were delivered through video presentations at schools, walks and talks within the Gramps area.
- 5 Introduction of a local 'fire setters' intervention and re-education scheme

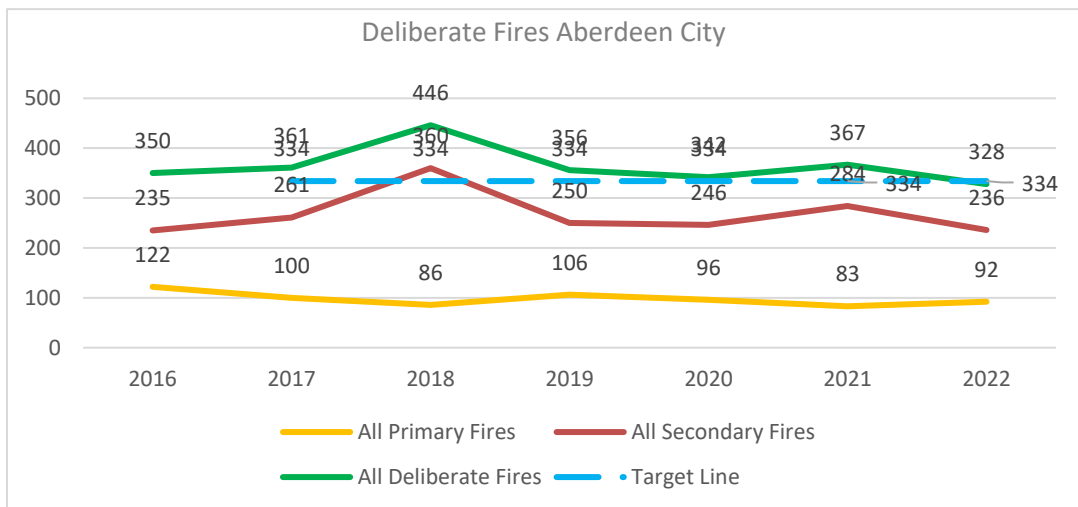
4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 Yes, we have achieved our aim with a 12% reduction from the 5-year average of 334 deliberate (2016-20), with 328 deliberate fires recorded in 2022.

4.2 The initial test area of Torry & Ferryhill has demonstrated a positive reduction in deliberate fires during the project period. A continued reduction has been evidenced across both reporting periods of 2021 and 2022 compared to the baseline period. Within the test area, we have seen a reduction of 48-50% year on year compared to the 5-yr. average.



4.3 Across Aberdeen city, the target of reducing wilful fire setting to 334 (10 % less than the 5-year average 2016-20) was narrowly missed in 2021, with 367 reported incidents. Compared to 2020, we saw an increase of 3.4% of deliberate fires during the reporting period 2021. To address this annual increase and to achieve the aim, the project expanded the test area to include the ward area of Kincorth, Nigg & Cove. This expansion of the test area, in conjunction with other SFRS direct targeting, has seen incident activity fall from 367 to 328 from 2021 to 2022, a decrease of 7.6% and 12 % reduction from the 5-year average baseline period (2016-20).



4.4 The impact of the changes tested have been positive as described below:

4.5 Eight young people having successfully completed the initial Fire Skills course held in October 2022, future courses are planned throughout 2023/24 allowing expansion to other secondary schools and referral pathways. The referrals came from St Machar Academy guidance and support dept. Feedback from the young people was that they felt challenged and that working as team built their confidence. Teaching staff spoke of how the students had shown a positive change in confidence and interaction.

4.6 Following the media article and the leaflets being distributed data showed a positive reduction in fires within outdoor structures/wheelies, these incident types fell from a reported 31 in 2020 to just 1 reported incident in 2022,

showing that both media and targeted communication was impactful. Not only has this reduction had a positive impact on our communities' and environment, it reduces the costs to Aberdeen City Council in replacement of bins.

4.7 Gramps school engagement continued throughout 2021/22, with 84 direct 'walk and talks' throughout Aberdeen by SFRS/Police/SAS and city rangers with 13 schools in 2022. 1,666 pupils engaged with Primary schools throughout the city are on board. For 2023/24, there is a full schedule of interaction with schools by SFRS/Police/SAS and city rangers delivering walks and talks.

4.8 Video presentation, along with leaflets and posters, delivered to four schools in Torry and Ferryhill in 2021. The sessions received positive feedback with teachers advising:

“Good at challenging the pupils on their understanding of wilful fire raising.”

“The follow up conversations the teachers had with the pupils showed the pupils had really been paying attention.”

“Overall, a really positive experience enjoyed by the pupils and teachers alike.”

4.9 SFRS 'fire setters' intervention and re-education scheme was utilised to educate 7 offenders. To date, data shows that none of individuals have yet reoffended after receiving this input. Scheme will continue to be utilised throughout the wider city area to educate and work towards reducing anti-social behaviour.

5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

5.1 Through the lessons learned during the tenure of the project, SFRS and partners will continue to/and will work towards improving how we work collaboratively together to achieve effective and sufficient engagement/intervention opportunities. Change ideas will be integrated into stakeholders' processes and procedures so that they are embedded as business as usual activities.

5.2 The changes tested have been embedded as business as usual and we will include these changes within our SFRS Aberdeen City Local Plan to ensure that we continue to reduce deliberate fires and will continue the work with partners so that this will ultimately further assist in the reduction of anti-social behaviour, including the impact on services and our environment.

5.3 Lessons learnt will be integrated into SFRS's seasonal thematic action plans and will form part of our reduction strategies and resources. Partners will also be including the changes into their plans as appropriate.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 6.1 We will continue to monitor data as part of SFRS internal scrutiny and performance reporting. We will continue to report our performance in the form of; Year to Date Monitoring and Thematic reports to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee (CHPPC). To capture new change ideas and initiatives, these will form part of the SFRS Monitoring and Tracking of Initiatives report which will also be presented to the CHPPC.
- 6.2 Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will also continue to be monitored and reported to the Community Justice Group, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement Programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

- 7.1 During the project tenure our test area expanded from the initial area of Torry and Ferryhill to include Kincorth, Nigg & Cove ward area. As of March 2023, this will be further expanded to include the Tillydrone, Seaton & Old Aberdeen ward area.
- 7.2 The introduction of the Fire Skills course has also been extended to all secondary schools across Aberdeen city. This provides the opportunity to identify suitable candidates through a robust referral's pathway. This approach will ensure that we are direct targeting the most vulnerable within our communities.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree to recommend that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end, on the basis that the aim has been achieved and that the changes and lessons learned are integrated as part of each individual stakeholders' business as usual activities;
- ii) Note that the data set for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the improvement programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored; and
- iii) Note the status of the plans to scale up and spread the changes tested.

Opportunities and Risks

Change ideas identified and implemented during this project, increased the opportunity for local services to work more collaboratively, achieving effective reduction strategies in relation to wilful fire setting. This collaborative approach has also provided the opportunity to expand this learning to other incident types such as, accidental fires and false alarms.

The introduction of the Fire Skills courses and Media strategy will provide partners the opportunity to utilise these tested reduction strategies within other ward areas. It is perceived that this will ultimately see a reduction in anti-social behaviour and the subsequent impact on service providers, our local communities and our environment.

There is an identified risk that wilful fires could see a raise in coming years, should education and messaging strategies be reduced or stopped. Due to the current financial climate and strain on service providers, it is foreseeable that this is a likely outcome.

Consultation

Stakeholder consultation conducted throughout tenure of project, with agreement of successful outcomes.

Community Justice Group
CPA Management Group

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

[Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26](#)

[LOIP Annual Outcome Improvement Report 2021/22](#)

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