ARSON & DELIBERATE
FIRE REDUCTION STRATEGY
2023 - 2026

CLEVELAND FIRE BRIGADE

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FIRE BRIGADE

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Contents

Introduction

Arson and deliberate fire setting is a chronic, and at times acute, problem in Cleveland, with our rate of deliberate fires per 100,000 population being significantly higher than the national level. Whilst great inroads have been made to reduce these numbers through previous arson reduction strategies, the level of deliberate fire setting throughout our communities remains unacceptable.

The majority of fire related incidents that we attend are small outdoor fires that involve refuse or grassland that cause a blight on our neighbourhoods and are of financial detriment to the local economy. Deliberate fires divert our resources away from other key activities, and we believe the time is now right to refocus our efforts to reduce the prevalence of arson and deliberate fire setting throughout our communities.

Background

Primary fires are potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property and include any fire that occurred in a (non-derelict) building, vehicle or outdoor structures.

Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property, and include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles.

Both primary and secondary fires can be either accidental or deliberate in their cause. The average composition of the primary, secondary, accidental and deliberate fires attended over the last five years is illustrated below:
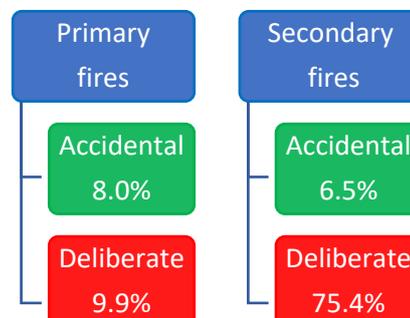
Context

Arson is categorised within the Criminal Damage Act 1971 (section 1)[1] as an act of attempting to destroy or damage property, and/or in doing so, endangering life, and only offences that meet the definition should accurately be termed as arson.

Deliberate fires[2] are those fires where the motive was 'thought to be' or 'suspected to be' deliberate. These include fires to an individual's own property, others' property or property of an unknown owner but not necessarily with the intention to deliberately damage or destroy property or endanger life.

Although deliberate fire records include arson, deliberate fires are not the same as arson.

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[1] Criminal Damage Act 1971 .

[2] Deliberate fires

Strategic drivers

There are a range of factors that influence the direction of the Cleveland Fire Brigade arson and deliberate fire reduction strategy, including:

The Cleveland Fire Brigade Corporate Plan 2022 - 26[3]

The Cleveland Fire Brigade Corporate Plan 2022 - 26 sets out the vision of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2030 and the strategic direction until 2026 and it directs a suit of strategic documents, including the Community Risk Management Plan 2022 – 2026, which describes how the Brigade will manage the risks to local communities.

Community Risk Management Plan 2022 - 2026[4]

The Community Risk Management Plan 2022 - 2026 sets out the Brigade's risk management priorities and improvement proposals, including the tackling of arson and deliberate fires.

Social and Economic Value[5]

Increasing budgetary pressures, the impacts of a growing and ageing population plus the general cost of living expenses all influence the need to support the development of our communities, and create safer homes, buildings and neighbourhoods for people to live, work and prosper.

The Serious Violence Duty[6]

The Serious Violence Duty was legislated for as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and is focussed on the reduction of serious violence, which may involve threats to life from the criminal use of fire. Fire and rescue services are often able to identify the early stages of anti-social behaviour associated with deliberate fire setting and our trusted position within partnerships and communities can help to find a solution to the core problems caused by anti-social behaviour.

The Fire and Rescue Services National Framework for England[7]

The Fire and Rescue Services National Framework describes that fire and rescue services are expected to promote fire prevention and work closely with other partner organisations to target prevention resources on those most likely to engage in arson or deliberate fire setting. Collaboration with local and national partners will also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Furthermore, fire and rescue services should evaluate their prevention interventions and share details of activities that are proven to be effective.

The National Fire Chiefs Council Arson and Deliberate Fire Reduction Strategy 2023/26

The NFCC Arson and Deliberate Fire Reduction Strategy 2023/26 provides guidance to fire and rescue services on the strategic priorities to influence the reduction of deliberate fire setting throughout communities.

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[3] https://www.clevelandfire.gov.uk/crmp/
[4] https://www.clevelandfire.gov.uk/crmp/
[5] Economic and Social Value of the UK FRS
[6] Serious Violence Duty
[7] The Fire and Rescue Services National Framework for England

Our existing position

Number of deliberate fires

Despite a longer-term decline in the frequency of deliberate primary and secondary fires throughout the United Kingdom, over the last decade some fire and rescue services, including Cleveland Fire Brigade, have observed a general levelling off, followed by an increase in the prevalence of deliberate fire setting.

Home Office data shows that the number of deliberate primary and secondary fires over the previous five-year reporting period is in contrast to the national direction of travel. While the total number of deliberate primary fires has decreased by around 29.9% and deliberate secondary fires by around 8.5%, throughout the Cleveland Fire Brigade area, deliberate primary fires have increased by almost 15.7% and deliberate secondary fires have increased by over 58.0%, as illustrated below:
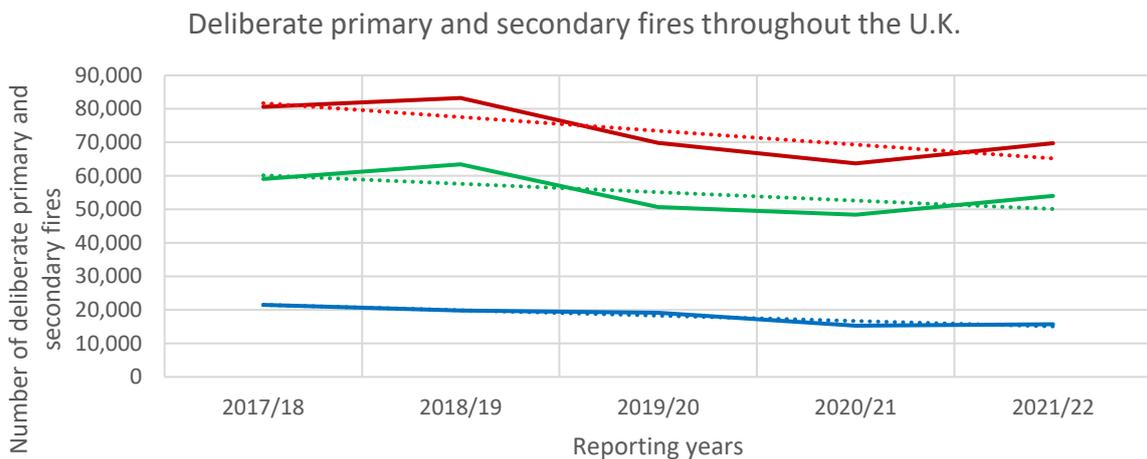

Figure 1 Deliberate primary and secondary fires throughout the U.K. from 2017/18 to 2021/22
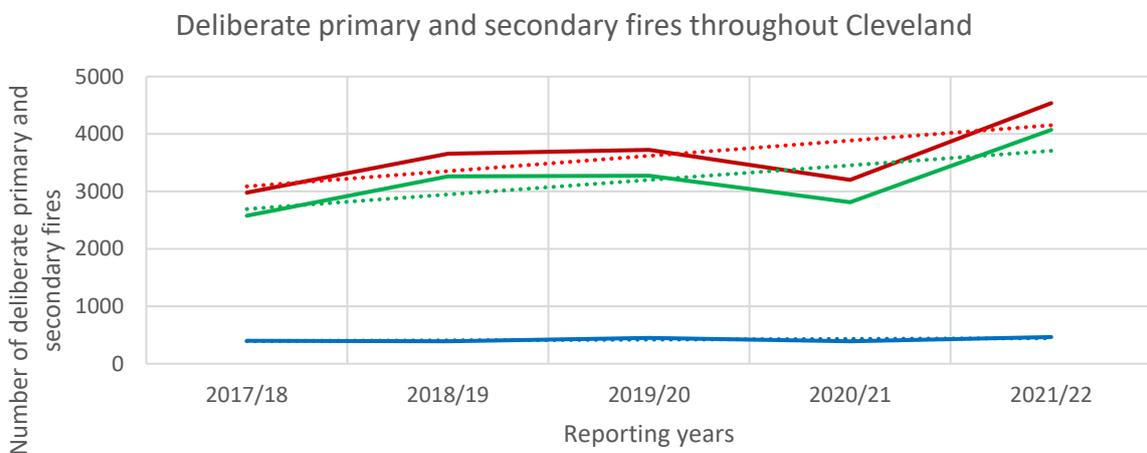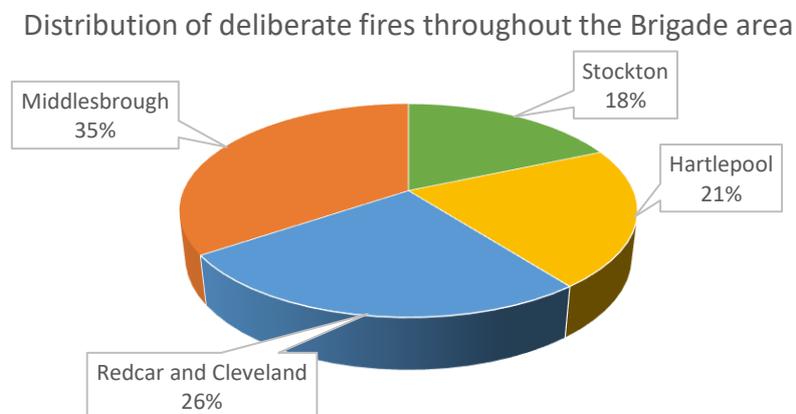

Figure 2 Deliberate primary and secondary fires throughout Cleveland from 2017 /18 to 2021/22

Distribution of deliberate fires

Over the last five years, the proportion of deliberate fires throughout the Brigade area has generally remained consistent, with their distribution illustrated below:

Distribution of deliberate fires throughout the Brigade area

Middlesbrough 35%

Stockton 18%

Hartlepool 21%

Redcar and Cleveland 26%

Figure 3 Distribution of deliberate fires throughout the Brigade area.

Types of deliberate fires

Deliberate fires throughout the Brigade area comprise of both primary and secondary fires, however they are predominantly attributed to refuse, grassland and scrubland. The proportion of the types of deliberate fires over the previous five years is shown below:

Composition of deliberate fires	Proportion
Refuse	49.4%
Grassland and scrubland	15.7%
Vehicles	5.2%
Wheelie bin	6.8%
Hedge	3.4%
Litter Bin	3.3%
Single tree	2.4%
House	1.8%
Commercial refuse container (skips)	1.4%
Fence	1.1%

Table 1 Types of deliberate fires throughout the Brigade area

Rate of deliberate secondary fires

The population of each local authority area is used to determine the rate of deliberate secondary fires, as shown below:

Local authority area	Population of local authority area[8]
Middlesbrough	143,734
Redcar & Cleveland	136,616
Stockton	197,030
Hartlepool	92,571
Total Brigade area	569,951

Table 2 Cleveland Fire Brigade local authority population estimates (December 2022)

The rate of deliberate fires per 10,000 population for each local authority throughout the Brigade area is illustrated below:
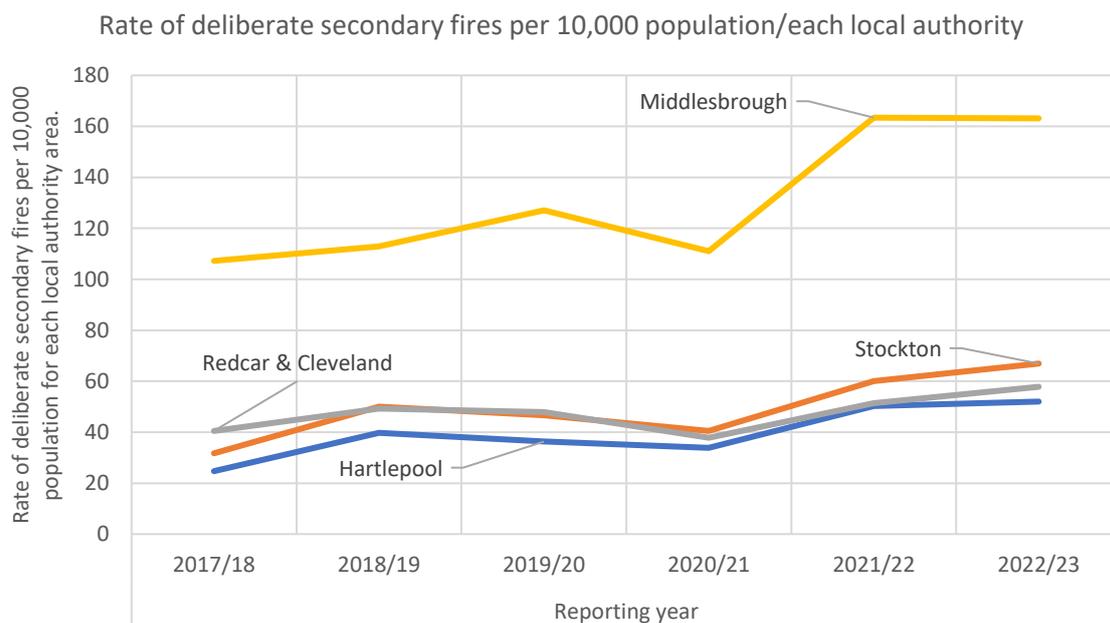
Figure 4 Rate of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population for each local authority area.

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[8] Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (December 2022)

Where do we want to be?

Our Strategic Goal is to create Safer and Stronger Communities.

We want to achieve Safer Neighbourhoods and improve the Environment by reducing the risks throughout our communities from arson and deliberate fire setting.

We aim to achieve this success through the delivery of four strategic priorities, described below.

1 Partnerships to protect our communities

2 Early intervention and education

3 Communication and engagement

4 Evaluation of activities

Strategic priorities

Partnerships to protect communities

Effective partnerships are needed to achieve a sustained reduction to the risk of arson and deliberate fire setting throughout the communities of Cleveland. Community Safety Partnerships established in each local authority area provide the opportunity to work with responsible authorities such as Cleveland Police, local authorities, health education and probation services to develop arson and deliberate fire reduction targeted interventions. By working with partners, businesses, community groups and volunteers, our communities can be protected by reducing the capabilities, opportunities, and motivations for people to engage in arson and deliberate fire setting.

Partnership activities to help protect communities include:

- Work with Cleveland Police to jointly investigate deliberate fires and support the prosecution of arsonists;
- Work with each local authority to manage the risk to both communities and operational crews from void, insecure and derelict buildings that have the potential to attract fly tipping, property damage or vandalism;
- Work with school governors, headteachers and school premises managers in reducing the risk of deliberate fire setting in schools and other educational establishments;
- Engage with landowners and agricultural communities to support a reduction in the prevalence of arson and deliberate fires throughout rural communities which may also lead to wildfires;
- Fly tipping is the illegal dumping of waste instead of using authorised methods to avoid paying a disposal fee, and it may often become the fuel for deliberate fires. Partnerships with local authorities and the promotion of fly tipping reporting lines can reduce the availability of waste material used as fuel for deliberate fires[9]. Effective partnerships with the Environmental Agency can also assist in the in the removal of waste from private land;
- Arson is a common cause of fire in retail premises. Engagement with the business sector to provide support on how to decrease unplanned and opportunist attacks can reduce the prevalence of deliberate fires;
- Partnerships with the housing sector and resident/community groups can also assist in target hardening localities susceptible to anti-social behaviour which may lead to deliberate fire setting.

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[9] The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) publish fly tipping statistics reported by local authorities.

Early intervention

People may show an interest and become involved in deliberate fire setting for a range of different reasons. These may include children or young people playing with sources of ignition to it being used by people with criminal intent to deliberately damage property or cause harm to others.

Determining the capabilities, opportunities and motivations of people who engage in deliberate fire setting enables appropriate interventions, such as education and early intervention programmes to be applied which can influence a positive behavioural change.

The delivery of education and early intervention programmes to achieving long term behaviour change can help reduce the prevalence of arson and deliberate fire setting. Recognised behavioural change frameworks[10] can also help to achieve positive changes in the behaviours of individuals or communities.

The activities that support education and early intervention programmes include:

- Engagement with partners such as schools and youth groups to identify at the earliest opportunity children and young people who may participate in deliberate fire setting;
- StayWise resources can assist in delivering essential safety messages. StayWise facilitates a more effective and consistent way of imparting knowledge and life skills to support the creation of a safety conscious environment;
- The provision of development opportunities for children and young people[11] which can improve their life skills and provide diversionary activities away from deliberate fire setting and anti-social behaviour.

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[10] An example of a behavioural change framework is Achieving behaviour change: A guide for local government and partners, which provides a structured approach to achieving behaviour change, and is based on a framework known as the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW). The BCW can be used to help develop behaviour change interventions from scratch, build on or modify existing interventions, and choose from existing or planned interventions.

[11] The NFCC Early Intervention Implementation Framework provides fire and rescue services with clear guidance and a suite of practical tools for strategic direction, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to deliver effective Early Intervention Programmes.

Communication and engagement

The effective communication of our deliberate fire reduction strategy, activities and their outcomes is essential to ensure that all our stakeholders are aware of the economic and social cost of deliberate fires throughout our communities and the activities that we deliver to reduce its impact.

A communication plan will provide the opportunity to deliver clear, consistent and targeted key messages that can heighten awareness of the risks and costs from deliberate fire setting, deter arson and deliberate fire setting behaviours and influence a cultural shift to perceive deliberate fire setting as being socially unacceptable.

The activities that support effective communication include:

- Identifying relevant stakeholders and analysing their degree of influence and contribution towards the successful delivery of arson and deliberate fire reduction activities;
- Delivery of an effective communication plan which conveys consistent messages with target audiences that support local and national campaigns to prevent arson and deliberate fire setting behaviours;
- Engaging with communities can both increase public participation and involve communities in the decision making around the activities that can reduce arson and deliberate fire setting in their localities. Improved community engagement can also help to build long term effective relationships between fire and rescue services and communities, building trust, ownership and achieving a cultural shift where arson and deliberate fire setting are seen as socially unacceptable.

Evaluation

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework describes that prevention activities should be assessed to determine their expected outcomes, which activities would achieve these outcomes and how the outcomes should be evaluated. The evaluation of arson and deliberate fire reduction related activities is essential to understand their impact, the processes of how they are delivered and their economic cost. Evaluation can help inform decisions about why an activity is effective or ineffective, and whether it is an appropriate use of resources. It can also help to highlight future improvement needs and determine whether an activity is worth delivering again, and whether it may be transferrable to a different location.

Through the evaluation of arson and deliberate fire reduction activities, the knowledge gained can be shared with other fire and rescue services to promote the interventions that deliver the greatest reduction in the economic and social value of deliberate fire setting.

The activities that support evaluation include:

- The proportionate evaluation of arson and deliberate fire reduction activities to determine their cost, impact and return on investment;
- Sharing the outcomes of the evaluation of deliberate fire reduction activities throughout the fire sector;
- Assessing and initiatives and learning from other services throughout the fire sector that have provided information and case studies into the NFCC good practice portal;
- Ensuring the accuracy and consistency of recording the cause of fires will influence the quality of evaluation outcomes.

Monitoring and review

The effective monitoring of progress is essential to gauge the impact of arson and deliberate fire reduction activities.

Leading indicators are predictive measures that lead to the performance of lagging indicators. Lagging indicators are historical in nature and focus on the results at the end of events.

A blend of leading and lagging indicators will provide a holistic overview of the resource allocation, cost, benefit and outcomes of arson and deliberate fire reduction activities.

Examples of performance indicators to support the delivery of strategic priorities include:

Partnerships

- The number of void, insecure or derelict buildings and the corresponding number of deliberate fires and incidents of anti-social behaviour;
- The number of deliberate fire incidents affecting educational establishments;
- The number of deliberate fires in rural locations;
- The number of incidents of fly tipping reported to local authorities and the number of deliberate fires involving refuse;
- The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic buildings;
- The number of fire investigations completed and their

corresponding percentage of positive outcomes such as arrests, cautions or other charges.

Education and Early Intervention Programmes

- The number of school education sessions focussed on arson and deliberate fire setting;
- The number of referrals made to engage with children and young people and implementation of suitable early interventions;
- The number of adult referrals made to fire and rescue services relating to deliberate firesetting behaviours;

Communication with communities

- Engagement from communities with arson and deliberate fire related communications, such as social media interactions or their response to targeted campaigns;
- The number of deliberate fire related communications targeted towards communities identified as being harder to reach through conventional communication channels.

Evaluation

- The number of deliberate fire reduction activities evaluated;
- The number of evaluations published or shared through the fire and rescue sector.

Summary

Purpose	• To support the achievement of the Brigade's corporate goal of creating Safer and Stronger Communities.
Aim	• Reduce community risk through a year-on-year reduction of deliberate fires throughout our communities.
Why we need a strategy:	• Deliberate fires account for around 75.4% of all fires attended by the Brigade over the previous five years. • The proportion of all fires that are deliberate in their cause has gradually increased over the last five years from around 81.1% in 2017/18 to around 87.5% in 2021/22,
Strategic themes:	• Partnerships to protect communities; • Education and Early Intervention Programmes; • Communication; • Evaluation.
What we intend to do:	• Protect communities by working with partners to reduce the capabilities, opportunities and motivation for people to engage in arson and deliberate fire setting; • Apply a structured approach to education and early intervention programmes to achieve a longer-term behavioural change; • Develop communication plans to deliver clear, consistent and targeted key messages to deter deliberate fire setting and influence a cultural shift to perceive deliberate fire setting as being socially unacceptable; • Use appropriate technology to maximise the conveyance of deliberate fire communications and the opportunity to report deliberate fire setting; • Conduct proportionate evaluation of deliberate fire reduction related activities and share best practice with other fire and rescue services.
How we will achieve our aim:	• Work with partners to develop and implement effective interventions that reduce the prevalence of deliberate fire setting; • Communicate and engage with communities to influence behaviour change; • Evaluate deliberate fire reduction activities and share best practice with other fire and rescue services; • Measure success through a range of leading and lagging indicators.