



SOUTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE
AUTHORITY



South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue
WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Have your say on our Operational Plan

Our Operational Plan outlines
how we'll continue providing a
first-class emergency response
service to **South Yorkshire.**

We're seeking your views on the targets
we should set ourselves in relation to
responding to life-threatening incidents.



We're asking you about changes to our response time targets because we're not meeting the current target

Our target is to attend 80% of life-threatening incidents within 6 minutes



But we've never achieved it



BUT

People in South Yorkshire are safer than ever before

The number of 999 calls we receive is going down



2009 – 42,835



2012 – 29,425

More importantly, the number of people killed or injured in an accidental house fire is also down



2006 – 158



2012 – 50

We're asking for your views on three options

We'll just promise to get to you as quickly and safely as possible

We'll change our current target to make it more realistic

9 minutes? 10 minutes? 11 minutes?

OR

We'll have a shorter target time in the areas we know have a greater fire risk

Please tell us what you think

What is an Operational Plan¹?



Our Operational Plan shows how we identify and efficiently manage risk. It is key that the Operational Plan demonstrates the integration of Prevention, Protection and Response to deliver the most effective and efficient service to the public, whilst at the same time ensuring the ongoing safety of our staff. What this Plan is not, is a list of projects or things that we are going to change.

The Operational Plan is an explanation of how we determine:

- What we need to do
- Where we need to do it
- When we need to do it

In this process we will assess the risks to:

- The people and communities of South Yorkshire
- The homes they live in
- The places they visit and where they work
- The infrastructure of the communities they live in
- The wider environment of South Yorkshire, both in a local and a national context

The results of this process are made freely available, demonstrated in terms of the decreasing numbers of fires, injuries and deaths experienced by the people of South Yorkshire.

Why do we produce an Operational Plan?

Central Government has a responsibility to ensure the public is adequately protected. This protection is delivered locally in South Yorkshire by the Fire and Rescue Authority who are responsible for providing and maintaining South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

In England the Government sets out its high level priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in a document called “The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework”.

The priorities in this Framework are for Fire and Rescue Authorities to:

- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately

¹Our Operational Plan is known within the Fire and Rescue community as an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

- Work in partnership with their local communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide

Each Fire and Rescue Authority must produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan, which we call our Operational Plan, that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. Our Plan must also take into consideration work that we do with our partners, such as the Police, health services, and local authorities, to consider the local risks of major emergencies, such as flooding, industrial explosions and terrorism.

What we are looking to explain in the Operational Plan is “how” we assess and manage these risks using the combined functions of Prevention (Community Fire Safety), Protection (Technical Fire Safety) and Emergency Response.

Our aims and objectives

Looking to the future we are trying to achieve two goals that, on the face of it, appear to conflict with each other:

- We aim to balance the functions and the structures of our service with the financial constraints that we are given to work within.
- We also aim to continue the significant advances in community safety in South Yorkshire delivered by the large reductions in numbers of fires, casualties and deaths.

For the Fire Authority and the Fire Service this is not a conflict but simply another reason, on top of our professional pride and desire to deliver the best service to the people of South Yorkshire, to maintain our drive for continuous improvement. To achieve both of these goals we will have to continually look for new and smarter ways of working, balanced with the need to meet the expectations of the public, partners, our own staff, and the Government, in terms of the quality, reliability and cost of our performance.

The Fire and Rescue Authority and the Chief Fire Officer are committed to an IRMP that will continue to deliver a safer South Yorkshire and a safe working environment for our staff, whilst operating within the available budget.



The aims and objectives of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue continue to be expressed in our four priorities:

COMMUNITY – Making people safer – working to prevent emergencies

OPERATIONS – Responding to emergencies – effectively and safely

PEOPLE – Valuing people – those we serve and employ

FINANCE AND RESOURCES – Maximising efficiency – making our resources go further

This consultation booklet

The final version of our Operational Plan will be produced later this year, taking into account the feedback and suggestions we receive through this consultation with our staff and with the public.

In our final Operational Plan we will be informing the public of the way we assess and deliver our core services:

- Prevention – this is our Community Safety function which, combined with our other areas of activity, has delivered major improvements to the safety of the people of South Yorkshire.
- Protection – this is our Technical Fire Safety function which is concerned with ensuring the safety of all non-domestic (eg. business) properties and locations in South Yorkshire. We will explain how we deliver these continuing improvements, using our inspection and enforcement activities.
- Response – we are rightly proud of our emergency response performance. This is linked to our other functions in several ways – one being the provision of risk information about buildings, which is collected by our protection function, being made available at the touch of a screen to our response staff to improve their safety.



Our Prevention, Protection and Response functions work together to ensure the ongoing safety of the people of South Yorkshire. They also combine to protect the environment in which they live and work.

To help us develop our next Operational Plan we are looking for staff and public input into some Fire Service issues.

Background

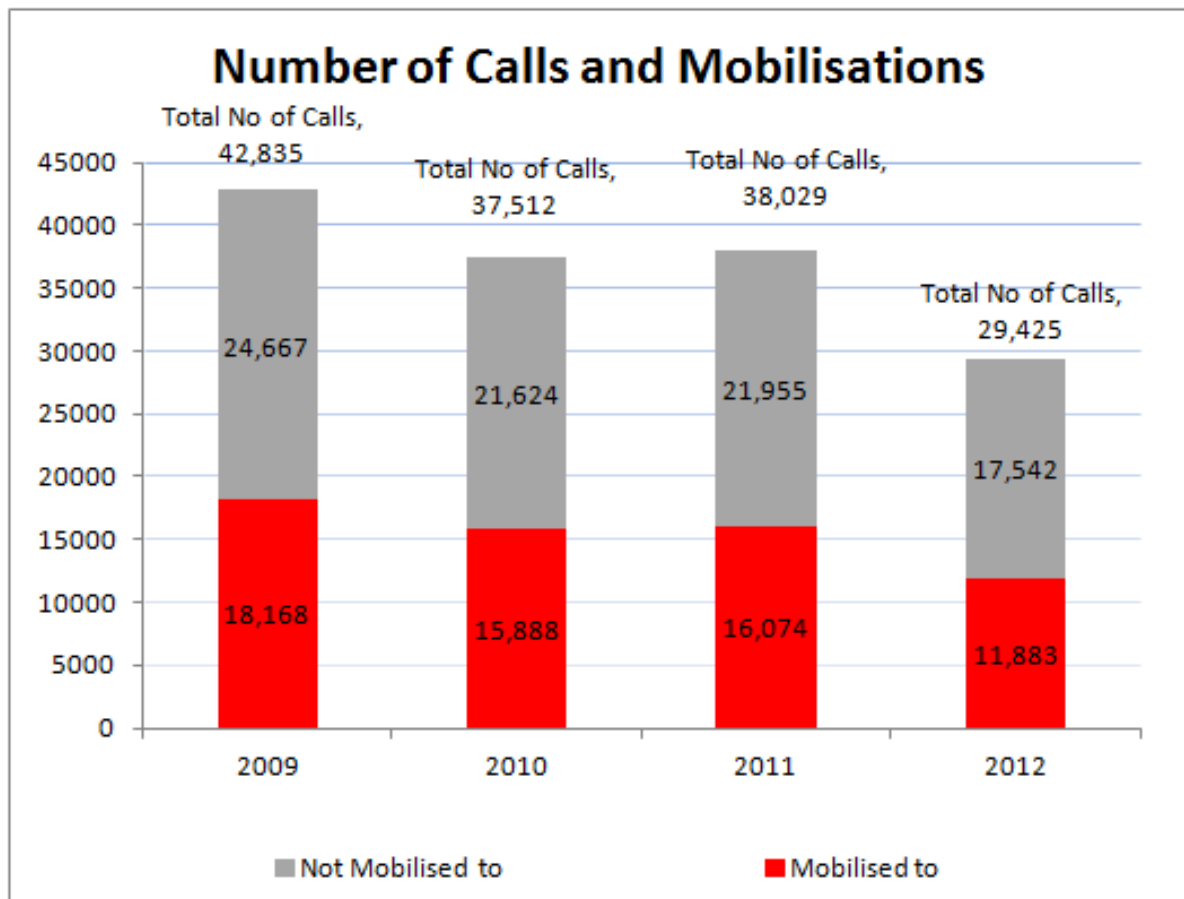
Due to the public sector austerity programme, Government funding cuts mean our budget is reducing by around £9.5m from 2011-15. There is also the likelihood of further cuts after 2015. We have done, and are continuing to do, everything possible to make efficiencies in the 'back office' to protect the frontline as much as possible. To illustrate this, we have produced a new booklet, "50 Ways We've Saved: Protecting The Frontline". However, firefighter costs make up the majority of our budget, and cuts on this scale are inevitably having an impact on the resources available for the frontline.

We are very concerned about the effect of any further cuts to our budget after 2015 and want to take this consultation opportunity to openly and honestly listen to our staff and the public we serve about your views on three key issues we must carefully consider in the coming years.

1. A Firefighter's Role

It is accepted throughout the UK fire and rescue service that a firefighter's role includes a range of work in addition to responding to fires. This work includes rescues from road traffic collisions and water, responding to terrorist incidents, and undertaking prevention work to make communities safer.

Firefighters are undertaking a wider role than they used to, but emergency calls to us have reduced significantly over recent years, as communities across South Yorkshire become safer.



Some people may look at this reduction in emergency incidents and believe it is possible to cut firefighter numbers in proportion. **We passionately believe this is a mistaken view.** Our work should be considered as an insurance policy for the South Yorkshire public. It is essential to maintain good levels of fire cover, well spread across the county, because we never know when, or where, we will next be needed.

We recognise, however, that taxpayers who fund us might expect our firefighters to take on more responsibilities to provide full value for the funding we receive, particularly considering that the number of emergency incidents we have traditionally responded to is reducing in number.

Therefore, this consultation proposes that we discuss with our staff the desirability of adding appropriate additional skills to our firefighters' role map, to better justify the cost of our wholetime workforce, and to show the full benefits we can provide to the community for the funding we receive.

2. Firefighter Staffing Arrangements

Like most UK Fire and Rescue Services, our firefighter staffing arrangements are based on traditional “wholetime” (full-time) or “retained” (on-call) arrangements. Traditional wholetime staffing maximises the amount of fire cover we can provide, but that comprehensive cover is relatively expensive. Elsewhere in the country, newer, more flexible staffing arrangements have been successfully introduced, particularly in localities where emergency calls are low in number. These still provide good levels of cover, at a significantly reduced cost.

As our funding continues to be cut, we are faced with a choice. Sticking only to traditional staffing arrangements increases the likelihood of fire stations having to close. More flexible working may enable us to keep more fire stations open, staffed in different ways. We are interested in your views on this issue.

3. Response Time Targets

When we receive a 999 call, we always aim to get our fire engine to those in need of help as quickly and safely as possible. Our self-set target of reaching 80% of life-threatening incidents (things like house fires and road traffic collisions) within 6 minutes has never actually been achieved since it was introduced in 2006, but this hasn’t affected our performance in relation to keeping people safe. In fact, people in South Yorkshire are safer than ever before with injuries and deaths from fires and road traffic collisions falling dramatically over the last ten years.



We will always strive to respond to life-threatening incidents as quickly and as safely as possible. However, given that we have never achieved our current 6-minute target, and considering that the extent of Government funding cuts means our frontline service is changing, we must be realistic about what we can achieve in the future.

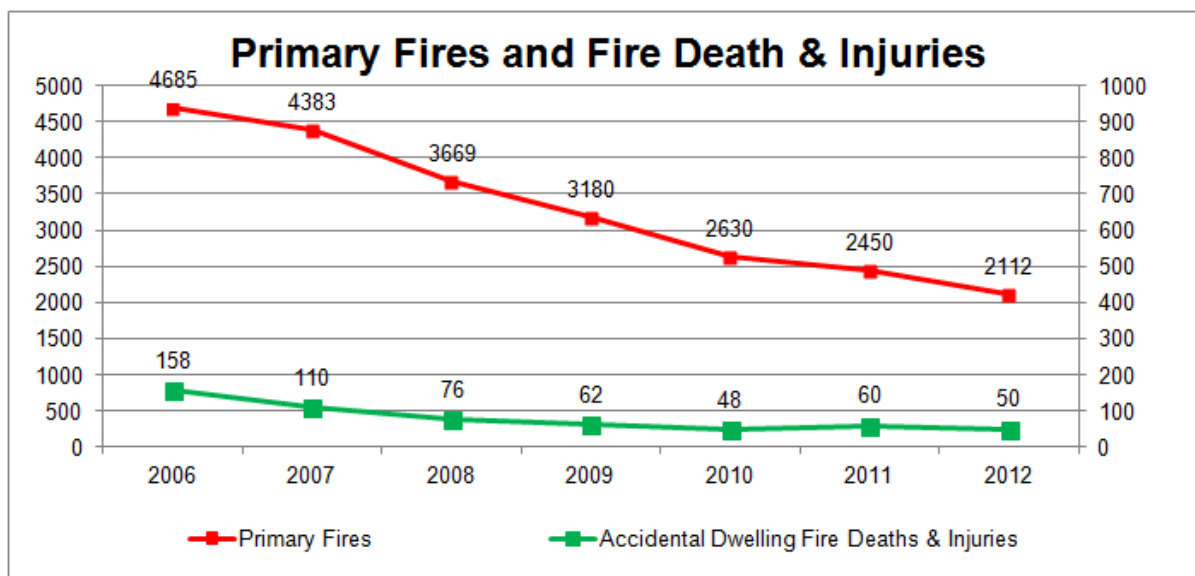
Response times are an issue of vital importance to anyone who might need to call us for an emergency, so we want to discuss honestly with the public what our future response times approach might be. There are some issues we would like people to consider, and tell us their views:

- Given that we will always respond as quickly as we can, is it necessary to set ourselves a target response time?
- If so, what approach should we take?
- Should this target be the same for each area of the county, given that some areas are more prone to fires than others and some are more prone to RTC's?

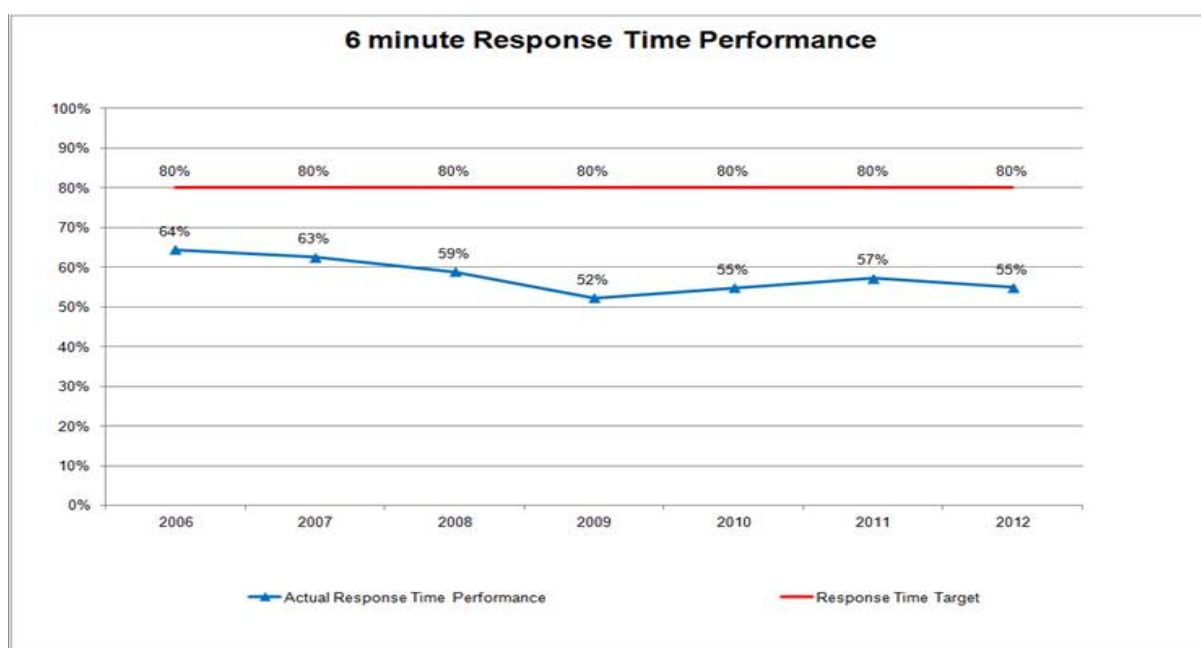
What do we mean by 'response time'?

When we talk about our 'response time' we are referring to the time it takes a fire engine to reach its destination from the moment the Control Room first sends the fire station (or appliance, if they are not at the fire station) a message, telling them about the emergency, until the moment the first appliance arrives at the scene.

As can be seen from the graph below, we have delivered significant reductions in Primary Fires (which include accidental dwelling fires) and fire deaths and injuries. These are the positive outcomes of our work combining Prevention, Protection and Response.



As can be seen from the graph below, we have never achieved our self-assigned six-minute performance target since its introduction in 2006. In light of the significant reductions in injuries and deaths, it is clear that this response time performance is not a deciding factor in the number of deaths and injuries experienced by the people of South Yorkshire.



Research has shown that in the critical early stages of a house fire, response times are not the main factor in preventing fire fatalities. The research shows that the education provided by our Community Fire Safety work, preventing fires before they start; the fitting of Smoke Alarms; an occupier's initial actions (raising the alarm and calling 999); and the fire survival guidance given by our Control Operators; are all more significant than whether an appliance turns up in a time like 6, 9 or 12 minutes.

Nationally, response times are increasing and fire fatalities are reducing. This is reflected in South Yorkshire with a continuous improvement in the reductions of fires, injuries and deaths.

What are the response time options?

We're seeking the views of our staff and the public on three different options in relation to response time targets. The three options are:

1. **No response time target** – we will always respond to all life-threatening incidents as quickly as possible with the resources available, so is it necessary to set ourselves a target?
2. **Single County-Wide standard** – keep a response time target for the whole of South Yorkshire, but review the current target of 6 minutes. It is difficult for the public to hold us to account against a target we are unable to reach. Given the scale of the Government budget cuts, if we keep to a countywide standard, the new target is likely to be in the 9-11 minutes range.
3. **Risk-Based Response standards** – have different response time targets for each area depending on the risk level. We hold risk information, down to household level, which is based on historic incident data for house fires, population density, deprivation and other relevant factors. Put simply, we know the communities in which most of our emergency incidents happen. If we take this approach, it may be possible to keep a 6-minute target in our high-risk areas. For lower risk areas, our target times may be in the 9-15 minutes range.

Turn over for more details on these options.

In more detail

Option 1 – No response time target

Many fire and rescue services, including us, measure how quickly they get to life-threatening incidents, like house fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs). By measuring this and reporting to local councillors, you can see how well your fire service is performing and challenge us if we are not meeting our target. It can also help us to plan where to put things like fire engines and fire stations.

But one option might be not to have a target at all and just promise to get to serious incidents as quickly as we can - **which as an emergency service we would always seek to do anyway**. You'll see from the graphs earlier that a fire service can still continue to reduce deaths and injuries from incidents even though it doesn't meet its response time targets. Taking this approach, our measure of success for the fire service is the reduction in numbers of fires, injuries and deaths. It is a feature of response time targets that you may arrive outside your target time and still save someone's life (as is clearly the case in South Yorkshire) – so which becomes the more important statistic? The life saved or the response time target failed?

No target time - key issues:

- ✓ Focus on more important targets, such as fire deaths and injuries
- ✓ Not tied to a measure that may be unattainable due to funding cuts
- × Public perception that standards will reduce
- × The public have no measure with which to hold us to account

Option 2 – Single County-Wide response time target

Countywide target – key issues:

- ✓ Easy to explain and understand
- ✓ Sets the same standard for all South Yorkshire's residents
- × Negative perception of moving to a slower target
- × Doesn't acknowledge that risks are higher in some areas

We currently have a target which says we'll get to 80 per cent of all life threatening incidents within six minutes, but we've never been able to achieve it. Partly this is because traffic has increased on our roads. It's also because a greater proportion of the serious incidents we go to are road traffic collisions, and our fire stations aren't ideally placed to get to these kinds of emergency as quickly as house fires. By measuring these two types of incident together we are not able to show an accurate picture.

So, another option could be to change this target to a more realistic time, such as 9-11 minutes, and possibly have separate targets for dwelling fires and RTCs. This will mean we still have something to aim for and for the public to measure us against. But it would still be a target we set ourselves and won't really affect our overall aim - which is, of course, to reduce the number of fires, injuries and deaths. **We will still attend all life threatening incidents that do occur as quickly as we possibly can.**

Option 3 – Risk-based response time target

Another option to consider is for us to have different response time targets for different geographical areas of South Yorkshire, depending on their likelihood of having a dwelling fire. We would develop a risk map of South Yorkshire with varying risk bands to achieve this. An example of the types of targets that could be set for different risk bands is shown below.

Response Target	Band A - x% in x minutes		Band B - X% in x minutes	Band C - x% in x minutes	
Risk Band	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low

Of course **we will still aim to get to all incidents in the quickest time possible**, but this approach would be useful when deciding how we respond – not just sending an appliance when an incident occurs, but how we engage in prevention and prevention work in our communities to reduce the risk and likelihood of fires occurring in the first place. This integrated approach would enable us to more accurately have the right resources, in the right place, and at the right time. It could be that, if we were to implement this option, we may be able to keep a six-minute target for very high/high risk areas. This approach would also enable us to set realistic targets that are meaningful to people, wherever they live in South Yorkshire, and against which we can be transparently held to account.

Risk-based target – key issues:

- ✓ We match our resources to risk, in line with national guidance
- ✓ Most realistic measure; may allow for 6-min target in some areas
- ✗ More difficult to explain and understand
- ✗ Perception of 'postcode lottery'

Keeping You Safe

We need to review our response time targets because we have never been able to achieve our current target, and because Government cuts mean they will become even more difficult to achieve in the future. However, we stress that the number of fires, and deaths and injuries due to fire, are now lower than ever before. This is because more lives are saved every year by working smoke alarms and the wide range of prevention activities we undertake than by emergency rescues.

The only way to guarantee not suffering injury or loss in a fire is not to have a fire in the first place. Where fires do occur, working smoke alarms provide an early alert to enable an evacuation to take place, and to stop small fires from spreading.

We are genuinely concerned about the impact of the Government cuts on our frontline resources, and must consider our approach to the firefighter role, shift arrangements, and response time targets. We are listening to the views of our staff and the public to help inform our future Operational Plan. We do believe, however, that we can continue to make South Yorkshire a safer place in which to live, work and drive. By taking basic safety precautions, fitting smoke alarms, and testing them regularly, you can minimise the chances that you'll ever need to call us in an emergency. Call us now on (0114) 253 2314 for a FREE home safety check and, if needed, free smoke alarms.

This Consultation

We are consulting on our Operational Plan from Monday 25th March to Monday 24th June. We will then take account of feedback from the public and our staff and produce our final Operational Plan over the summer months. We intend to ask our Authority to approve it in September 2013.

To give us your feedback, please do so in writing using any of the following methods:

- Write to: Operational Plan Consultation, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue, 197 Eyre Street, Sheffield, S1 3FG. You may complete and return the form overleaf if you like.
- E-mail: customercare@syfire.gov.uk
- Internet: visit our website, www.syfire.gov.uk, and follow the links under “Operational Plan Consultation”

You can find out more about SYFR and our work in any of the following ways:

- Website: www.syfire.gov.uk
- Twitter: @syfr
- Facebook: South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue

We are also holding four public events for any member of the public to come and ask us questions. There is no need to book, you can just turn up to any event. Each day will include both a drop-in session and a public meeting as follows:

Date	Venue	Time of drop-in session	Time of public meeting
Tue 14 May	Rotherham Market, Effingham Street (drop-in session) All Saints Centre, Vicarage Lane, Rotherham, S65 1AA (public meeting)	11.00-5.00	6.00-8.00
Wed 29 May	The Core, County Way, Barnsley, S70 2JW	12.00-6.00	6.30-8.30
Thu 30 May	Voluntary Action Sheffield, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield, S1 4FW	12.30-5.30	6.00-8.00
Tue 4 Jun	The Mansion House, High Street, Doncaster, DN1 1BN	12.00-5.30	6.00-8.00

At these drop-in sessions, you will be able to ask our staff for further details on any aspect of this consultation, as well as talk to community safety staff about how you can make your home safer.

SYFR Consultation Feedback

Response Times preference (tick one box)

- ☐ No response time target
- ☐ Single countywide response time target
- ☐ Risk-based target

Other comments on response time targets

Equality Assessment. Our initial Equality Assessment is that changes to response time targets, and the other Operational Plan consultation issues, impact equally on everyone in the community. If you disagree, and feel some sections of the community are affected in an unequal way, please give details here

A Firefighters' Role

Firefighters' Shift Arrangements

Any other comments

Please ensure your consultation feedback is with us by Monday 24th June, 2013.