



COMMUNITY SAFETY ENGAGEMENT

EARLY INTERVENTION

FireSkills and FireSkills Employability Award

Statistical Report

April 2025 – March 2026

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1. Summary

This report presents the first full year of Fireskills and FireSkills Employability Award (FEA) recorded activity delivered by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) between April 2025 and March 2026. It summarises data collected from FireSkills quarterly returns provided by Local Senior Office (LSO) Areas and while it remains too early to identify long-term trends, it provides an initial overview of the delivery of Fireskills across the Service.

The FireSkills Programme engaged 754 young people between April 2025 and March 2026, delivering 94 courses overall, 46 of which were FireSkills Employability Award courses.

When reviewing the data, it should be noted that Lanarkshire LSO area delivered 47% of all courses, giving it a substantial influence on the overall picture.

Delivery was highest in Q1 (33 courses), followed by a decline in Q2 and Q3, before recovering in Q4, likely reflecting school holiday patterns. A total of 1,156 sessions were delivered, predominantly during daytime hours, indicating strong alignment with school-based provision.

Participants were primarily male (64%) and concentrated in the 14–16 age group (76%), demonstrating effective engagement with adolescents at a key stage for preventing risk-taking behaviours. However, lower participation among under-11s and those aged 16–18 suggests opportunities to expand early intervention and transition support.

The programme engaged 55 young people with additional support needs (7%) and 12 care-experienced individuals, though the latter may be underrepresented due to limited disclosure. A total of 90 pre-visits supported relationship building and risk assessment.

Our main partners were Education, reflecting current delivery models. Overall, the programme shows strong performance but could improve inclusivity, broaden partnerships, and diversify delivery to extend reach and impact.

2. FireSkills Background

FireSkills consists of a range of individual sessions, based on Firefighter drills, that can be combined to provide a course ranging from 2.5 hours to 40 hours. It is delivered at a local fire station by specially trained Fire and Rescue personnel and will usually take place during school hours, however, it can be delivered at weekends or in the evening.

The flexible programme uses adapted Firefighter training activities to support young people develop their core skills. The activities can be adapted to provide a unique learning experience for young people. These activities include:

- Problem solving;
- Basic first aid and CPR;
- Team working and team leading;
- Confidence and communication;
- Citizenship skills;
- Understanding of the contribution that the SFRS and other agencies make to our communities.

3. FireSkills Employability Award (FEA)

Alongside the practical sessions, young people can complete the FireSkills Employability Award (FEA). This is a nationally recognised qualification, sitting at SCQF Level 4 and worth 4 credits. It offers a formal accreditation to support the advancement of CVs, job applications, apprenticeships or college pathways, and helps them talk about the transferable skills they've gained.

It is delivered in partnership with Ayrshire College and is designed to suit a wide range of learners. There are no pre-requisites for entry on to the programme, however because of the delivery level, this programme would be best suited for those 14 years and over.

Set criteria for the programme must be adhered to. All the learning outcomes must be undertaken and successfully achieved.

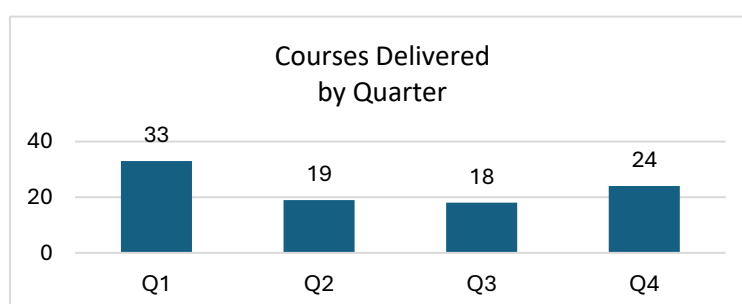
4. Delivery Volume and Trends

Course Delivery

Across the year:

- **Q1:** 33 courses;
- **Q2:** 19 courses;
- **Q3:** 18 courses;
- **Q4:** 24 courses.

This shows a strong start in Q1, followed by a dip in Q2 and Q3, before recovery in Q4. The drop in mid-year delivery may reflect seasonal factors created by the school holiday schedule.



5. Sessions Delivered

The overall number of sessions totalled 1,156. Each session is equivalent to 2.5 hours and would normally be a morning, afternoon or evening.

The distribution shows:

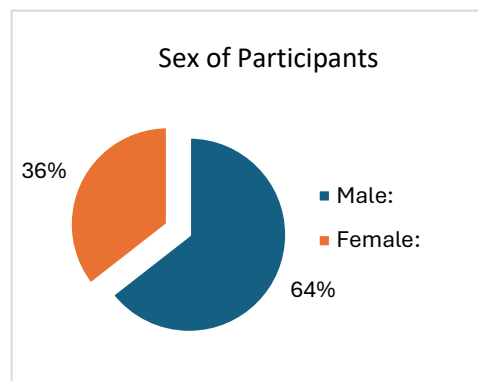
- Heavy reliance on **daytime sessions**;
- Minimal to **no evening or weekend delivery**.

This suggests the programme is primarily school-based or delivered during structured daytime settings, which supports accessibility but may limit reach to harder-to-engage groups who are unavailable during school hours.

6. Participant Demographics

Overall Engagement

A total of 754 young people participated. 486 (64%) were male and 268 (36%) were female:



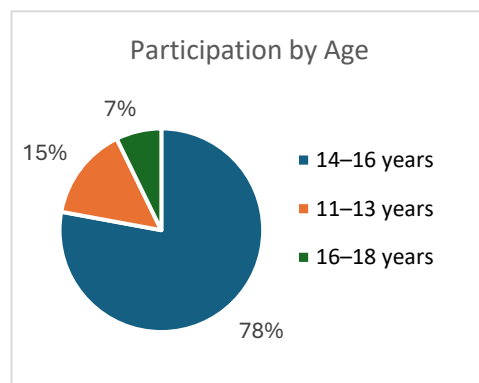
The *Serious Offending Report (2025)* highlights that young males are more likely to be involved risk taking behaviours including crime and Anti-Social behaviour¹. This affords an opportunity to engage with young people within this demographic.

7. Age Distribution

Most participants fall into the 14–16 age group, with only 21 being out with this and breakdown as follows:

¹ Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) – Serious Offending Report (2025)

- 14–16 years: 571 participants;
- 11–13 years: 109 participants;
- 16–18 years: 53 participants.



This indicates the programme is strongly focused on mid-teen cohorts, likely aligning with intervention strategies targeting risk behaviours emerging during adolescence². However, there may be missed opportunities in:

- Early intervention (under 11);
- Transition support (16–18+).

8. Vulnerability and Additional Needs

12 Care Experienced Young People participated in the courses. Given the scale of delivery, this figure may appear relatively low, however young people are not asked to declare this, and it is only recorded where known.

There were 55 young people (7%) that attended with Additional Support Needs, indicating the programme is engaging with young people requiring additional support.

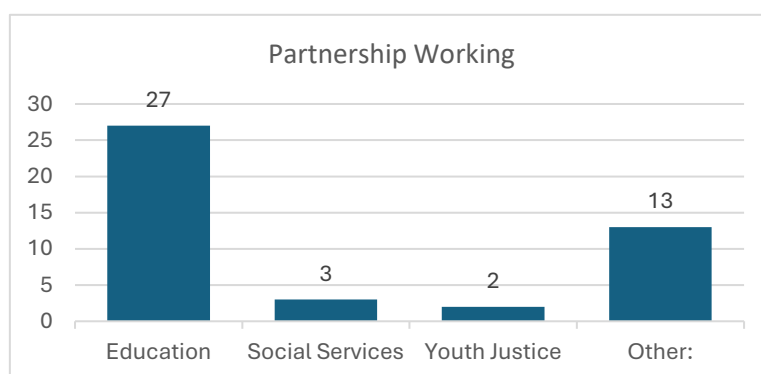
² Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Scotland (2022)

9. Pre-Engagement Activity

Pre-visits involve instructors meeting with the groups prior to them attending the course, they are important for relationship building and risk assessment, 90 pre-visits were conducted out of 94 courses.

10. Partnership Working

Education was by far the largest partner group, due to the high number of courses provided in Lanarkshire it is likely that this heavily reflects the model they use which is funded by the local authority and the participants are selected by Education.



11. External Funding

External funding was successfully secured by four LSO Areas at a total of £80,900, ranging in amount from £2,000 to £50,000. The majority of this was provided by local authorities with smaller amounts from partners such as Police Scotland. The LSO areas that obtained external funding were:

- Highland;
- East, North & South Ayrshire;
- East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde;
- Lanarkshire.

12. Support from Prevention function

The CSE Function provide strategic support for Fireskills. During 2025-26, the Function provided the following:

- Ongoing advice and guidance by each of the Youth Engagement Officers;
- Translation of all Fireskills sessions in Gaelic to support the delivery of courses in the Western Isles;
- Fireskills Training provided for 23 new instructors and FEA training provided to two LSO areas;
- Review of the Quality Assurance process and support to LSO areas to implement it locally.

13. Feedback from Young People

Young people completed feedback forms at the end of their course. Using Microsoft Forms made the process easy and accessible, especially with instructors available to support.

Young people reported back as follows:

- 84% had heard about FireSkills through their school teachers, which most likely reflects the strong school-based delivery model in areas like Lanarkshire;
- 80% already knew a bit about the course before attending – something that helps reduce anxiety and prepare them for a new environment;
- 98% reported that they were looking forward to attending, with only 2% stating that they were told to attend;
- 57% felt that it was even better than they expected and 41% that it met their expectations;
- 100% reported an improvement in one or more of their Coreskills which included confidence, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership;

- 84% rated SFRS staff as excellent, and a further 15% said good;
- 62% said that PPE and equipment was either good or fair;
- 100% said they now have a better understanding of the Fire and Rescue Service;
- 99% would recommend SFRS as a good organisation to work with young people;
- 97% were very or extremely satisfied overall.

14. Partner Feedback

“I took a group of pupils from Ellon Academy to Peterhead Fire Station to take part in the FireSkills course, and they had an excellent experience. The course helped to build their confidence in themselves and in their abilities and strengths. Although the pupils were from different year groups, they worked effectively as a team by the end of the week.

They developed valuable new skills through real-life, practical activities, which gave them a strong sense of achievement and pride. This was particularly impactful for those who do not always thrive in school, as it provided them with an opportunity to succeed. Following the course, two pupils expressed an interest in joining the Youth Volunteer Programme, with one now attending weekly. This opportunity would not have been on their radar without their participation in the course.

I cannot thank the staff at Peterhead enough. They were supportive, encouraging, and approachable, and they made a real difference to the pupils’ experience.

I will be enquiring soon about availability for next year, as I would like to offer another cohort of pupils the opportunity to take part in this excellent course.

This is a little longer than what you wanted but I cannot recommend this course enough.”

Principle Teacher Pupil Development – Ellon Academy

"We have recently seen our fifth cohort of pupils complete their FireSkills training and we continue to be impressed by the level of responsibility and commitment that our pupils demonstrate throughout the course. Families attending the passing out parade has been a particular highlight year on year. Parents and carers regularly comment on how engaged their young person has been throughout the week, arriving to school on time with full attendance and talking positively about their learning at the end of each day.

The young people we select for the course are more often than not interested in a career with the emergency services and many have solidified Firefighting as their pathway upon completing the course.

Previous participants have since gone on to college to complete the Uniformed Services course."

Lead Business and Community Support Officer – St Machar Academy

"FireSkills has already become a firm favourite with pupils. They appreciate a rich learning experience outside the classroom, and benefit from being tested physically and mentally. Being exposed to "real world" scenarios and discipline enables them to find out about themselves and each other. Parents too, are often surprised!"

Teacher of English – The Gordon Schools, Huntly

"TD1 Youth Hub is proud to partner with the FireSkills programme at Galashiels Community Fire Station. The programme empowers young people to build confidence, resilience, teamwork and leadership through meaningful challenges. The professionalism and encouragement of the firefighters have created lasting, positive outcomes for the young people we support."

Youth Worker – TD1 Youth Hub, Galashiels

15. Conclusion

The FireSkills and the FireSkills Employability Award have demonstrated the programme's significant value as an early intervention and youth engagement initiative within SFRS. The programme has successfully engaged young people at a key stage in their development, providing practical learning experiences that build confidence, communication, teamwork, leadership and problem-solving skills.

Data highlights strong levels of engagement and satisfaction, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from both participants and partner organisations. Young people reported improvements in their core skills, greater understanding of the role of SFRS, and high levels of satisfaction with both the programme and staff delivering it. Feedback from schools and partners further demonstrates the programme's ability to improve confidence, engagement, attendance and aspirations while offering positive experiences to young people who may not always thrive in traditional educational settings.

While the majority of participants are selected for Fireskills by partners in Education and this has proved an effective method supporting young people, potential opportunities exist to further diversify delivery models, strengthen partnership engagement, and increase accessibility through greater use of evening and weekend provision. Data also suggests scope to expand engagement with younger age groups, older teenagers, and underrepresented groups to maximise the programme's preventative impact.

As this represents the first full year of national data collection, it provides an important baseline from which future performance and outcomes can be measured. Continued investment in quality assurance, instructor development, partnership working and the FEA will help ensure the programme continues to evolve and deliver positive outcomes for young people and communities across Scotland.

Overall, FireSkills is making a meaningful contribution to SFRS's prevention agenda by supporting young people to develop skills, confidence and resilience while strengthening their connection to their communities and public services. Future

reporting will enable a deeper understanding of long-term outcomes and support evidence-based development of the programme.

16. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to support the maintenance and development of the FireSkills Programme:

1. Increase Employability Award Uptake

Promote and expand the FireSkills Employability Award (FEA) to maximise accreditation opportunities and strengthen outcomes for participants.

2. Partner Feedback

Develop a formal system to capture feedback from partner agencies that includes direct quotes.