

Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2018/19 to 2021/22

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report advises Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2021/22, with comparisons to the previous three years.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

The Fire Authority's vision and strategic aims stress a commitment to providing high quality services to the community of Shropshire. The Service takes seriously both complaints and compliments made about the quality, nature or delivery of the services provided. Comments are also used to review the effectiveness of the provision of these services.

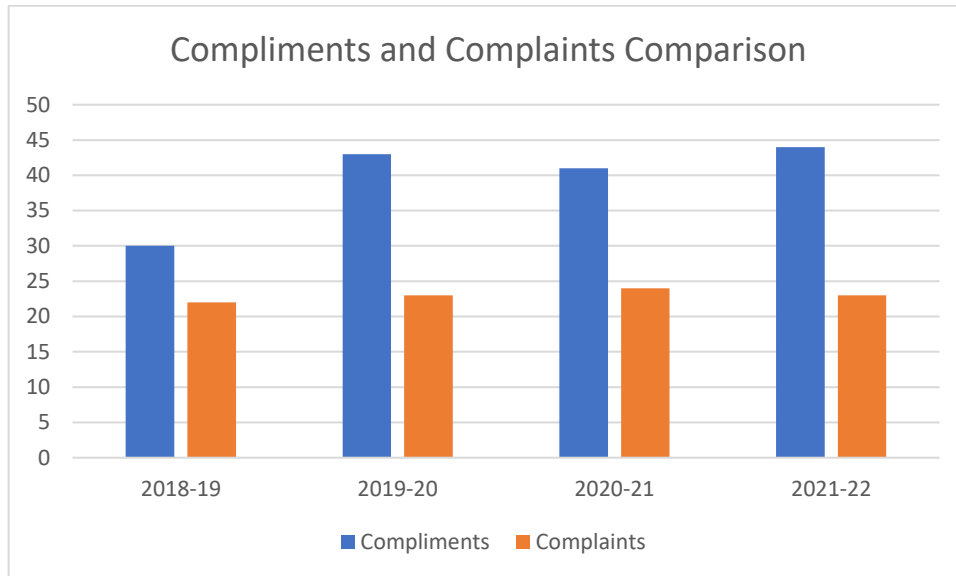
The Fire Authority has a Comments and Complaints Procedure in place to ensure complaints are handled in a fair and objective manner and that views expressed about the quality of services provided are acknowledged.

Compliments are recorded when they are addressed to the Chief Fire Officer or are brought to the attention of Executive Support Officers as per the established process.

4 Summary of Compliments and Complaints received during 2018/19 to 2021/22

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the number of compliments and complaints received in 2021/22, compared with the previous three-year period.

Figure 1



Compliments

The details of all complimentary communications received via the Executive Support Officers are circulated to the personnel concerned, their line management, Executive Officers and Members. Compliments are also published in the Service's weekly internal newsletter, 'The Pink', for all staff to appreciate and on the Service's website for public information. Care is taken at each stage, to ensure that any personal, identifying or sensitive details are removed.

The number of compliments received may be greater than shown in Figure 1, as this only captures those formally addressed to the Chief Fire Officer or passed to Executive Support. Compliments are often sent directly to stations, watches or departments and may not always be relayed to Executive Support Officers. However, work has been ongoing to raise awareness amongst staff to pass compliments to Executive Support and this may be a factor in the increased number of compliments recorded in the last three years.

The number and variety of compliments received make it difficult to benchmark specific areas of performance over a given period of time. However, Appendix A to the report provides a breakdown by type of the compliments received in 2021/22, together with some examples.

Complaints

Appendix B provides a breakdown of complaints received. There are no nationally prescribed classifications for recording complaints but, to facilitate local benchmarking across the period from 2018/19 to 2021/22, complaints received have been categorised into six key areas.

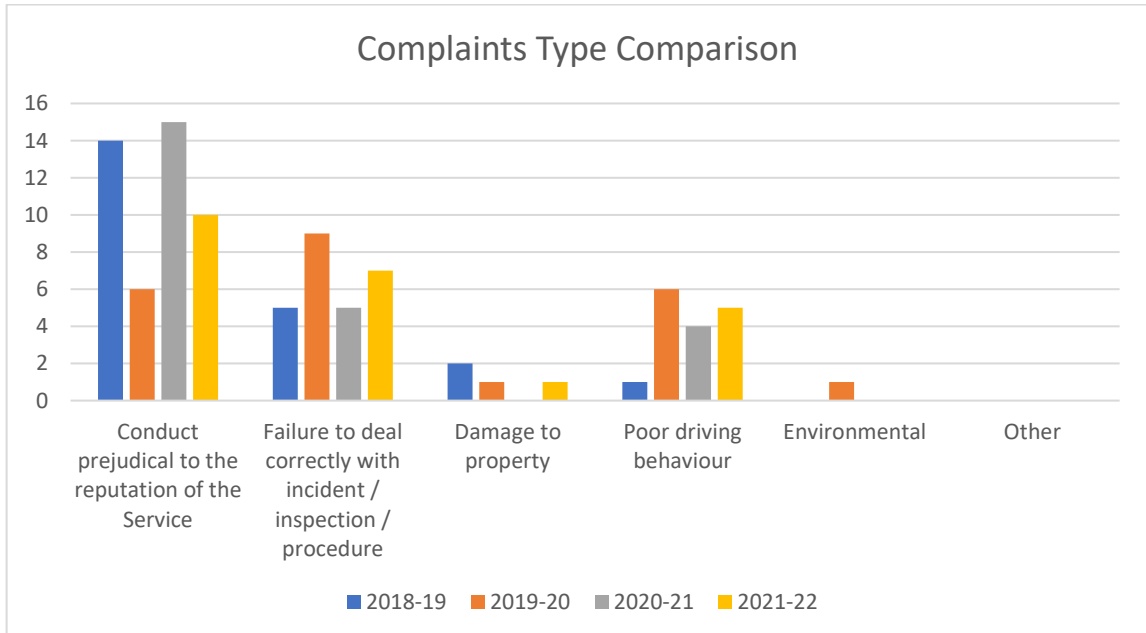
These are:

- Damage to property
- Poor driving behaviour
- Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service
- Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure
- Environmental
- Other

Of the 23 complaints lodged during 2021/22:

- 10 related to 'conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service'
- 7 related to 'failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection procedure'
- 5 related to 'poor driving behaviour'

Figure 2

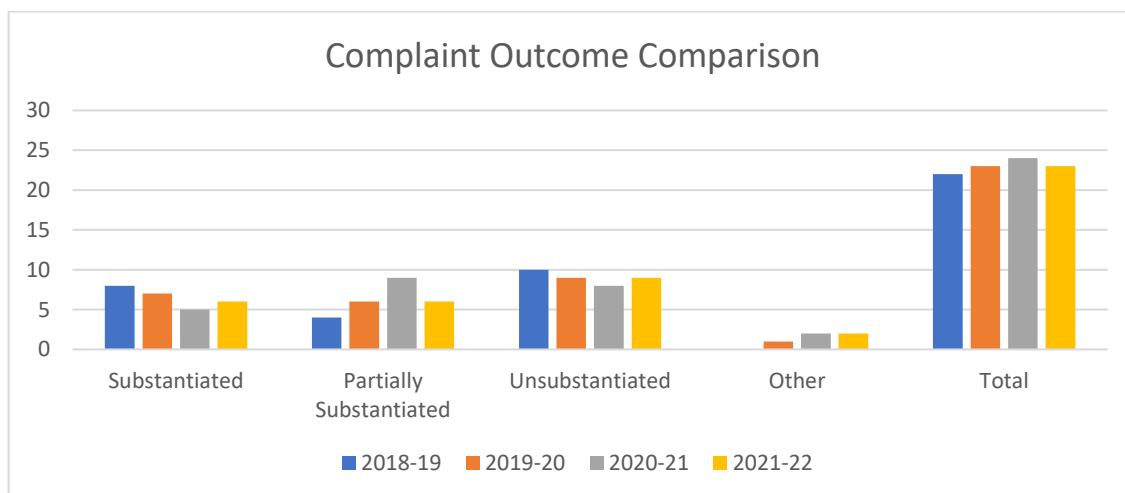


Of the 23 complaints lodged during 2021/22:

- 6 were substantiated
- 6 were partially substantiated
- 9 were unsubstantiated
- 2 were withdrawn

47.8% of all complaints were found to be fully or partially substantiated (see Figure 3). This was a 10.5% decrease over the previous year. (Figures have been rounded up to one decimal point). However, please note the small sample size involved and the corresponding impact on the statistics of just one or two complaints.

Figure 3



The outcome category 'Other' refers to where the complaint was withdrawn or the outcome was not shared with Executive Support because the complaint was subsequently addressed through the Service's disciplinary procedure, and the outcome was confidential. As mentioned previously, in 2021/22 two complaints were withdrawn.

In all cases, even those that were found to be unsubstantiated, the Service looks to identify any improvements that may help to avoid similar complaints arising in the future.

5 Social Media connectivity

Throughout the last 12 months, the Service has received a number of comments on the corporate social media accounts, praising the Service's work. Numerous comments are received saying, 'well done', 'thank you', and congratulating members of the Service on their achievements.

However, specific compliments are also received which are passed on to the line manager of those involved in the particular piece of work, incident or project. (Examples can be found in Appendix C).

Since 1 January 2022, the Service has received 1,762 comments on Facebook posts, the majority of which were positive.

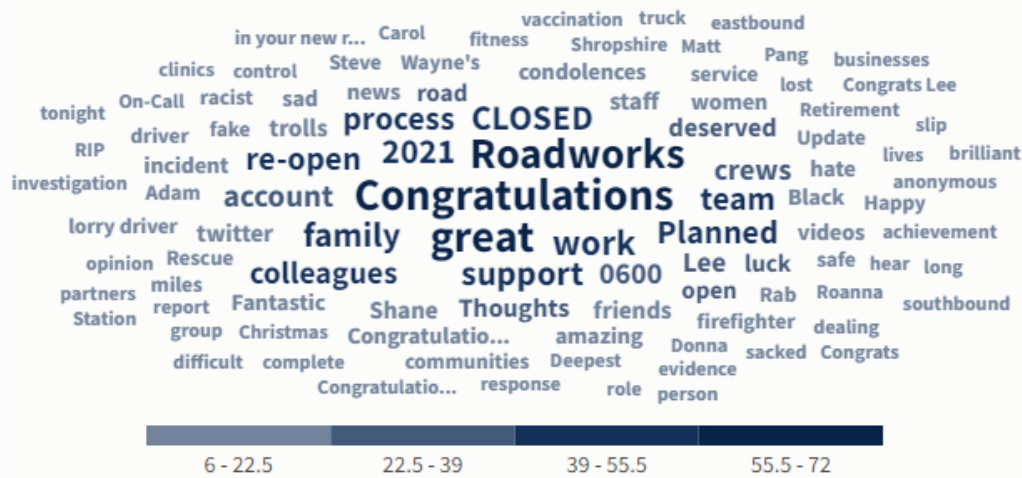
In 2021 the Service received 2,489 messages on Twitter and 53% of these were positive messages.

Inbound messages by sentiment in 2021



53% Positive	1.3K
34% Neutral	869
13% Negative	320

Inbound messages by topic in 2021



So far this year (2022) the Service has received 991 messages on Twitter and 549 of these were positive.

Inbound messages > Senti...

● Positive ● Neutral ● Negative



Although it is difficult to compile all positive comments and compliments on social media, it is apparent the Service receives significantly more positive engagement than negative.

Any complaints made on social media are dealt with through the usual formal channels and will be included in the complaints report and overview.

In October 2021, a complaint was received from various anonymous Twitter users regarding activity on a staff member's personal account. It transpired that the staff member's Twitter account had been doxed ie was a fake account, set up with malicious intent by a third party.

6 Management of Compliments and Complaints

Compliments addressed to the Chief Fire Officer are recorded by Executive Support and replied to by or on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer. Staff are encouraged to pass compliments to Executive Support, these are also acknowledged where contact details are available. and shared with the staff concerned and their line management. Compliments are also shared with Fire Authority Members as part of that circulation.

Complaints Performance Standard

Where contact details are provided, receipt of the complaint is formally acknowledged to complainants within five working days. All complaints are fully investigated irrespective of whether the complainant has identified themselves. Where possible, a written response is provided to complainants, advising of the outcome of the investigation. The Fire Authority sets a performance standard of 28 working days in which to furnish the complainant with a written response or advise of an extension of time where necessary. This standard has consistently been achieved, with one exception which was due to difficulties in getting a timely response for individuals within the complainant organization.

Appeals

Complainants dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation are entitled to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer within 28 days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following this, an appeal may be directed to the Local Government Ombudsman.

During 2021/22 two formal appeals to the Chief Fire Officer were received. One concerned the Service's road closure process that had been partially substantiated. The Chief Fire Officer responded that *"Whilst I don't think it constitutes an appeal against ACFO Hardiman's response to your original complaint, you have raised some issues on which I would certainly like to seek more assurance"*. Officers continue to communicate with the complainant on progress made.

The second appeal was in response to a road traffic collision between an appliance and the vehicle belonging to the complainant's son. While the complaint was substantiated, the complainant was seeking an apology and admittance of responsibility on behalf of the Service. The Chief Fire Officer apologised for any distress caused and acknowledged that while not common

practice to accept blame, it was his opinion that the fire appliance driver had played a significant part in the collision.

No appeals against the outcome of a complaint have been made to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2020/21.

Lessons Learned

All lessons learned from complaints are communicated in the most appropriate manner to staff, with remedial action taken as necessary, e.g. retraining, discipline etc. Actions taken in relation to individuals are not published within this report, as that would not be appropriate.

7 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An e-EQIA is not, therefore, required.

10 Appendices

Appendix A

Summary of Compliments received 2021/22

Appendix B

Summary of Complaints received between 2018/19 and 2021/22.

Appendix C

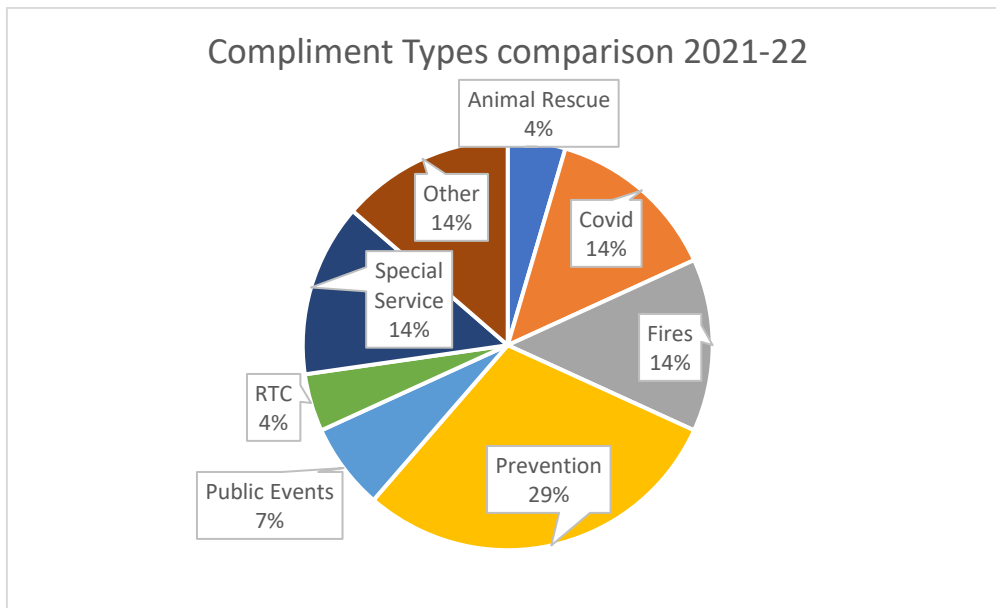
Compliments sample from social media.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Summary of Compliments Received 2021/22

Figure 4



Examples of Compliments Received

Below are some examples of compliments received during 2021/22. More can be viewed on the Service website via the following link:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/management-support/compliments-and-thanks>

Letter to the Chief Fire Officer following successful horse rescue on 12 April 2021 by a crew from Wem Fire Station, the specialist Animal Rescue Unit from Wellington and an Operational Officer.

" I wanted to write to you personally to express my deep gratitude for the rescue of my beloved horse Villem, an 18 hand Russian Warmblood. Villem is 27 years old and has been a very special part of my family for over 20 years.

It was a massive shock to go out to his stable and find him on the floor up against the wall and unable to move. My first call was to the Fire Brigade; the Wem unit arrived and instantly calmed me down and explained that the specialist Animal Rescue crew were on the way from Wellington, who arrived quickly. On arrival they got to work. I cannot say how impressed I was with all of the Fire personnel, calm professionalism and very calm around Villem. The Animal Rescue crew's skills are truly lifesaving, without them I know Villem would have to have been put down.

I could not watch Villem being moved from the stable but when he was out and before he was helped to his feet an officer came and spoke to me, and he was so calm and very reassuring, and I could go and see Villem before the next stage. I am sorry to say I was in a bit of a state and I did not get the officer's name, so could you please pass on my thanks to him.

I am very glad to say that Villem was got to his feet and is now doing amazingly well. He is out in his field and still under the supervision of the vet but has come through his trauma better than I ever hoped. That is in great part down to the caring, sympathetic and quick work of the Animal Rescue Unit and the Wem crew. Please pass on my thanks to all who helped Villem."

Thanks to one of our senior operational officers

"I write to convey my thanks and appreciation for the assistance that you gave to my son and his partner on 13 May. You were at a red traffic light in Telford when my son Steve tapped on your window asking for your help. He was on his way to Princess Royal Hospital with his partner in active labour and close to giving birth. You were able to escort him through the busy traffic, ensuring that they safely arrived at PRH. My son tells me that their child (a beautiful baby girl) was delivered safely virtually on arrival at the hospital, rather than in the car! As someone who has worked for twenty years in the Ambulance Service I'm more than aware of the potential pitfalls had you not acted as you did. For this, you have the eternal gratitude of all our family".

Appreciative comments from the business owner to one of the attending crew following a fire involving an acetylene cylinder on 18 May 2021.

Incident attended by crews from Bridgnorth and Much Wenlock Fire Stations.

"I wanted to reach out to you personally as I was other end of the site when you left. You and the team did a great professional job, managing risk in a potentially lethal situation and making safe. The cooperation between teams enabled us to get back up and running by later in the evening with very little damage. Of course and most important everyone safe too. Great job, please extend my thanks to the team."

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity work reaches North America

"I just attended a North American Fire Training Directors webinar featuring your EDI Officer and your Chief. Well done. I appreciate your efforts, investing in our success. Clearly you make a difference in people's lives in Shropshire.

Now add North America to the people you have touched. Thank you from a retired Chief who cares".

Grateful thanks received for the actions of Church Stretton fire crew

"I should like to pass on my appreciation of your Fire and Rescue Service with very special thanks to the Church Stretton fire crew who came to our rescue on Saturday, 15 May 2021. My husband, who now has almost no mobility, had slipped between the wheelchair and the standing hoist. He was hanging on to it by the loops and I did not have the strength to lift him back onto the chair. Within minutes of my 999 call, the Church Stretton fire crew were at the doorstep and were able to release him and place him safely onto his bed.

Embarrassingly, I feel I also need to apologise to the crew for turning on the 'waterworks'. Not normally a habit of mine. I think it was the relief that there was help to hand and they were all, without exception, not only very efficient but so extremely kind (emotionally fatal!). Please accept my grateful thanks."

Thanks from a vulnerable individual following the fitting of smoke alarms in their home

"I want to say how impressed and satisfied I am with the service. The officer was polite and showed great integrity. I live alone and I get very nervous letting strangers into my home but he put me at ease immediately and patiently explained how and when to test my smoke alarms. Thank you."

Message of appreciation following incident attended by Market Drayton and Blue Watch Wellington.

"Further to my phone call yesterday, would you kindly accept our thanks and donation in respect of my husband's accident on 31 May at our farm.

My husband was trapped under our Volvo car having tried to source a rattle! The Fire Brigade from Market Drayton came first and used the air bags to lift up the car. He was trapped under the engine. He was eventually taken to Stoke Hospital A&E where he was diagnosed with chest bruising only.

Thank you so much for turning up - you saved his life. I believe I also saw two more fire engines at the end of the drive. Would you thank all three crews and accept this donation to The Fire Fighters Charity."

Summary of Complaints received between 2018/19 and 2021/22

Type of Complaint	Total 18/19	Outcomes		Total 19/20	Outcomes		Total 20/21	Outcomes		Total 21/22	Outcomes	
Damage to property	2	2	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	1	1	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	1	0	Substantiated	6	4	Substantiated	4	0	Substantiated	5	2	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		1	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	14	5	Substantiated	6	2	Substantiated	15	3	Substantiated	10	1	Substantiated
		4	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		5	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated
		5	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated		6	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		1	Withdrawn		2	Withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure	5	1	Substantiated	9	1	Substantiated	5	1	Substantiated	7	2	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		4	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		4	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Environmental	0	0	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Anonymous Total		3 22		1 23		2 24		2 23		2 23		

Compliments sample from social media

February 2022

Council Tax precept

“Our Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is a force to be proud of. I am not in any way connected with the SFRS but I am in total awe at the service they provide for the precept allocated to them. Incidentally the SFRS is actually limited to increases of no more than 1.99% which in a period where inflation exceeds 5.50% is a ridiculous situation as the great bulk of the force's expenditure is on personnel. £2 pa is a rise that most people can easily afford and most of the ones that can't don't have to. The effect on morale within the Service must be dreadful but we all expect the Fire Service to be there when we need it.

Covid Drop-In Centre

“Brilliant service!!! Came at lunchtime today for my booster! Only 3 in the queue, so easy and local. Open each Tuesday 10-4. Thank you to the staff running this local drop-in 🍌”

October 2021

Menopause activity

“Well done Shropshire Fire & Rescue!
It's a pity more organisations don't recognise something that every female employee goes through. It's like a silent disease 🙄”

June 2021

Biker Down course

“Sunday morning well spent I attended the Biker Down UK course hosted by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service what an eye opener it was. The course was fantastic with presentations from the police, fire & Air Ambulance Service As a biker I now feel 🧠 confident that I could administer CPR correctly & potentially save someone's life this valuable life skill can be taken anywhere and used in any emergency situation. Biking is a brotherhood being in a bike club comes with risks - would you know what to do? We as humans are not invincible but sometimes invisible to other road users I've been on the dark side of the pavement years ago in a near fatal RTA given what I know today I commend all public services for their dedication to help save others I witnessed some previously recorded emergency calls today I was shocked at how little time you really have in a heated moment. Summers here ride safe and book yourself onto one of these courses you will not be disappointed”.