

Craig Lyons is a Public Safety Officer based in Bentham and has been in the role for the last 18 months.

Craig's role is largely a preventative based role focusing on helping the community to be safe and feel safe. Craig represents all services including fire safety, providing safer neighbourhoods advice like security, scams and fraud, advising people and sign posting on local concerns such as anti-social behaviour. He also refers and provides advice for health issues such as help to stop smoking, falls advice, loneliness and social isolation and works with dementia friendly groups.



How did you become a Public Safety Officer?

My role is based in Bentham and we have a public safety officer in Grassington. We are the only two currently in North Yorkshire as currently, the role is a pilot. I heard through my line manager that North Yorkshire was planning to replicate a similar role they have in Cornwall (a Tri-Service Safety Officer). I started six years ago as an on call firefighter at Grassington and then gained a full-time role as Craven fire community safety officer, which is a role that deals in all things fire prevention, safe and well visits. The experience required was having good knowledge of safeguarding and working within a multi-agency setting, recognising the signs when people may require support and having the confidence to start for some difficult conversations.

What does your role involve?

As well as being largely preventative based, the role also has some operational parts. I respond on alerter for fire calls with the Bentham fire crew as a firefighter and I'm on call as a community first responder getting sent to category one calls such as cardiac arrests if an ambulance isn't immediately available. I have a police radio which I can monitor the area in case anything comes in such as a missing person or concern for safety but my police powers are limited to less than a Police Community Support Officer so I can concentrate more on prevention rather than response.

What have been the best bits and challenges of your role?

The best bit of my role is being in the heart of a small rural community and giving people a place to turn when they are at their most in need. It's really good to be able to help resolve local issues more swiftly and be that reliable resource available to everyone. I enjoy when I'm introduced to people for the first time that I can help them by carrying out such tasks as delivering a prescription, a Community First Responder call or even a chat, being able to cross the threshold of their home and carrying out a safe and well visit and helping to make them safe from fire by fitting new free smoke alarms provided by the fire service or offering advice on home safety. The main challenge has been the COVID-19 pandemic. My role relies on engagement with people which has been difficult to do but the challenge was to create new ways to safely speak to people which saw the introduction of platforms such as Teams and Zoom which helped us greatly.

Top tips for people wanting to become a Public Safety Officer:

My top tips for anyone wanting to be a Public Safety Officer would be to be confident, outgoing, community-minded, patient and most of all resilient. The role can be very challenging juggling all the different services but when you can use all the tools we have and when it makes positive impacts in people's lives it's the most rewarding job in the world.