

Entrant company name: **Emilija Juseviciute, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service**

Category: **Outstanding Young Communicator of the Year**

Since joining Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) in 2023, I have focused on using creative, data-driven communications to reach audiences that traditional public sector messaging often struggles to engage.

My role centres on social media, digital storytelling and behaviour-change campaigns that support public safety across Essex. In the past year alone, my digital campaigns have reached over 5 million people, helped increase safety course participation by 40%, and introduced new social media platforms to engage high-risk young audiences.

Through a combination of creativity, analytics and strategic thinking, I aim to demonstrate how emergency services can adapt communications approaches to meet the expectations of modern digital audiences.

Working in digital communications requires continuous learning. Social media platforms evolve rapidly, and effective communicators must constantly adapt their approach to audience behaviour, trends and technology.

To support my professional development, I regularly attend Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) conferences and communications industry events, where I learn from campaigns across different sectors and explore how innovative approaches can be applied within the public sector.

Through this ongoing development, I aim to contribute to the future of public sector communications by demonstrating how emergency services can adopt modern digital platforms to deliver vital safety messaging effectively.

Since joining the communications team, I have delivered several projects that have improved engagement with key audiences and strengthened public safety messaging.

One significant achievement was transforming the way volunteers apply for roles within the Service. I supported the development and delivery of a targeted communications campaign that used audience data to reshape how opportunities were promoted online. The campaign significantly improved visibility and engagement, resulting in all volunteer roles becoming fully booked. The innovative use of audience data within the campaign led to my nomination for a national PR award.

In 2025, I was also tasked with supporting communications for the Service's FireBike initiative, which promotes safer riding and advanced motorcycle training. I developed targeted social media content and managed online engagement with the motorcycling community, helping raise awareness of the courses and encouraging participation.

The campaign contributed to a 40% increase in rider participation compared with the previous year, despite the previous year already being the busiest on record. Increasing participation in these courses helps reduce the risk of serious injuries and fatalities among motorcyclists, demonstrating how strategic communications can support meaningful behaviour change.

Another campaign I am particularly proud of was a Christmas fire safety campaign in 2024, where I created and co-starred in a short social media film inspired by the iconic scene from Love Actually. The video combined humour and storytelling with fire safety advice for the festive period. The campaign received over 96,000 views, was featured on the BBC and even received approval from the film's writer and director, Richard Curtis.

In recognition of my work, I was nominated for 10% of all internal quarterly staff awards in 2025, receiving awards for both the FireBike campaign and the Christmas campaign.

One of the most significant challenges I faced occurred in 2025 when proposing the launch of a TikTok account for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

In August 2025, I carried out a review of the Service's social media performance with my manager, Chloe. The analysis showed that Instagram was not effectively reaching younger audiences aged 16–25 - a demographic that is among the highest risk groups for incidents related to water safety, road safety and fire safety.

TikTok had been proposed internally before but was repeatedly rejected due to concerns about the time required to create content and fears that the platform might damage the Service's reputation.

To address this, I helped develop a clear communications strategy that demonstrated how TikTok could be used responsibly to deliver prevention messaging to younger audiences.

Externally, the launch was an immediate success. Within the first three videos, the account gained 4,000 followers, and one video went viral - reaching 5 million people and generating over 1 million likes.

However, the biggest challenge came internally. Some staff felt the content was inappropriate for the organisation and formal complaints were submitted.

To address these concerns, I supported internal communication about the strategy, explaining the purpose of the platform, the target audience and the evidence behind the approach. I also shared analytics demonstrating that the content was successfully reaching younger audiences.

This experience reinforced the importance of internal communications when introducing innovation. I learned that while new ideas may initially face resistance, clear strategy, transparency and evidence-based results can help build confidence and support.

The project I am most proud of is the development and launch of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service TikTok channel.

Brief

Develop a new digital platform to reach younger audiences aged 16–25 with prevention messaging, particularly around water safety, road safety and fire safety.

Objectives

- Increase engagement with younger, high-risk audiences
- Improve the reach of prevention messaging
- Test the effectiveness of TikTok as a communications platform for an emergency service

Strategy

The strategy combined trend-led content with clear safety messaging. By adapting popular formats used on TikTok, we were able to create content that felt authentic to the platform while still delivering important public safety messages.

Tactics

- Researching TikTok trends and adapting them for safety messaging
- Collaborating with firefighters and staff across the Service to appear in content
- Producing short, engaging videos using accessible filming methods
- Monitoring analytics and audience demographics to refine content

Outputs

- Launch of the ECFRS TikTok channel
- Regular production of short-form video content
- Ongoing monitoring of engagement data and audience insights

Outcomes

- 4,000 followers within the first three videos
- One video reaching 5 million people and generating over 1 million like
- 10,000 followers and over 1.2 million total likes to date
- The fastest-growing social media platform for the Service

Although behaviour change through social media can be difficult to measure directly, audience interactions demonstrate the impact of the messaging. For example, one

smoke alarm awareness video prompted a young viewer to comment that she would ask her parents to install a smoke alarm when she returned home from college.

Budget

The campaign was delivered with no additional budget, using existing staff, in-house filming and organic social media reach.