

## Initial draft November 2019

### COLLABORATION STRATEGY

#### Introduction

The Blue Light services in Cheshire have a proud tradition of collaboration, from the day to day interaction at emergency incidents to the sharing of premises and joint procurement. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) regularly works in collaboration for the good of the communities it serves and this document explains how CFRS approaches collaboration.

#### Why Collaborate?

Our vision is:

“A Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires or other emergencies”.

Our mission is:

“To help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests”

By working in collaboration with others, we can achieve our strategic aims and fulfil our statutory duties, and this can also be an opportunity to drive efficiency and effectiveness, in the interest of public safety.

In certain circumstances we believe we are more likely to achieve our aims by collaborating with others.

We have a **statutory duty** to collaborate in certain circumstances.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 contains a duty to consider collaboration with other emergency services where two or more services consider it would be in the interests of the efficiency of effectiveness to do so. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to enter into mutual assistance schemes and mutual agreements in order to discharge certain statutory functions.

#### What have we been doing?

One of the first collaborations CFRS entered into was the Fire Responder agreement with North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), where fully trained on-call firefighters based in Nantwich respond first to medical emergencies within a specified area, where they are able to get to the incident before an ambulance.

In 2014 we entered into a regional collaboration with Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Services to form a joint control centre, North West Fire Control, in Warrington for emergency call handling and mobilising.

For many years we have had agreements in place with all neighbouring fire and rescue services for cross border mutual assistance.

We have worked with the NHS in creating gyms on fire stations which cardiac patients can use to support their recovery and rehabilitation.

We recently celebrated our twentieth anniversary of working with the Prince's Trust, delivering courses for young people in Cheshire.

We are working in collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary and joint teams provide support services to Police and Fire.

We are a member of the Fire and Rescue Insurance Consortium, which is a novel way to provide cover for a variety of risks.

We have worked with the NHS and expanded our work concerned with fire safety so that we are able to cover broader health issues when we deliver Safe and Well visits.

## **Register of Collaborations**

We maintain a register of collaborations.

## **How do we decide what we will collaborate on?**

In some areas of our activity we can achieve a better result by collaborating with partners. This may be because of their greater knowledge and experience. It may be more cost effective to share the costs to achieve a common goal.

Before any collaboration activity we undertake a scoping exercise or feasibility study. This will include engaging with partners, to determine what they can contribute and what they want to achieve.

Key questions include:

- Will the initiative improve public safety?
- Will the initiative improve efficiency and/or effectiveness?
- Are the parties seeking to achieve similar aims and objectives?
- What are the risks associated with the collaboration and how can the risks be managed?

The key requirements of this initial evaluation are outlined in the Partnership Initiative document which is contained in the Prevention Department's Partnership Toolkit.

The outcome of this initial evaluation is reported to the Service Management Team and in some cases, to elected Members of the Fire Authority and once the findings have been considered, a decision is made about whether to proceed with the collaboration.

## **Delivery of the collaboration**

The Cheshire Planning System helps with project planning and provides a governance structure to enable the project to be managed effectively.

Risks and issues will be recorded in a risk register/issues log and each project will have a change control process.

## **How do we monitor, review and evaluate collaborations?**

In order to effectively review a collaboration the following questions will be considered:

- What are the outcomes?
- What has been the impact of the collaboration?
- Has the initiative led to an improvement in efficiency?
- Has the initiative led to an improvement in effectiveness?
- Has the initiative improved public safety?

Within the Prevention Department's Partnership Toolkit there is a Partnership Review checklist and a Partnership Evaluation and Closedown document and the principles in these documents can assist in the review and evaluation of all collaborations.

Sometimes we will arrange external evaluation of collaboration, for example the results of our programme of Safe and Well visits is being considered by Liverpool John Moores University.

Where collaborations have been captured in formal agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, these will contain provisions for review, variation, extension and termination.

Performance monitoring reports on significant collaborations, such as North West Fire Control, are presented to elected Members.