

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 or 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?

Local Collaborations

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, based in Warrington for emergency call handling and mobilising.

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.

The Authority has entered into a Blue Light Collaboration arrangement, merging support services with Cheshire Constabulary to form joint teams to support both organisations.

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.

The Authority works with North West Ambulance Service to assist it in gaining entry to properties where there is a concern for someone's welfare.

The Authority plans to work with public sector partners to create a strategic road safety plan that will have a real impact on reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads.

As the Authority progresses its programme of modernising many of its fire stations it will consider opportunities to further collaborate with local partner agencies, sharing premises and working closer together to reduce costs and operate more efficiently.

National Collaboration

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 requires all fire authorities to collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities and other emergency services to ensure interoperability in line with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP).

We do this through membership of various National Fire Chiefs Council regional and national groups attended by officers in the Service. Membership at these groups facilitates exercising and cross-border working with other fire and rescue services in the region and those bordering Cheshire.

Interoperability with other Cat 1 & 2 responders is achieved through membership of the Local Resilience Forum.

The Service has representation on the Cheshire Emergency Response Collaboration (CERC) which is a Blue Light group to ensure interoperability.

The Service has systems in place to ensure that its National Asset (High Volume Pump) can be available to respond to national emergencies.

Cross Border Collaboration

For many years the Service has had agreements in place with all neighbouring fire and rescue services for cross border mutual assistance. Reinforcement and mutual-aid agreements (Section 13 & 16) are in place with all fire and rescue services that border Cheshire and local managers are encouraged to create local relationships with neighbouring stations to exercise and test operational compatibility.

Cross border regional exercises are regularly undertaken with neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Other Types of National Collaboration

The Service is a member of the Fire and Rescue Insurance Consortium (FRIC), an insurance mutual, which is an innovative way to provide insurance cover in conjunction with other fire and rescue services for a variety of risks.

In order to achieve value for money and ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources procurement activity is undertaken through nationally or regionally agreed framework arrangements.

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:

- Which strategic objectives will the collaboration support?
- 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 outcome of this scoping exercise /feasibility study 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.

Register of Collaborations

We maintain a central register of collaborations. This Collaboration Register draws together key information including the parties to the collaboration, the benefits and the arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review.

How Do We Monitor, Review and Evaluate Collaborations?

In order to effectively review a collaboration, some or all of 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?
- Are the initial outcomes from the collaboration being achieved?
- What are the strengths and benefits of the collaboration?
- What are the main achievements of the collaboration?
- Are there any potential weaknesses and if so, are there any refinements/improvements that could be made?
- Has the collaboration supported the strategic objectives and core values identified at the initiation stage?

The mechanisms for review will depend upon the type of collaboration.

Where collaboration projects are entered on the Cheshire Planning System the system will provide automated reminders for those involved in the collaboration to ensure that reviews are undertaken. Progress is monitored at the Performance and Programme Board on a quarterly basis and at the end of each project a Closedown and Evaluation report is completed. This report looks at the achievement of project outputs and outcomes, measurement of benefits, review of performance and lessons learnt.

Within the Prevention Department's Partnership Toolkit, which is also available on the Cheshire Planning System, there is a Partnership Review checklist and a Partnership Closedown document and the principles in these documents can assist in the review and evaluation of all collaborations.

Sometimes the Service will arrange external evaluation of a collaboration, for example the results of our programme of Safe and Well visits have been considered by a local university.

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

The Cheshire Planning System is not always the most suitable mechanism for monitoring and evaluation and where other more appropriate methods are in place the Service will continue to use these.

Performance monitoring reports on significant collaborations are presented to elected Members. For example, annual reports on the performance of North West Fire Control are produced for the Performance and Overview Committee.

A Performance Management Framework has been designed for the Blue Light Collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary. Performance of this collaboration is overseen in a number of ways and ultimately is considered by the corporate services board.

The Fire and Rescue Insurance Consortium (FRIC) is overseen by the FRIC Board made up of representatives from the fire and rescue services involved in the consortium.