



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 February 2025

Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2028

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members with details of the 2025-2028 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), the proposals contained within the plan and the public consultation on it.

Background

2. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework. The Framework sets out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities who must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their duties.
3. Members will note that the old name of Integrated Risk Management Plan, which is still referenced in the legislation, has been replaced with the title Community Risk Management Plan to align with the National Fire Chiefs Council's Community Risk Management Planning (CRMP) Fire Standard.
4. The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework document places a responsibility on all fire and rescue authorities to produce and consult on their CRMP. These documents direct fire and rescue authorities to:
 - be accountable to communities for the service they provide;
 - identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face;

- make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and the response to fire and rescue related incidents;
 - develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse;
 - collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide.
5. Specifically, the National Framework states that we have a **statutory responsibility** to include several areas within the CRMP. These duties are summarised below:
- Reflect up-to-date risk analyses of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
 - Demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities;
 - Outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
 - Set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO) 2005;
 - Cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as is necessary;
 - Reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
 - Be easily accessible and publicly available.
6. The Service's CRMP is a three-year strategic plan. This is reviewed annually to assess the effectiveness of existing arrangements. Following this review an annual CRMP Action Plan is developed.

CRMP Content

7. The CRMP contains profile information regarding the Service area, performance, data, governance arrangements and how the Service identifies, manages and responds to risk in County Durham and Darlington.
8. Linking directly to the Community Risk Profile and Station Plans, the CRMP sets out the key risks found and what proactive and reactive measures will be in place relating to each identified risk.
9. Each of the main Strategies (Community Safety and Arson Reduction; Business Fire Safety; Emergency Response and Resilience; People, Estates, ICT, Assets and Assurance; Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is directly referenced regarding how they are affected by risk.

10. An overview is provided of what was introduced following last year’s consultation together with the proposed options for Year 1, 2 and 3 of the 2025-2028 CRMP period.
11. In our 2024- 2025 Consultation we consulted on and delivered the following:

We said	We did
Monitor the crewing of Wholetime fire engines	<p>In July 2023, the Service implemented the crewing of the wholetime fire appliances at five fire stations, with four firefighters.</p> <p>Throughout 2023 and 2024, we monitored the operational activity and operational performance of each of the five fire stations. We found no operational performance or health and safety issues reported that were directly attributable to the implementation of this action.</p> <p>We have also conducted a review of our response times 12 months prior to implementation, and 12 months following implementation, the results of which highlights that the Service’s response times were maintained. We will continue to monitor this activity in the coming year through our normal assurance processes.</p>
Implement the findings following the review of the Risk Based Inspection Programme.	<p>The review produced an updated Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) with an increased focus on premises types that have been identified through national research as a higher risk. These premise types include care homes, hotels, hospitals and residential buildings over four storeys tall.</p> <p>The new RBIP implemented on 31 March 2024, has increased the number of premises in our Service area classed as higher risk from 40 to 734. Many of these premises now classed as higher risk, have not been inspected for several years. We have developed a three-year plan to ensure all these premises receive an inspection. Once inspected all higher risk premises will receive a reinspection at least, every three years thereafter.</p>
Continue to monitor the staffing arrangements and application of TRVs	<p>The Targeted Response Vehicle (TRV) and its staff operate independently at low impact low risk incidents. In doing so they increase the availability of front line fire engines. This is especially effective between 4pm and 9pm. They also support the wider operational capability either through provision of equipment and/or personnel at high impact incidents.</p> <p>Other supporting roles include enhancing operational cover at on call stations, standby cover at wholetime stations as well as forming part of our Business Continuity arrangements. The TRV is comfortable in dealing with varying terrains and is used</p>

	<p>for assisting in flood conditions, at wildfires and during other such spate conditions or complex incidents.</p> <p>More recently the TRV and staff have been utilised alongside partners for anti-social behaviour collaboration initiatives aiming to reduce unwanted deliberate and nuisance fire setting in hot spot areas.</p>
<p>Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects</p>	<p>Over the past year our Service has been involved in several collaboration projects.</p> <p>We are working in collaboration with three other FRSS Cleveland, Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire to integrate a new Fire Command and Control system that will save us approx. £1.9m over the 7-year contract.</p> <p>The joint system increases resilience and fallback arrangements including the handling of each other's calls during spate conditions or day to day business disruption.</p> <p>Other benefits include the reduction of carbon footprint through sharing of telephone lines, freeing up of technology infrastructure by moving to a cloud-based approach as well as improved cyber security.</p> <p>We have reviewed the Community Safety Responders roles in Weardale, signing a new agreement with Durham Constabulary. They now focus on a dual role of Community Support Officer and On Call Firefighter, with performance indicators reported through the Collaboration Board.</p> <p>We have signed an agreement with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (TWFR) whereby experts in Data Protection from TWFR to assist County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority with meeting its responsibilities to the Information Commissioners Office and its legal duties arising from the Data Protection Act 2018.</p> <p>We continue to collaborate on our Service Estate with partners from Durham Constabulary and North East Ambulance Service and are pursuing further collaboration on other schemes.</p>

Medium Term Financial Plan

19. The Service has faced considerable financial pressures including a shortfall in Council Tax and business rates receipts together with cost pressures arising from rapidly increasing inflation which is resulting in demands for higher pay awards. The financial pressures faced by the Service are compounded by uncertainty surrounding the level of government funding from 2026/27 onwards.

20. Our 2024/25 annual budget is £35.4M and to set a balanced budget for 2025/26 it will be necessary to continue to closely monitor our spend and income from central government. The Authority has one of the lowest level of reserves of all English fire and rescue authorities therefore using reserves to balance the budget is not sustainable on an on-going basis.
21. Historically, we have received an equal amount of our funding from direct government grants and Council Tax. However, over time this has changed, with over two thirds of our funding now being received from Council Tax, increases which are subject to strict limits without going through a very expensive referendum process. The Government have determined a band D Council Tax increase limit of £5 on fire and rescue authorities for 2025/26. Reliance on Council Tax also brings with it challenges in an area such as ours where a significant number of the properties are in Council Tax band A and B. A 1% increase in Council Tax raises an additional £218,000 for the Authority whereas in other areas 1% raises significantly more. To further illustrate the problem a 1%, pay award costs us over £298,000 per year and other inflationary pressures are adding significant costs to the Service.

Our Plans

22. In 2025/26 the following options will be considered
 - Review the newly implemented Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme;
 - Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects.
23. In 2026/27 the following options will be considered
 - Implement any changes to the Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme identified by the review in 2025/26;
 - Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects.
24. In 2027/28 the following options will be considered
 - Continue to explore opportunities and evaluate changes introduced through collaboration projects.

Our Commitments

25. As discussed at the Strategic Planning Day the Service makes a series of commitments throughout the CRMP. These have now been streamlined and reworded as follows:

Be the Best

Recruit and retain a diverse workforce and continually assess their performance and behaviours.

Prevent

Target at least 80% of our Home Fire Safety Visits to the most vulnerable people, taking referrals from and making them to our supporting partners.

Protect

Work with local businesses to keep people safe from fire and take enforcement action when we need to.

Respond

In an emergency we will be fully prepared to respond and will strive to reduce the impact.

Improve

We will constantly endeavour to improve by monitoring our performance and encourage our staff to be innovative.

Learn

We will learn and improve following scrutiny from HMICFRS, the CFA, external audit bodies and our consultation process.

Plan

We will identify the risks you face and plan ways to reduce their impact using our staff and resources effectively.

Budget

We will use our budget, people and equipment effectively to tackle our risks and keep you safe.

Consultation

26. The consultation for 2025/26 will begin on 19 February 2025 and will run for 12 weeks closing on 14 May 2025. To ensure that a wide range of views can be gathered the Communications and Engagement Team will lead on all consultation activity, with the assistance of crews and other departments. The consultation questions are set out at paragraph 35 of this report.
27. The consultation questions (as set out in paragraph 35) will be available to the public to answer in two formats, via an online survey created on Smart Survey and via a questionnaire style booklet. All surveys filled in via questionnaire will be manually inputted on to Smart Survey by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) staff. This will allow for a comprehensive data set to be stored in one area.
28. Following feedback at the Strategic Planning Day it was noted that the inclusion of postcode data will help to identify consultation return rates by geographical location, this has been included as part of this consultation approach.

29. A Communications and Engagement Plan has been created to assist with the consultation process. The strategy sets out the aims of the consultation as follows:
- Increase responses compared to 2023 (297 responses) and 2024 (799);
 - Increase in person engagement via Open Days and pop-ups, utilising crews;
 - Explore new ways to engage with communities and to build on those platforms for future consultations and as a new way to connect;
 - Ensure the consultation is meaningful;
 - Ensure technology is utilised to assess the reach and engagement levels of the different community members from all age ranges and backgrounds; and
 - Work with social justice partners, Teakisi, to connect with members of the black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.
30. Various methods of communication will be utilised to ensure a meaningful consultation is carried out. Following an evaluation of the 2024/25 communications strategy, a wider emphasis on in-person engagement will take place. Three Station Open Days will take place during the consultation period and an Open Day at the Service Training Centre.
31. Social media will be a key component in promoting the online survey. CDDFRS have a large following on Facebook and TikTok and growing following on Instagram, LinkedIn and via our WhatsApp channel. Increasingly we will aim to promote and use WhatsApp, TikTok and stories, to connect to people quickly and efficiently in a landscape where people want their news faster and more concise than ever before.
32. Stakeholder engagement will play a large role in consultation activities, with the Local Resilience Forum Communications Group utilised to encourage partners to communicate our consultation via their own internal channels. Departments that are public facing such as Community Safety and operational crews will be tasked with handing out QR code business cards asking people to complete the consultation online after their interaction with the Service. Furthermore, all partnership meeting attendees will be asked, if appropriate, to present to their peers and seek consultation feedback.
33. Internal communications are an important aspect of our consultation, with our own staff being encouraged via The Bulletin, Chats with the Chiefs, everyone emails and at Leadership Forums to take part in the consultation and have their family members take part also. Posters with QR codes will be displayed around Service stations, Headquarters, Service Training Centre and Workshops.
34. A range of other communication methods will be utilised such as: working with the press to issue releases, visits to schools and universities, leaflet drops, work with social justice partners Teakisi and posters displayed in busy areas.

Consultation Questions

35. At the Strategic Planning Day on 21 November 2024 the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) considered the range of options which could be put to the public. Based on the feedback from this day and the Service analysis it is suggested the following questions be put to the public: The public are asked, do you agree for each of the following questions.

Q1 We will invest further with partner agencies to increase our access to people vulnerable from fire and other emergencies.

Q2 We aim to reduce the impact that deliberate fires have on our communities through targeted interventions and prevention activity.

Q3 To ensure we provide the best service to the public we will invest in our people by promoting our approach to recruitment, retention and staff well-being.

Q4 We are committed to continually improving our on-call response model.

Q5 To meet the challenges of the future and reduce our impact on the environment we will invest in our buildings, equipment and technology.

36. A copy of the draft CRMP document can be found at Appendix A.

37. A copy of the draft consultation document can be found at Appendix B.

Recommendations

38. Members are requested to:

a) **Note** the 2025-2028 CRMP summary provided.

b) **Approve** the questions to be put to the public in the Consultation Document as shown at paragraph 35 of this report.

Steve Helps, Chief Fire Officer