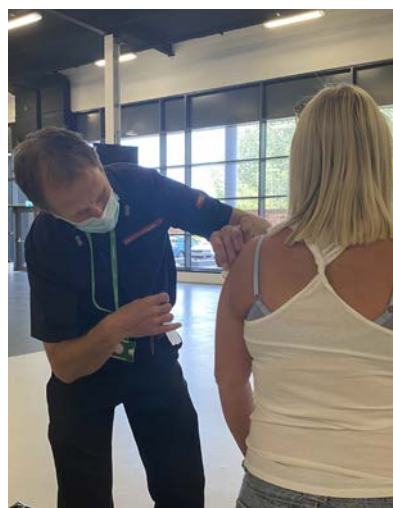




AVON
FIRE & RESCUE

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Collaboration Strategy

2021-2026











PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

“Working collaboratively
to deliver better outcomes
for our communities”



Multi-agency training exercise involving fire and ambulance

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Avon Fire & Rescue Service is committed to ensuring our documents are accessible to all members of the community. If you have difficulty reading this document because English is not your first language and you would like a translation, please contact:

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Executive summary



Councillor Brenda Massey,
Chair, Avon Fire
Authority



Simon Shilton,
Chief Fire Officer/
Chief Executive,
Avon Fire & Rescue
Service

Collaboration means working together with other people or organisations to create, or achieve, something of mutual benefit which enhances what either party could have achieved on their own. At Avon Fire and Rescue Service (AF&RS) we embrace collaboration as a key enabler to achieving our mission to improve public safety through prevention, protection, response and resilience. Collaboration also helps us maintain an excellent service which is effective, efficient and value for money.

From how we work together at incidents, to our community safety work and how we use our estates, AF&RS has considerable experience in collaborating both formally and informally with a wide range of organisations, emergency services partners, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

The recent pandemic has further demonstrated just how essential and powerful it is for communities and emergency services to work together to help ensure public safety and how transforming our ways of working can improve effectiveness. It is therefore an important time for us, as it is for many organisations and communities, to reflect and build on our learning during the pandemic as we continue our exciting collaborative journey together.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 also supports our efforts in respect of our blue light partners. The Act introduced a statutory duty on all three emergency services (Fire, Ambulance and Police) to collaborate with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness for all parties, with local discretion in how the duty is implemented to benefit local community needs and risks.

We published our first Collaboration Strategy for 2019-2020 and we are delighted to now share our strategy for the next five years. Collaboration is also an overarching theme in our Service Plan, Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and underpinning Service strategies.

This strategy sets out our high level approach to collaboration to:

- ensure we understand our approach and who we collaborate with in order to reinforce our strategic priorities of **Making our Communities Safer** and **Making our Service Stronger**;
- describe the priority areas of focus for collaborative working and what has been achieved so far;
- highlight the work planned;
- explain how we will resource and deliver this strategy; and
- explain how we will measure success and seek to ensure benefits realisation from collaboration.

B. M. Massey

Councillor Brenda Massey



CFO/CE Simon Shilton



Multi-agency training exercise involving fire, police and ambulance

What is collaboration?

Avon Fire Authority defines collaboration as “A professional relationship which brings together two or more groups or organisations to work collectively to improve outcomes for the community and achieve a goal or strategic aim which the organisations share”.

Collaborations can vary in size, duration, membership and function. They can be internal or external, formal or informal, voluntary or statutory, short term or long term; and may include one off events and activities and membership of boards and sub-groups.

Collaboration is not a transfer of our duties or functions to another organisation through outsourcing or take-overs.

Collaboration is also not to be confused with cooperation or contract management. Cooperation means we agree to share something with another organisation (for example information or resources) solely to assist with their goals. Contracts are where we commission an organisation to provide us with goods or services (or vice versa) and then ensure delivery against set deliverables. There are strict rules around contracts and procurement which can affect opportunities for collaboration.



Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between AF&RS and Räddningstjänsten Östra Götaland (Rescue Service for Five Municipalities in Sweden)

Why collaborate?

Avon Fire and Rescue Service already collaborate with a wide range of organisations and there are numerous drivers for this, both internally and externally. These drivers can be summarised into these broad themes:

- Mutually agreed shared outcome
- Keeping our communities safer
- Increased effectiveness
- Greater efficiency
- Improved value for money
- Increased resilience and sustainability

Successful collaborations are usually driven by all these factors in combination. These themes link to our strategic priorities of **Making our Communities Safer** and **Making our Service Stronger**, our values (and underpinning behaviours) to be ambitious in what our Service can achieve for our staff and our community, and our national Code of Ethics where we are committed to putting our communities first.

The principles of the Core Code of Ethics have been produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. They are:



Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.



Integrity

We act with Integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.



Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence.



Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards, without discrimination or bias.



Equality, diversity and inclusion

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve.

We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

While our collaboration work extends beyond its provisions, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 also placed a specific expectation and duty on Fire and Rescue, Ambulance and Police to work together to improve the effectiveness of our emergency services, enabling the delivery of better outcomes for the public.

The duty supports Services by providing the legal backing for such collaboration and enables a quicker and more structured process for understanding collaboration opportunities and how they can be taken forward at the local level. It is deliberately broad to allow for maximum local innovation and implementation.

Our approach to collaboration

We believe collaborations should be a mutually beneficial partnership, advantageous to all parties involved, and delivering a recognised benefit to the community. A collaboration should deliver something “better” or “more” than we would be able to do on our own, and focus on community benefit, reduced risk and more effective delivery of our services. The scope is not limited to traditional partners and AF&RS is open to collaboration with any organisations, for the benefit of organisational efficiency and the safety of the communities we serve.

We have five strategic guiding principles and considerations when examining whether to enter a formal collaborative arrangement.

There must:

- Be a shared vision or business need - a common goal. It is this goal that provides a meaningful reason to invest time and resource into working together, along with achieving mutual benefits. While it is one of the potential benefits, collaboration must be more than a financial and efficiency savings exercise, with the primary focus on mutual benefit to the community.
- Be a specific aim which enhances our ability to deliver the objectives in our Service Plan and high-quality services to the public but does not compromise our statutory functions.
- Be a clearly set out timeline, objectives, resourcing implications, benefits (operational, functional or economic) and costs which have financial sustainability and benefits equitable to input.
- Be clear mechanisms for governance, quality assurance, performance management, reporting, risk apportionment, data protection and management to ensure the benefits agreed are being realised.
- Be compatible with our [Service values](#), shared ethics in how we treat each other, the public and our staff, without compromising the integrity and propriety of the Authority. The Code of Ethics can be found here. www.apccs.police.uk/media/6291/core-code-of-ethics-england-fire-and-rescue-services-final-may-2021.pdf

When considering a collaborative partnership, it is therefore essential to fully appreciate the drivers, benefits, risks, costs, implications and pressures prior to engagement. While the benefits may not always be equally balanced, the partnership should enhance the work of both organisations rather than compromise their delivery, increase costs or reduce the level of service received or provided. Therefore the challenge is to find a fair balance between organisational aims; and assurance that efficiency and effectiveness can be delivered to ensure AF&RS' time, resources and finances are focused where they offer most value.

As a trusted organisation within our communities and a responsible employer, our responsibilities also extend beyond the work we do with a collaborative partner, into how we work together. While we need to objectively assess organisational compatibility and not accept unnecessary barriers, we recognise not every potential partner will align with our goals, ethos and values. Collaboration isn't outsourcing or a take-over of our services and AF&RS and Avon Fire Authority remain committed to avoiding compulsory redundancies.

At the centre of any successful collaboration is our talented and committed workforce whose engagement, expertise and experience are essential. Team work is a key part of everything we do in AF&RS and we encourage collaborative working across the Service. We welcome ideas about collaboration from any member of staff regardless of background, role or experience.

We also recognise some collaborative arrangements can raise concerns and have sensitivities. We will lead our organisation to be open minded about collaboration opportunities which make a difference to the community and support our workforce through any change. We will manage internal communication and consultation in a sensitive and pro-active way to aid understanding, listen to needs and concerns and minimise disruption and negative impact on staff morale. In doing so, we will work closely with our Staff Engagement Network and representative bodies.



Wrapped fire appliances as part of our partnership with NHS Blood and Transplant

Our areas of focus for collaborative working

AF&RS engages with colleagues from Avon and Somerset Constabulary (ASC) and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST) to identify and explore collaboration opportunities. We actively participate in various forums nationally, and across the South West, to: share best practice; identify opportunities for good collaboration and multi-agency working; remove barriers and embed collaboration as the norm.

AF&RS is also a key partner in the South West Emergency Services Collaboration Group (SWESCG) and the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum. This allows us to co-ordinate a shared understanding of risk within our community, a joined-up approach to addressing the risk, optimise collaboration effectiveness and efficiency, and improve prevention across the South West.

Our areas of focus for collaboration over the next five years have been established and agreed in consultation with the Fire Authority, Service Leadership Board (SLB) and Service Leadership Team (SLT) and are set out overleaf. These areas of focus build on the Collaboration Strategy 2019-2020 and multi-agency working during the COVID-19 pandemic. They echo our strategic priorities of **Making our Communities Safer** and **Making our Service Stronger** through protection, prevention, response and resilience, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) key areas of effectiveness, efficiency and people.



Wristbands for the Police and Fire Dementia Safeguarding Scheme.

Strategic focus for collaboration:

Our focus	What does this mean?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way we work together operationally in emergency planning and response and resilience 	<p>We will continue to seek suitable opportunities to collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities, emergency responders and Local Resilience Forums to manage demand for our services, ensure effective multi-agency working, compatible command, control and co-ordination, robust risk planning, cross-border working and use of national assets. This intelligence-led approach supports the best use of skills and availability to enhance public safety, risk management and ensure resilience.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training, learning and development 	<p>We will continue to seek and implement joint multi-agency training, exercises, development and learning for operational and non-operational work to increase and expand skills and effective cross-agency working and singular governance models (Marauding Terrorist Attacks Response).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared communications, working, functions, information and infrastructure 	<p>We will continue to seek opportunities to share compatible communications systems, information, data, procedures and intelligence and without a reduction in quality or service provision to AF&RS. In AF&RS we have a comparatively small corporate services section but we will continue to consider if we can provide, or share, expertise, functions and resources with other emergency services or partners. Shared functions will only be viable if the cost and impact does not outweigh savings over a reasonable period, and if priority and quality of service to AF&RS is maintained. Any impact upon people resources will be duly considered and appropriate communications or consultation will be undertaken. Whilst collaboration can generate efficiencies AF&RS remain committed to avoiding any compulsory redundancies and we don't regard any function as 'back office' with every part of our organisation equally essential to our public service delivery. As part of our Transformation Programme, we will continue to learn from other organisations to refine our business models and ensure central services are modern, effective, and efficient focusing on specialist, value-added work.</p>

Our areas of focus for collaborative working

Our focus	What does this mean?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing estates, assets (fleet) and equipment 	<p>We will consider further opportunities to share estates and assets with other emergency services or partners to improve service to the public, share best practice in maintenance and quality standards, and realise value and efficiency. Shared estates and assets can facilitate closer dialogue and better working relationships between partner organisations, and deliver better services, efficiencies, community resilience and engagement. Efficiencies are generated through the reduced duplication of property costs, sharing utilities and the potential sale of existing sites and properties. There may also be other opportunities to generate income and recover costs from estates by utilising excess capacity through lease and license agreements and singular charging/ agreement models. Co-location will be considered with partners with a business need for similar premises, such as appliance bays, office space or training facilities, and/or where business or delivery functions have a common purpose and can support our service delivery (e.g. Ambulance Standby Points, rest and break and welfare facilities shared with other services, community education and engagement).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement 	<p>Joint procurement, regionally and nationally, can provide economies of scale and organisational and financial efficiencies. It can also encourage closer working and sharing of procured resources, which in turn helps to reduce the procurement demand further. We will continue to seek further opportunities for joint procurement where quality, and any essential tailoring of products for local need, remains.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint prevention and protection activities 	<p>We will continue to build community resilience by seeking further opportunities to collaborate on local and national initiatives and joint communications, marketing and public safety messages which increase the impact and reach of our work, targets the most vulnerable in our communities and achieves shared community outcomes to improve lives. We will also continue to explore opportunities to collaborate to improve local business fire safety, and work with a range of diverse groups to build a network of communication, support and engagement to ensure our services are accessible to, and effective for, all members of our local community.</p>

Our Focus

- Climate Change

What does this mean?

We will continue to work together with local councils and within the emergency services sector and beyond because, by working collectively, we can respond more effectively to the global climate and ecological emergency and the national, regional and local action required to mitigate this. We will continue to take a lead in the sector by delivering our own Net Zero plan and also collaborate to support local change such as the Clean Air Zones in our region to improve local air quality.



Our joint headquarters with Avon & Somerset Constabulary

Our current collaborations

AF&RS has considerable experience of working in collaboration with a wide range of partners, both formally and informally. This work expanded and refocused during the delivery of the Collaboration Strategy for 2019-2020, and our joint working during the pandemic.

We currently formally collaborate with over 40 organisations; we work with 159 agencies that refer vulnerable people to us for fire safety support, and engage in a wide range of further informal partnerships. This section is not an exhaustive list but provides a brief overview of our existing work.

There are also further specific examples of our collaborative joint working during the pandemic and these are summarised below in respect of 2020/21. Further information is available in the following reports [Collaboration and multi-agency working during the COVID 19 pandemic](#) and [Performance Report 2020-21](#) and up to date information is available on our website.

Our focus	Examples of current collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response, resilience and emergency planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the border mobilisation of appliances to support neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services and national resilience assets and arrangements in place. Regional Collaboration Agreement between South West Regional Police Forces and SWAST to facilitate requests for resources and support at incidents across the region. Extensive contingency planning with the Local Resilience Forum, for example in relation to wide area flooding, the potential implications of Brexit and the COVID-19 outbreak. Agreements between emergency services to ensure a joined up and effective response on, for example: body recovery, gaining entry/exit to buildings, mental health triage, specialist heavy rescue support, missing person search, and Severn Tunnel contingency planning. AF&RS, Police and Ambulance services have joint command and control arrangements for major incidents and a number of National Inter-agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) to enhance communications and response to major incidents, for example joint working during civil disturbances in Bristol in 2020/21.

Our focus	Examples of current collaboration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community responders from Thornbury and Portishead provide a range of emergency medical treatment when demand is high or in rural areas. Collaboration with international colleagues on contaminants, firefighter safety and tactical firefighting initiatives. Formed the South West Regional Operational Assurance Group with our local FRS to standardise the processes and procedures for operational assurance and sharing of risk critical information to assist with joint operations and learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training, learning and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared training centre with Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. Wide range of joint training and training exercises with ASC, SWAST and Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) to ensure our teams work effectively and safely together to improve service to the public. Work collaboratively with partner agencies such as SARI (Stand Against Racism & Inequality) and the Race Equality Commission to build relationships with community groups on public and business safety, recruitment, and to deliver equalities training. Launched leadership programmes in collaboration with ASC, for example, Springboard Women's Development Programme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared communications, working, data, functions and infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three year Transformation Programme to increase efficiency and effectiveness across the Service through digitalisation and streamlining policy and procedure working with, and learning from, other Fire and Rescue Services and organisations. Sharing data protection resources with West of England Combined Authority (WECA).

Our current collaborations

Our focus	Examples of current collaboration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with the NFCC and joint working relationships at department level between specialist corporate staff in ASC, Fire and Rescue Services, Local Resilience Forum and local authorities to develop, access and share working practices, resources, data and initiatives. Joint working protocols with ASC on media communications for incidents. Joint marketing and communications with a range of partners supporting local and national safety campaigns, NFCC Fire and Rescue Campaign calendar, jointly branded events, diversity and inclusion and wellbeing initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared estates, assets (fleet) and equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared headquarters with ASC. Shared fire stations and/or provision of storage, offices, set down facilities, training space and community engagement space for ASC, SWAST, community and voluntary groups at Nailsea, Southmead, Avonmouth, Thornbury, Yate, Chew Magna and Hicks Gate stations and additional temporary accommodation provided to assist with COVID-19 response and testing. NHS Blood Donation centres held at station to reduce cost and increase public reach. Gambia and Avon Fire Services in Partnership (GAFSIP) to donate out of service vehicles and equipment to preserve life in Gambia.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of joint regional and national procurements of goods and services and development and utilisation of FRS frameworks include: data protection e-learning, premises cleaning, consumables, vehicle parts, breathing apparatus (BA) equipment provision, specialist Personal, Protective Equipment (PPE), repairs and washing, medical gas, and smoke and deaf alarms and Emergency Response Vehicles. Joined Procurement in Partnership, a group of South West public sector organisations (including police, NHS, universities and councils) to share knowledge, resources, buying power and best practice to deliver the best value for money service to our communities.

Our focus	Examples of current collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention and Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working with local authorities and a range of agencies nationally and locally on education packages on home and water safety, student fire safety, road safety, and Firesetters. Working with local authority housing partners to ensure fire safety in rented housing meets the required standards. Working with businesses as part of the Primary Authority scheme to ensure consistency against fire safety standards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working with blue light partners to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for emergency vehicles in Bristol and Bath Clean Air Zones and commitment to fleet decarbonisation. Part of the Emergency Services National Environment Group and cross-public sector Carbon Trust Public Sector Network working together to reduce carbon emissions.



Ex-AF&RS fire trucks donated to Gambia via the Gambia and Avon Fire Services in Partnership (GAFSIP)



Road-to-rail vehicle provided to AF&RS by Network Rail for responding to Severn Tunnel incidents

Our current collaborations

COVID-19 pandemic

We are proud of the contribution we have made to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020/21 we:

- Covered over 700 shifts for South Western Ambulance Service Trust driving ambulances
- Crewed three SWAST ambulances 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Responded to over 2,700 emergency calls on behalf of SWAST
- Provided over 11,000 hours of marshalling assistance at NHS mass vaccination centres
- Provided staff as vaccinators at the NHS mass vaccination centres
- Supported the local surge testing response to outbreaks of concern

Prevention activity during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic presented AF&RS, and our partners, with some challenges in relation to our prevention activity. However, during 2020/21 our partners were still able to refer 1935 vulnerable people to AF&RS for a free Home Fire Safety Visit to keep them safer from fire in their homes. In response, we were able to continue to provide essential fire safety advice and equipment to those most in need of our support. As COVID-19 restrictions ease, we will continue to work with our partners to reach as many vulnerable people as we can.

In partnership with schools and other organisations we were also able to continue other prevention activity safely including, during 2020/21 visiting 29 schools to deliver a variety of educational packages to help keep children safe (including water, fire and road safety advice) and hosted 31 events to deliver community safety advice.



AF&RS corporate staff volunteers at Shirehampton local vaccination centre



AF&RS staff volunteer vaccinator at Ashton Gate mass vaccination centre



IN 2021/22, DESPITE THE PANDEMIC, AVON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

HANDLED **20,979** EMERGENCY CALLS 

RESPONDED TO  **15,369** INCIDENTS

WAS CALLED TO
521
FIRES IN THE HOME 

RESCUED
768 

PEOPLE FROM
FIRE  AND OTHER
EMERGENCIES

FITTED **4,430**
SMOKE ALARMS 

CARRIED OUT
3,871 

FIRE SAFETY
VISITS
IN THE HOME

ENGAGED WITH
3,113
BUSINESSES 

COVERED **2,195** SHIFTS 

DRIVING
AMBULANCES 

TO PROVIDE
ADVICE 

REDUCED OUR
CARBON EMISSIONS BY

20.8% 

CO₂

ATTENDED
430 

VEHICLE
FIRES

WAS CALLED TO
535 ROAD TRAFFIC
COLLISIONS 

RESCUED
55 

PEOPLE FROM
WATER

WE ARE HERE
TO HELP 

24 HOURS
A DAY

SEVEN DAYS
A WEEK 

365 DAYS
A YEAR

ALL FOR ONLY

10_p 

A DAY

FOR EACH
PERSON 

IN
AVON

Please note this infographic is updated each year. The current version is available on our website

Our plan for further collaboration

Collaboration takes time, resources and sometimes financial investment to initiate, progress and performance manage. Therefore, to ensure we have the organisational capacity to deliver our ambitions while maintaining core business and our statutory operational and corporate duties, it is important to apply focus to our efforts by agreeing the collaborative work AF&RS will be considering and progressing over the next five years. These objectives are in line with the areas of focus set out in this document and are in addition to maintaining the existing collaborations and partnership working already outlined.

2021-2026

Response, resilience and emergency planning

- Implement National Operational Guidance aligned to best practice across blue light services and collaborate within the South West region. This includes a three-way partnership, with Gloucestershire FRS and Cornwall FRS to support and partner Kent FRS.
- Work with Bristol Airport to move from existing to new guidance sharing data, policies, learning, risk assessments and procedures to ensure cross-organisational alignment, prevent inefficiency and duplication of effort.
- Work with SWAST to explore a continuing and wider first response model where the fire service assists with certain medical emergencies, considering a trial of emergency category 1 co-responding with a whole-time station.
- Reinvigorate trial of a combined police, fire and ambulance Tri-Service Safety Officer.

Training, learning and development

- Continue, and build upon, joint training events with HART and ASC.
- Deliver further joint menopause awareness training for staff in conjunction with ASC.
- Progress joint fire investigation accreditation with South West Fire and Rescue Services, or ASC and South West Forensics, to enhance fire investigations of a criminal nature in order to reduce the instances of arson, anti-social behaviour and provide risk reduction.
- Encourage an agile, adaptable, and collaborative culture focused on productivity and working across prevention, prevention and response to reduce the risk of fire and other incidents and put our community first.

Shared communications, working, data, functions and infrastructure

- Review and consider a different delivery model for our telecommunications and WAN, website development, IT and financial services including the potential for sharing these functions with blue light or other organisations.
- Revisit a shared occupational health function with ASC.
- Explore further formal community outreach partnerships with ASC, local councils, other organisations and community groups for work placements, school engagement and other initiatives to improve outcomes in diversity and inclusion through recruitment, positive action, Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) and community engagement.

- Continue to jointly run emergency services open days to communicate and build community awareness of our work and recruitment opportunities.
- Implement the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) which will span across all emergency services.
- On conclusion of the Transformation Programme, consider shared or joint working arrangements in respect of any residual purely transactional services where there is mutual cost and efficiency benefit, and retained priority of service to AF&RS.

Shared estates, assets (fleet) and equipment

- Assess the potential for the redevelopment of our fire stations in Bath and Weston-super-Mare as shared facilities with blue light and/or other partners.
- Explore potential further joint training with blue light partners as part of our long term training needs analysis and in anticipation of the end of the PFI arrangement at Severn Park.
- In the context of post-pandemic ways of working, review and ensure the model for an ongoing shared HQ and office space with blue light or other partners ensures value for money.
- Seek to move the contractual, leasing and licencing arrangements in place with the police and ambulance into a collaborative reciprocal arrangement which streamlines the process for sharing rooms and space in each other's buildings and ensure any costs applied are mutually fair and value for money.
- Continue to engage with the West of England One Public Estate programme, West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Joint Assets Board (JAB) to identify further collaboration and funding including the release and disposal of publicly-owned sites.
- Develop an 'innovation hub' for fleet to work with partners to identify further opportunities for joint development, design and research to reduce the cost, duplication of effort and speed of response.
- Consider options to extend the use of some equipment, for example drones, with other emergency services subject to MOUs.

Procurement

- Continue sharing of our procurement pipelines with fire and rescue services and other partners regionally and nationally to identify and progress additional opportunities for joint, cost-effective procurements.
- Engage with the NFCC to develop tools and processes for national collaboration to improve the efficient and effective category, contract and supplier management.
- Explore with South West Fire and Rescue Services the risks, merits and potential of a more formalised south west procurement 'hub' to further pool resources and expertise for joint procurements.

Prevention and Protection

- Deliver our improved Home Fire Safety Visit programme which includes referrals to and from other agencies, such as Social Services, as well as the charity sector, to support the most vulnerable in the community.

Our plan for further collaboration

- Partner with businesses and agencies in areas of licensing, building regulations and housing to drive down risk within the built and business environment. As well as further explore the benefits of 'Better Business for all' to help businesses achieve fire safety compliance and sustainable growth and in the context of pandemic recovery.
- Explore further development of our firesetters intervention scheme in particular in the area of arson prevention working with partners.
- Explore further development of community engagement programmes with, for example, the Prince's Trust.
- Continue to jointly run a range of community safety and awareness programmes in collaboration with partners, focusing on fire prevention, water safety, community mental health and road safety.

Climate Change

- Work in partnership with other FRS', local authorities and organisations to maximise opportunities for joint net zero and renewable energy generation and share best practice. For example, work with Bath University to assess the embodied carbon of the new Bath Fire Station and with Bristol City Council on electric charging networks.
- Collaborate with London Fire Brigade and others on the development and trial of electric fire appliances and emergency response vehicles.

In addition, we will also review and refine the processes and procedures underpinning collaboration and partnerships in the following areas:

- Review our central resources for the set-up, monitoring and assurance of collaboration.
- Improve the Collaboration Framework which sits underneath this strategy and provides guidance to managers. This work will include developing the collaboration start up process along business case lines to enhance governance, monitoring and assurance arrangements, clarify roles and responsibilities and ensure robust assessment of cost, benefit, risk and opportunity.
- Expand our internal collaboration registers to ensure they capture collaborations across the Service and with owners to aid monitoring and assurance.
- Continue a South West Fire and Rescue group at Chief Executive level, and instigate a practitioner level equivalent, to share best practice, ideas and collaborative opportunities.
- Work with other fire and rescue services, organisations, universities and best practice bodies (such as the Institute for Collaborative Working) to further improve evaluation and benefits realisation.
- Seek to adopt sector relevant principles of ISO 44001 (Collaborative Relationships) as a 'tool box' to deliver effective collaborative outcomes, further enhance skills in collaborative working and encourage a culture of collaboration in line with our Service objectives, values and the NFCC Code of Ethics.

AF&RS regularly horizon-scans for local, regional and national changes in our community risk profile and any developments impacting on the role and function of fire and rescue. This strategy will therefore be reviewed at any point there is a significant change to the overarching Service Plan or IRMP.



Birdseye view of a multi-agency training exercise involving fire, police and ambulance

Delivering our strategy

Underpinning the strategic intentions within this document is a Collaboration Framework which sets out the detail of how we consider, approve, set up, performance manage and, where necessary, exit a collaboration arrangement.

The Framework provides a consistent approach to the consideration, assurance and delivery of formal collaboration projects and arrangements. It also ensures appropriate documentation is raised and stored as an account of each arrangement's purpose and contribution to the Service's key objectives. The process includes, but is not limited to, Business Cases, Agreements, Risk Assessments, Equality Impact Assessments and Data Protection Impact Assessments.

The Framework provides staff with the guidance, knowledge and tools to consider and develop their collaboration ideas and projects; and outline the requirements and their responsibilities going forward. The delivery of any agreed collaborations is also included in the detailed plans of the relevant business units and directorates.

Our governance arrangements and roles and responsibilities

It is important that an appropriate governance structure is established within the overall corporate systems and assurance frameworks.

Avon Fire Authority

The AF&RS Service Plan (incorporating our IRMP) is approved by Avon Fire Authority. It sets out our contract with the community, responds to risk in our service area, and provides the foundation for all other plans and strategies, including this Collaboration Strategy. The Collaboration Strategy aligns with the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

Responsibility for the delivery of the Collaboration Strategy is owned by the Service Leadership Board (SLB) and Service Leadership Team (SLT).

Service Leadership Board (SLB)

The SLB is responsible for providing strategic direction to facilitate collaboration with key partners, ensuring there are sufficient resources for delivery and agreeing priorities with SLT. The level of involvement of SLB will vary with the scale of the collaboration and commitment involved.

Director of Corporate Services

As the Collaboration Strategy 'lead', the Director of Corporate Services seeks to ensure the strategy remains fit for purpose and holistic (reflecting the priorities of our other cross Service plans and strategies), as well as sponsoring collaboration and a culture of collaborative working across the Service.

Service Leadership Team (SLT)

The SLT ensures collaboration activities are taken forward in accordance with the underpinning Framework, and oversees team working on collaboration projects, ensuring they are delivered to time and quality and are performing against objectives.

SLT members provide updates to SLT and SLB on collaboration workstreams and raise any risks and issues with delivery and resourcing.

The **Performance, Risk and Scrutiny Committee (PRSC)** has a scrutiny role in ensuring that appropriate governance and decision making processes are maintained utilising the established Authority and committee structures. They ensure AF&RS works collaboratively with other Fire and Rescue Services to deliver inter-operability and collaborates with other emergency services, Category 1 and 2 responders and the Local Resilience Forum.

If any proposed collaboration falls outside of the agreed Service Plan, or if financial or other considerations mean it is necessary, the PRSC would also consider recommendations to be made to the full Fire Authority on business transformation proposals.

As new and revised Service Plans and IRMPs are developed, collaboration will continue to form a central element with Members engaged in that process.

In addition, the **Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC)** and our **External Auditors** have a role in ensuring value for money is achieved through our work. **Internal Audit** also provides an independent and objective assurance service to the Fire Authority, an opinion on the internal control, risk management and governance arrangements and identify areas for improvement. Internal Audit carried out a review of 'Collaboration' in May 2019 in which a reasonable audit opinion was provided. The auditor conclusion stated 'AF&RS has a collaboration strategy which sets out clear executive and operational ownership of the collaboration agenda'.

Funding

Although, over time, collaborative partnerships can result in increased efficiency, effectiveness and value for money, most successful collaborative initiatives need some form of financial investment in the early stages (from one or all parties) and may incur on-going costs. Therefore, the full lifetime costs, cost/benefit analysis and funding provision will be scoped out at the early stages, and discussed and agreed at the appropriate level, to ensure the work is viable and sustainable going forward.

Collaborations planned and agreed as part of the IRMP and Service Plan process will form part of the Medium Term Financial Plan with budgets or earmarked reserves used to support invest to save or collaboration activities.

AF&RS is committed to pursuing opportunities for external and transformational funding that may be available from central Government or other sources to support collaborative working.

Evaluating effectiveness

Collaborative partnerships take mutual investment of time and resource; therefore, it is important to monitor delivery against the required and agreed outputs and outcomes. Good relationship management is crucial to ensuring the collaborative partnership remains effective and achieves the benefits outlined.

It is also important we share our successes and learn from our experiences so that our collaborative work achieves the best outcome for our communities and stakeholders.

How do we do it?

Formal collaborations are recorded and monitored by our Corporate Assurance Team through our Collaboration Register. They are developed, monitored and maintained in accordance with the Collaboration Framework and will require a supporting assessment and performance matrix which documents how the collaboration will be monitored and evaluated using the relevant qualitative and quantitative evidence.

There is no single method to evaluate a partnership and it can be difficult to attribute a public safety outcome to one specific intervention or partnership initiative because the context is often multi-faceted and constantly evolving.

Some initiatives require an assessment of cost saving, others the effectiveness of improved services. Some partnership outcomes can be measured and monitored using a straightforward list of deliverables which have quantitative data; others may use more qualitative data, and often both. Goal-based evaluation models use key indicators of success, whereas goal-free evaluation considers actual effects or unintended consequences, without pre-empting what these will be.

However, all methods provide important information about the outcomes of the collaboration and whether the benefits expected were realised, not achieved or even exceeded. Therefore, when considering a collaborative partnership we will identify and agree the best way to monitor and evaluate each initiative from the outset and the stage or frequency at which the evaluation will take place. A Red, Amber and Green rating system has already been developed to assist SLB, SLT and the Fire Authority with their scrutiny of collaborative partnerships and whether they are achieving the agreed benefits. Performance monitoring and benefits realisation methods will continue to be enhanced.

The goal is to continually build on current and future management of outputs, outcomes and impact in order to make informed decisions on the future of collaboration across the Service and for each collaborative initiative.

Exit strategies

In considering the implications of a collaborative engagement the potential partners should jointly evaluate the key aspects of disengagement. Establishing potential triggers and rules of disengagement, possible transition and future development during the partner selection and contracting stage, builds confidence between the parties.



AF&RS Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team and Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) taking part in a training exercise at Fire Service College

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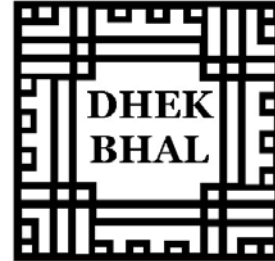


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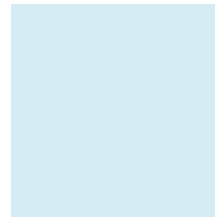
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