



**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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# **Response Strategy 2022 - 2025**

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# 1. Introduction

**This document is Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's Response Strategy and outlines how we will deliver our emergency response functions to the communities of Greater Manchester.**

**This Response Strategy supports the Fire Plan for Greater Manchester (2021-25), which identifies six priorities for the Service:**

1. Provide a fast, safe and effective response
2. Help people reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies
3. Help protect the built environment
4. Use resources sustainably and deliver the most value
5. Develop a culture of excellence, equality and inclusivity
6. Integrate our services in every locality with those of partner agencies

The strategy covers the period 2022-25 and primarily supports the delivery of Priority 1 within the Fire Plan.

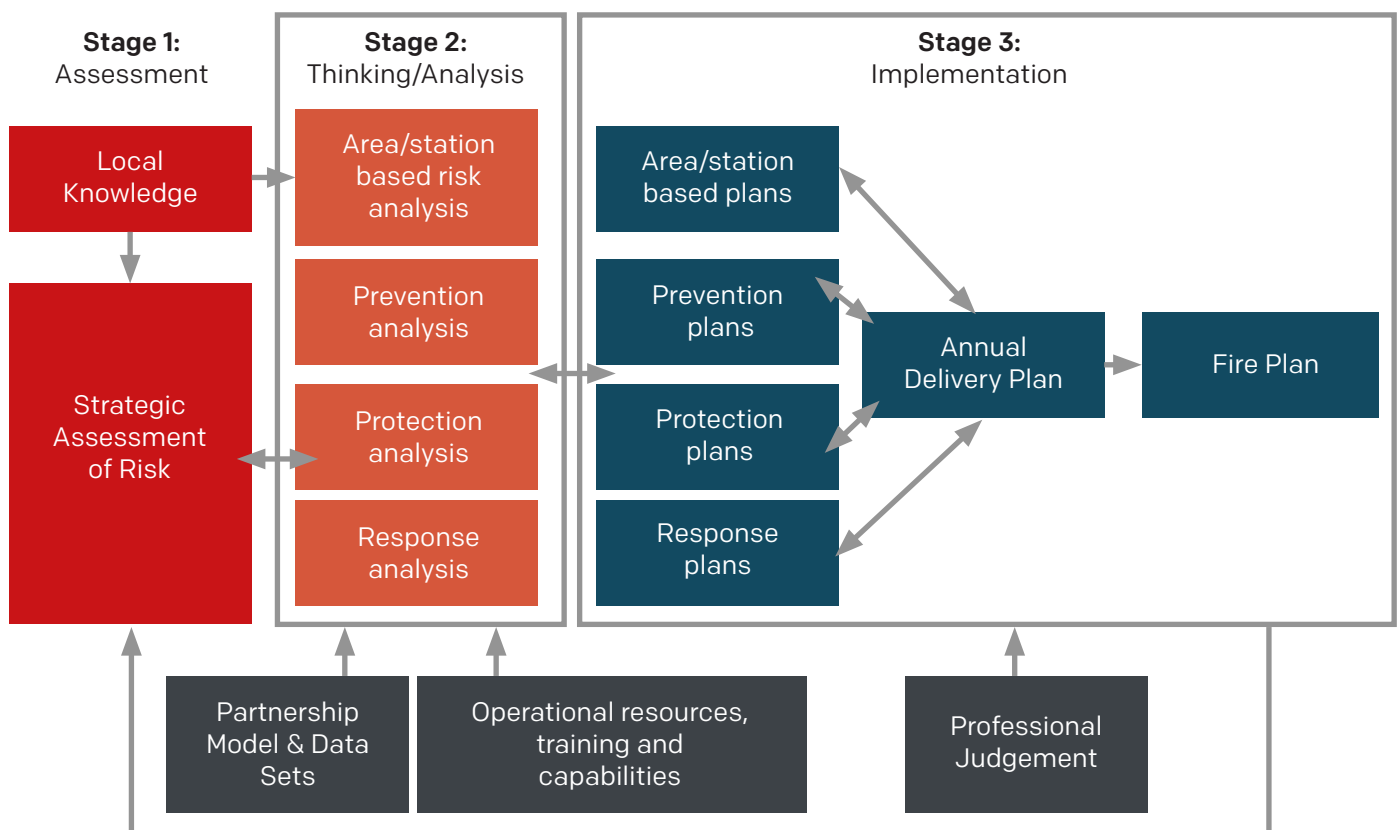
The Strategy also helps support the delivery of the other priorities where applicable.

Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) is one of the largest fire and rescue services in England, covering an area of 493 square miles and serving a population of 2.8 million residents, with many other people working or visiting the region.

GMFRS must plan, train and exercise for the response to a wide variety of emergencies. These include building fires, road traffic collisions, rail and Metrolink incidents, terrorist attacks, building collapse, hazardous materials, wildfires, water rescues, flooding and rope rescue.

Our range of capabilities are determined by relevant legislation, the Fire and Rescue National Framework and our approach to

## Our Community Risk Management Model



integrated risk management planning. This planning recognises identified threats with National and Community Risk Registers and is underpinned by our annual Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) and our Community Risk Management Model.

The threat environment in Greater Manchester is complex. As well as being densely populated with an increasing number of high-rise buildings, there is an extensive network of rivers, canals and reservoirs, and many square miles of moorland and peatland habitats. There are also numerous strategic buildings and infrastructure in the region including:

- Manchester International Airport
- The Trafford Centre and 57 town and city centres
- 62 miles of tramways, 130 miles of railways and 10 motorways
- World renowned sports stadiums and entertainment venues
- 9 Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites
- Internationally renowned and pioneering universities and research facilities

Greater Manchester continues to transform and grow, and it is essential we understand and adapt to the changing risks we face, so we are prepared when an emergency occurs. We seek to deliver the highest standards of operational response through continuously planning, preparing and training for all potential emergency incidents. We will continue to assess risk and evolve our capabilities to ensure our firefighters respond with the correct resources, equipment and skill to manage incidents efficiently, effectively, and safely.

This Response Strategy is built on a series of commitments to our communities and our partners. Our commitments are captured throughout the document in red boxes.



## 2. Assessing Risk

The Fire Plan commits to continually improving how we respond to risk and demand to ensure we have the right resources available, in the right place, at the right time, and in the right numbers.

We commit to undertake an annual Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) to support our risk planning process, identifying the potential threats we face and to respond accordingly.



This enables us to create an accurate and up-to-date picture of the potential threats facing our communities and how these are considered in the production of our plans. Whilst this document takes a strategic approach to risks we recognise the importance of enhancing this with local intelligence provided by our frontline crews and partners, which will inform the development of station and area action plans to identify local priorities.

## 3. Planning and preparing

### Resilience and Contingency Planning

We commit to develop, test and assure plans at our highest risk sites to ensure we are prepared to face a range of significant incidents and emergencies.



Resilience is about having a contingency capability – the ability to instantly deploy the right resources in the right quantities at the right moment so that we are able to deal effectively and safely with large emergencies such as wildfires, flooding or high-rise incidents.

Given the number of threats facing Greater Manchester, the potential for major incidents is significant. Such events include flooding and wildfires; train derailments; large spillages, fires and chemical incidents; civil unrest; terrorist attacks; and even pandemics. We must have the flexibility to be able to scale up our response when necessary, and in a timely fashion, to reflect the scale of the events we are responding to.

The Fire Plan commits to recruiting a further 350 apprentice firefighters over the next four years and we will continue to monitor risk and demand to ensure we maintain the appropriate numbers of frontline firefighters.

### Local Resilience Forum (LFR) and Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP)

The Fire Plan commits to dedicating a senior officer to the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum to lead on multi-agency planning, training for large-scale threats; embedding Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP); and joint training with other agencies.

We commit to being a key partner within the Local Resilience Forum to ensure we are prepared for when major incidents occur, embedding the principles of JESIP at all levels to support an effective multi-agency response.



The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a legal duty on all emergency services to carry out risk assessments of the dangers in their area. All significant risks are recorded on the Greater Manchester Community Risk Register. Responding to large-scale and complex incidents such as flooding, moorland fires, pandemics and terrorist attacks requires joint planning and training with other agencies. GMFRS will continue to work closely with the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum and individual agencies to identify and share large-scale threats to our communities and develop joint plans to mitigate, respond to, and recover from them.

JESIP was established to help improve multi-agency response to large and complex incidents such as terrorist attacks. It provides a framework that sets out a standard approach to multi-agency working, along with training and awareness products for organisations to train their staff. The JESIP principles and models can be applied to any type of multi-agency incident, and we are embedding them into the Service to utilise them whenever we need to work more effectively with other organisations.

## Operational Training

We commit to investing in our crews and incident commanders to ensure they have the right skills and experience to deal with all the potential threats that face our communities.



The Fire Plan commits to investing in operational training facilities. Our staff are our greatest asset, and we will continue to invest in our Bury Training Centre to create a state-of-the-art facility encompassing Incident Command and Leadership Academies. Our aim is for this to become a focal point for the development of our frontline staff, whilst being one of the leading facilities in England.

We will also engage in a programme of cross-border exercises with other FRS to improve our operational effectiveness at our own incidents, and those in other counties. This will support the delivery of mutual assistance as well as our responsibilities under National Resilience.



A particular priority for the Service is to ensure all our frontline firefighters are appropriately trained and equipped to effectively and safely respond to all types of terrorist attack. We will continue to work with staff, unions and the Home Office to develop the best possible response model for our communities.

We commit to ensuring our response to terrorist attacks is resilient, timely and effective.



### Operational assurance and learning

The Fire Plan commits to continually improving our operational procedures, policies and guidance.

We commit to an on-going review of our operational performance to monitor effectiveness, identify learning, and ensure we act immediately to rectify any issues and drive continuous improvement.



We will do this by reviewing national operational guidance (NOG), fire standards, national/joint organisational learning (NOL/JOL) and use this information to review and update our policies and procedures where appropriate. We will embed the debrief process at all levels of incidents from hot debriefing through to strategic and multi-agency debriefing, sharing this learning where appropriate across the sector and with relevant partners.

The Fire Plan commits to implementing recommendations from all relevant public inquiries. We will commit resources to ensure all relevant learning and recommendations are effectively and efficiently embedded in our policies and procedures. We will do this in collaboration with the LRF.

### Built Environment

The Fire Plan commits to improving how we collect and use accurate risk information on buildings to ensure our response to emergencies is as safe and effective as possible.

We commit to developing the knowledge of our frontline crews to identify hazards and risks within the built environment, capturing relevant risk information to improve the safety and effectiveness of our response.



The built environment within Greater Manchester is growing at a rapid rate and is the most complex in England outside of London. We will train our firefighters to improve their understanding of new building construction methods and materials, and fire protection measures to assist them in tackling fires in the safest, most effective ways possible. We will ensure access to risk information is effective by updating our IT on fire engines through the Mobile Data Terminal refresh programme.



## 4. Improving our response

### Response Standards

Our 'response standards' are the performance measures we determine for our first fire engine to arrive on scene at an incident. The measure includes call handling time at North West Fire Control, time for our crews to 'turn out' to the fire engine, get dressed in PPE, and includes travel time to the incident location. We measure our performance against this standard for those incidents that pose the greatest risk to life such as house fires and road traffic collisions, termed 'life risk incidents'. In 2019/20 our response time to life risk incidents was the 5th fastest in England. Our target response time to reach life risk incidents is 7 minutes 30 seconds.

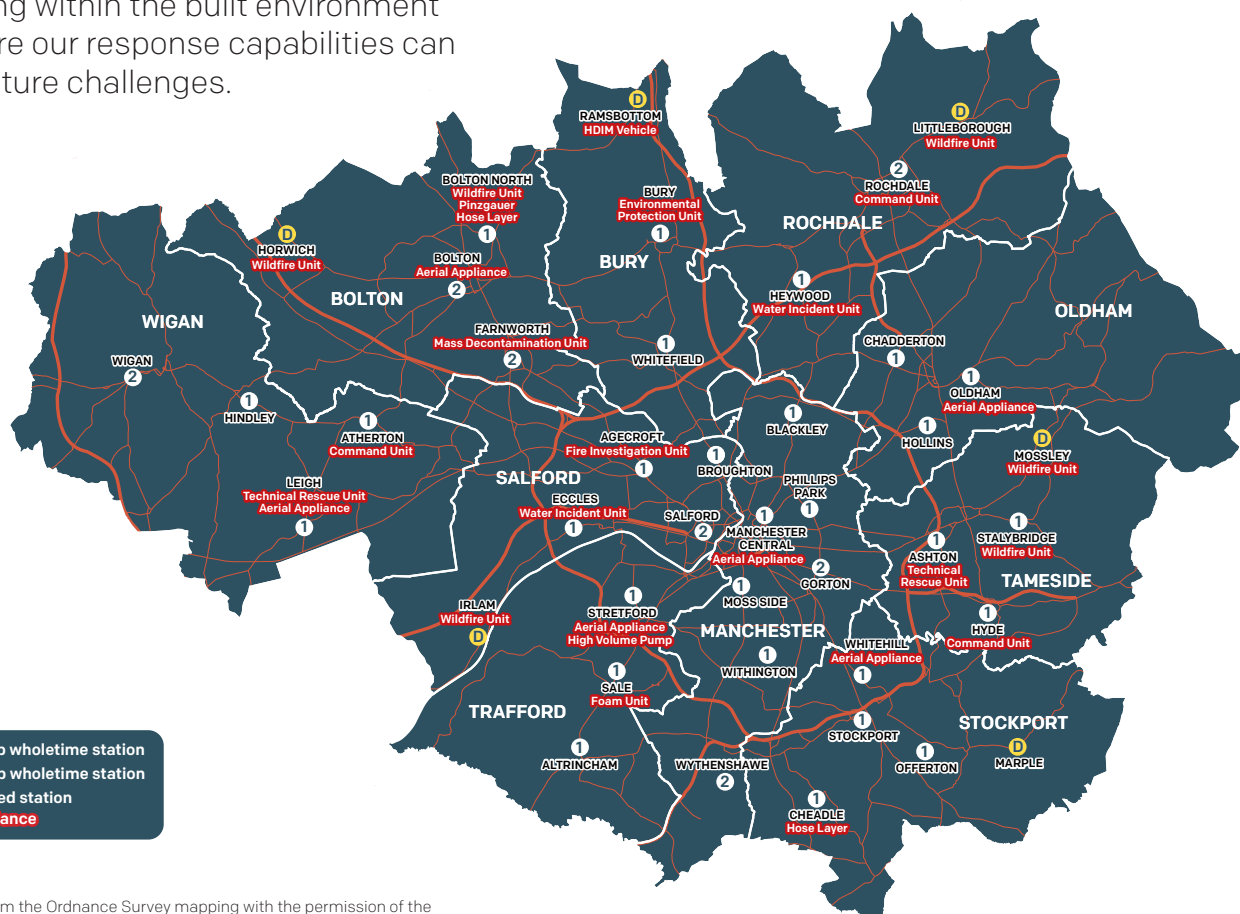
The Fire Plan commits to a response to emergencies that is as quick and safe as possible. To do this we utilise complex modelling software to analyse historical incident data for a three-year period and assess our performance to determine whether our assets are in the correct locations. We also identify future risks emerging within the built environment to ensure our response capabilities can meet future challenges.

We commit to continuously monitoring our response times to incidents and reviewing the location and number of our assets to ensure we achieve the quickest possible response times and most effective operational cover.



All our fire engines and firefighters are strategically located across Greater Manchester to ensure our fire engines arrive at incidents as quickly as possible. We currently operate two crewing systems; shift duty system and day crewing, ensuring firefighters are available, 24/7 365 days per year and can be quickly mobilised to incidents.

We also have a number of specialist appliances strategically located across Greater Manchester that provide a variety of capabilities to resolve the vast array of incident scenarios we face.



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## The Climate Emergency

The Service is more directly affected by the consequences of the climate emergency than many other organisations. Not only do we need to manage and maintain our own assets and resources when faced with extreme events, but we are also expected to mobilise those assets and resources promptly and effectively to help communities and protect vital infrastructure and environments.

GMFRS carries out environmental risk assessments at incidents to identify the potential risks posed by our actions on the environment and the control measures that can be applied to reduce or, where possible, prevent environmental damage. The Service has a dedicated Environmental Protection Unit that can be mobilised to incidents with an array of specialist equipment. This is further supported by a team of highly knowledgeable Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection Officers. Assisting and supporting the training of firefighters on environmental protection is now part of their maintenance of competence programme.

### Wildfires

We commit to developing our ability to tackle wildfires through reviewing our existing capabilities, working with landowners, and introducing wildfire burns teams to reduce the impact of these incidents.



At the height of the region's moorland fires in 2018, 57 fire engines and 220 firefighters were in operation across Greater Manchester. GMFRS committed resources to the 2018 fires for almost three weeks before they were finally extinguished. There are longer-term environmental impacts of wildfires continuing to spread. The peat and vegetation on the region's moorlands absorb significant levels of carbon dioxide and rainfall. Their destruction releases large quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> and increases the threat of flooding across Greater Manchester. Research has suggested that wildfire smoke is more toxic than exhaust fumes

and exacerbates vulnerability to respiratory threats such as CV-19. As well as being home to numerous species of wild animals and birds, the moorlands are a vital carbon sink that need protecting to help reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the subsequent impact of climate change. The introduction of a burn team at Littleborough Fire Station will reduce the level of destruction, and time that resources are committed to these incidents. This will be supported by the continued development of our Wildfire Tactical Advisors (Tac Ads) who will have enhanced knowledge of tactical approaches to help reduce the time taken to extinguish these fires.

### Water and Flood incidents

We commit to enhancing our capability to respond to water and flooding incidents, expanding the number of stations who are trained in this capability.



In response to research indicating the increasing frequency and risk of wide-scale flooding across Greater Manchester, we have already invested in new equipment. All operational firefighters, and specially trained FDOs now have immediate access to flood response equipment enabling them to respond to a variety of water incidents safely and efficiently. We also have specialist water rescue units with a variety of enhanced equipment to facilitate the rescue and search for people and animals in different waterways. Whilst we already have this capability, we will strengthen this further and will expand these skills to other stations. We currently have Water Incident Units located at Eccles and Heywood. Through analysis completed during the strategic special appliance review we have identified further locations where expending this capability will improve our response times to these incident types whilst increasing resilience. We will prioritise this during the first year of this strategy.



## Technical Response

### TRU



We commit to maintaining a highly trained Technical Response Unit capability recognising the complex built environment which exists within Greater Manchester.

Our Technical Response Units (TRU) have been established to better respond to more complex and sometimes unusual emergencies that we face. These include complex road traffic collisions, water rescues, entrapment, terrorist threats, rescues from height, collapsed buildings, trench rescues and more. As the built environment within Greater Manchester continues to develop at pace, we will continue to review the capabilities that our TRU provides to ensure it can meet the challenges both now and in the future.

### National Resilience

The Fire Plan commits to providing support to other fire and rescue services and National Resilience.

We commit to discharging our statutory duties and maintaining effective operational availability of National Resilience assets.



GMFRS has statutory duty responsibilities with regards to National Resilience assets being effectively discharged. These are assured through the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) to ensure host services achieve and maintain effective operational capability to respond to national emergencies. We will ensure we maintain compliance to deliver High Volume Pump, Mass Decontamination Unit, Detection, Identification and Monitoring, and flood response capabilities.

### Flexi-duty Officers (FDO)

Our FDO cohort supports our incident command structure which is underpinned by our planning assumptions. FDOs work closely with other agencies to resolve operational incidents and have the knowledge and skills required to provide an advanced level of

tactical and strategic command. FDOs utilise their training to co-ordinate and manage the largest and most complex incidents within a multi-agency environment. FDOs also undertake a range of specialist and tactical advisory roles from Petrochemical Officer through to Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN) Strategic and Tactical Commanders.

## The Building Safety Crisis

The crisis facing the UK's building stock exposed by the Grenfell Tower fire is still ongoing. Greater Manchester currently has some 640 high-rise buildings with more and more being constructed every year. Across our region, a significant number of buildings are subject to interim measures meaning the fire safety of those buildings is severely compromised.

In November 2019, part of The Cube building in Bolton city centre was destroyed by fire. The affected building was a seven-storey block of student accommodation, wrapped in high-pressure laminate cladding. The speed with which the fire took hold and the devastating impact it had on the building was shocking.

Evacuating large numbers of occupants whilst dealing with a rapidly developing fire is complex and challenging. To manage this situation effectively, the HIRE action plan required a number of additional resources be sent to the fire including extra fire engines, an extra command team dedicated to evacuation, and a specialist officer to advise on the building's fire safety features. To ensure fire cover across the rest of the region, GMFRS had to call on 18 fire engines from four other fire and rescue services. The HIRE procedure is now embedded as policy and is referred to as Immediate Building Evacuation (IBE).

We commit to ensuring our response to fires in buildings with failed fire safety measures continues to be as effective and safe as possible and is adapted to changing risk and intelligence.



## Blue Light Collaboration

The Fire Plan commits to delivering a more ambitious blue light collaboration programme. GMFRS was the first fire and rescue service to mobilise all its firefighters to cardiac arrests in support of the ambulance service. The initiative was subsequently undertaken across the country. The Fire Brigade's Union had some legitimate concerns about how it was being implemented and a decision was taken nationally to discontinue the initiative. If future funding requirements permit, we are keen to explore with staff, unions and partners whether there is scope to revisit and improve this function, ensuring effective procedures are put in place and firefighter welfare is a priority. There are other areas where GMFRS could provide further support to the Ambulance and Police services, including gaining access for paramedics at 'concern for welfare' incidents and searches for missing persons.

We commit to working with staff and partners to explore potential new forms of emergency response that will help further protect our communities.



## Technology & Innovation

The Fire Plan commits to researching and applying innovative technology and techniques to ensure our fire appliances, resources and protective equipment continue to keep our communities and firefighters safe.

## Investing in our Fleet

We commit to investing in our vehicle fleet across a range of capabilities, ensuring these are configured effectively across Greater Manchester by reviewing the type and number required to meet the risk we face.



We will implement the findings of our Strategic Special Appliance Review, procuring a range of specialist appliances based on sound rationale and developing our capability through consideration of new technologies including high reach extendable turret (HRET) technology.

## Gartan

We commit to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our crewing system through utilising updated Gartan crewing software and the use of mobile apps.



This will apply to all duty systems including the Officers Rota and will support much easier management of our resourcing function. Staff will be able to apply for time off and receive update notifications to their mobile device improving end user experience.

## Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)

We commit to providing the most up-to-date mobile data technology to improve our agility, operational capabilities and awareness.



We will provide greater functionality and access to information and systems through the installation of a removable rear MDT in fire engines. As well as providing risk-critical information at incidents, these terminals will have greater functionality and improved software to enable crews to carry out a number of activities such as Home Fire Safety Assessments and risk information gathering visits, reducing duplication of work and the need to access computers on fire stations.

## North West Fire Control (NWFC)

The Fire Plan commits to reviewing the current performance and future model of our control room functions to continuously improve performance.

We commit to maintaining a dedicated Officer who will liaise with NWFC to ensure mobilisations to incidents are as efficient and effective as possible.



NWFC handles all 999 emergency calls and mobilises firefighters and fire engines to incidents in Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Greater Manchester. NWFC uses an advanced mobilising system to ensure that our resources are dispatched efficiently to any incident type required. We will continue to explore ways to improve this service working with colleagues from NWFC and other FRS to align our processes where possible.

## 5. Measuring success

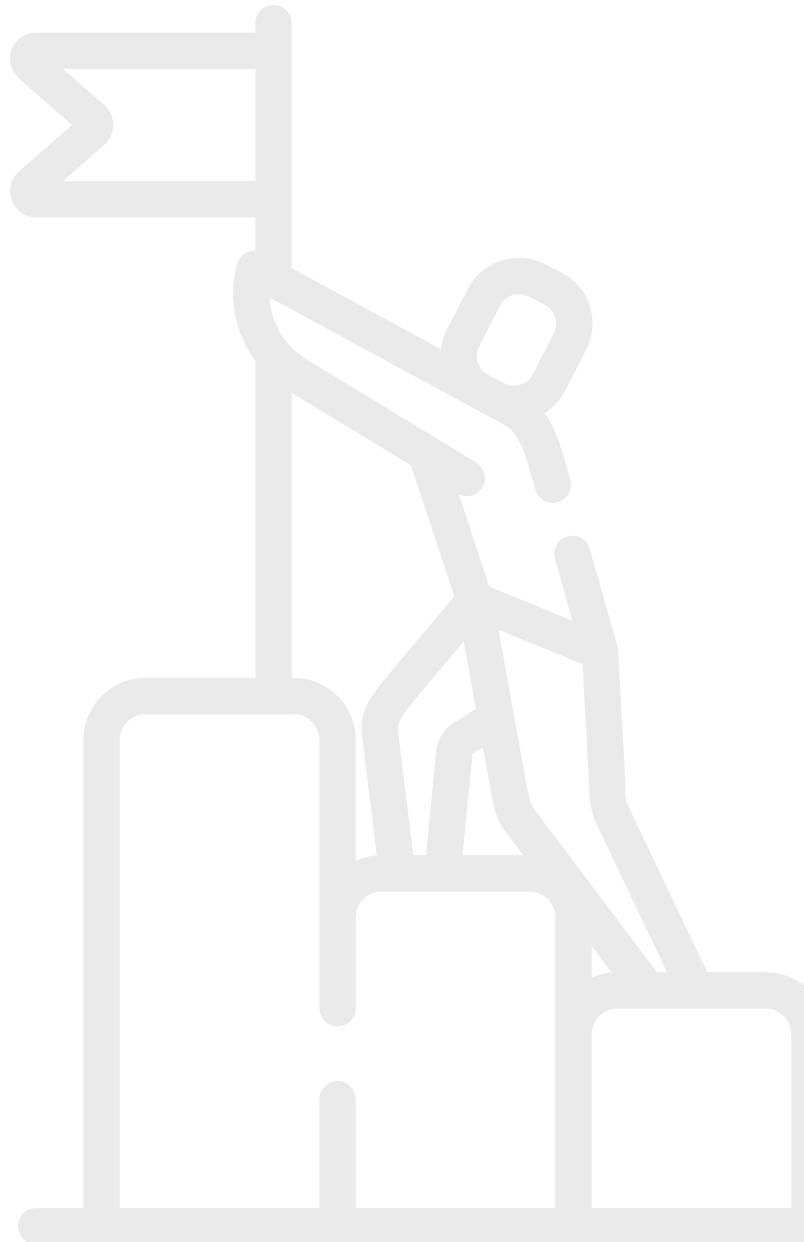
### The objectives of the Fire Plan are to:

1. Reduce deaths, injuries and damage caused by fire and other threats to our communities.
2. Deliver the best value to the public with the least impact on the environment.
3. Develop and maintain a diverse, high-performing, and healthy workforce.

The ultimate aim of this strategy is to ensure that our response to all emergencies is resilient, timely and effective.

### To help achieve these outcomes, the aims of this strategy are to:

1. Continually update our understanding of risk, and plan and train for all foreseeable threats, so we can respond as effectively as possible when an emergency occurs.
2. Work in an integrated way with partners to ensure our planning, training and response is as effective as possible and provides the greatest value to our communities.
3. Provide support to other fire and rescue services and partners.
4. Continually monitor and evaluate our performance and procedures, and implement relevant recommendations from external bodies to drive continuous improvement.
5. Invest in new technology and equipment to ensure our response to emergencies is as safe and effective as possible.
6. Protect the environment and protect our communities from the impacts of the climate emergency.



What we do:

<b>Provide a fast, safe, and effective response</b>	<b>Help people reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies</b>	<b>Help protect the built environment</b>
<b>Use resources sustainably and deliver the most value</b>	<b>Develop a culture of excellence, equality, and inclusivity</b>	<b>Integrate our services in every locality with those of partner agencies</b>

How we do it:

We commit to undertake an annual Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) to support our risk planning process, identifying the potential threats we face and to respond accordingly.	We commit to develop, test and assure plans at our highest risk sites to ensure we are prepared to face a range of significant incidents and emergencies.	We commit to being a key partner within the Local Resilience Forum to ensure we are prepared for when major incidents occur, embedding the principles of JESIP at all levels to support an effective multi-agency response.
We commit to investing in our crews and incident commanders to ensure they have the right skills and experience to deal with all the potential threats that face our communities.	We commit to ensuring our response to terrorist attacks is resilient, timely and effective.	We commit to an on-going review of our operational performance to monitor effectiveness, identify learning, and ensure we act immediately to rectify any issues and drive continuous improvement.
We commit to developing the knowledge of our frontline crews to identify hazards and risks within the built environment, capturing relevant risk information to improve the safety and effectiveness of our response.	We commit to continuously monitoring our response times to incidents and reviewing the location and number of our assets to ensure we achieve the quickest possible response times and most effective operational cover.	We commit to developing our ability to tackle wildfires through reviewing our existing capabilities, working with landowners, and introducing wildfire burns teams to reduce the impact of these incidents.
We commit to enhancing our capability to respond to water and flooding incidents, expanding the number of stations who are trained in this capability.	We commit to maintaining a highly trained Technical Response Unit capability recognising the complex built environment which exists within Greater Manchester.	We commit to discharging our statutory duties and maintaining effective operational availability of National Resilience assets.
We commit to ensuring our response to fires in buildings with failed fire safety measures continues to be as effective and safe as possible and is adapted to changing risk and intelligence.	We commit to working with staff and partners to explore potential new forms of emergency response that will help further protect our communities.	We commit to investing in our vehicle fleet across a range of capabilities, ensuring these are configured effectively across Greater Manchester by reviewing the type and number required to meet the risk we face.
We commit to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our crewing system through utilising updated Gartan crewing software and the use of mobile apps.	We commit to providing the most up-to-date mobile data technology to improve our agility, operational capabilities and awareness.	We commit to maintaining a dedicated Officer who will liaise with NWFC to ensure mobilisations to incidents are as efficient and effective as possible.

Underpinned by our values:

<b>Excellence</b>	<b>Respect</b>	<b>Professionalism in our role</b>	<b>Inclusive</b>	<b>Honesty</b>
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