



**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

# Protection Business Engagement Framework

2023-25

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*GMFRS Fire Safety Regulators and Operational Staff visiting Licensed Premises*

# Introduction

The Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) Protection Business Engagement Delivery Framework is a structured approach that sets out how we will interact with businesses across Greater Manchester to improve safety through measurable interactions that result in engagement and providing advice.

Greater Manchester is the fastest growing region outside London. The local economy is robust, diverse and expanding. With over 124,000 businesses, it is already a great place to live, study, work and visit. Mayoral ambitions for the region are made clear in *'Our People Our Place – The Greater Manchester Strategy'* and this will support further economic, residential, commercial and cultural growth.

Fires can be economically devastating for businesses, not only from the destruction of assets but also from the impact on business continuity. GMFRS has a significant role in supporting the region's growth by providing businesses with fire safety support and advice to help them reduce the likelihood of a fire occurring and making them more resilient to fires. To help local business owners be aware of emerging trends and new risks it is vital that we understand, relate to, and interact with businesses across our communities.

The core purpose underpinning our protection work is *"to ensure the safety of the public and firefighters by identifying, investigating and reducing risk. We will work with others to identify risks and develop solutions to improve safety through engagement, advice and enforcement"*.

Our commitment to engaging with businesses and other organisations we regulate is one way that we can reduce risks and improve safety to support the six priorities set out in the Fire Plan 2022-25:

- ✓ Provide a fast, safe, and effective response
- ✓ Help people reduce the risks of fire and other emergencies
- ✓ Help protect the built environment
- ✓ Use resources sustainably and deliver the most value

- ✓ Develop a culture of excellence, equality and inclusivity
- ✓ Integrate our services in every locality, with those of partner agencies

We know that by working with others we can better understand risks and share this knowledge to ensure that not only can we provide a safe and effective response to fires but more importantly we can influence building design and management to prevent fires occurring. We want to support those we regulate to reduce the risk of a fire occurring, protecting the built environment and reducing the impact of fires on the environment.

We are committed to supporting all businesses and recognise that some business owners may face barriers in accessing information, advice and support. We want to ensure our services are inclusive. We are committed to working with partners to share information about risks and compliance and want to develop joint business engagement activities to make the most effective use of resources and improve the support available.



# Framework Objectives

Our Protection Strategy outlines how we develop and deliver our diverse functions to improve building safety and reduce the risks to our communities and firefighters.

The main objective of this framework is to increase and continually improve the way we engage with those we regulate, and support the delivery of a number of commitments in the Protection Strategy. We are committed to:

- ✓ Improving our business engagement to offer information in a range of ways which are inclusive and easily accessible
- ✓ Providing thematic targeted advice and information aligned to our risk-based inspection programmes
- ✓ Developing and refining our Primary Authority offer to ensure we provide quality advice and support to our partners
- ✓ Providing clear advice and information before carrying out programmed inspections and when confirming the outcome after inspections
- ✓ Working with others to prepare for legislative change by providing guidance and support

The successful delivery of our Protection functions is crucial for supporting community safety, minimising fire-related risks and harm, and ensuring firefighter safety.

Through this Business Engagement Framework, we aim to enhance and expand the volume and reach of our business engagement activities to:

- ✓ Improve understanding of the legal requirements
- ✓ Reduce the risk of fires occurring within regulated premises
- ✓ Ensure the safety of the public
- ✓ Reduce the need for formal enforcement action
- ✓ Support and promote prevention activity and access to our targeted prevention activities

The Protection Strategy includes a commitment to improving our business engagement by providing information in inclusive and easily accessible ways. The Framework focuses on better education and engagement with local businesses

across Greater Manchester as the regulator for fire safety, petroleum and explosives legislations.

## Developing our Approach

The Covid pandemic affected many businesses and organisations including GMFRS. We had to change the way we worked due to limitations on our inspection activities. As part of these adaptations, we explored how we could better provide advice to businesses.

In national lockdowns almost all inspection activity was suspended. In Greater Manchester there were extended restrictions over a two-year period. From January 2021 Tier 4 restrictions meant many local businesses classed as 'non-essential' were forced to close, with essential businesses allowed to remain open with strict capacity protocols in place. As a result of the new challenges created by these protocols, GMFRS Protection teams reviewed and adapted their planned activities to provide more advice and support to local businesses.

We developed guidance notes covering Covid 19 restrictions and the impact they had on fire safety responsibilities. Initially, this guidance was provided to schools and care home providers across Greater Manchester.

As lockdown measures and the restrictions on hospitality premises were eased, GMFRS Protection teams sent information to licensed premises with advice on complying with the Fire Safety Order. We carried out days of action where we visited premises and provided doorstep advice. We also worked with our Licensing partners to provide specific guidance to premises applying for or operating with a pavement licence.

The emergence from lockdown allowed us to test the concept of an engagement framework that provided a range of, and an increase in engagement activities across Greater Manchester. In 2022-23 we tested a number of engagement initiatives, reviewed them and subsequently improved all of our correspondence related to the inspections we carry out of premises.

Our Protection teams proactively organised a series of impactful business engagement events. These initiatives focused on emerging risks and trends from

incidents as well as changes in legislation. Through this work, we engaged with over 8000 businesses with a reach of 40,000 premises. This included:

- ✓ Targeted advice for 68 care homes overdue an inspection - supported by online seminars in advance of inspections
- ✓ A series of online seminars and updates for housing providers and managing agents that reached 110 individuals responsible for over 16,000 blocks of flats
- ✓ A licensing campaign delivered with our Local Authority partners and the Greater Manchester Centre of Regulatory Excellence (GMCRE) following two serious fires involving decorations and the use of indoor fireworks. We also sent mailshots to 6000 licensed premises, held online seminars and visited licensed premises on days of action in each district
- ✓ Information to all schools across Greater Manchester during the heatwave with basic fire safety advice and Prevention messaging
- ✓ Improved guidance to businesses licensed to store fireworks

We continued to evolve our Primary Authority offer working closely with the GMCRE to increase our number of Primary Authority partners and ensure we are offering a quality service that adds value.



# Our Commitments

Through proactive, positive business engagement we will support those we regulate to understand and comply with their legal obligations to keep their premises, employees and customers safe.

GMFRS will support and align our activity to key national initiatives in the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) calendar to ensure national business fire safety messages and themes are supported and delivered locally.

Our business engagement commitments are:

- ✓ We will plan and deliver business engagement activities throughout the year offering information in a range of ways which are inclusive and easily accessible seeking to identify and remove barriers
- ✓ We will increase the number of joint business engagement events with other regulatory local authority partners
- ✓ We will develop a comprehensive digital media plan with the support of our Communications Team using a range of methods to deliver key messages and themes
- ✓ We will support NFCC-led fire safety campaigns to engage with businesses locally
- ✓ We will continue to further develop relationships and engagement methods with Primary Authority Scheme partners through a dedicated officer to benefit the business and the community
- ✓ We will collaborate with other fire and rescue services to develop and integrate learning and best practice into our engagement delivery methods
- ✓ We will proactively evaluate and assure the effectiveness of our engagement activities



# Delivering our Approach

The Business Engagement Framework has been developed to help provide a structure and process for all future engagement activities. There are a number of steps involved when creating and conducting an engagement campaign, each step is important to ensure that the campaign meets GMFRS standards and is accessible to the widest audience possible.

Our Protection department now operates with a functional delivery model – this means that our teams operate across the whole of Greater Manchester but focus on specific priorities which are outlined below.

- Risk Reduction Team**
- Inspect and audit the majority of premises on our Risk Based Inspection Programme
  - Lead on Business Engagement
  - Provide general fire safety support to members of the public and businesses
  - Support Operational Crews with reviewing and capturing building information to ensure we can provide a safe and effective response

- Investigations & Enforcement Team**
- Lead on complex enforcement cases including prohibition notices and investigations
  - Respond to complaints from the public and referrals from other enforcing authorities
  - Lead on our Petroleum and Explosives regulations
  - Provide support to Operational Crews who identify fire safety concerns when responding to incidents or carrying out other visits
  - Support multi-agency enforcement initiatives

- Fire Investigation Team**
- Carry out complex fire investigations working closely with Greater Manchester Police and HM Coroners

- Support Incident Commanders carrying out Tier 1 investigations including assurance activity
- Identify risks and trends to support fire prevention advice for the public and businesses

**Higher Risk Team**

- Lead on the regulation of higher-risk premises types including high rise residential buildings, hospitals, COMAH sites and the highest-risk care homes
- Support Operational Crews with reviewing and capturing building information for our highest risk buildings
- Lead on preparation for the new Building Safety Regime
- Oversee and respond to faults reported in high rise residential buildings

**Technical & Consultations Team**

- Lead on responding to consultations to influence the safety of the built environment
- Identify emerging risk arising from new methods of construction and technologies and provide technical advice to the organisation
- Lead on our Operational Intelligence policy, system, guidance and training
- Ensure adequate water supplies for firefighting by requesting new hydrants and inspecting and maintaining hydrants

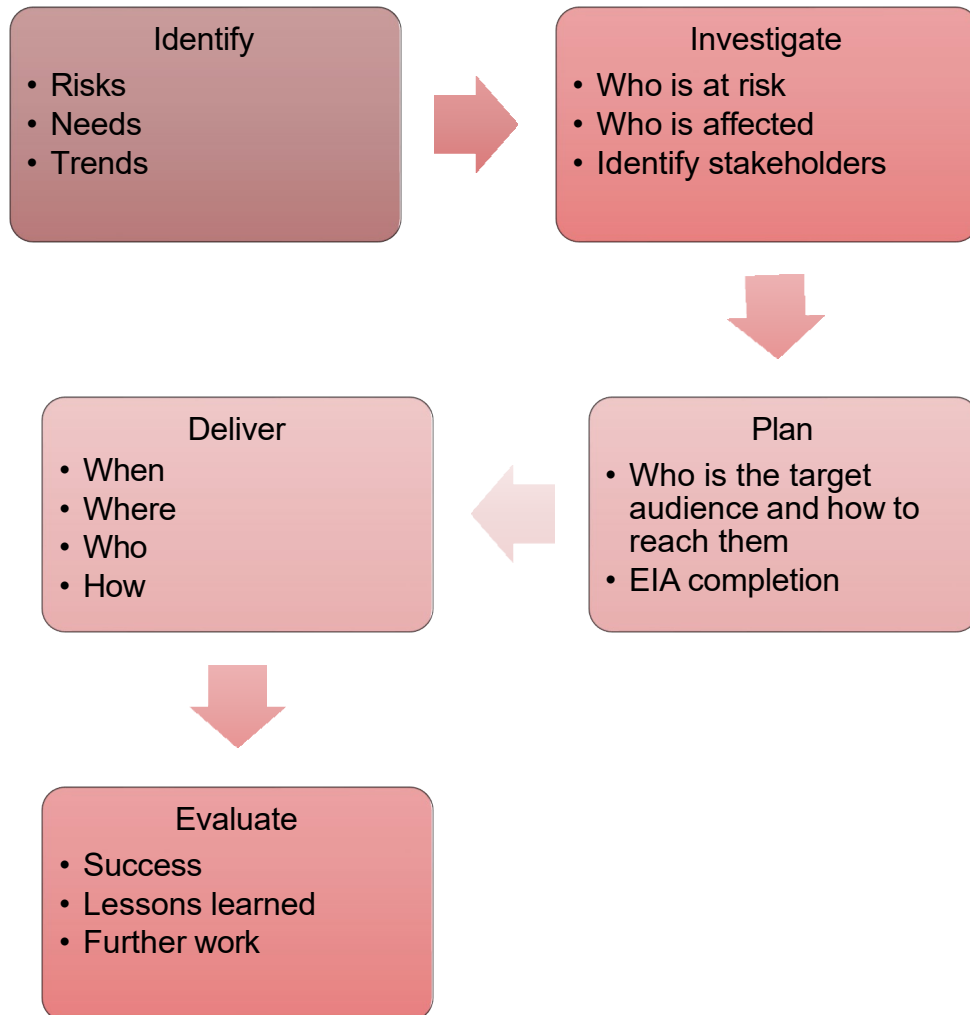
**Training & Development Team**

- Lead on developing and delivering training for Fire Safety Regulators and Incident Commanders
- Support the development and competency of Fire Safety Regulators
- Support the development of business engagement materials

All of our teams are responsible for contributing to business engagement with the majority of activities organised and delivered by the Risk Reduction team.

The delivery methods will vary depending on the campaign objectives, with seasonal campaigns and emerging risks or trends being identified across all teams.

There are five key stages we will consider when planning an engagement campaign as set out below:



## Identify

We will identify themes for our business engagement based on emerging risks or trends, or in response to requests from businesses or partners which highlight a need.

We will monitor the cause of fires through incident analysis and our Learning from Fatal and Serious Fires procedure to identify emerging risks. If we consider there is a likelihood of further events, or the risk warrants further action, an engagement campaign will be considered to educate local businesses and communities within Greater Manchester.

## **Investigate**

Once a decision has been made to instigate an engagement campaign further planning and analysis will identify who the target audience is, who is at risk, what is the actual risk, what is the severity of that risk and who may be affected. If any identified risk falls under other regulatory authorities, then we will look to work with our partners to deliver a multi-agency campaign.

## **Plan**

When we are planning our engagement initiatives, we will consider the best ways of reaching the target audience and how to make our engagement accessible. We will work with colleagues internally and our partners to develop a range of delivery mechanisms and ways of promoting our access to the initiative.

For our campaigns we will conduct Equality Impact Assessments to ensure our delivery methods are inclusive.

## **Delivery**

When delivering our business engagement activity, we will have clear objectives and timescales which will be shared with internal and external stakeholders.

## **Evaluation**

We will evaluate our Business Engagement campaigns with the GMFRS evaluation framework. We will determine the best method for evaluation when planning the initiative and share this with partners where appropriate.

# **Delivery Mechanisms**

We are committed to providing clear information and guidance to those we regulate on complying with their legal responsibilities. We will utilise a range of delivery methods for our business engagement initiatives.

## **Written Information**

When arranging inspections, we will provide written guidance and advice and will confirm the outcome of all inspections in writing. We have rolled out training for all

our Fire Safety Inspectors on Plain English and are committed to making our letters and written advice as simple and accessible as possible.

We will also use written information to target advice and guidance to businesses through mailshots and doorstep advice as part of our days of action.

## **Social Media and Web-based Information**

We will utilise social media messaging to provide general and targeted business safety advice and promote national campaigns through our social media channels.

We will continually review and improve the information on our website and make a range of resources available. Where appropriate we will signpost business to national guidance through the website.

## **Presentations and Training**

We will deliver presentations as part of targeted business engagement through in person and online engagement events. Where appropriate, we will work with our partners to deliver comprehensive advice on the legislative requirements of businesses and how to comply.

Wherever possible, we will make these recordings available on our website and explore utilising translation services to make them fully accessible.

## **Days of Action and Open Days**

We will provide in person advice as part of targeted days of action and wider campaigns. This will allow us to provide general advice as well as bespoke advice to individual businesses.

We will also pilot encouraging businesses that are due to be inspected to attend our Fire Safety Open Days. This will provide an opportunity to talk to our Fire Safety Inspectors and find out more about the service, the legislation, what is expected of them and what they can expect from us.

## **Primary Authority**

We will continue to work with the Greater Manchester Centre of Regulatory Excellence to support our Primary Authority Partners through advice, training and assurance visits.

# Embedding Inclusivity

GMFRS is committed to ensuring our services are inclusive and accessible. We have adopted the NFCC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy in order to improve against the Equality Framework for Local Government.

We are committed to the NFCC Core Code of Ethics which has inclusivity at its heart and will embed this into our Business Engagement by recognising and promoting the value of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) both within our fire and rescue service and the wider communities in which we serve.

We are also committed to ensuring our diverse business communities are consulted, engaged and represented in line with our own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25.



*GMFRS Fire Safety Regulators delivering fire safety advice before Manchester Pride 2023*

We will strive to ensure that inclusivity is embedded into our business engagement work at all levels. All GMFRS employees undertake a wide range of inclusive culture training including in-person training and e-learning modules. We will continue to promote further learning across Protection and ensure all Fire Safety Inspectors are equipped to utilise Language Line and other translation services when needed.

We will ensure that campaigns have Equality Impact Assessments to identify any negative impacts on underrepresented groups. As part of our commitment to develop new ways of recording our work through a digital transformation project, we will explore how we can safely, confidentially, and securely collect equality data about those we regulate.

We will also continue to learn from others and work with partners and third sector organisations to identify and utilise different or innovative methods for targeting engagement in particular communities.

## **Regional and National Working**

GMFRS actively participates in regional and national meetings with other fire and rescue services through the National Fire Chiefs Council. These meetings provide a platform for sharing valuable knowledge, expertise, and best practice between services. By exchanging ideas and experiences, GMFRS can learn from others' successes and challenges which will help to enhance our own capabilities and effectiveness. By working collaboratively, we have a platform for continuous learning and improvement ultimately benefiting the safety and well-being of communities at local, regional and national levels.

We will actively support the NFCC Business Safety Campaigns and amplify national messaging alongside any local initiatives. We will work with other fire and rescue services in the North West to identify opportunities to promote business engagement and advice regionally and adopt a consistent approach to changes in legislation where we can.

We will also share any learning and good practice from our own business engagement with the NFCC and other fire and rescue services.

# Evaluating our Engagement Activities

We are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of our work to identify improvements and will proactively seek feedback from involved parties and local businesses as part of our evaluation methods. Success will be measured across a range of metrics and will allow us to evidence the integration of best practices and learning from others.

GMFRS has developed an evaluation pathway to help provide structure to the evaluation process.

There are five key stages in conducting an evaluation summarised in the evaluation pathway model below:



*Figure 1 - GMFRS Evaluation Pathway*

The pathway illustrates that evaluation is a continuous process, all business engagement activities will be suitably evaluated to allow the creation and development of new innovative activities that reach across all businesses within the local economy.

When considering the evaluation pathway, we commit to utilising a range of evaluation methods. This may include digital surveys, written correspondence, telephone communications and analysis of incident, or inspection data following or preceding engagement campaigns.



The collected data will be used for:

- ✓ Measuring impact - assessing the positive outcomes for the business and the community
- ✓ Feedback collection - gathering feedback from business owners and stakeholders to continuously improve our methods
- ✓ Formulation of best practice – understanding what works well and what requires further development
- ✓ Aligning with strategic goals - striving to achieve strategic aims and commitments outlined within the GMFRS Fire Plan, Annual Delivery Plan and Protection Strategy
- ✓ Transparency - being transparent and open about the evaluation process and subsequent results
- ✓ Regular review and assurance - conducting regular evaluations to continuously assess the effectiveness of the engagement, with further assurance to ensure that engagement methods are accessible to all

The evaluations of our business engagement activities will be added to the GMFRS evaluation portal and shared with partners. They will inform planning for future initiatives and years.



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