



Core Strategy:

Response Strategy 2025-30

1 October 2025 to 31 March 2030

HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



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OUR CORE CODE OF ETHICS

We follow the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services \(FRS\)](#) in England which guides everything we do.

Putting our communities first

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

Integrity

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

Dignity and respect

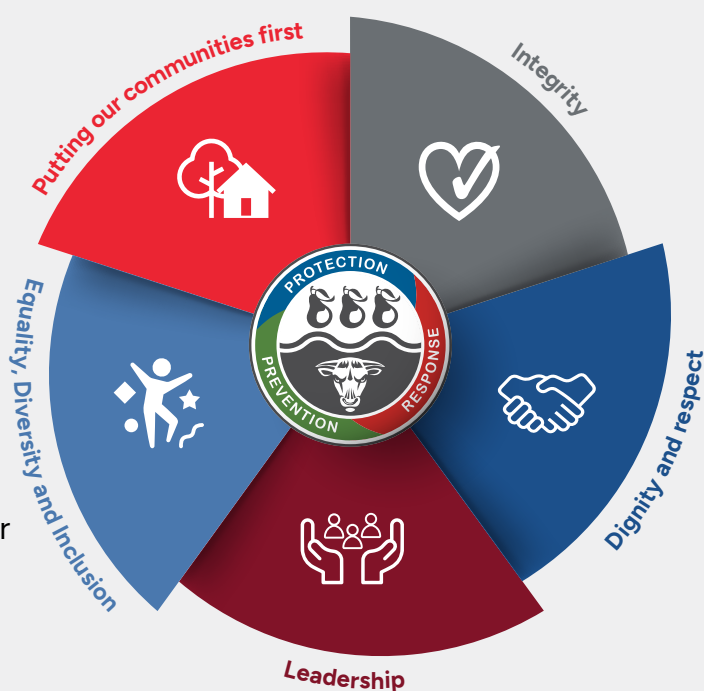
We make decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership

As positive role models, we are accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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



Summary:

Response Strategy 2025-30

The focus of our work over the next five years will be in three core areas:



Availability

Having the right people and assets ready at the right time, driving operational resilience through effective emergency response.



Competence

Building competence through rigorous training and professional development, ensuring personnel have the skills and confidence to respond safely and effectively.



Intelligence

Utilising accurate data, risk information, and situational awareness to make informed decisions that ensure safe, effective, and adaptable emergency response.



Foreword

This document outlines the key objectives of the Response Strategy, one of the three Core Strategies that support the delivery of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). Together with the Protection and Prevention Strategies, it sets out how we will achieve our strategic aims and deliver high-quality, sustainable services to our communities.

The Response Strategy provides clear direction on how we will deliver emergency response services across our counties. Response represents the largest area of our Service, involving the majority of our personnel, resources, and budget. It is also the most visible aspect of our work, with public expectations at an all-time high.

Given the nature of emergency response, it carries the highest risk of harm to both our communities and our staff. It is therefore essential that we clearly define how we will ensure our teams are fully prepared and equipped to respond effectively when needed.

To achieve this, the strategy sets out key objectives that will guide our daily activities and help us to achieve the Response aims identified within the CRMP. Our focus extends beyond the immediate response, we aim for excellence at every stage: before an incident, during mobilisation, and after the event, by learning and improving continuously.

WHO WE ARE

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service attended 8,213 incidents in 2024-25 ranging from property and countryside fires, road traffic collisions, collapsed structures, water rescues, hazardous materials to animal rescues. We employ over 696 full-time and part-time members of staff in 754 roles, delivering a wide range of prevention, protection and emergency response services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire (an area of 392,000 hectares with a population of over 804,000 people).

Above all, we are committed to deploying the right resources as quickly as possible, supported by highly skilled and competent staff. Our delivery model will remain resilient and flexible, capable of managing the full spectrum of incidents and risks we face from fires and road traffic collisions to hazardous materials and large-scale flooding.

While the Protection and Prevention Strategies aim to reduce the frequency of emergencies, our Response Strategy ensures we are always ready to act when those moments arise.

The Strategy also sets how we will support overarching core purpose, vision, mission and will be guided by the [NFCC Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#), as shown on the previous page.

As a living document, the Strategy must remain agile and flexible to be able to respond to the changing needs of our local communities, our workforce and emerging risks as necessary. We will maintain this through continual monitoring and review of all aspects of the Strategy.



PURPOSE

Why we are here

Keeping people safe from fire and other risks.
Responding efficiently and effectively to incidents and emergencies.

VISION

What we want to do

Building on our successes to continue to make a difference, improve lives and help secure resilient communities.

MISSION

What we do every day

As one professional team we will work hard every day to deliver high quality, sustainable services to our communities.

Introduction

The core principle of HWFRS's Response Strategy is to mobilise the most appropriate resources to each incident, based on the nature of the emergency and any known or anticipated risks. Our aim is to arrive promptly and safely, with the right capabilities to mitigate risk, stabilise the situation, and bring the incident to a safe and satisfactory resolution.

The successful delivery of this Response Strategy is built upon three core pillars: Availability, Competence, and Intelligence. Together, these ensure that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) have the right assets in place at the right time, supported by professionally trained and competent personnel, equipped with the necessary information to respond safely and effectively to any foreseeable risk.

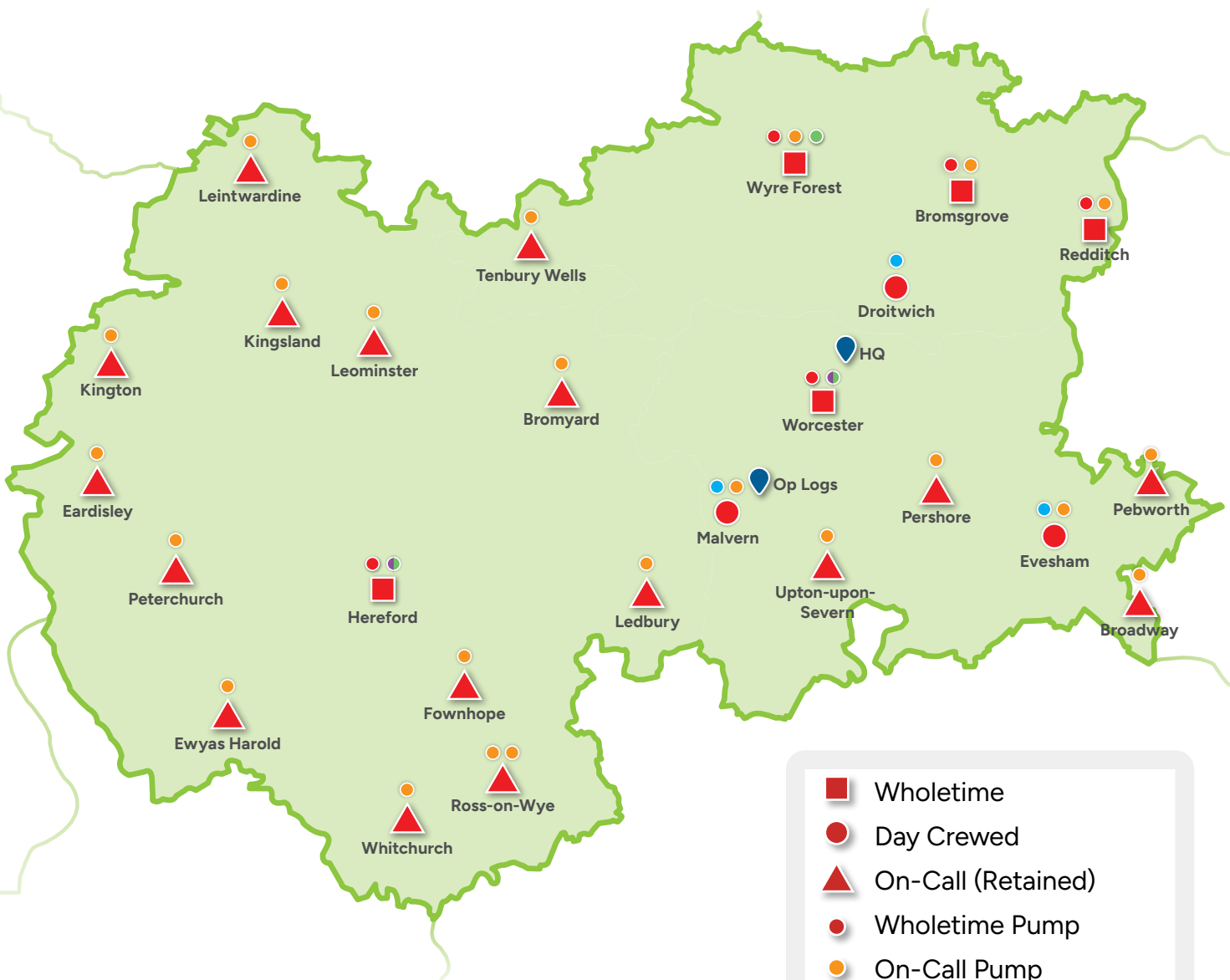
These foundations are operationalised through our three Service Districts and Fire Control, which play a critical role in implementing the strategy. Each District will collaborate and train across functions, departments, and aligned strategies to ensure a coordinated and efficient response capability. This includes maintaining strategic fire cover, optimising resource deployment, and ensuring local responsiveness to emerging risks and community needs.

This integrated approach ensures that HWFRS remains agile, informed, and resilient, delivering high-quality emergency response across the diverse communities it serves.

Our core aim is responding to and dealing with fires and other emergencies promptly, safely and effectively.

Understanding Response:

Our role and focus for the next five years



- Wholetime
- Day Crewed
- ▲ On-Call (Retained)
- Wholetime Pump
- On-Call Pump
- Day Crewed Pump
- On-Call Pump – nights
- Day Duty Pump
- HQ** Service Headquarters
- Ops Logs** Operational Logistics

25

Fire Stations

34

Fire Engines

Central to our Response capability is a highly trained and skilled firefighter workforce. Working alongside them is our Firefighter Control team, who manage emergency calls and mobilise resources. Together, Fire Control, Wholetime and On-Call firefighters make up approximately 81% of our total Service workforce.

We operate from 25 fire stations, staffed by a mix of Wholetime firefighters, providing immediate, full-time cover, and On-Call firefighters who live and work within their local communities. On-Call crews typically mobilise within six minutes of receiving an alert. All stations provide emergency response 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with some stations staffed by both Wholetime and On-Call teams.

Understanding Response:

Our role and focus for the next five years continued



234
Wholetime
Firefighters
and Officers



349
On-Call
Firefighters




28
Fire Control
Firefighters




143
Support Staff
and Managers


As we look ahead to 2030, our Response activities will focus on:



Availability



Competence



Intelligence

Supporting this frontline capability are our corporate teams in ICT, HR & Development, Payroll, Training, Operational Logistics, and Finance. Their work is essential to ensuring the effectiveness and resilience of our Response function.

This Response Strategy sets out our plans for the next five years towards achieving our overarching Core Purpose, Vision and Mission and our work will be guided by the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services.

Availability



Ensuring the availability of skilled personnel and assets is central to delivering HWFRS's Response Strategy. Effective emergency response depends on having the right people with the right capabilities and leadership, and a readiness to act decisively, accepting that greater potential benefits of intervention often involve higher levels of risk.

To support this, HWFRS will continue to maintain and enhance internal systems that monitor the availability of both personnel and physical assets. On-Call staff currently provide coverage for many of our fire engines and specialist response units, with deployment and availability often varying by time of day. On-Call and Wholetime staffing including those operational staff not on fire stations should be viewed as a 'pool' of operational staff to deliver our operational capabilities across the Service as a single team and not in 'silos'.



To further strengthen operational availability, HWFRS actively monitors neighbouring service assets for mutual aid under Section 13/16 agreements. We also collaborate with voluntary sector partners including Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), West Mercia Search and Rescue (WMSAR), and other organisations to extend our response capacity.

At the national level, HWFRS contributes to wider resilience through active engagement in the National Coordination Advisory Framework (NCAF), ensuring alignment with national capabilities and strategic interoperability.

Availability continued

The availability of Command resources is equally critical to firefighter safety and operational success. HWFRS will maintain a cadre of professionally trained and highly skilled Operational Commanders, capable of leading and resolving incidents across all command levels:

Level 1 – Initial (Bronze):	Crew and Watch Commanders
Level 2 – Intermediate (Silver):	Station Commanders
Level 3 – Advanced (Silver):	Group Commanders
Level 4 – Strategic (Gold):	Area Commanders and Principal Officers

Where specialist command and functional expertise is required, HWFRS will ensure access to these capabilities either through internal provision or, where appropriate, via agreements with partner organisations.

This structured and collaborative approach ensures HWFRS remains operationally resilient, strategically agile, and fully equipped to deliver safe and effective incident resolution across a wide range of scenarios.

The overarching objectives are as follows:

Enhance Workforce Availability Monitoring

- Maintain and improve internal systems to track real-time availability of personnel across all duty systems.
- Ensure accurate forecasting and deployment to meet operational demand.

Optimise Asset Readiness and Coverage

- Monitor and manage the availability of fire engines and specialist response units, with particular focus on On-Call duty system, succession planning and recruitment.
- Ensure physical assets are strategically positioned and maintained for effective deployment.

Utilise opportunities for effective Command and Control

- Enhance operational efficiency by optimising the deployment of resources in alignment with real-time demand, based on calls received and processed through the Fire Control team.

Competence

Competence is the demonstrated capacity to fulfil a role effectively, achieved through the integration of knowledge, experience, and skill. At HWFRS, we are strategically committed to building and sustaining operational excellence by ensuring every team member undergoes a structured journey of skill acquisition, reinforcement, and continuous development.

HWFRS is committed to striving towards excellence in operational competence and despite the constraints on resources and available capacity we will endeavour to ensure that every member of staff has the opportunity to work and develop their skills beyond a basic level of competence.

This is delivered through a blended learning approach that leverages digital platforms, classroom instruction, support from leaders and peers, and encourages hands-on practical training to meet evolving service demands and individual growth.



The overarching objectives are as follows:

Define and Embed Competence Standards

- Equip new entrants with essential operational skills and provide ongoing development to maintain and enhance their competence throughout their careers.
- Establish clear role-based competence frameworks that integrate knowledge, experience, and skills.
- Ensure regular maintenance of skills as well as the introduction of new ways of working that harness technological innovation and learning from local and national events.
- Test and assure this learning through exercising at a local, district and Service level.

Deliver Structured Learning Pathways

- Ensure learning pathways align with individual roles and organisational priorities.

Implement a Blended Learning Model

- Combine digital learning, classroom-based instruction, and practical training to maximise engagement and effectiveness.
- Tailor delivery methods to suit different learning styles and operational.

Partner relationship

- Strengthen collaborative partnerships to ensure coordinated planning, response, and recovery for operational incidents and emergencies, while building joint competence and capability.



Intelligence

Operational Risk Information, referred to as "Intel" is a cornerstone of HWFRS's approach to safe and effective incident response. However, Intel extends beyond formal systems; it encompasses a broad spectrum of strategic and tactical knowledge, including risk data, national guidance, and the professional judgement of our operational crews and commanders.

Intel should not just encompass the traditional knowledge of the built environment, but more widely consider the risks across our communities, such as roads, waterways and rural areas and local infrastructure.

Intel is not just about what we know, it's about how we apply it. It combines formal technical knowledge (such as building construction and fire safety), structured risk inspection programmes, and informal local intelligence gained through familiarity with our communities. This holistic approach empowers our personnel to make informed, confident decisions that lead to the safe and successful resolution of incidents.

The overarching objectives are as follows:

Enhance the Collection and Integration of Risk Information

- Maintain and expand structured risk inspection programmes to capture up-to-date technical and environmental data.

Leverage Professional Judgement and Local Knowledge

- Empower crews and commanders to contribute informal intelligence based on community familiarity and operational experience.
- Create mechanisms to validate and share this intelligence across teams, partners and duty systems.
- Apply insights from Prevention and Protection activities to enhance our understanding of community risks and their potential impact on people, infrastructure, and the local economy.

Invest in Systems and Tools for Intel Management

- Develop or enhance digital platforms that support the capture, analysis, and dissemination of risk information.
- Ensure interoperability with national and regional systems for seamless information sharing.

CRMP 2025-30:

Core aims for Response

To develop our response activities, we have five core aims:

OUR AIMS:

1 Provide a prompt, safe and effective response to fires and other emergencies.

WHAT WE WILL DO TO ACHIEVE OUR AIMS:

- a. Continually review fire and emergency cover to ensure appropriate provision of resources and crewing arrangements.
- b. Continually monitor Firefighter availability to ensure capacity and resilience across the Service area.
- c. Embed the new Command and Control system to ensure best-practice call handling and resource deployment.

2 Ensure fire and emergency cover arrangements are appropriate to meet current and emerging risk levels.

- a. Review, update and share risk information at a local, regional and national level and ensure it is widely available.
- b. Review and update the disposition of our assets as necessary to support our response arrangements in conjunction with our working provisions / duty systems.

3 Ensure Firefighters are well trained, well equipped and well led, including the outcomes of the national incidents and inquiries; for example, Manchester Arena and Grenfell Tower.

- a. Maintain a full complement of training and exercising including cross-border working and fitness assurance to ensure ongoing competence, leadership and specialisms are maintained to high standards.
- b. Ensure Firefighters have access to the most up-to-date personal protective equipment and state-of-the-art firefighting equipment and fire engines.
- c. Collaborate with local resilience forum (LRF) partners to prepare for events or situations that may have serious consequences, which require specific arrangements from one or more emergency response agencies. Major incidents go beyond routine operations and involve large-scale efforts.

CRMP 2025-30:

Core aims for Response continued

OUR AIMS:

4 Prepare and plan for emergencies to be able to respond effectively and safely for the public, Firefighters and the environment.

WHAT WE WILL DO TO ACHIEVE OUR AIMS:

- a. Review and refresh operational procedures to align with NOG, sharing learning locally and across the sector to ensure response procedures are safe and effective.
- b. Ensure the Service is able to proactively intervene when extreme weather is expected in order to reduce the impact.
- c. Develop further capabilities to respond effectively to the growing environmental impact of changing climate e.g. flooding, wildfire.

5 Work with partners to deliver shared response opportunities and assistance

- a. Work collaboratively with partners to support incidents other than fire and contribute towards ensuring a positive impact on our local communities.
- b. Develop capabilities to further enhance our coordinated response to large-scale and multi-agency incidents.
- c. Work with partners to assist individuals and communities to recover from the impacts of fires and other emergencies.



Legislative Requirements

HWFRS operates within a robust legislative framework that defines its statutory responsibilities and underpins its strategic approach to emergency response. The following core legislation guides our operational planning and delivery:

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

This foundational legislation outlines the legal powers and duties of Fire Authorities. A key provision is the requirement for Fire Authorities to have regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, produced by the Secretary of State, which sets out national priorities and expectations.

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Framework articulates the Government's strategic objectives for fire and rescue services. It defines:

- The Government's expectations of the sector
- The responsibilities of Fire Authorities
- The support available to help meet these objectives

The Framework provides a strategic foundation while allowing flexibility for Fire Authorities to develop local solutions tailored to community needs.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

This legislation emerged in response to evolving threats, including terrorism and major civil emergencies. It designates fire and rescue services as Category 1 Responders, requiring them to:

- Assess risks of emergencies
- Maintain plans for effective response
- Collaborate through multi-agency arrangements

HWFRS fulfils these duties through active participation in the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum, ensuring coordinated planning and response to major incidents, and minimising impact on people, property, and the environment.

National Resilience Capabilities Programme

HWFRS contributes to national resilience through specialist assets, including High Volume Pumping Units and an Urban Search and Rescue Team. These capabilities support both day-to-day operations and national emergencies under the National Mutual Aid Protocol, beyond standard Section 13/16 agreements. To ensure future readiness, HWFRS will continue to align its resources and personnel with the evolving requirements of the National Resilience Frameworks, ensuring the right capabilities are available to meet emerging risks locally and nationally.

Further detail is available in the National Coordination and Advisory Framework.

Monitoring and Review

The headline objectives outlined in this Response Strategy are measurable and will be subject to continuous monitoring. This enables HWFRS to track progress, ensure delivery against strategic aims, and assess how effectively the strategy is being implemented across the organisation.

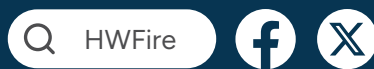
Monitoring will focus on relevant performance indicators, operational data, and feedback mechanisms to provide a clear picture of progress. This insight will inform decision-making and support adaptive planning where necessary.

Progress and outcomes from both monitoring and review processes will be reported through the Annual Service Review, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.





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FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



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