

Response Strategy

2021-25

1 July 2021 to 31 March 2025



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Our Purpose, Vision and Mission.....	3
Who we are	3
Our Values	4
Introduction	5
Principle	5
Availability	7
Competence.....	9
Intelligence.....	10
CRMP	12
Legislative Requirements.....	13

Foreword

As part of our three core strategies that drive everything we do, and underpin our mission of delivering high quality and sustainable services to our communities, this strategy gives clarity and direction on how we will deliver our Response function. Response forms the largest part of our Service, with the most people, assets and finance being directed in this area. It would also be realistic to say that this is the most visible part of the Service to our communities, and an area where public expectation is at an all-time high.

Response is also the area of highest exposure, in terms of risk to our communities and staff, of coming to harm. It is therefore wholly appropriate that we set out clearly in this strategy how we will ensure our staff are fully prepared and ready to respond to help our communities in their time of need, aligned to our Community Risk Management Plan ([CRMP](#)). The other two strategies (Protection and Prevention) aim to make those times of need as infrequent as possible; however, we must always be ready to respond and deploy whenever we are needed.

To achieve this you will see some key themes in this strategy which will help us drive our daily activities to all achieve this. We will also strive not only to focus on the actual response but ensure we aim for excellence before the incident, when we mobilise, and when we return from incidents seeking to improve and learn at every stage.

Above all else we will endeavour to readily deploy the right asset, as quickly as possible, with the most competent and highly skilled staff we can, and have a resilient and flexible model of delivery that can meet the wide ranging breadth of incidents and risks we are required to face, from Fires & Road Traffic Collisions, to Hazardous Materials & wide scale Flooding, but to name a few.

Jon Pryce
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive

Our Purpose, Vision and Mission

Who we are

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service receives nearly 10,000 emergency calls each year requesting assistance at a wide variety of incidents, including property and countryside fires, road traffic collisions, collapsed structures, water rescues, hazardous materials and animal rescues. We attend just over 6,500 incidents each year – more than 125 incidents every week across the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Our stations are staffed by a mix of Wholetime firefighters - operating on a full-time basis and providing an immediate response - and On-Call firefighters who work and live in their local communities and respond to emergency calls whenever they are needed, usually mobilising within six minutes of receiving a call. All our fire stations can respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Some stations are crewed by Wholetime firefighters as well as On-Call colleagues.

Our Service is supported by our Fire Control (mobilising) team who answer emergency calls and deal with mobilising, communications and other activities. We also have Support teams in our corporate areas such as ICT, HR & Development and Payroll, Training, Operational Logistics and Finance, without whom we could not provide a Response function.

Our core purpose, vision and mission are what drives and motivates our staff to make the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire safer. To do this effectively we need to ensure we understand and appreciate the diversity of the communities we serve and that we have a workforce that is inclusive where our people fully represent and understand those communities.

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

Saving More Lives: 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.

Our Values

How we carry out our core purpose is set out in **Our Values**. These are the guiding principles that are most important to us about the way we work. They help us to identify the right ways of working, acting and leading within our organisation and with the public and our partners, and they help us to make important decisions.

Values

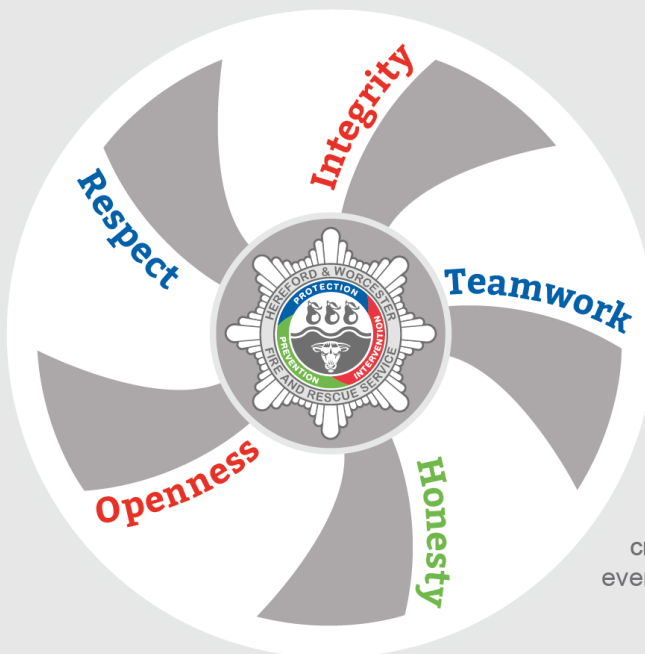
What we believe in

Integrity

We will do the right thing and show fairness and consistency in our approach, taking responsibility for the decisions we make and the actions we take.

Teamwork

By working collaboratively, we can exceed expectations and go beyond the achievements of individuals.



Honesty

We will be truthful in our actions and duties to build trust amongst our colleagues and within the communities we serve.

Openness

We will act in a way that is transparent and open to review and will welcome new or innovative ways of thinking.

Respect

We value the differences between individuals and create an inclusive environment which recognises everyone's experiences and opinions.

This strategy sets out our plan for the next four years and supports our overarching core purpose, vision, mission and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), [Code of Ethics](#).

Introduction

In line with statutory responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) Order 2007 and the Fire and Rescue National Framework, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is committed to providing a range of response capabilities to ensure it is capable of dealing with the full range of emergencies and incidents that it could reasonably be expected to attend.

In order to achieve this response capability, HWFRS will maintain a fleet of vehicles, systems and equipment to meet these expectations and also ensure that staff are trained to use them, and prepare effectively to resolve all incidents in the circumstances that they would reasonably be expected to operate in.

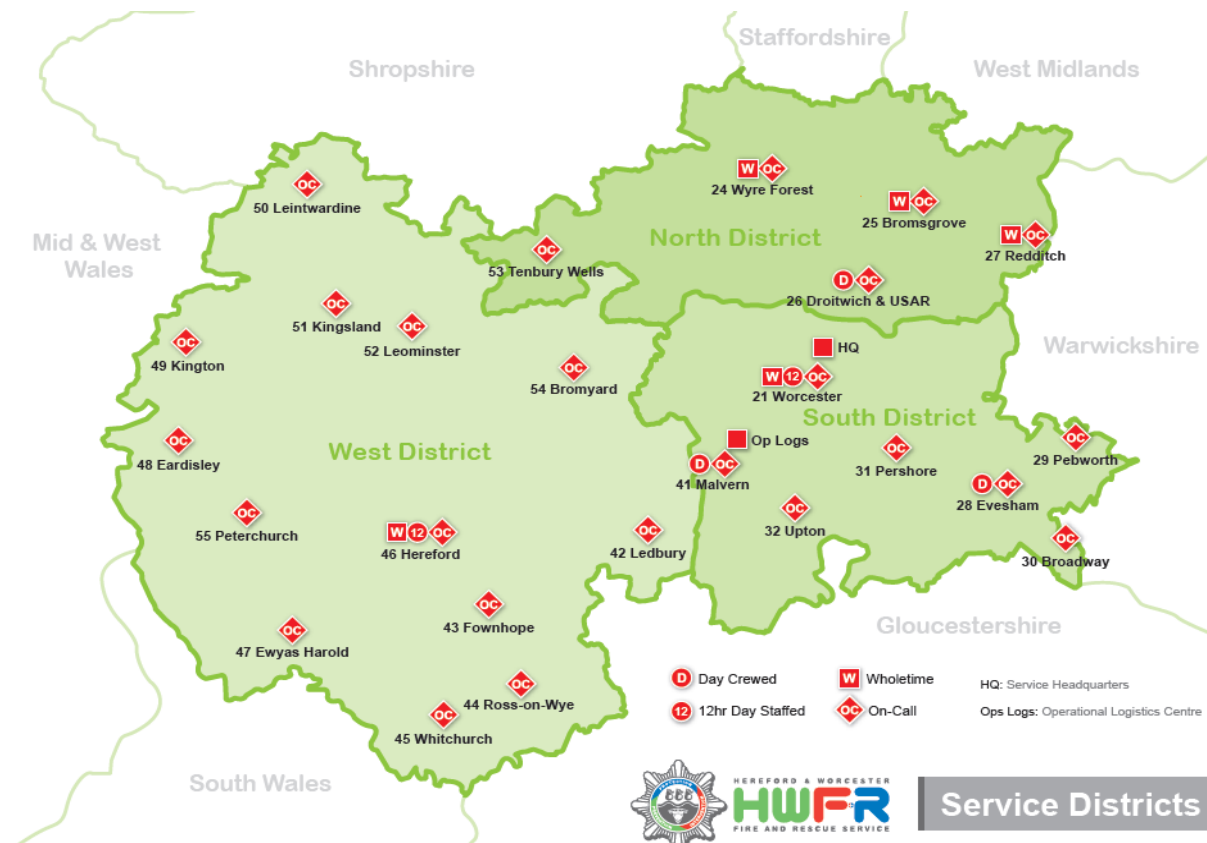
Principle

The main principle behind HWFRS's **Response Strategy** will be to mobilise the most appropriate resources to an incident taking into account the incident type and the potential risks that may be known or suspected, and we will endeavour to arrive as promptly and safely as possible. The determination of the resources mobilised will be based on having the appropriate capability to be able to deal with the immediate risk, stabilise the incident and bring it to a satisfactory and safe conclusion, which may require additional resources or strategically located specialist resources.

The most appropriate initial resource, often known as the Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA), will normally be mobilised by Fire Control Operators based on the information available to them at the time of the emergency call; however our Control Operators will use their skills, experience and professional judgement to ensure the right assets are deployed at the right time. All resources will usually be mobilised at the discretion of the Incident Commander (IC) in line with their risk assessment and operational plan.

In order to achieve correct mobilisation, HWFRS will continue to develop a response model that allows the mobilisation of a range of vehicles, equipment and personnel in the most flexible way. This more flexible response model will not be based solely on the mobilisation of fire appliances in the traditional way, but on the capabilities and personnel required to, firstly, make a lifesaving intervention and, secondly, to bring the incident to a satisfactory conclusion.

Response



The core foundations in delivering this strategy are **Availability, Competence** and **Intel**. In other words, we will have the right assets available at the right time, with suitably trained and competent staff to respond safely, with the right level of information available for them to deal with any foreseeable risks. The three Service Districts will deliver this strategy by supporting and engaging with other functions, departments and strategies to enable HWFRS to respond efficiently and effectively to incidents and other emergencies based on availability and strategic fire cover.

Availability

Throughout the CRMP, we talk about our three core services: Prevention, Protection and Response. Employees' availability to respond is a core aspect in delivering this Response Strategy. Having the right people, with the right skills, at the right time enables the delivery of high quality services and ensures we can respond efficiently and effectively to incidents and emergencies.

Internal systems will be maintained to monitor and ensure the availability of physical assets and staff to support the deployment of all operational resources. Information, Communication, Technology (ICT) systems will in the future link everything together to provide a real-time view of our assets, people and responding vehicles linked to our Fire Control systems to enable the correct response on each and every occasion.

Whilst the most immediate response is usually available, unless deployed elsewhere, and staffing can generally be predicted using real-time systems, it still requires a degree of management to maintain it to a high level and we recognise the ongoing challenges of managing On-Call availability.

On-Call staff account for 82% of our fire engine and specialist response assets (dependant on time of day or night). It is therefore important that the Service not only manages this to optimise levels of availability of our On-Call assets, but that we invest and innovate across all operational areas to ensure we have the right systems and crewing models in place for the future. To support our own assets, we monitor neighbouring assets for mutual operational assistance via Section 13/16 agreements along with support from the voluntary sector, for example Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), West Mercia Search And Rescue (WMSAR) and the Red Cross.

HWFRS also plays a wider role in supporting National Resilience capabilities through the National Coordination Advisory Framework ([NCAF](#)) Electronic Support System (ESS).

Incident Command and Control underpins [firefighter safety](#) therefore we will ensure professional and highly skilled Operational Commanders are available to lead and resolve all incident types ranging from **Level 1** to **Level 4**:

- 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 skills are needed HWFRS will provide these skills internally or where appropriate may enter into Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to ensure these are supported with relevant specialist advice.

The availability of specialist skills will be monitored and maintained, in particular those delivered by Level 2 and 3 Incident Commanders:

- National Interagency Liaison Officers
- Specialist Accident Investigation Officers
- Hazardous Materials Officers
- Fire Investigation Officers
- Fire Safety / Protection Officers
- National Resilience Tactical Advisors (Urban Search And Rescue, High Volume Pump, Wildfires, Flood, etc.)

A number of headline objectives will be delivered to support this Response Strategy:

- *We will deliver an On-Call Recruitment and Marketing campaign – to drive availability of staff across the two counties*
- *We will embed a succession plan for the vast range of specialist skills required to deliver our diverse functions*
- *We will review systems that monitor and maintain availability of staff and resources*
- *We will ensure our fire and emergency cover arrangements are appropriate to meet current and emerging risks*

Competence

Competence refers to the proficiency of an employee to efficiently carry out their role/job. It encompasses a combination of knowledge, experience, skills and attitude to continually improve performance. We will ensure all aspects of Response activity are underpinned by staff training as well as ensuring staff receive high quality training at state of the art training facilities. This ensures they are not only merely competent, but have ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Ultimately, with this investment, they will become experts in their field supporting the Service's aim of achieving Organisational Excellence. To achieve this we will become a better 'Learning Organisation' and build a model based on operational excellence in all areas of Response. We will debrief operational incidents following exercising, training, incidents, near misses, etc. Information gained through working with our staff, communities and partners will influence new equipment, policy, response procedures and future training, enabling HWFRS to continuously improve.

The key to capturing interoperability and national capabilities lessons is through single Service and multi-agency debriefs. This process is captured through Joint Operational Learning (JOL), and accessed via [Resilience Direct](#) (Note: you will need to be a registered user to gain access). Operational training for all incident types can be broadly grouped as follows:

- **Tasks** needed to resolve operational incidents using the equipment provided within the parameters of HWFRS guidance and procedures
- **Supervision** of responding employees – Incident Command, Levels 1 to 4
- **Supervision** and interaction with other responding agencies (Cat1&2 responders) – [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles](#)
- **Knowledge** – technical input delivered through ICT training systems
- **Learning** – debriefs from operational incidents, National Operational Learning (NOL) and Joint Operational Learning (JOL)

A number of headline objectives will be delivered to support this Response Strategy:

- *We will deliver a centre of excellence for Incident Command based at Worcester Fire Station to enhance Command Competence, ensuring our firefighters are well trained, equipped and led, using technology and investment to drive improvements in how we train.*
- *We will deliver a new North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility (STF) to drive opportunities to train and improve overall response and competence, working with partners to deliver shared response opportunities.*
- *We will ensure STFs at Wyre Forest, Peterchurch, Evesham and Defford are maintained, supported and utilisation is maximised to drive operational competence*

Intelligence

Operational Risk Information (or Intel as it is known), is at the heart of our Intel programme; however Intel is more than just this system. When we refer to Intel we are referring not only to the information we hold on risks, but also to all the information and guidance held elsewhere (such as National Operational Guidance), and most importantly the skills and experience of operational crews and Commanders in how they apply this information. Intel centres around our staff using all the available information at their disposal and applying their local knowledge, training and experience to make command decisions that lead to the successful and safe resolution of an incident.

Intel is the combination of technical knowledge (such as competence in building construction or Fire Safety training) combined with the Intel Inspection programme of known risks, alongside informal local knowledge of risks and familiarity with the communities we work within. To be successful at Intel in the broader sense requires operational staff to have an 'enquiring mind' and have the desire to grow and develop their professional understanding of the risks within the fabric of the built environment within our communities, not just limited to potential fires, but also water and road risk, for example.

Our Intel system provides robust yet flexible guidance on developing and maintaining a consistent approach to managing, processing and using strategic and tactical operational risk information that can be adapted to the nature, scale and requirements of all operational incidents.

Section 7(2)d of the Fire Services Act places a responsibility on the Authority to make arrangements for obtaining information needed for that purpose. Sections 8(2)d, and 9(3)d place a similar responsibility on the Authority in respect of road accidents and other emergencies. In support of these legislative responsibilities, the Fire and Rescue National Framework places a requirement on all Authorities to have in place effective arrangements for gathering risk information and making it readily available to operational crews.

To ensure this responsibility is achieved, HWFRS will ensure staff have the right skills to be able to evaluate risks and will provide a mechanism, and criteria, to gather and process risk information; it will:

- Identify local sites and their risks
- Gain local specialist advice from partner agencies and other organisations
- Consider including salvage and / or disaster plans
- Ensure that familiarisation visits and exercises involving such premises or sites are carried out
- Produce suitable templates to record and capture the relevant information
- Establish a delivery method to present the information in a clear and timely manner
- Schedule reviews and audits for the validity and accuracy of such information

- Embed a quality assurance programme
- Ensure information is made available to operational personnel to help successfully plan for, and resolve, operational incidents
- Identify specific operational knowledge, skills and understanding, which may need to be incorporated into local training plans

A number of headline objectives will be delivered to support this Response Strategy:

- *We will carry out and deliver a comprehensive end to end review of the Intel process, along with the Information Technology software systems needed to ensure Intel remains up to date, in line with National Operational Guidance, providing high quality tactical plans at operational incidents for risk identified within the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire*

CRMP

Responding to and dealing with fires and other emergencies promptly, safely and effectively

<i>Our aims</i>	<i>What we will do to achieve our aims</i>
<p><i>Provide a prompt, safe and effective response to fires and other emergencies</i></p> <p><i>Ensure fire and emergency cover arrangements are appropriate to meet current and emerging risk levels</i></p> <p><i>Ensure firefighters are well trained, well equipped and well led</i></p> <p><i>Prepare and plan for emergencies to be able to respond effectively and safely for the public, firefighters and the environment</i></p> <p><i>Work with partners to deliver shared response opportunities and assistance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continually review fire and emergency cover to ensure appropriate provision of resources and crewing arrangements</i> • <i>Continually monitor firefighter availability to ensure capacity and resilience across the Service area</i> • <i>Review, update and share risk information at a local, regional and national level and ensure it is widely available</i> • <i>Consider a joint attendance standard with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service based on incident type and location</i> • <i>Maintain a full complement of training, exercising and fitness to ensure ongoing competence, leadership and specialisms</i> • <i>Ensure firefighters have access to the most up-to-date personal protective equipment and state-of-the-art firefighting equipment and fire engines</i> • <i>Review and refresh operational procedures to align with National Operational Guidance, sharing learning locally and across the sector to ensure response procedures are safe and effective</i> • <i>Ensure the Service is able to proactively intervene when extreme weather is expected in order to reduce the impact</i> • <i>Develop further capabilities to respond effectively to the growing environmental impact of climate change – e.g. flooding, wildfire</i> • <i>Work collaboratively with partners to support incidents other than fire and contribute towards ensuring a positive impact on our local communities</i> • <i>Develop capabilities to further enhance our coordinated response to large-scale or multi-agency incidents</i> • <i>Work with partners to assist individuals and communities to recover from the impacts of fires and other emergencies</i>

Legislative Requirements

There are a number of statutory functions and duties that we must carry out according to law as summarised below:

[The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

This is the core legislation for all fire and rescue services and it details legal powers and responsibilities of Fire Authorities. A key element of the Act is that it makes the production of a National Framework document by the Secretary of State mandatory. Fire Authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

[National Framework Document](#)

The Framework document sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the fire and rescue service. It states:

- The Government's expectations for the fire and rescue service
- What Fire Authorities are expected to do
- The support the Government will provide in helping them meet these objectives

The Framework is intended to be strategic and provides the foundation on which to build local solutions, giving Fire Authorities flexibility to meet the needs of their communities.

[Civil Contingencies Act](#)

This Act is a key piece of legislation and arose in response to the terrorist threat, as well as a number of other civil emergencies. It imposes a series of duties on local bodies (known as Category 1 Responders) including a requirement to assess the risk of an emergency occurring and to maintain plans for responding to an emergency.

The fire and rescue service is a Category 1 Responder.

The Act also creates a broader concept of an emergency.

To satisfy this legislation, the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum has been established. As a member of this Forum, HWFRS must maintain effective multi-agency arrangements for major emergencies and minimise the impact of those emergencies on the public, property and environment.

HWFRS is also part of the national [Resilience Capabilities Programme](#), which means we provide specialist support around the country in the event of a national emergency. Within HWFRS this consists of High Volume Pumping Units and an Urban Search and Rescue Team. The assets form part of the Service's day to day response function and also support the National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents outside the provision of normal Section 13/16 agreements. In support of this, staff will contribute to the future needs of HWFRS through the National Resilience frameworks to ensure the right assets are always available to meet the developing risk both internally and externally.

Further Information can be found in the [National Coordination and Advisory Framework](#)

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