



Response Strategy 2025/2026



Welcome to the Response Strategy & Department Objectives 2025/26

The purpose of the Response Strategy & Department Objectives is to ensure that between April 2025 and March 2026, all departments recognise their strategic drivers and agree the key indicators of successful delivery for the 12-month period ahead. The Staffordshire Commissioner's Fire & Rescue Plan runs for four years and identifies the direction that they wish the fire and rescue service to pursue. This direction is then transposed into strategic actions which can be found in the Community Risk Management Plan, and subsequently into deliverable actions in the Annual Department Delivery Plan. This plan sets out our agreed annual objectives for each of the areas of responsibility held in the Response directorate that our people will deliver against. This will aid in supporting the delivery of the Community Risk Management Plan and therefore allow our progress to be monitored, and to provide overall accountability by the public, strategic service management and the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner.



For Response, 2025/26 are important years as this is an integral time in the development of the Service's future, with the creation of the 2025-2028 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This will underpin the strategic direction of the organisation for the next four years and will require extensive analysis and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in order to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue continues to provide an exceptional service to its communities. Our aim is to improve all aspects of Response, to ensure we are available to respond to incidents in a timely manner, with improved appliances, equipment and training.

We will also encourage innovation and have a problem-solving approach to any issues encountered.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service has three strategic priorities derived from its Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2028. These are the areas that the organisation looks to carry out its service delivery activities.

Our People

Our Communities

Our Environment

OUR KEY DRIVERS & CORE CODE OF ETHICS

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) evaluates the performance of Fire & Rescue Services regularly and produces an annual report known as 'The State of Fire'. The Service's own inspection outcomes and those identified on a national scale will be evaluated along with any actions to improve the Service being reviewed and prioritised as appropriate.

Incidents that have a national significance will have an impact on the activities for all Fire & Rescue Services. During 2025-26 our Annual Service Plan will be cognisant of ongoing outcomes from such incidents, including the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena inquiries, and we will seek to align ourselves to continually improving through learning from these tragedies.

The Core Code of Ethics for the Fire & Rescue sector has been developed by the Fire Standards Board and has been wholly accepted into Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service as its guiding behavioural values framework. This has an impact in all activities carried out by Response staff and we will ensure that our actions are in line with the Code at all times and in all aspects of our work.

Our people are what allows us to deliver a quality service to those who live and work in Staffordshire. Our goals for 2025/6 are to maximise the potential for all of our people and to create an inclusive culture that mirrors and celebrates their achievements.

Throughout 2025/6 we will be investing in the professional development of our team members in order to enhance their skills and experiences for the future. We will maximise opportunities for training, mentoring, and development to help individuals grow and advance in their careers, across the wider fire and rescue service.

We will look to consult with our people to increase employee engagement and motivation, as well as improving overall team performance. We will develop our aspiring leaders through progressive responsibility and positive exposure to new and challenging areas of the organisation. Allowing them the opportunity to develop personally and professionally towards their long-term goals.

We will ensure that we have resilience across the organisation by developing our leaders, and those with future leadership ambitions, in a range of skill sets allowing an improved distribution of resources to assist in short term activities and projects.

Clear and effective communication is crucial for creating a positive work environment. It is imperative that we continue to encourage open and honest communication amongst our people, and ensure that everyone is informed about the team's goals and progress. This will continue to build trust and understanding among team members, and improve overall delivery of services. We will engage on both a team and departmental level with regular forums, sharing updates on progress and maintaining a platform where each individual has their own voice, and can shape the future of their areas of responsibility and the wider team.

Collaboration is another important aspect of maintaining our positive work environment. Teams that work well together are more productive and efficient. We shall encourage a culture of collaboration and teamwork among our team members and across fire and rescue service departments. To aid this we will provide opportunities for our team members to share ideas and knowledge, and work together to achieve their common goals. We will look to build a sense of shared ownership and responsibility amongst our people leading to more creative and effective problem-solving.

Recognition and appreciation are critical for building morale and motivation amongst team members. We will regularly recognise and appreciate the contributions of our people and teams to highlight the positive impacts they have made to communities and the organisation. Through regular appraisals both formal and informal, we will help our staff to maximise their professional and personal achievements and offer assistance in their career development.

We will maximise the use of technology for our staff, supporting an efficient use of their time and efforts, improving their skill base and offering an improved level of service delivery to the communities of Staffordshire.

A sound work-life relationship is important for the well-being of our team members. We will encourage a healthy balance between work and personal responsibilities amongst our people, and provide opportunities for flexible working arrangements or scheduling, and job sharing where appropriate.

We will be open to flexibility to help reduce individual stressors and improve overall well-being amongst our team members. We will maximise opportunities and afford time to all of our people to help them maintain an appropriate balance between mental and physical health.

We will be proactive in using Occupational Health services when required, and ensure all of our personnel are able to access provision as they may see fit, without undue delay.

We will strive to understand how we can assist our people in staying healthy through well-being focused activities, bespoke or communal to support a reduction in absence.

We will empower our team members to make decisions and take ownership of their work to maximise engagement and motivation.

We will continue to encourage our people to take the initiative and to make decisions about their work, providing them with the appropriate levels of autonomy and resources that they need to be successful within Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Our departments look to offer opportunities to apprentices and through internships, where we shall nurture the development of these individuals and welcome their ideas and thoughts into our Service.

We will all continue to foster and develop an inclusive environment that values and respects the diversity in backgrounds and perspectives that our department breeds. We will always encourage diversity of thought, and will create opportunities for people from different backgrounds and perspectives. We can then contribute to creating a more dynamic and innovative team environment.

In 2022, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue has aligned its values and behaviours framework to the National Fire Chiefs Council developed, Core Code of Ethics. All of our people will use this as the foundation for our activities, and we will hold each other accountable to them.

We will incorporate them into our meetings, our appraisals, our working, to ensure that we understand the values and how they apply to us on an individual and a team level.

The overarching purpose of Response is to respond safely to incidents, with the professionally staff, appropriate equipment and suitable vehicles. It is important that our staff uphold the high levels of public trust in every intervention that they have in the workplace and with our communities.

1. Developing our teams & individuals

We will develop our teams and individuals in areas such as problem solving, decision making and supporting individuals to raise ideas to improve processes including innovation.

We will provide our staff with the tools and support to carry out their roles, including industrial relations training, having difficult conversations, managing poor behaviours and role-modelling positive behaviours in the workplace which encompasses the Core Code of Ethics.

Identifying talent and gathering ideas through the response hub will be a priority over the next several years, supported by a new performance development review (appraisal) process and establishing a clear promotion process framework.

2. Monitor and react to performance

There is now a clear set of response measures, which are reviewed on a monthly basis. We will ensure the individual measures are monitored and we react and implement actions to improve any unacceptable performance issues.

We will ensure that all measures are shared through the response hub for awareness and scrutiny. We will also develop more intelligent measures for our response such as availability and attendance times. Work will start to review what our response model will look like in the future, working with partners and other fire and rescue services to establish options which if required, will be consulted on with the public. National Resilience assurance will continue along with sharing learning at all levels from debriefs, exercises and incidents. We will continue to work closely with the NFCC, National Resilience, regional colleagues and the Civil Contingencies Unit to improve our response to incidents.

3. Innovation

There has been many areas of good practice in problem solving and innovation from our departments in areas such as equipment and training. Developing our teams and individuals will allow us to implement good ideas which move the Service forward in technology and new practices, which will support the environment, fire-fighter safety and resolve incidents more efficiently. Change will be instigated on the basis of evidence and it should be clear to the reason why this is occurring. Clear communication, as well as full engagement and consultation, is required in order that everyone is aware of the change requirements. We need to encourage an approach which gathers people's views and explores the evidence and data to inform decision-making processes. There is much talk around productivity, we need to be clear on what the expectations are for our working shifts and what work can be achieved in this time which benefits the service, crews and members of the public. It is preferable that we drive this work and establish this ourselves rather than it being done to us.

4. Climate crisis: Implement the Environmental Strategy in relation to vehicles, equipment, property and during incidents.

If we view the recent Environmental Strategy as someone else's issue then it will fail. Everyone has a part to play. For response, there are some crucial departments which can support a reduction in our carbon footprint and improve our environment; JETS, Estates and ERT.

We also want to gather everyone's ideas which can influence change and we would encourage everyone to log their ideas on the intranet, these will get reviewed on a regular basis by an environmental working group. We have seen some reductions in our carbon footprint and we are really pleased with the measures we have now developed and it demonstrates that departments need to do more to support new ways of Working.

5. Collaboration: Wider collaboration and strengthening of local partnerships.

There will be more stations under review to move to a shared estates model, we need to be pragmatic and understand which stations fall under the wider estate's strategy. Early engagement is essential to make sure opportunities are not missed.

This priority is not only about estates, it also includes local partnerships to ensure we understand local issues and priorities. Building these relationships will help with our priorities and support our JESIP work operationally. Our stations should welcome in our communities in order to support the development of strong long-lasting community relationships.

6. Training: Improving our training implementation and recording processes.

We will continue to implement more flexibility with how we train, building upon the outreach work and challenge the rationale for all our training to ensure it is fit for purpose. It is important we close the loop on all learning. We will be including assurance visits on station to confirm we are working to the correct standards and identify any gaps for improvement. Our recording of decision making is also crucial. We would still encourage everyone to review the recent public enquiries which fire services have been involved in. Recording of competencies and development need to be simplified without lowering standards, specifically for our on-call colleagues.

7. Response Model: Resourcing to risk.

We will review our current response model to ensure it is fit for purpose. We will use an intelligent approach to measuring our response availability and how we mobilise our appliances. This review will include enhancing our resources to respond to Staffordshire specific risks, which will be appropriate and affordable. We will ensure our response model is also sustainable for future demand and risk. Resilience is a key element and will be included within this review, considering high demand periods such as seasonal and weather-related demand. Any ideas and recommendations will be consulted on internally and with the public through our CRMP consultation process.

12-month review and forward look

Our learning and development team have implemented a new leadership pathway. This pathway defines all routes for development. Our new performance development review (PDR) will support this process. We will now be bringing forward development training for individuals who are deemed ready through their PDR, prior to them being in role. This is supplemented with the new supervisory and middle manager modules which focus more on leadership, behaviours and how to have difficult or empowering conversations.

We believe our 2024 whole time recruits course was a success, introducing new elements such as practical training at the Fire Service College. Work is also now being completed to enhance the experience for trainees and trainers at our L&D facility, future proofing and working towards a center of excellence with all the training being delivered.

The focus now for L&D is to review and enhance our training delivery at our HQ site including the outreach training. We will focus on improving our theoretical E learning training creating stronger links with the technical documents out of National Operational Guidance. We will also provide a stronger focus on practical training to ensure every Fire fighter and supervisory managers are equipped with the skills required.

We need to ensure new recruits and managers have the balance between theoretical and practical training and our recording mechanisms are simple, easy to use but effective to understand, enabling everyone to identify gaps and understand individuals' competencies. Training at L&D will be classed as 'Phase 1 training'. Over the next two years we will see many more new fire fighters and new managers entering these roles based on our retirement profile. It is essential we adapt and improve our training to fit the needs of the current and future roles of the service.

During 2025/26

Learning and Development (L&D) milestones will be to deliver:

1. Introduce a 360 and talent progression program.
2. Introduce new technologies and advancements to support training.
3. Simplify our processes for competence recording.
4. Transform and modernise the L&D facilities to enhance the learning experience.
5. Align theory and practical training (phase1) with National Operational Guidance.
6. Increase all appliance driver numbers.

12-month review and forward look

Projects completed in 2024 include the introduction of improved structural firefighting PPE and equipment such as the Battery Powered Rescue Equipment. ERT work on the procurement, design, build and equipping of new appliances such as the two ALP's and the soon to be introduced Enhanced Rescue Pumps based at Stafford and Longton.

ERT supports operational delivery through the provision of the BA Maintenance (BAM) department and the Hydrant team. Alongside their Business as Usual work of servicing and maintaining equipment BAM have been occupied in preparing for the introduction of the new Breathing Apparatus and associated equipment. The hydrant team have implemented a new system for planning and recording hydrant testing and will continue to work to embed, improve and further roll out these systems. ERT lead the services drive on the Clean Concept – a team effort to reduce staff exposure to post fire contaminants on the incident ground, appliances and vehicles and in workplaces. Significant progress made in 2024 saw the introduction of dirty PPE stores outside stations meaning dirty PPE should now never have need to be brought in to service workplaces.

Over the next 12 months ERT will continue to focus on equipment and appliances to support both the effectiveness and safety of all staff and the work they do. Planned projects include the design and delivery of the three new appliances currently in build, the introduction of the new BA sets and equipment and the continuation of the Clean Concept work to include installing a BA / Helmet cleaning machine.

During 2025/6

Emergency Response Team (ERT) milestones will be to deliver:

1. Implement and embed the new Breathing Apparatus equipment.
2. Understand, evaluate and implement technological solutions to improve fire fighter safety and operational effectiveness.
3. Understand and reduce factors leading to defective, lost and damaged operational equipment and appliances.
4. Evaluate and implement tracking systems for equipment and PPE.
5. Enhance ERT department measures including: BA audits, hydrants and stores.
6. Propose a more efficient way of purchasing structural and non-structural PPE.

12-month review and forward look

Ops assurance have been key in establishing new processes to provide Service assurance. The team supports continual improvement by identifying key learning from internal processes such as debriefs, crew feedback, H&S events, ongoing trends and external sources including NOG, NOL, JOL, ensuring any learning is fed back into other departments and local crews. New processes have included debriefing, ARA's and how we manage our action plans.

Our Major Incident plan was reviewed and is now shared regularly with partners. We have also introduced the CS10B for tall buildings, enabling a single process for Fire Control, making sure we have a more effective process than a paper based one for evacuation management.

Coordination and monitoring of the Service training and exercise program provides assurance against NOG and is shared with our partners to enable multi-agency development and joint exercising in line with the principles of JESIP.

Our ICS team continue to develop their approach and have now included a knowledge check following assessments. This aligns with best practice and are developing CPD opportunities for our commanders to provide support and development.

The next 12 months will see a focus on our NOG review process and how this links in with Phase 1 (training at L&D) and Phase 2 training (training at station) and how it can be supported by e-learning.

We will start a review and overhaul of our e-learning platform with a focus on aligning to the National Operational Guidance Training Framework. We will also continue to develop and enhance the station assurance visits including a set of clear measures.

During 2025/26 Ops Assurance (OpA) milestones will be to deliver:

1. Review our NOG process and understand how this links together technical documents, Phase 1 training and Phase 2 training.
2. Review and start to overhaul our e-learning platform with a focus on aligning training with National Operational Guidance.
3. Station assurance visits to include practical core skills assessment and measures.
4. Review of Incident Command courses and recording tools.
5. Development of the Incident Command suite, hardware and software.
6. Maintenance of action plans including a Grenfell phase 1 review.

12-month review and forward look

During 2024 our frontline crews responded to over 8,800 incidents, completed over 400 training exercises and simulations and carried out routine testing of 5,064 fire hydrants across the County. We have observed some really positive work from crews during incidents throughout 2024 and contributed to understanding our productivity.

Looking forward into 2025, we will focus on ensuring that our crews are able to respond to fires and other emergencies in a safe, competent and effective way. We will do this by increasing the amount of practical training that is carried out, assisted by an improved training assurance process.

The availability of our on-call appliances remains a challenge and we will seek to improve this by ensuring that we have the right people, with the right skills at the right time, through a mix of recruitment, development and staff engagement.

Finally, we will ensure that our operational staff have access to the information they need through the introduction of an improved operational risk information system, which will enable staff to continue to plan, train and exercise for existing and new emerging risks, ensuring our crews are prepared and able to work with key stakeholders to resolve operational incidents.

During 2025/26 Service Delivery Group (SDG) milestones will be to deliver:

1. An increase in practical training activities (Phase 2 training), tailored to those subjects which present the greatest risk to our firefighters.
2. An improved training assurance process capturing the planning, delivery and debriefing lifecycle.
3. Implementation of an improved risk information system.
4. An increase in the availability of our on-call appliances through recruitment of new staff and upskilling of existing staff where required.
5. An increase in the number of qualified fire appliance drivers.
6. Improvements in the way that we record and measure the productivity of our crews.

12-month review and forward look

We have worked hard to build the relationship with Fire control over the last 12 months. We have introduced a single point of contact (SPOC) to work through day to day issues from both crews and Fire Controls perspective. Following feedback there is clear evidence of improvements in this area.

In terms of governance we now have a robust structure in place that supports relationships and decision making at all levels, from Fire fighter to Principle managers. The governance structure comprises of three levels of scrutiny. Strategic oversight, Performance review and operational assurance, reviewing the day to day issues. The day to day issues remain at a low level and are resolved quickly and effectively. There is clear evidence of collaborative work between both areas. We will continue to encourage watches to visit Fire control and build on this relationship. Performance will continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

The next 12 months will see the introduction of an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA) and the introduction of the new Command & Control system. The new Command and Control system will deliver a system that integrates with all Digital & Data systems enabling increased efficiency in control room operations. An intuitive system that reduces manual processes and releases capacity within control room operations. Success criteria to include having a reliable system that peerlessly helps staff do their job.

We will also continue to carry out joint training, this was a key focus in 2024 however we need to do more. Training, development, competence & assurance remains a priority for Fire Control and the roll out of Standardised Assessments and CPD days will further enhance and invest in our teams development and progression, whilst ensuring we also align fully to key recommendations from Grenfell and Manchester Arena Enquiries.

During 2025/26 Fire Control (FC) milestones will be to deliver:

1. Agreement and introduction of the new Service Level Agreement (SLA).
2. A smooth introduction of the new Command & Control system.
3. Increased involvement with local exercising including FC specific objectives.
4. Undertake standardised Assessments aligned to the agreed competency risk assessment for FC.
5. Roll out of 1 day CPD training for all of FC.

12-month review and forward look

The management structure and governance of JETS has evolved throughout 2024 and the measures are showing appliance availability (due to mechanical issues) improving whilst relationships with operational crews has also improved. The number of issues raised regarding the reserve fleet have also decreased. New vehicles have been introduced to the fleet during 2024 including ALPS, response cars and vans for supporting services such as Hydrant Technicians and BA Maintenance. One of the response cars is fully electric, a first for SFRS.

Work on the existing fleet continues including the business as usual work servicing and repairing but also innovative work such as the fitting of cradles to accommodate the new BA sets and the Battery Powered Rescue Equipment. A great success at JETS during 2024 was the work conducted in partnership with Volvo in engineering solutions to issues effecting appliance emission control systems. This saw a reduction in vehicles commonly going 'off the run' for such issues in 2023 to virtually zero in late 2024

This work will continue into 2025 and beyond. JETS now have a structured and planned Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) to assist in purchasing the most appropriate vehicles. JETS will continue to engage with response staff to ensure that they are receiving the vehicles that they believe are fit for purpose whilst actively seeking efficiencies and improvements to the fleet. JETS are an integral part of the services drive to meet our environmental responsibilities, and act accordingly. We are also invested in the Clean Concept to protect staff from post fire contaminants.

During 2025/26 Joint Emergency Transport Services (JETS) milestones will be to deliver:

1. Producing and using clearly defined measures, including customer value, to drive performance.
2. Continue to Improve the relationship between JETS and FRS staff.
3. Reduce our Carbon Footprint through the introduction of alternatively powered vehicles and increased focus on heavy Fleet.
4. Supporting driver and road user safety through technology.
5. Facilitate the structured training of technicians to ensure they are suitably qualified and skilled for the role performed.
6. Review 'appliance type' based on station and community risk need.