



Cheshire
Fire Authority

Community Risk Management Plan

2024-2028

Annual Update 2024/25

MORE PREVENTION

MORE PROTECTION

BETTER RESPONSE



Our Community Risk Management Plan

Under the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England, we are required to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which outlines the key risks that we face as a fire and rescue service and sets out our plans to both mitigate these risks and provide an effective emergency response and fire prevention and protection activity within the community.

Following an extensive consultation process and approval by Cheshire Fire Authority, in April 2024 we began work on delivering our 2024-2028 CRMP. The CRMP outlines our ambition to deliver more fire prevention and protection activity and a better emergency response to the communities of Cheshire, ultimately keeping those we serve safer and contributing towards our organisational vision of a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fire or other emergencies.

You can read our full CRMP here on our website.

To complement our CRMP, we produce a series of annual updates to set out which parts of the plan we are focusing on each year. This annual update provides an overview of the progress we have made in 2024/25 towards achieving our objectives and outlines key projects we will be working on in 2025/26.



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Our progress so far

Emergency Response

The first year of our CRMP concentrated on delivering a programme of change to how we provide fire cover across Cheshire, in order to meet our new emergency response standard of attending a primary fire (e.g. house fire) within an average time of 10 minutes.



To meet the new standard and provide a better emergency response, we changed four on-call fire engines based at Macclesfield, Northwich, Runcorn and Winsford into full-time fire engines which operate flexibly across Cheshire during weekdays. This required us to develop a new shift pattern in conjunction with our staff and representative bodies.

We also turned our duty system at Knutsford from on-call to day crewing and changed fire cover arrangements at Birchwood and Stockton Heath.

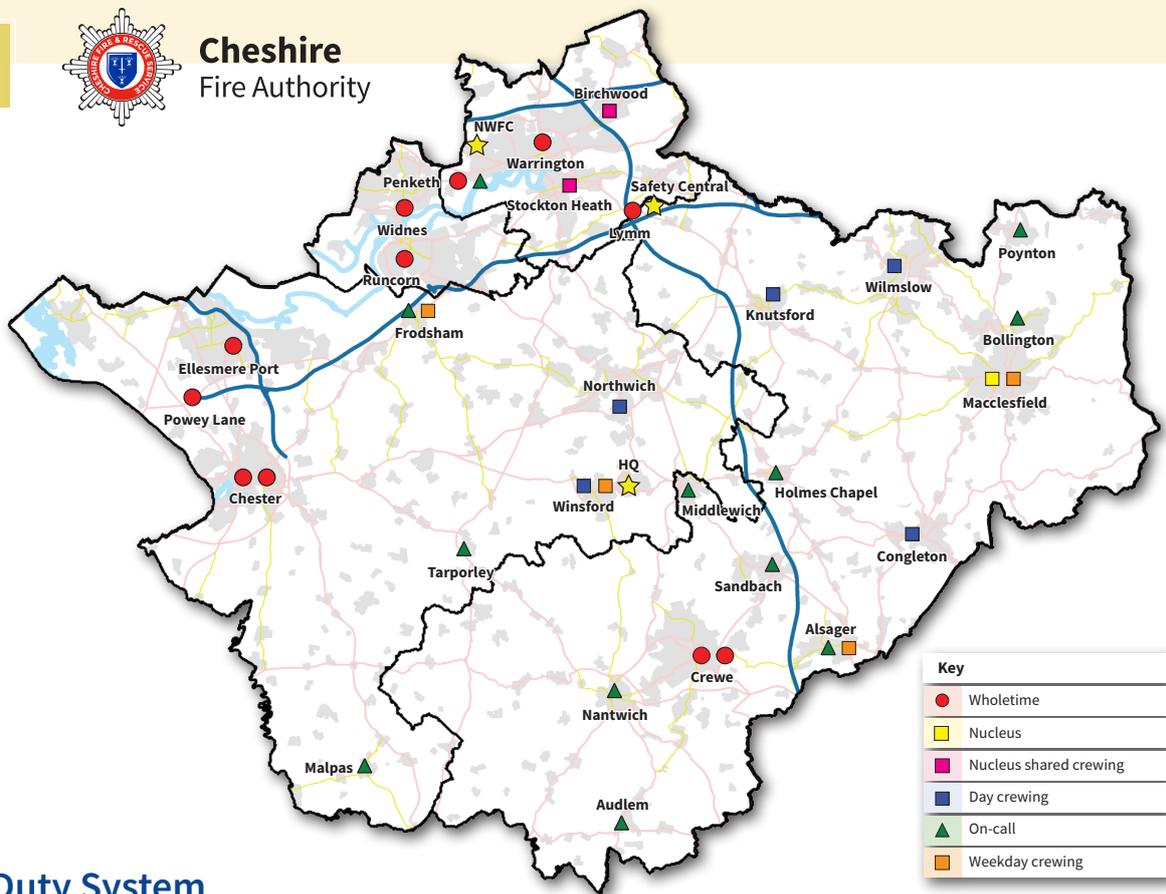
Together, these changes have helped us to improve our emergency response by increasing the number of fire engines providing guaranteed fire cover during our busiest times. The map on the next page shows our new fire cover arrangements across Cheshire.

These changes also provide us with additional capacity to carry out vital safety work in the community, helping to prevent fires and ensuring businesses comply with fire safety legislation.

Following the changes to our fire cover, we implemented a review of our specialist resources, placing them at the locations where they can be used to provide the most effective response to emergencies.

We also began work on a major programme to enhance our on-call duty system, which covers several of our fire stations in Cheshire. On-call firefighters are firefighters who live near to the station or work in other jobs locally and respond to emergencies via an alerter.

The objective within our CRMP is to make this system more efficient, financially rewarding, and sustainable, improving the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and improving the availability of our on-call fire engines. This year, we introduced enhanced primetime rates of pay for on-call firefighters.



Duty System

● Wholetime

A wholetime station is where firefighters operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They work 12 hour shifts in specific teams called watches.

■ Nucleus

Stations operating the nucleus duty system are crewed by wholetime firefighters during daytime hours and then by on-call firefighters overnight.

■ Nucleus shared crewing

There are currently two fire stations operating this duty system located at Birchwood and Stockton Heath. The station at Birchwood is crewed by one team of wholetime firefighters during daytime hours for 50% of the time and then by on-call firefighters overnight. The station at Stockton Heath is crewed by one team of wholetime firefighters during daytime hours for 50% of the time and remains uncrewed overnight.

■ Day crewing (DC1)

During the daytime the station is crewed by wholetime firefighters, who also live close to the station to provide emergency cover overnight.

▲ On-call

These stations are operated by firefighters who respond to emergency calls via an alerter. On-call firefighters will either live or work in the local community near to the station.

■ Weekday crewing

Weekday crewing fire engines are staffed by one team of wholetime firefighters working during Monday to Friday daytimes when our On-call availability is often at its lowest. There are four weekday crewing fire engines which operate flexibly to benefit the whole of Cheshire.



Prevention and Protection

We implemented the outcomes of a review of our Prevention Department. This review led to a new structure for our team to help us operate more effectively, by providing more dedicated resource to support our work with partners to help the most vulnerable residents we engage with; brought together our programmes to educate and work with young people (including our Safety Central life skills centre), and enhanced coordination of our work on road and water safety.

Our Protection team worked with several partner agencies to introduce a groundbreaking aspiration system into Chester Rows, helping to protect one of our most recognised and cherished heritage sites.

Improving our Service

To support the delivery of our CRMP we produced new strategies to direct our work to communicate effectively with the public and connect and engage with our staff. We also launched a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to underpin our approach to engaging with all parts of our community and our workforce as an inclusive Service and employer.

Finally, we embarked on the next phase of our estates modernisation programme, refurbishing fire stations at Knutsford and Winsford.



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The year ahead

This year (2025/26) will see us work on several objectives within our CRMP in order to deliver more prevention and protection activity, as well as providing a better emergency response within the communities we serve.

Prevention

Our Prevention Department works hard to keep people safe from fire and other emergencies by providing advice on keeping safe in the home, on the road and in and around water. We also work with young people to help them make a positive contribution to society and reduce their risk of becoming involved in fire-setting.

As outlined in our CRMP, we will increase the number of Safe and Well visits that we deliver in the community. This will help us to keep more people safe by giving them important advice and guidance to prevent fires occurring and keep them living well in their homes.

We also recognise the risks presented by lithium-ion batteries and the growing use of products containing them in society. We will develop a safety campaign to inform people of the risks of these products and help them to use these items safely.

Protection

Our Protection Department carries out important work to ensure that non-residential premises are compliant with relevant fire safety laws. We work together with businesses to help them become compliant; however we will also take legal action where there are serious breaches of legislation which puts people at risk.

Our officers carry out audits and inspections on thousands of premises each year to check businesses are keeping their workers and customers safe from fire. We will review the department to ensure that it operates as efficiently and effectively as possible, focusing our activity on the premises that are at the highest risk of fire.

We are also a Primary Authority for several companies. The Primary Authority scheme is where organisations can partner with one authority to have access to consistent fire safety advice across their business, even if they operate sites outside of their home fire and rescue service. We will review our arrangements over this year to ensure that they are effective, and work towards the scheme becoming self-funding.



Emergency Response

Breathing apparatus sets are a critical part of firefighting equipment. Our current sets are now coming to the end of their operational life and there are technological advances in the market. We will involve staff to begin the procurement process to introduce new, updated equipment and associated technology. This will help to keep our firefighters safe and enable them to operate more effectively in hazardous environments.

Call handling is a key part of our emergency response, which helps us to mobilise the right resources from the right location to attend as quickly as possible. We will support our colleagues at North West Fire Control in upgrading their mobilising software and integrate this into our procedures, helping us to deliver a more effective response to emergencies.

Improving our Service

Over several years, we have modernised many of our fire stations. Some of these, such as Chester and Crewe, have involved building new stations, while in other locations we have refurbished existing buildings. We will bring this programme to completion over the next year, as well as progress plans to rebuild or substantially redevelop our fire stations at Ellesmere Port and Warrington. This will give our staff modern, more energy-efficient premises and a better physical working environment.

We are due to undergo our fourth inspection from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). These inspections look at how effective we are at keeping people safe from fire and other emergencies; how efficiently we use our resources and how well we look after our people. We are aiming to build on the progress we made during our last inspection in 2023.

To underpin our positive culture and support all of our staff at each stage of their career with us, we will launch a new People Strategy. This will be supported by a programme of events for all staff to explain how they can play their part in shaping our culture.

We will also carry out our regular two-yearly staff engagement survey, giving staff a platform to give their views on working as part of the Service. We will develop an action plan to address the findings of the survey.



Summary

The list below provides a summary of our key projects for 2025/26.

More prevention

- Continue to increase the number of Safe and Well visits we deliver to residents most at risk of fire.
- Develop a safety campaign to address the risks of lithium-ion battery products.

More protection

- Review our Protection department to ensure it remains efficient and effective.
- Review our Primary Authority arrangements to ensure they are effective and self-funding.

A better response

- Procure new, updated breathing apparatus sets for firefighters.
- Support the upgrading of new mobilising software at North West Fire Control to enhance how our resources are mobilised to attend fires and other emergencies.

Improving our Service

- Begin work to redevelop our fire stations at Ellesmere Port and Warrington, and complete the modernisation programme for the remainder of our fire stations.
- Launch a new People Strategy to help us build a positive culture and supporting our staff to provide the best possible fire and rescue service to our communities.
- Work to address the findings of our fourth inspection by HMICFRS, as well as our 2025 staff engagement survey.