



**Cheshire**  
Fire Authority

# Community Risk Management Plan

2024-2028

Annual Update 2025/26  
and Mid-CRMP Review

MORE PREVENTION

MORE PROTECTION

BETTER RESPONSE



# Our Community Risk Management Plan



**Alex Waller**  
Chief Fire Officer and  
Chief Executive

**Under the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England, we are required to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which should cover a period of at least three years.**

This outlines the key risks we face as a fire and rescue service, how we plan to mitigate them and how we will provide an effective emergency response and community safety activity.



**Councillor Stef Nelson**  
Chair, Cheshire Fire Authority

Our current CRMP was launched in April 2024 following approval by Cheshire Fire Authority and runs until the end of March 2028. Developed after extensive consultation with the public, our staff, representative bodies and our key partners, it is our roadmap for achieving our vision of a 'Cheshire with no deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies' by providing more protection, more prevention and a better response.

You can read the full CRMP on our website.

This document summarises the progress we made during 2025/26, Year 2 of the CRMP, describes the impact our work is having and provides a summary of our priorities for 2026/27, Year 3 of the CRMP.

This annual update is particularly important as it marks the mid-point of the lifespan of our current CRMP. In autumn 2026 we will start the conversation about our next CRMP, with the aim of developing proposals for consultation in late 2027.

**If you require the information in this document in an alternative format or language, please call 01606 868700 or email [equalities.diversity@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:equalities.diversity@cheshirefire.gov.uk)**



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**Annual Update 2025/26**

## Emergency response

### A reminder of progress in Year 1 | 2024/25

- Working with colleagues and representative bodies, we changed four on-call fire engines at Macclesfield, Northwich, Runcorn and Winsford to full-time fire engines which operate flexibly across Cheshire during weekdays.
- Knutsford Fire Station was converted from on-call to the day crewing duty system and also became the base for our Technical Rescue Unit.
- Birchwood and Stockton Heath fire stations started sharing full-time cover during the day. At night on-call firefighters still respond from Birchwood, and Stockton Heath is covered by nearby neighbouring fire stations.
- We changed the way we measure and record the time it takes us to respond to incidents – with the aim of keeping the overall average time to under 10 minutes.
- We began a detailed review to strengthen our on-call duty system and to make it more efficient, sustainable and rewarding for firefighters.



### Further progress in Year 2 | 2025/26

- We piloted a new retainer fee system for on-call firefighters, rewarding them for maximising availability during periods where our weekday fire engines are not available and when it has been historically challenging to maintain on-call availability.
- We reviewed the location and crewing arrangements for our special appliances and introduced a number of new and replacement specialist vehicles including a Hazardous Materials Unit, Command Support Unit and Evacuation Unit.
- We launched a new Operational Learning Board to ensure learning from incidents locally and nationally is reviewed and shared more effectively.
- Working with other north west fire and rescue services, we started the process of procuring a replacement mobilising system at North West Fire Control.



## Plans for Year 3 | 2026/27

- We will review the changes we made to crewing arrangements in Years 1 and 2, to ensure they continue to work for our communities and colleagues.
- We will carry out reviews of our nucleus and wholetime duty systems to ensure they remain efficient and effective.
- We will launch and implement a new strategy to strengthen our on-call system.
- We will prepare to introduce new state-of-the-art breathing apparatus at the end of 2028 and invest in new equipment, PPE and emerging technology to improve response and firefighter safety.
- We reintroduced our own drone capability, supporting the safe and effective command of incidents.
- We will continue to consider options to enable fire engines to respond to cardiac arrest emergencies along with the local ambulance service, subject to outcomes of local and national negotiations with trade unions.
- We will close all outstanding actions resulting from the Manchester Arena and Grenfell Tower inquiries and independently assure this work.

### Impact so far

- ✓ The number of fire engines guaranteed to be available across Cheshire on weekdays has **increased from 17 to 22**.
- ✓ Average response times to primary fires attended by a weekday fire engine are **3 minutes 22 seconds faster**.
- ✓ Average response times across all on-call fire station areas have **improved by 30 seconds** overall and **1 minute 18 seconds** during the hours when weekday fire engines operate.
- ✓ **Additional prevention and protection work** has been carried out as a result of more fire engines being on the road in the week (see p6).

## Prevention

### A reminder of progress in Year 1 | 2024/25

- We completed a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Prevention Department, ensuring it continues to respond to changing risks in the community, and started to implement its recommendations.

### Further progress in Year 2 | 2025/26

- We finished the implementation of the Prevention Department review recommendations, which included launching our Persons at Heightened Risk Team, bringing together our children and young people's programmes and enhancing the co-ordination of road and water safety activity.
- As part of the review, we refined the targeting of our Safe and Well visits, ensuring we continue to support households most at risk of fire.
- Our Water Safety Team began delivering drowning prevention education to 11-14 year olds in secondary schools and we continued to lead the multi-agency Cheshire Water Safety Group.
- A new water safety scenario was unveiled at Safety Central, our safety and life skills education centre in Lymm.
- We continued to deliver a range of road safety education activity despite the work of the Cheshire Road Safety Group being paused.
- Our Communications and Engagement Department developed and launched public safety information about the safe use of lithium-ion batteries.





## Plans for Year 3 | 2026/27

- Our prevention teams and firefighters will deliver 30,500 Safe and Well visits during 2026/27.
- Lithium-ion battery safety advice will be routinely given during Safe and Well visits and communicated via our social media channels.
- We will step up our work to reduce deliberate fires in the small number of communities where they cause a nuisance and divert firefighters' time and resources.

### Impact so far

- ✓ As a result of refining our targeting strategy and increasing the number of fire engines operational on weekdays, in 2025/26 we **delivered 30,270 Safe and Well visits** – 2,730 more than the previous year.
- ✓ **More than nine out of 10 people** who received Safe and Well visits were offered health and wellbeing advice, supporting safer, independent living.
- ✓ We are now **members of adult and children's safeguarding boards** in all four of our local authority areas.
- ✓ The impact of our water safety work on our communities has achieved **local and national recognition**.

# Protection

## A reminder of progress in Year 1 | 2024/25

- Working with partners, we introduced a ground-breaking smoke detection system to protect Chester's unique and historic Rows from fire.

## Further progress in Year 2 | 2025/26

- We began a review of our Protection Department to ensure we continue to be efficient and effective as a fire safety regulator.
- We continued to adapt to changing legislation and risks such as the Building Safety Act 2022 and the upcoming Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025.
- We continued to work with local planning authorities and the National Fire Chiefs Council to ensure that modern energy technologies such as battery energy storage systems consider fire safety during the planning and development of sites.
- We reviewed the Primary Authority scheme, which enables organisations that operate across multiple fire and rescue service areas, to partner with one service so they receive consistent fire safety advice.
- We continued to campaign for the installation of sprinkler systems, particularly in high-risk residential, commercial and heritage buildings.



- Cathedral
- Town Hall
- Tourist Info
- Storyhouse

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## Plans for Year 3 | 2026/27

- We will implement the recommendations of the Protection Department review.
- We will further develop and automate our IT system, to include data on risk level, fire safety compliance and previous incidents, to enable our Risk Based Inspection Programme to continue prioritising the highest risk premises.
- We will continue supporting lower risk premises by delivering a total of around 5,000 business safety visits and fire safety health checks each year.
- We will review our operational policies and procedures for responding to incidents at battery energy storage sites.
- We will introduced accredited Protection training to all operational staff to improve the knowledge and competency of staff carrying out fire safety checks.

### Impact so far

- ✓ Our firefighters **delivered 260 additional business inspections** in 2025/26 thanks to a greater number of fire engines operating during weekdays.
- ✓ The Chester Rows aspirator (smoke detection) system **won a prestigious gold award** in the Public Sector Transformation Awards in Westminster.
- ✓ We reviewed our Primary Authority scheme and now have **10 partnerships** that make it a self-funded role.

## Improving our Service

### A reminder of progress in Year 1 | 2024/25

- We completed the modernisation of Knutsford Fire Station ahead of it changing from on-call to day crewing and accommodating our Technical Rescue Unit.
- We launched our new three-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to promote fairness at work and a better understanding of our communities.

### Further progress in Year 2 | 2025/26

- We completed the modernisation of Winsford and Frodsham fire stations, providing improved welfare and decontamination facilities for staff and delivering greater energy efficiency.
- We published a new three-year People Strategy with the aim of maintaining a great place to work, developing our leaders, diversifying our workforce and supporting our staff to stay well.
- Between October and January, we facilitated a fourth routine inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), who will publish their report later in 2026.
- Our Culture Conversations brought together senior leaders and colleagues from across our Service to talk about maintaining standards and a positive workplace environment.
- We ran our bi-annual Staff Survey to help us understand how staff feel to work for our Service and where we can improve.





## Plans for Year 3 | 2026/27

- We will implement any recommendations from the recent HMICFRS inspection.
- We will develop and implement an action plan to address areas of improvement from our 2025 Staff Survey.
- We will start work on the final phase of our fire station modernisation programme including the modernisation of Ellesmere Port and Warrington fire stations.
- We will disaggregate our shared IT service with Cheshire Police and bring the function back in-house, to drive forward digitisation.
- We will bring back our facilities, estates and stores functions from Joint Corporate Services with Cheshire Police and create a new stores facility at our Headquarters.
- To facilitate the creation of the new stores facility, we will relocate our Occupational Health Unit to Collingham House – the former Winsford Police Station purchased from Cheshire Police in early 2026.
- We will refurbish the conference and meeting spaces at Headquarters and provide inclusive toilet facilities compliant with the Equality Act 2010.
- We will review the efficiency and effectiveness of our fleet services function and the administration hubs that support our fire stations.
- We will introduce new HR and applicant tracking systems, to streamline the way we manage some of our people processes.
- We will publish the next iteration of our Environment and Sustainability Strategy to highlight achievements and ongoing progress towards our Net Zero ambition.

### Impact so far

- ✓ Twenty-two of our 28 fire stations have either been **newly built or completely modernised** over the last 10 years – with the remaining six scheduled for work in the next two years.
- ✓ We rose 20 places to **19th position in the Top 50 Inclusive Employers list** ranking alongside major national private and public sector organisations.
- ✓ We achieved an **overall staff engagement score of 84%** in our 2025 Staff Survey, one point higher than in 2023 and higher than the benchmark for the fire sector, public sector and commercial organisations.



## Ways to keep up to date

In autumn 2026 we will start talking to our staff, our partners and our communities to help develop our plans for April 2028 onwards. You can join that conversation by following us on:



**Alert** – register at [cheshirefireandrescue.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk](https://cheshirefireandrescue.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk)



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