

Making the West Midlands SAFER, STRONGER, HEALTHIER

Our Plan - a summary

We set out our priorities and objectives in 'The Plan'. It's a rolling, three-year document which covers things like reducing serious traffic accidents, helping people have safer, healthier lives and making sure we tackle emergencies assertively, effectively and safely.

THE PLAN 2018-2021

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The West Midlands has a diverse and multi-cultural population. It includes areas with the highest risk in England outside of London, presenting a range of socio-economic and health and wellbeing challenges.

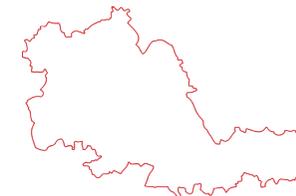
We identify and analyse risks across the West Midlands, and use the information to decide where we need our fire stations, firefighters and vehicles. It also helps us plan how we deliver our full range of services which we split into prevention, protection and response.

Your postcode is key to a wealth of info about our work in your area. Our interactive Community Safety Strategy, (also known as our Integrated Risk Management Plan or IRMP), includes maps and stats about incidents, and you can find out how we're managing risk across the West Midlands. Visit wmfs.net/communitysafetystrategy for fire station contact details, their latest tweets, photos and more!



We are the second largest fire and rescue service in the country, serving seven local authority areas (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton councils).

Knowing where the risks are, we can decide where we need our fire stations, firefighters and vehicles. It also helps us plan how we deliver our full range of services which we split into prevention, protection and response.



AREA : 902 sqkm



PEOPLE : 3,177 per sqkm



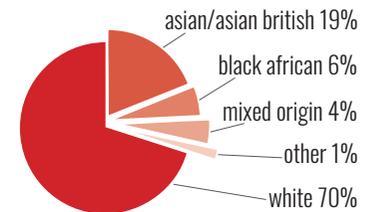
HOMES : 1,125,675



NON-DOMESTIC : 97,000



POPULATION : 2,864,900



ENTER YOUR POSTCODE TO SEE WHAT INCIDENTS HAVE HAPPENED IN YOUR AREA

– AND WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT THEM.



@WestMidsFire

INTRODUCTION



JOHN EDWARDS
Chair of the Fire Authority



PHIL LOACH
Chief Fire Officer

A welcome from Phil Loach, our Chief Fire Officer, and Councillor John Edwards, Chair of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority. Thank you for reading our strategic plan and our vision of **'Making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier'**.

We hope you get a real insight into how our work delivers the priorities and outcomes set by the people of the West Midlands through their Fire Authority.

Every day we are making a very **real and positive difference** - to people and families in our communities, to businesses and to visitors to the West Midlands.

A lot of this relies on us working closely with a wide range of other agencies and organisations, including councils and the **West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)**.

Our staff play a major part in helping people live safer, healthier lives and supporting the West Midlands economy. They do it at a time of unprecedented change and significant financial challenges.

Our Government funding reduced by £37m between 2010/11 and 2018/19. It will be cut by a further £1m in 2019/20. However, we have responsible plans in place to manage this reduction and to minimise any potential impact on the public.

Our community consultation and engagement has shown, very clearly, that **our residents understand and overwhelmingly support how we do things, including how we monitor and manage risks** across the West Midlands. This feedback helps to set our priorities and what we will achieve going forward.

So, how do we plan our response, prevention and protection activities to keep the communities of the West Midlands safe?

Our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) provides the evidence base to identify the priorities and objectives set out in our strategic plan and the forecasting of future risk to determine where our staff and response vehicles are best placed.

We continually review our IRMP to make sure we are meeting the changing needs of our communities and ensure that our staff have the right skills to enable them to respond to emergencies and carry out the **wide range of activities needed to reduce risk and vulnerability**.

By using evidence and looking at the future risk in the West Midlands, **we make sure our staff and resources are positively reducing risk and vulnerability where it is needed most and when needed, respond assertively, effectively and safely.**

If you live in the area we cover, you can get involved with our work and have your say on how our services are shaped?

Our Community Members help us to make the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier by supporting our work and events on fire stations and in our local communities. We'll keep you posted with newsletters, and we also have lots of volunteering opportunities at our two Safeside learning centres. Or how about supporting one of our Fire Cadet programmes, based at some of our community fire stations?

Telephone: 0845 5000 900
email: community.membership@wmfs.net



INTRODUCTION

RESPONSE

2017 saw two significant terrorism attacks in London, one in Manchester and the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire.

We have an **excellent track record** in identifying and reducing ever-changing risks and working collaboratively with other agencies in increasing public safety.

The **professionalism** and **dedication** of our own crews to respond **assertively, effectively and safely**, coupled with our **5-minute attendance standard**, is at the heart of our **Service Delivery Model**. We have **reduced our response times significantly** over the last five years and we are continually looking at ways to improve.

Our risk-based, five-minute response is one of the best in the country. We've worked with academics and medical experts on research that shows the time it takes to get to an incident is **critical to someone surviving** a fire or a road traffic collision.

So we know that **our 5-minute response, based on evidence and our knowledge of risk, saves lives, homes and businesses.** It also helps us to plan where we need our people and resources, including our fire stations, engines and more specialist resources.

In turn, this gives us the capacity to deliver our **equally important and collaborative prevention and protection services.** This approach is efficient, effective and recognised by our communities as being in their interest.

PREVENTION

Our prevention work focuses on **reducing people's vulnerability** to the type of emergencies to which we respond. We use sophisticated analysis through our IRMP to forecast what will make a difference to a wide range of public service objectives and to support **economic growth**.

Our firefighters carry out thousands of 'Safe and Well' visits every year, and our crews now also give advice on health and wellbeing, where it will reduce the risk of a fire. This means **vulnerable people are safer in their own homes** and we can get them extra help if they need it.

Thanks to our strong relationship and **collaborative partnerships with our colleagues in other sectors**, such as the health sector, we can identify and support people who are at higher risk from fires and other emergencies.

We are working closely with a number of councils on projects that see our firefighters **responding to people who have had a fall at home** and others on whose safety we check as they leave hospital.

But our prevention work extends well beyond the home. We provide **fire safety education** in hundreds of schools and colleges and at our interactive **'Safeside'** learning centres in Handsworth and Eastside, as well as at public events and through our popular **Fire Cadets programme**.

We also have specialist prevention and partnership teams who support our firefighters in **reducing anti-**

social behaviour, including arson, and improving road safety.

If you would like to see what our activities are in your area, then please visit: wmfs.net/communitysafetystrategy.

PROTECTION

Our protection work focuses on **working with businesses** to help them thrive, and on **assessing** high risk buildings including residential **high-rises** to ensure **public safety** and provide reassurance about the risks of fire. **Healthy businesses who are able to sustain themselves benefit the West Midlands' economy and provide local job opportunities.**

Where appropriate we advise companies how best to comply with **fire safety legislation**, to **keep staff and customers safe.**

If the worst does happen, and they do experience a fire, our focus is on getting them **back up and running as soon as possible.** We're a large organisation ourselves and know the importance of business continuity.



INTRODUCTION

HOW WE DO IT AND HOW WE'RE GOVERNED

We **recognise the need for change and continuous improvement** and have developed a new and innovative approach to how we work.

This has been made possible by our **cost-effective, flexible and agile workforce, a blended fleet of vehicles**, a new approach to communication and a commitment to the use of technology.

We want West Midlands Fire Service to be governed in a way that enables it to keep delivering services in the most relevant, efficient and effective ways for its communities.

Our governance is on track to move from the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority and to be incorporated into the **Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority**.

We are already coordinating an important area of the Combined Authority's work. **The Public Sector Reform (PSR) programme is about improving the life chances of West Midlands people**. It continues to do this through four key work streams: Mental Health with Health and Wellbeing; Criminal Justice; Skills and Employment; Multiple Complex Needs.

Here at West Midlands Fire Service we have committed resources to the work stream that supports people living with multiple complex needs. **Our prevention work focuses on vulnerable people, on what makes them vulnerable and how we can help them to live safe, independent and fulfilled lives.**

And we are embracing wider opportunities for **collaboration with other fire and rescue services and organisations**. One example of this was our signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in early 2018 with Warwickshire County Council. The arrangement sets out a vision for closer working between our two fire services to deliver improved outcomes to our communities and enhance public safety.

Everything we do is achieved by our dedicated staff, who keep finding exciting, new ways to keep delivering and transforming the services we provide, and to achieve even more with less. Individually, and in teams, their **positive contributions are making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier**.

Thank you for reading our Plan. Please encourage your friends and family to take a look, too.

We hope we get the chance to meet you and hear your valuable feedback at one of our open days; when we're out and about doing our prevention work; or simply by dropping in at one of our 38 community fire stations.

As part of our commitment to the national fire agenda, we now host and support the newly-formed National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the professional voice of UK fire and rescue services.

NFCC is headed by a national Chair who also acts as adviser on fire-related issues to the Home Office and wider government and represents the wider fire sector. Our own Chief Fire Officer, Phil Loach, is one of NFCC's Vice-Chairs. He has a key role in delivering influential, national work.

As well as hosting the NFCC at our HQ, we support its workstreams undertaken by nine coordination committees on prevention, protection, operations and health.

In 2017, we set up and ran a 24/7 incident room following the devastating Grenfell Tower fire in London which claimed 71 lives. We were responsible for providing the Government with up-to-date information and statistics about high-rises from all fire services, including the number in each area, how many were inspected in the days following Grenfell.

This information is still being collected to ensure the Government has the very latest national picture in relation to high-rise safety and cladding. This has helped to ensure NFCC is at the forefront of providing information to Government, while assisting all fire and rescue services across the country at a very difficult time. This continuing work supports the independent inquiries, including the review into building regulations to look at building safety.



PREVENTION

SAFER AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES



Our prevention work is all about keeping our most vulnerable people safe, and getting extra support for those who need it from our many partner organisations.

We think of it as 'upstream firefighting'. The same firefighters who respond to 999 emergencies carry out thousands of 'Safe and Well' visits every year. They give advice on health and wellbeing where it will lessen the risk of a fire.

But prevention extends well beyond the home.

We provide fire safety education to thousands of school children and college students.

And we have specialist prevention and partnership teams who support our firefighters in reducing anti-social behaviour, such as arson, and improving road safety.

We carry out 30,000 Safe & Well visits every year of which...



...handed out 25,431 pieces of equipment like smoke alarms...



...48% originate from partner referrals and as a result of which we've...



...which has resulted in a 10% reduction in fire deaths and serious injuries.



Our prevention priorities focus on making safer, healthier communities:

- the number of people killed or seriously injured by fire-related incidents will reduce as we focus, with our partners, on the risks faced by the most vulnerable people in our communities
- arson-related incidents will fall, supporting safer and stronger communities, as a result of our partnership working
- fewer people will be killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads, as we work with the West Midlands Combined Authority and other organisations to develop and deliver interventions that support the West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy
- the safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities will improve through our interventions delivered to tackle the effects of an increasing demand on health and social care services.



EDUCATION



Every year, **1,000's** of children and young people pass through the doors of our **2** Safeside centres at Eastside and Handsworth in Birmingham. They provide innovative, interactive and enjoyable environments, inspiring visitors to think and act safely.

Nearly **100,000** safety messages were delivered to West Midlands families as a result of visits to Safeside. And the centres' **brilliant volunteers** gave **2,808** hours of their own time to support our Junior Citizen Programme.

Meanwhile, our firefighters also deliver educational programmes. In 2017/18 they engaged with over **41,000** children, young people and adults.

ROAD SAFETY



Although just over **600** people were killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads in 2017...

...this was down nearly **30%** from 2016.

Our firefighters and Road Casualty Reduction Team engaged with more than **400,000** children and young people, delivering key road safety messages.

We use virtual reality video to help young drivers and car passengers understand the consequences of choices they take at the wheel. **Some of the most vulnerable people on our roads are aged 17 to 25.**

ARSON



We recorded **137** deliberate fires in derelict buildings in 2017/18 – **the lowest figure ever.**

Our Fire Investigation and Prevention Section (FIPS) were involved in **127** fire investigations and supported more than **50** criminal cases including a murder and **10** fire-related deaths.

Their detailed and painstaking work helped secure the convictions of eight arsonists, who were jailed for a total of 146 years.

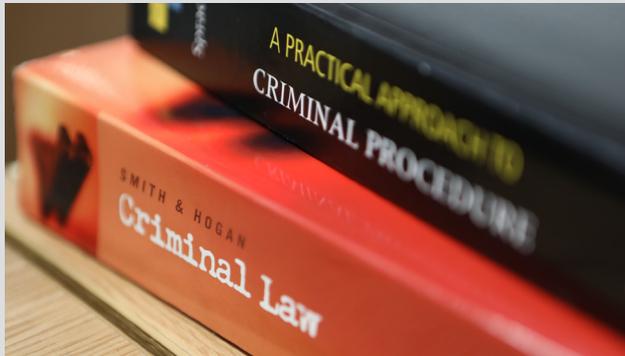
Our fire investigation dog (and his handler!) used their detective skills across our region some **150** times.

To visit one of our Safeside centres, please call / email: **Eastside** on 0121 380 6429 / safeside.eastside@wmfs.net or **Handsworth** on 0121 380 7566 / safeside.handsworth@wmfs.net



PREVENTION

PROTECTION CASE STUDIES



COURT CASE STUDY 1:

JD Sports Fashion were fined £60,000 after our officers identified fire safety breaches.

The company admitted six offences at a court hearing in October 2017.

Serious breaches were discovered, including an escape route blocked by crates and stock which reduced its width to just 30cm.

The case followed pre-Christmas fire safety checks at the company's JD Sports and Scotts stores in Merry Hill shopping centre, Brierley Hill.

In spite of our warning that we would be revisiting, breaches were again identified when we returned two weeks later.

The company was fined £10,000 for each of six offences and ordered to pay costs of nearly £7,500.

It's our business to help businesses and other organisations keep their staff, residents, visitors and buildings safe from fire.

We do our very best to give clear advice, and to identify where improvements can be made.

In the most serious instances we take enforcement action – 17 such cases in 2017/18. It's a last resort, but necessary if lives are in danger.

COURT CASE STUDY 2:

Two men got suspended jail sentences after serious fire safety breaches were discovered at a five-storey hotel in Birmingham. Its rooms were sometimes used to house people in emergency need.

Our officers were tipped off by a concerned contractor.

The defendants, together responsible for ensuring fire safety at the hotel, each admitted six offences.

They had failed to review a Fire Risk Assessment while refurbishment work was taking place, leading to what was described as a 'woeful' catalogue of other serious risks for guests and staff.

Each man was sentenced to eight months in jail, suspended for two years, to run concurrently for each of the offences.

One was also ordered to pay prosecution costs of nearly £30,000.

BUSINESS SUPPORT VEHICLES



Fire alarms going off when there's no fire can cost your business money.

They can also mean our firefighters responding unnecessarily when they might be needed for a real emergency somewhere else.

We have three vehicles and a team dedicated to bringing down the number of 'unwanted fire signals' from automatic fire alarms, through business engagement, education and support.

MODERN DAY SLAVERY

HELP FREE THE UK FROM MODERN SLAVERY Modern-day slavery (MDS) can involve people being held in dangerous, fire-trap conditions.

We've been involved in a number of multi-agency operations to combat the issue here in the West Midlands.

We also provide an online learning package to help our staff spot the signs of MDS and how to respond if they do.



PROTECTION

RESPONSE

DEALING EXCELLENTLY WITH EMERGENCY INCIDENTS

RESPONSE DEALING EXCELLENTLY WITH EMERGENCY INCIDENTS

Getting to you quickly when you call 999 in an emergency will always be a priority for us. Here in the West Midlands we aim to get to incidents where life or property is in danger in an average of just **5 MINUTES**

999 We frequently exceed this standard.

This is our response work. We pride ourselves on doing it assertively, effectively and safely.

Our response services protect lives, properties and businesses. They help to keep the West Midlands' transport networks moving and the economy running.

In 2017/18 our Fire Control handled nearly 52,000 999 calls...



Our firefighters attended 28,000 incidents...



... in an average of 77 seconds per call.



... and they arrived at the most serious in an average of just 4 mins 45 secs.



Our response priorities focus on dealing excellently with emergency incidents:

- the most serious emergency incidents will be attended, on average, within five minutes to save life, protect homes and businesses, and keep our transport networks moving
- our commitment to operational excellence will reduce risk to life and property and enable an assertive, effective and safe emergency response to all incidents whilst supporting firefighter safety
- at all incidents we attend, we will lead and co-ordinate rescue operations whilst working collaboratively with other agencies to deliver an excellent response and meet public expectations
- we will enhance resilience and deliver a local, national and international response to major incidents, emerging threats, and humanitarian situations through our specialist response teams.



TECHNICALLY SPEAKING...



As well as responding to fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies, firefighters at two of our 38 fire stations form our Technical Rescue Unit (TRU).

TRU's rescue expertise can be called upon at a wide variety of incidents, such as **rescuing people from collapsed buildings, floods, height or confined spaces.**

Many members of TRU volunteer with colleagues from throughout our organisation to respond on behalf of the UK Government to scenes of international crisis, **under the banner of UK International Search and Rescue.**

They have been deployed to some of the world's most devastating disaster areas.

999EYE GIVES UNIQUE INSIGHT



People who use their smartphone to **call us on 999** could now also be asked to **send photos or videos of what they can see.**

We came up with the idea of '999Eye' and developed it with Capita.

It has been used more than **1,100 times to help operators** in our **Fire Control**, ensure that the most appropriate resources are sent to incidents. You should still always call 999 in an emergency. But now our Fire Control staff have the option, once initial resources have been dispatched, to text you a secure link so you can send us images of the incident.

WE'RE READY!



Preparing, training and testing how we operate is 24/7 business at our **38 fire stations.**

We also stage **104 large-scale training exercises** every year – **that's two a week!**

These are often with colleagues from other organisations like the police, ambulance service and West Midlands councils.



RESPONSE

HOW WE DO IT

THE PLAN 2018-2021
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

12

EFFECTIVE DELIVERY THROUGH COLLABORATION - BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Our Government funding reduced by £37m between 2010/11 and 2018/19. It will be cut by a further £1m in 2019/20.

Part of our wide-ranging work to manage these cuts is seeking and developing different, better and new services for our communities.

We've explored **commissioning, commercial work, sponsorship** and **'social value'** to raise £2m towards our funding deficit and enable us to **continue delivering frontline services with no adverse impact on our communities.**

We're starting to see the benefits, with projects that allow us not only to achieve our own priorities and objectives but those of the organisations we're working with in the public, private and third sectors.

In Coventry, Wolverhampton and Dudley our frontline staff are responding to **elderly, frail and vulnerable people** who call a council-run service for **help if they've had a fall at home.**

Our average response time is just **22 minutes**, compared with a previous wait of sometimes hours.

This is firefighters and staff **helping vulnerable people live independent, safe and healthy lives – in their own homes, for as long as possible.** Read more about our health-related work at wmfs.net/our-services/our-health-work/

Through our commercial work **we engage with business to ensure that fire safety is top of their agenda.** We work with big-name companies such as **Nationwide** and **Wilmott Dixon.** We provide firefighting skills to manufacturing companies such **Jaguar Land Rover** and our other partners include the **Home Office** and the **Department of Trade and Industry.**

We also develop people who manage others' safety. For example, after the **Grenfell Tower tragedy**, many other Fire and Rescue Services have asked to use our **high-rise training facility** at Oldbury which is the tallest in the country. **For every £1 spent with us, West Midlands communities receive £5 of 'social value'.**

From finance through to our vehicles, technology and communications, we work hard to ensure that our services are delivered in the most relevant, effective and efficient ways. Everything we do is achieved by our cost-effective, flexible and agile workforce.

At a time of unprecedented change and financial challenges for the public sector, our staff keep finding exciting, new ways to transform the services we provide and achieve even more with less.

If you think there's a way we can work together, please contact:

Business Development Team

0121 380 6284

e-mail: businessdevelopment@wmfs.net

We're seeking sponsorship for our many projects with young, unemployed or elderly people, plus others who are marginalised and vulnerable.

We also have exciting partnership opportunities to work with our Research and Development team.



HOW WE DO IT

EFFECTIVE DELIVERY THROUGH COLLABORATION - PEOPLE



PEOPLE

We really **value** the **trust** our communities place in our organisation and staff.

It lets us into the lives of some of the **West Midlands' most vulnerable residents**.

People in poor health or from poorer backgrounds are more at risk from fire and other dangers. So we focus our prevention work on keeping them safe.

We want our workforce to reflect the **amazing diversity** of the West Midlands. We do a lot of work to make sure we attract and **recruit** people from groups that are under-represented here at West Midlands Fire Service.

We look for a lot of qualities:

genuine **professional** **dedicated**
caring **flexible** **agile**
accountable **resilient** **open to change** **adaptable** **innovative**

A large organisation like ours needs **effective leadership**, so we invest a lot in **training and development**.

We aim to use all of our resources **effectively and efficiently**, and know the importance of looking after our staff's **physical, emotional and mental, health and wellbeing**.

We ask a lot of them, so it's important our staff feel **valued, happy and supported** so they can provide excellent services.

The people who work for us here at West Midlands Fire Service are our finest asset.

Without them, we couldn't achieve what we do for the people of the West Midlands. That's why we have a set of strategic priorities dedicated to them and members of our community to ensure:

- an agile, flexible and accountable workforce, to enable the sustained delivery of our strategy by individuals and teams through adaptability, authenticity and cohesion
- an environment where benefits of physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing are understood and valued equally, to enable our staff to respond positively to opportunities for change
- Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) will be enabled for the most vulnerable people in our communities, by addressing social and health inequalities
- we have a workforce reflective of the communities we serve. Through an approach known as 'positive action' we will attract, recruit and support progression for individuals with protected characteristics.



HOW WE DO IT

The focus of our ICT (Information and Communications Technology) is:

EFFECTIVE DELIVERY THROUGH COLLABORATION - ICT



Using our resources effectively and efficiently is really important to us.

Technology plays a massive part in helping us to make the West Midlands **safer, stronger and healthier**.

Across our **prevention, protection and response** work it's vital that our systems allow us to make **evidence-based decisions**.

Our emergency 999 systems help our staff in fire control send the appropriate response to an incident.

Satellite mapping lets us see the precise location of our fire engines.

And our radio and **communications network** lets us share **vital information** with our firefighters as they're on their way to an incident. When they arrive, **technology helps to keep them safe**.

As our workforce becomes more mobile, and spends as much time as possible in the community, they need to be able to access accurate and useful information when they need it.

This is key to working with the most **vulnerable people in our communities** as well as **collaborating with other agencies in delivering joined-up services**.

We continue to lead the way in many areas.

A great example of this is how we position our resources based on real-time risk, to support our **5-minute attendance standard**. If we're experiencing high demand during a major incident, we can re-distribute our remaining vehicles and crews to ensure the **greatest levels of emergency cover across the West Midlands**.

- provide assurance and intelligence for evidence-based decisions with accurate, useful and timely information provided to our communities and our mobile workforce
- enable the secure and reliable sharing of data with our partners and the cost-effective and joined-up delivery of services to the most vulnerable people in our communities
- our digital strategy will improve user experience and enable assertive, effective and safe delivery of services through collaboration with individuals, teams and partners.

