

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

Operational Response Strategy 2018-22

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Where we are now.....	4
Making sure the right resources are in the right place at the right time	6
Where next... ..	10
Emergency response provision... ..	10
Operational capability... ..	11
Operational learning.....	11
Leadership and cultural change... ..	12
Productivity, savings and efficiencies.....	13
Action plan	15

Introduction

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to **working together, saving lives and reducing harm**. Our objectives and strategies focus on home safety, road safety, assisting businesses, responding to emergencies, and protecting the wider community from the impact of major events.

We recognise the need to continually improve our emergency response in line with our Customer and Corporate Plan. It aims to put in context the progress made since the last operational strategy, where we are now, and where we plan to be in the future. This strategy has been written to complement the seven other corporate strategies as well as our aims and objectives set out in the Customer and Corporate Plan. This strategy is intended to be for our customers, partners, interested members of the public and everyone that works for us.

Operational response is overseen by the Assistant Director, Response, who has responsibility for five operational Group offices and 56 fire stations that deliver the operational service to customers. The Assistant Director, Response, is also responsible for the Operational Policy and Development (OPD) team that ensures, through research and development and through the provision of operational guidance, vehicles and equipment, that every firefighter who works for us does their job as effectively as possible.

Where we are now...

Our Fleet: The majority of our emergency response is delivered by one of three categories of fire engines that respond to incidents. These are determined by the equipment they carry and range from Heavy Rescue Pumps (HRP), Rescue Pumps (RP) and Pumps (P). There is also a fleet of 'specials' such as height vehicles, command support units, foam tenders and incident support units, etc, that are mobilised in support.

999 call handling: When we receive a 999 call we endeavour to gain as much information as we can to quickly determine what level of resources need to be sent. When we deploy fire engines to an incident, we need to move others through a series of stand-by moves to ensure adequate cover is maintained and that subsequent calls receive as quick an attendance as possible.

Pre-determined attendances: In order to help everyone that works for us in taking 999 calls, and ensure our response is as quick as possible, we use pre-determined attendances that allocate the correct initial level of resource to different incident types so that firefighters can start work safely and effectively. So for example, we automatically despatch two fire engines to house fires because we can anticipate the likely demand on crews when they first arrive. If, on arrival, it is apparent that more resources are required, these can be requested from the scene or en-route if further calls suggest the incident is deteriorating quickly. We use first impressions messages to help build a common picture of the incident from the outset for those not at the scene. We also visit sites to assess what they might need, should we attend an incident there, and gather information on special risks.

Our approach to the crewing of fire engines: A fire engine is sent out with a minimum of four firefighters made up of a driver, incident commander and two qualified breathing apparatus wearers. We have been trialling the despatch of fire engines with three firefighters when four are not available. This enables us to make the best use of the skills and equipment we have when a call comes in but there are insufficient numbers to make up a full crew. This has an obvious benefit to the public who receive a quicker response while back-up is sent from further afield. We believe this is what the public would expect and it enables us to demonstrate the best use of resources and value for money.

Incident command: Incidents are managed under the 'Incident Command System' to ensure effective and safe command and control. The more serious the incident, the more senior the officer who is sent to take control and oversee operations.

It's not just fires... Although the majority of the public would associate us with fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs), we do respond to a much wider range of emergencies such as rescues from height, flooding and animal rescues. We are constantly reviewing risks to the county with our partners, and we work closely with them to ensure we provide the best service to the public, while providing value for money to the taxpayers of Kent and Medway. One area where we have seen real value-added is in our emergency medical response activity in support of the South East Coastal Ambulance Service (SECamb). Given our crews' medical training and the provision of defibrillators on our emergency vehicles, we are now able to respond to people suffering from immediately life-threatening medical issues, such as cardiac arrest, where we have a nearer resource than the ambulance service, although we always stress an ambulance is on the way.

But, as described in the Responding to Emergencies strategy that preceded this plan, our emergency response starts long before we receive a 999 call and a huge amount of planning is done to make sure that we are able to respond when you need us.

Making sure the right resources are in the right place at the right time

'Resources' refers to our fire stations and our equipment, including our fleet of emergency response vehicles, and everyone who works for us. In order to respond to emergencies effectively we need to be sure that our stations are in the best possible locations and are staffed by the right number of people, at the right time, with the right skills. In 2011 we reviewed the location of our stations and the number of our fire engines through a project known as the **Review of Emergency Response Provision (RERP)**.

By looking at risk¹, demand² and isolation³, the review determined the right level of emergency cover for an area and the right location for fire engines, in order to meet the risk and demand of both the local area and across the county. This resulted in a decision to close 11 stations and build up to five new ones in more appropriate locations. It is important to note that the review also recognised that more than one incident can occur at any given time, as well as the need to provide cover for larger incidents where additional fire engines would be needed.

As part of that programme we redeveloped Medway Fire Station (now called Chatham). One fire engine remains there, with the other relocated to the brand new fire station at Rochester to provide quicker response times to that part of the Medway Towns. The new station at Ash-cum-Ridley is now fully operational. We are in the process of building a new fire station in Ramsgate at a site in Newington which is scheduled to go live in early 2019, and we are currently looking for suitable sites in other key areas.

During the day we now move fire engines from Dartford, Thames-side and Maidstone to other locations where it is very difficult to get daytime cover through on-call firefighters. This spreads emergency cover more widely across the county. It also improves access to incidents on the M25.

Our current key performance indicators are to reach 80% of life-threatening calls within 10 minutes. In order to achieve this we endeavour to have, on average, 50 fire engines available both day and night. Our current performance against this target is consistently in the high 70s% which is lower than we would like it to be, but on-call recruitment during 2018 is one way we hope to improve this.

Whilst the RERP project identified locations of fire stations and fire engines, it did not assess skills and equipment, and subsequently what type of vehicle would be best suited for an area. This is a natural progression from the review and so the **Operational Capability**

¹ Risk is the combination of factors that add up to the likelihood of an incident in an area.

² Demand is the number of incidents that happen in a defined area over a defined period of time.

³ Isolation is the distance of a place or community, measured in travel time, from the nearest fire engine when it's at the fire station and ready to respond.

Review (OCR) was implemented to research these issues. This new review analysed and researched every aspect of operational response over a four-year period through a series of workstreams starting with our core business of firefighting and road traffic collisions and progressing to specialist rescue operations, working at height, assistance to other agencies, major transport incidents, incident information management, hazardous materials, water, flooding and unstable ground, and provision of welfare. The review used our extensive database and analytical capabilities to provide a series of research-based recommendations with a blend of professional judgement. Some of the most significant findings and improvements are listed below.

Issue/finding	Response
New approaches to firefighting	Introduction of offensive exterior attack and associated equipment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of: 22mm hose-reel tubing (to provide greater flow of water); • Electronic Pump Controls, Cobra, Fogspike; • Increased positive-pressure ventilation fans (PPVs); • Thermal scanning and introduction of second Thermal Image Cameras (TICs); • Compressed Air Foam (CAF) systems; • New firefighting tactics course.
Introduction of Enhanced Availability (crewing with three)	Making use of a crew of three when full crew not available using the new technology listed above to support its introduction. Enhanced situational awareness, command and operational discretion training.
Improved response to RTCs	Introduction of RTC categories and improved question-sets to assist the Fire and Rescue Control Centre (FRCC) to determine the most appropriate resources to mobilise. Upgraded Hydraulic Rescue Equipment (HRE) and bespoke stabilisation kit.
Realignment of front-line appliances	We bought 29 new smaller fire engines carrying the new equipment listed above. Introduction of three categories of fire engine. Standardised inventory to assist FRCC mobilise the nearest, most appropriate resource.
New Height Vehicles	The replacement of five Height Vehicles with three state of the art vehicles that combine the features of a turntable ladder with an aerial ladder platform, with minimal impact on attendance times across the county, at a saving of £1million. These also incorporate rescue loader attachments for use with bariatric incidents.
Assistance to other agencies - Enhanced Medical Response (EMR).	Improved IECR training, introduction of additional equipment including defibrillators and observation kits, MOU with SECamb for responding to the most urgent calls, Introduction of new forced entry equipment.

Issue/finding	Response
Improved specialist rescue capabilities.	Review of line rescue, and resilience created with the use of the Technical Rescue team. Removal of chainsaws from Larkfield with enhanced capability provided by the Technical Rescue team. Review of Animal Rescue and approval gained from Authority to continue the service.
Missing persons	Collaboration with Kent Police and Kent Search and Rescue, with additional training for firefighters and officers in assisting with location of vulnerable missing persons.
Improved incident information	Upgraded Command Support Units (CSUs), jointly badged for collaborative work, new nominal roll system and introduction of the Aerial Drone and sonar equipment.
Improved welfare arrangements for crews	More resilient relief arrangements introduced which include the provision for feeding on the incident ground, removal of the notional four-hour relief and reduction in the time crews and engines are unavailable due to welfare. This also reduced the number of relief crew moves and subsequent reduction in fuel costs, carbon footprint and managerial time to organise the logistics. Hot packs issued, shelters provided with CSUs, Memo of Understanding established with the Rapid Relief Team charity for the provision of welfare arrangements at the scene of large incidents, supply of second kit bags.

Having decided *where* our stations should be and *what* capability is required at each location, we were then able to review *when* our staff would be required through the **Variable Crewing** programme of projects. Our stations are staffed by crews providing either ‘on-call’ cover (firefighters who go to their station when we receive a call) or ‘positive’ cover (firefighters who are already working at a station) or a mixture of the two. Details of this approach are set out in the **People Strategy**, elsewhere in this suite of documents.

In 2011 we completed a move from the retained duty system, a system where somebody living within a set distance from a station could be employed as a firefighter offering cover at times when they were available, to a contractual on-call arrangement which, for the first time, gave us absolute certainty about the fire engines we have available to respond to emergencies at any given time.

We took the opportunity to restructure the service delivery side of the organisation, moving to a model which links stations together into what we call clusters⁴. This model makes it easier for stations to work and train together.

⁴ A cluster is two or more stations which have been grouped based on those that most frequently work together. Two or more clusters form a ‘group’ for management purposes.

In order to provide you with the best possible emergency response it is important that the positive hours firefighters work match times which are more likely to be busy. We are starting to assess whether or not we have the right balance at present and will look to adjust positive hours and on-call times as necessary. Details of how we plan to do this can be found in the **People Strategy**.

Where next...

The fire and rescue service cannot stand still. It will continue to change and evolve in response to the changing needs of the customers it serves, new duties or expectations set by Government, new areas of partnership working, and by our budget.

We know that budgets are likely to be squeezed further in the future, and while we will always strive to balance risk, demand and isolation, managing a service within budget will become more and more important. This does not mean that we spend beyond our means now, far from it in fact. We have a track record of making significant savings through changing how we deliver the service, without ever impacting on the service received by customers. But the likelihood is that, with significant issues likely to be raised from the outcomes of the enquiry into the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, and continued downwards pressure on our funding, we must plan for doing more with less resource, or at the very best, stabilise our funding and deliver far more in terms of demonstrable outcomes for the public across all that we do as a service. The **Community Safety** strategy discusses approaches to evaluation, and return on investment within home safety and business fire safety work. We need to make sure that similar rigour is applied to operational service delivery too, and we will do this via our quality plan. The quality plan formalises operational learning process, debriefs and the data we collect from incidents to feed the development of new procedures, which our learning and development team will then create the right training for. Most importantly we will then be able to test that the training has had impact and changed behaviour on the incident ground.

We will always make any change based on evidence, and when the change required is clear we will make that change as fast as possible. By engaging with everyone that works for us, we will use their ideas and co-design with them wherever possible.

Emergency response provision...

As levels of demand in our core business of fire and road traffic collisions changes over time, and new roles, especially responding to immediately life-threatening medical emergencies alongside the ambulance service, makes us far busier, we need to constantly assess and test our planning assumptions. This enables us to get the right level of resource available day to day, with the ability to throw everything we have at a really major incident. And while a major incident is dealt with, still be able to deliver a service to anyone that needs us at the same time.

Over the life of this strategy we will therefore:

- Challenge the planning assumptions and commission various emergency response models to provide for VFM and efficiency matched to impact on service/performance;
- Test and challenge our current performance standards to explore opportunities for improvement;
- Reassess the current weightings around risk, demand and isolation, and include affordability in our future planning models;
- Review and refresh the current stand-by policy.

Operational capability...

We will invest in equipment that makes it safer for everyone that works for us to offensively fight fires, reducing fire spread and damage to people's homes and businesses, and minimising burns injuries to customers by rapid cooling for at least twenty minutes before handing them over the ambulance service. Equipment will be smaller, lighter and better quality, and so will our workwear and personal protective equipment.

Over the life of this strategy we will therefore:

- Embed customer focus into all aspects of operational response and review our procedures and practices to meet customer needs;
- Introduce 'customer support' as a functional role in incident command;
- Improve the operational support for FRCC at the time of call and reduce the command gap from time of call to our arrival at incident;
- Trial methods to assist with the transfer of information from the caller at the scene to FRCC;
- Continue to refine and improve the question-sets used by FRCC and reviewing our fire survival guidance;
- Introduce fire hoods, develop a better approach to how we treat burns and scalds at incidents, and put more focus on human behaviour to help shape our advice and response;
- Introduce the use of fire curtains to protect people as they evacuate and assist firefighters to limit damage from fire spread;
- Continue the roll out of Enhanced Availability across Kent and Medway;
- Move Emergency Medical Response (EMR) from project to 'business as usual';
- Review the possibility of using on-call appliances for training purposes to improve utilisation of the vehicles;
- Implement the next phase of the operational capability review and specifically:
 - Specialist Rescue – review of Technical Rescue;
 - Water, flooding and unstable ground;
 - Review of incident management;
 - Hazardous materials;
 - Assistance to other agencies - missing persons and concern for welfare/falls/bariatric calls.

Operational learning...

We will make sure everyone that works for us is trained to an appropriate level, and that they are personally responsible for their own development. We will maintain a training and exercising programme to make sure we are ready to deal with any incident we should or could reasonably foresee happening in Kent or Medway. And we will use the principles of joint working to deal with multi-agency incidents.

Over the life of this strategy we will therefore:

- Improve how we learn from incidents by delivering the quality plan – and link incident data to changes in policy and procedures and subsequently behaviours on the incident ground;
- Link learning to operational procedures by aligning subject matter workstream leads/experts;
- Keep developing our understanding of needs of people under the protected characteristics described in the Equality Act 2010 and respond to those needs;
- Review our operational response to high-rise properties following the outcomes of the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower disaster;
- Reassess our tactics when dealing with incidents in specialised housing, such as sheltered accommodation and care homes, linked to the aspirations as set out in the Community Safety strategy;
- Review officer training and site familiarisation processes used by our firefighters and emergency planning teams to pre-plan our response to incidents;
- Exploring learning through Operational Discretion workshops and Command Debriefs;
- Review our Fire Investigation arrangements to ensure learning is fed back into the organisation;
- Roll 'situational awareness' training out to whole-time crews (links to Enhanced Availability);
- Carry out a review of specialist skills and align learning to address workforce succession needs;
- Conduct a review of on-call training;
- Maintain a robust training and exercising programme, both as a service individually, and in a multi-agency setting, and learn from those exercises.

Leadership and cultural change...

Across the organisation we are moving decision-making down to the right level and that level is now often with managers at the front-line. Listening to everyone that works for us, there has been a clear message from across the organisation - they want to own the responsibility and accountability for decisions. We need everyone that works for us to have the confidence to do what is right for the customer they are serving, and to know the boundaries in terms of our expectations and the law, within which they operate. Clearly people have to be able to understand and justify their decisions. Decision-logging is critical to this and needs to improve.

Over the life of this strategy we will therefore:

- Free up middle managers to coach and mentor supervisory managers/crews;
- Invest in managers of the future to ensure both managerial and operational command experience is developed through effective succession planning. This will

include Watch Manager Development Centres as well as a review of the operational rota systems to ensure people are mentored and developed so that they can fulfil their true potential. The review of Incident Management will also set clear expectations of Flexi-duty officers;

- In advance of the introduction of 'One Leader' trial different working patterns and duties to understand the most effective use of this new role on stations;
- Support the implementation of the Inspiring Leadership Framework to improve our officers' professional skills;
- Develop 'specialist' subject matter experts for key areas of activity across the officer corps;
- Explore station benchmark metrics and review the impacts of devolved decision-making against outcomes, e.g. devolved responsibility to Watch Managers for granting overtime;
- Use apprenticeships as a recognised career route to satisfy workforce planning needs;
- Review long term support arrangements for On-Call stations/Sections;
- Clearly communicate the core things firefighters need to know via the 'Policy on a Page' concept;
- Embed the principles of the 'Think Contaminants' project into everyday working life;
- Take back responsibility for Community Safety Partnerships' representation from Community Safety;
- Make sure all learning investment is linked to the skills, knowledge and competence of the workforce and our future operational needs, and encourage membership of the Institute of Fire Engineers;
- Improving decision-logging at all levels.

Productivity, savings and efficiencies...

Whilst we have made savings, the expectation of Government is that we will need to create more. We accept we can be more productive without an impact on cost, for example by responding to immediately life-threatening medical emergencies, and working more closely with the Police. We will monitor any impact on our core business of fires and road traffic collisions of performing these roles, but to date there has been none.

We need to be operationally ready to deal with any incident, so over the life of this strategy we will therefore:

- Introduce National Operational Guidance and review how we communicate operational policy in a more user-friendly and effective way. This will include the introduction of 'Policy on a Page' for operational managers;
- Review our fleet size and how it is managed, including the use of reserve appliances, to improve utilisation rates and make capital savings. This will include replacement requirements in line with any changes identified through reviews of emergency

response provision. It will also include the exploration of 'sealed' fire engines similar to the 'make ready' model used by the Ambulance service;

- Review our approach to 'smaller' firefighting vehicles and continue to test their viability within Kent and Medway;
- Review barriers to productivity on stations to ensure we can continue to meet key objectives and priorities such as Safe and Well visits to the public.

Action plan

Ref	Actions	Years 1, 2, 3		
1	Commission analysis work on fire cover planning assumptions, performance standards and risk/demand/isolation weightings. To consider degradation and options for savings.			
2	Review stand-by policy.			
3	Prepare for and go live with the new Ramsgate fire station.			
4	Engage and meet the requirements of the customer focus project through customer advocate role.			
5	Work with newly created Operational Watch Manager post in FRCC to identify opportunities for improvement.			
6	Trial new 999 call technology.			
7	Review 'fire survival' guidance and question sets.			
8	Implement action plan from 'Saving lives is not enough' report.			
9	Introduce fire hoods.			
10	Introduce smoke curtains.			
11	Continue to roll out Enhanced Availability training.			
12	Move EMR to BAU.			
13	Replace fire ground radios.			
14	Install/introduce CCTV to heavy fleet.			
15	Implement next phase of OCR: TR Review. Water/Flooding/Unstable Ground Review. Incident Management Review. Hazardous Materials Review. Assistance to other agencies – missing persons, concern for welfare, falls, bariatric calls.			
16	Conduct On-Call recruitment for daytime cover.			
17	Recruitment campaign for On-Call at new Ramsgate fire station.			
19	Review 5 th Watch.			
20	Explore opportunities to support On-Call rostering with software systems.			
21	Implement OA plan.			
22	Explore opportunities to link OCR with Training Terms.			
23	Review operational documentation to align with Training Terms.			
24	Review PIAs for operational procedures to cater for protected characteristics.			
25	Review operational High-Rise procedures			
26	Implement training, familiarisation and operational planning for regulated buildings and sheltered accommodation.			
27	Review Officer Command Training.			
28	Review Fire Investigation function.			
29	Roll out 'situational awareness' training to whole-time crews.			
30	Review the role of GMTs.			
31	Introduce development posts on FDS rota.			
32	Conduct Watch Manager development centres.			
33	Conduct and evaluate 'One leader on station' trials.			
35	Set station benchmark metrics and review the impacts of devolved decision making.			

36	Review and agree longer term support arrangements for On-Call.			
37	Continue to embed the principles of the 'Think Contaminants' project into everyday life.			
38	Review and adapt our involvement in CSPs.			
39	Implement NOG.			
40	Review fleet arrangements.			
41	Review the concept of 'Smaller' fire engines.			
42	In conjunction with 35 above, review barriers to productivity which may affect station performance/outcomes.			