



County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Service



County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Collaboration Agreement: Statement of Intent

The three fire and rescue services (FRS) covering the areas of: County Durham and Darlington; Northumberland; and Tyne and Wear are facing similar challenges. The threat of continued funding cuts, increased operating costs and restrictions on council tax income all place additional financial demands on the three FRS as we strive to provide our communities with the best possible services.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a statutory duty on all emergency services to collaborate where it is in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness. The three Chief Fire Officers are of the view there are numerous opportunities between the three FRS to improve efficiency and/or effectiveness through sensible collaboration.

There is a strong and growing relationship between the three FRS based on trust and mutual respect which should enable opportunities for ever-closer working.

There are significant opportunities for collaboration which include:

- Reduced costs through removal of duplication;
- Shared operational and organisational learning;
- Better outcomes for the communities who use our services;
- Increased resilience.

Therefore, we intend to enhance our collaboration in order to help us to meet the challenges of the future.

We will consider the potential for collaborative activity in all our areas of spend, paying particular attention to the following aims:

- (1) BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY** – The collaboration produces quantifiable efficiencies, either on implementation or in the longer term.
- (2) IMPROVED OUTCOMES** – The collaboration maintains or improves the service we provide to local people and local communities.

- (3) REDUCED DEMAND** – The collaboration should contribute towards our longer term strategic objective of decreasing risk in communities and reducing demand on services.
- (4) INCREASED RESILIENCE** – The collaboration should increase each FRS ability to cope with adversity, spate conditions or to recover more quickly from such conditions.

Collaborative working will be explored in all areas of responsibilities across the three FRS where there is potential for the above aims to be achieved. It is also acknowledged that each FRS may already have collaborative plans or be in service level agreements with other partners which preclude them from taking forward some collaboration opportunities. This specifically applies to Northumberland FRS given their position as a County Council FRS and the unique relationship they have with Northumberland County Council. Nothing in this agreement precludes the parties from collaborating with other agencies.

Consideration will also be given to when there are opportunities to involve either Durham Constabulary or Northumbria Police in the discussions around wider collaboration. There are already formal mechanisms in place to enable this discussion to take place.

A work programme will be drawn up and agreed to identify priority areas for collaboration. Initial areas to explore will include, but are not limited to:

- Fire Investigation;
- Health, Fitness and Wellbeing;
- Water and hydrant management;
- Workforce Development including:
 - Recruitment
 - Talent management and succession planning
 - Cross service secondments

The three FRS acknowledge that there may be times when the three organisations make different levels of savings in order to gain the overall advantages of collaboration.

Governance arrangements will be established which provide a mechanism to drive forward efficient decision making and implementation whilst ensuring all parties are properly represented. Business cases for each of the opportunities identified will be developed which outline the potential benefits and the potential costs of implementation.

The three fire and rescue services will review progress under this agreement every six months.

Signed on behalf of:

County Durham and Darlington FRS

Name:..... Position:

Signature: Date:

Northumberland FRS

Name:..... Position:

Signature: Date:

Tyne and Wear FRS

Name:..... Position:

Signature: Date:

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