



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

Annual Service Plan  
2008 - 2009

If you would like to obtain further information about any aspect of this Annual Service Plan 2008 - 2009 document please contact us, using one of the methods shown below:

**Letter:** Corporate Planning  
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,  
Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham B4 7DE.

**Phone:** 0121 380 6901

**Fax:** 0121 380 7007

**E-mail:** [corporateplanning@wmfs.net](mailto:corporateplanning@wmfs.net)

You can also visit our website at [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)

Arabic	هذه المعلومات متوفرة بلغات وأشكال أخرى. ارجوك اتصل (0845 8009000) بالهاتف.
Bengali	এই তথ্যটি অন্যান্য ভাষা ও সেবার উদ্ভূত অন্যান্য নথিতে (সহজাতিক) দেয়া যাবে। অনুগ্রহ করে 0845 8009000 নম্বরে কল করুন।
Chinese	我們可以用其他語言和提供格式提供這份資料。請致電 0845 8009000。
Czech	Tyto informace mohou být k dispozici v jiných jazycích a formátech. Zatelefonojte prosím na 0845 8009000
Farsi	این اطلاعات به صورتها و زبانهای دیگر موجود است. لطفا با شماره زیر تماس بگیرید: 0845 8009000
French	Ces informations peuvent être mises à votre disposition dans d'autres langues et sous d'autres formats. Veuillez appeler le n° 0845 8009000
Gujarati	આ માહિતી અન્ય ભાષાઓમાં અને આકારોમાં પૂરી પાડવામાં આવી શકે છે. કૃપા કરી 0845 8009000 નંબરે કોલ કરો.
Kurdish	ئەم زانیاریەکان بە زمانەکانی تریشدا و بە شێوە گوناگونەکاندا پێشکەش دەکرێت. وە زانیاریەکانمان لە 0845 8009000 نۆمەرەوە پێشکەش دەکەین.

Polish	Niniejszą ulotkę Informacyjną otrzymać można również w innych językach i formatach. Bliższe informacje tel. 0845 8009000
Punjabi	ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਦੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਹੋਰ ਢੰਗਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਦੀ ਮੇਲ ਬਰਤ ਕਰੋ 0845 800 9000
Russian	Эта информационная листовка может быть получена на других языках и в других форматах. Ближайшие по телефону: 0845 8009000
Somali	Akhbaartan waxaa lagu heli karaa iyadoo u qoran siyaallo kale iyo afafka kale. Fadlan wac: 0845 8009000
Urdu	یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں اور دوسرے انداز میں بھی دستیاب کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ نامبر 0845 8009000 پر کال کیجئے
Vietnamese	Tin tức này có thể được cung cấp trong ngôn ngữ và hình thức khác. Làm ơn điện thoại số 0845 8009000

The information contained in this document can also be provided in other formats including Braille, audiotape and large print. Please call 0845 800 9000.

**To book a Free Home Fire Safety Check  
in your home, by your local firefighters  
Freephone 0800 389 5525  
or register via [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)**

Published by West Midlands Fire Service Marketing, Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham B4 7DE.

© West Midlands Fire Service Marketing 78•103. Photos © West Midlands Fire Service Photographic 2008

This document is produced on material which is obtained from a sustainable source and is ECF (Elemental Chlorine Free).

## Contents

Foreword	5
Our Fire and Rescue Service	6
Our Key Priorities	7
Our Service	8
Fire Development and Flashover	8
Our Plans for 2008 - 2009: Actions	10
Our Plans for 2008 - 2009: Prevention	12
Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC)	12
Working with children and young people	13
Fire Safety School Quiz	15
Reducing the impact of arson and fire crime	16
West Midlands Arson Task Force	17
Site Risk Survey	18
Our Plans for 2008 - 2009 Protection: Advice and Enforcement	19
Our Plans for 2008 - 2009: Emergency Response	20
Shannons Mill - 3 August 2007	22
Incident Support imaging System (ISiS)	24
Fire Cover Arrangements	26
Pump Rescue Water Tower	27
Flooding	28
Our Plans for 2008 - 2009: Organisation	31
Peer Support Officers	33
Our Targets for 2008 - 2009	36
Our Consultation	39
Changes to our Plan following consultation	40
Abbreviations	40



This map shows the West Midlands Fire Service area and the locations of our stations and fire safety centres.



## Joint Foreword from the Chief Fire Officer and Chairman of the Authority: Developing the Annual Service Plan



**Frank Sheehan QFSM**  
Chief Fire Officer  
West Midlands Fire Service



**Peter Howard**  
Chairman  
West Midlands Fire and  
Rescue Authority

Our intention is to work towards making risk management the driving force behind all of our actions, so that the service we deliver is the most efficient and effective at managing risk to local people.

The Annual Service Plan presented here combines our Integrated Risk Management (IRM) Action Plan with our Business Plan to ensure that our Corporate Objectives are driven by an assessment of risk in the community and analysis of how we intend to manage our resources as a result.

This plan helps to explain to our workforce and the communities that they serve some of the practical ways we will be attempting to reduce risk in the West Midlands and continue to strive towards our vision of "Making West Midlands Safer". It includes the risk management proposals that were subject to twelve weeks' internal and external consultation during 2007/2008 and refers to a summary of the consultation responses received and the Authority's responses to the points raised.

Our plans for the next year are driven by the need to target resources into prevention activities, areas where they are likely to have the greatest impact.

We will also make advances in the methods we use to protect and advise people in non-domestic properties to allow our Service to operate more efficiently.

At the same time, it is recognised that we will always need to provide an effective emergency response service and we will continue to introduce changes, where necessary, to make the best use of our resources.



## Our Fire and Rescue Service

The West Midlands Fire Service currently has 40 fire stations and five fire safety centres (see map on page 4).

The management structure is based upon the seven Local Authority areas within the West Midlands. We have a network of Operational Commanders who are responsible for managing local performance and service delivery for the areas of:-

- Birmingham Central
- Birmingham North
- Birmingham South

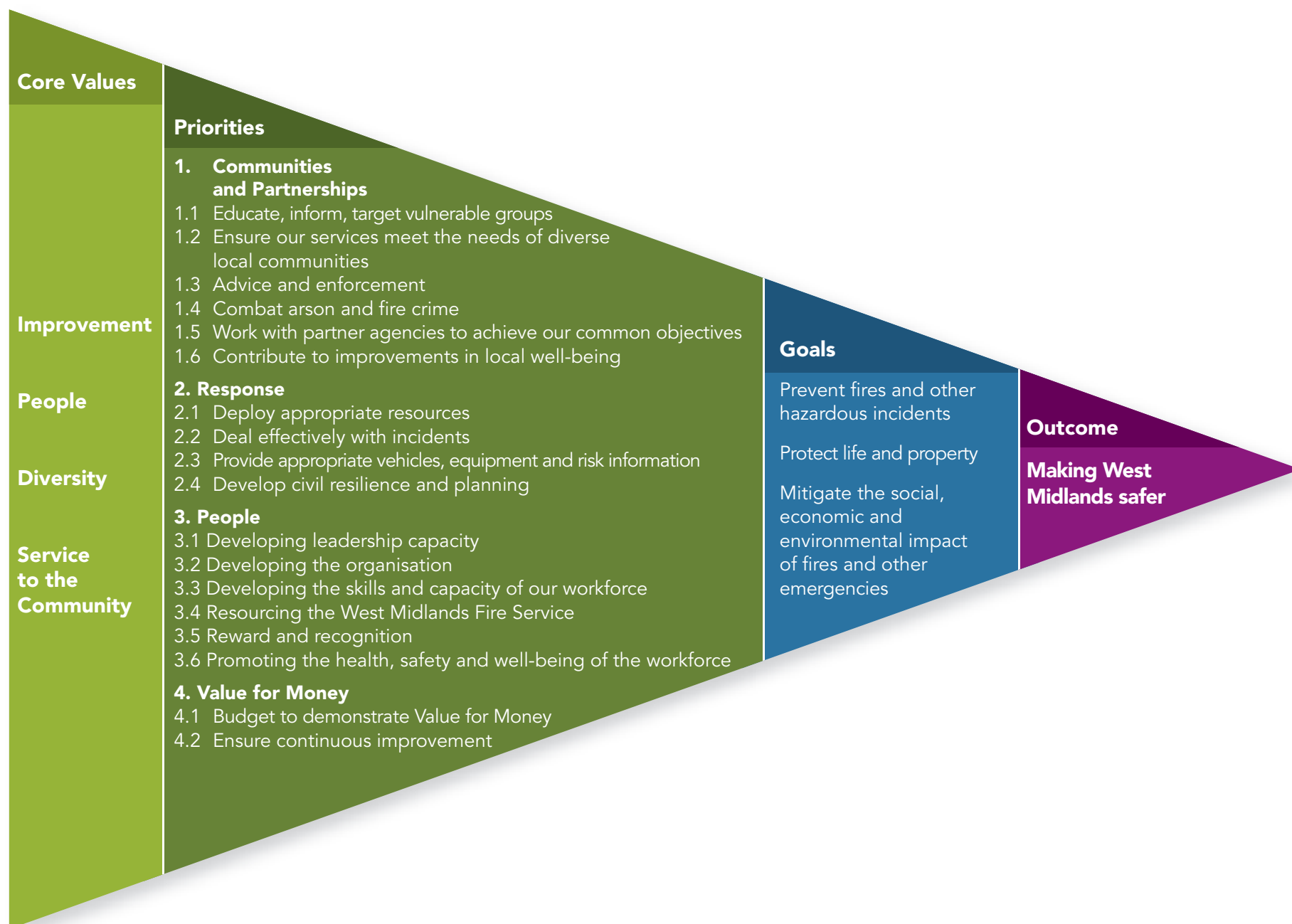
- Coventry
- Dudley
- Sandwell
- Solihull
- Walsall
- Wolverhampton

By aligning our service provision in this way we are able to make sure that our Operational Commanders and Station Commanders play a full and active role in local partnerships, for example Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) and Local Area Agreements (LAA). Working alongside our partner agencies in the local communities helps us to achieve much more than would be possible by acting in isolation.

We can participate fully in planning for the future needs of local communities and respond to issues on a local level. In addition we can contribute by:-

- Building and shaping local identity
- Representing the community
- Regulating harmful and disruptive behaviours
- Maintaining the structure of the community
- Helping to resolve disagreements
- Working to make the local economy more successful
- Understanding local needs and preferences, making sure that the right services are provided to local people
- Working with other partners to respond to complex challenges

## Our Key Priorities



## Our Service

Our most valuable resource is our staff. Everyone contributes towards our aims and helps us to achieve our objectives.

At the frontline there are the firefighting personnel responding not only to operational incidents but undertaking vital training and carrying out important community safety work. They visit schools, homes, businesses and work in partnership to help achieve our current vision statement.

Firefighters respond to calls, dress in protective clothing and navigate through traffic to arrive at the scene as quickly as possible. Safe working practices are adopted and they work together in a team to bring any situation under control.

To deal with a house fire, firefighters will wear breathing apparatus to ward off the effects of the smoke and heat whilst they check whether anyone has been left inside and then put the fire out.

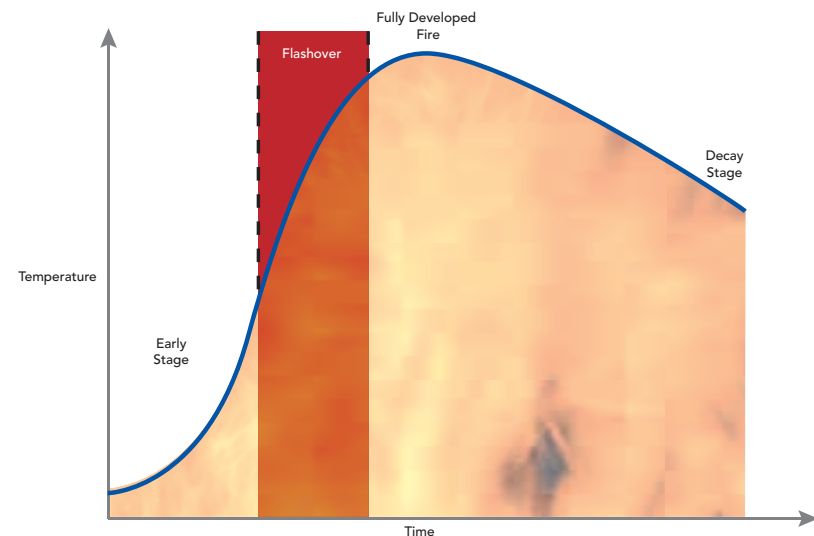
When a smoke alarm has been fitted in the house the occupants are given an early warning and have the chance to escape. By closing any doors as they make their way out they help to prevent the spread of heat and smoke within the house limiting the amount of damage that can be caused.

As a result of our work in the community, educating people about the dangers from fire, lives and property have been saved.

## Fire Development and Flashover

A working smoke alarm senses the unburnt products of combustion before the build up of smoke becomes life threatening. This early warning gives people time to raise the alarm and leave the property. It will also result in fire crews being committed to a fire in its early stages rather than one that has had sufficient time to develop into a flashover.

A flashover (illustrated below) is when the whole room becomes quickly engulfed in fire. The sooner the fire is detected, the quicker firefighters can attend and extinguish the fire before it has chance to reach the critical flashover stage. Risk to the occupier, firefighters and property is therefore greatly reduced.

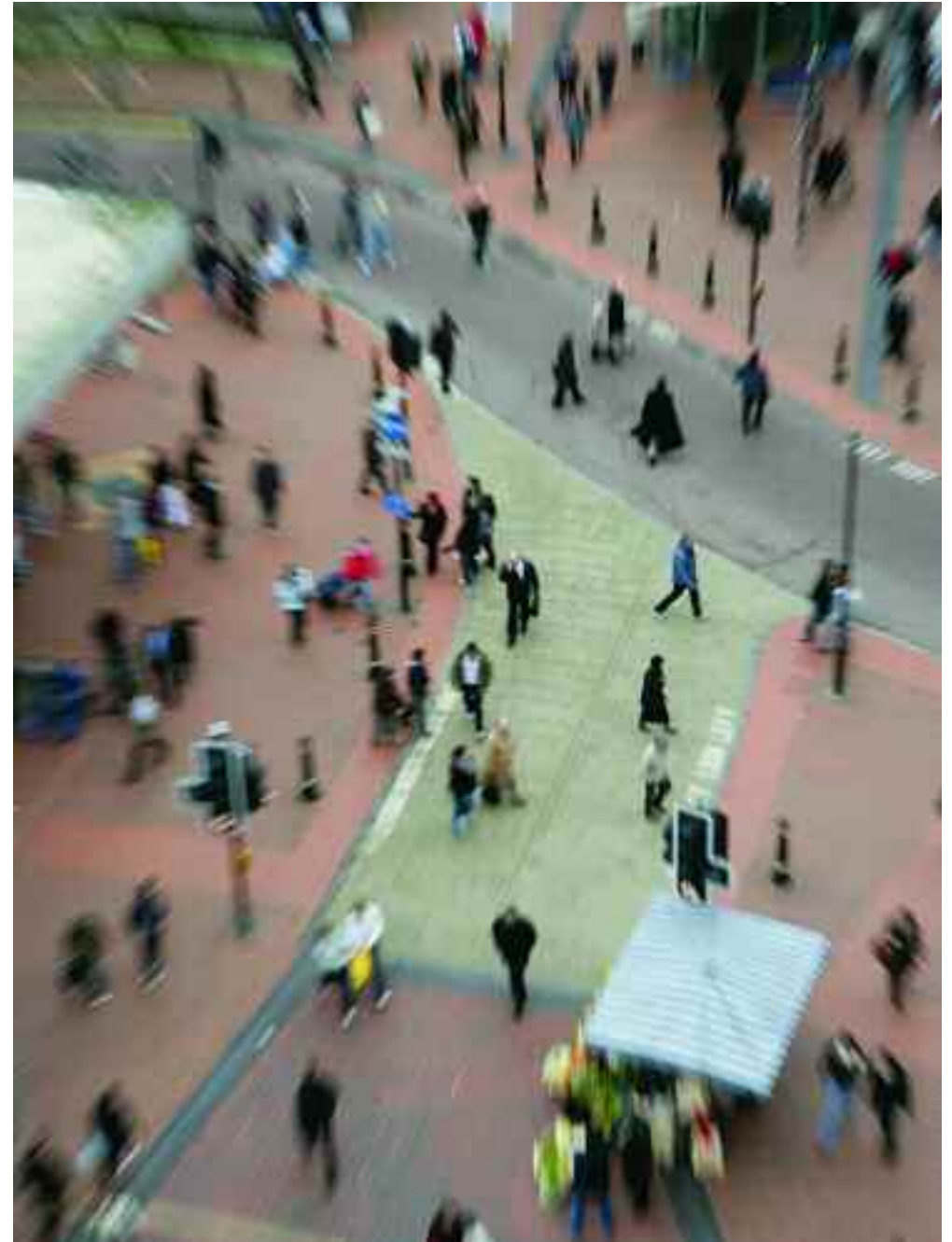


Emergency calls come into and are received by our fire control personnel who have to act promptly to obtain the correct information, often under difficult conditions. They mobilise the correct fire engines, specialist vehicles and officers that are required to deal with many and varied incidents.



Our professional, technical and administrative staff play an important role. There are a number of functions within the organisation that assists in making sure that the service delivered is first class. We have produced a number of supporting strategies to outline how services are to be delivered and how they are linked across the organisation; namely

- Learning and Development
- Estates
- Communication and Consultation
- People
- Technical Services
- Fleet Management
- Equality and Diversity
- Performance Management
- Information Communications Technology
- Procurement
- Operations
- Finance



## Our Plans for 2008 – 2009: Actions

Our intended actions for 2008 – 2009 are summarised below.

Further information can be found in our Corporate Strategy which is available on our website [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net).

We intend to:

- Reduce death, injury and the impact of property damage on our communities as a result of preventable fires in the home
- Work with our partners to fulfil our statutory duties and community responsibility to achieve successful community outcomes through Local Area Agreements (LAA) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP)
- Work with partners to influence reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions
- Use the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) to provide development for all staff across Operations
- Improve the systems and operational resources that are used to deliver prevention, operational preparedness and learning and development activities
- Improve our business support systems and increase efficiency by creating a suite of standardised business processes across Operations
- Relocate Headquarters and Fire Control from Lancaster Circus to Vauxhall Road
- Build a new community safety facility – ‘Safeside at Eastside’ – within the new Headquarters site
- Develop an Asset Management portfolio
- Implement Firelink prior to the Headquarters move
- Procure and implement a new Command and Control system
- Review business processes, Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and staffing arrangements in Fire Safety Centres
- Create and develop a strategy for ensuring compliance and support with the Local Better Regulation Office, both at strategic and local levels
- Research opportunities and implement actions where identified to collaborate with regional partners
- Implement revised brand identity incorporating a marketing strategy
- Implement a new Incident Recording System
- Work towards attaining the new level 3 Equality Standards for Local Government
- Improve the framework for consultation and communication, and review processes for the resolution of employee relations issues
- Ensure that all Training Centre instructors are trained and suitably qualified or working towards an appropriate qualification
- Improve and extend the Fire Behaviour training programme
- Develop a quality assurance process regarding the technical rescue station
- Develop and deliver a programme to ensure all command officers receive command training and assessment
- Introduce medium to longer term workforce planning (3-5 years)

- Produce a workforce plan to enable effective succession /capacity planning
- Undertake a functions' audit within Operations Support to identify and generate departmental efficiencies to be realised on relocation to the new Headquarters
- Ensure the organisation's recruitment, retention, reward and development strategies and practices deliver the skilled workforce needed in the medium to long term
- Develop flexible working practices to support performance improvement and provide employment conditions that suit our diverse workforce and the needs of the organisation
- Continue to promote and support a positive health and well-being culture
- Develop and deliver a programme of thematic Health and Safety audits and system reviews
- Lead the development and implementation of the environmental strategy that reduces the Service's carbon footprint
- Develop appropriate partnerships with relevant governance aimed at achieving Value for Money
- Review and examine our current vision of 'Making West Midlands safer' to find out if it still meets our key priorities
- Support, improve and refine Operations performance management arrangements
- Capture organisational knowledge and make it available when required
- Develop a forward looking Route Map that will provide a positive focus with an emphasis on preparing for Direction of Travel, Value for Money and Use of Resources assessments
- Co-ordinate through the Corporate Strategy Working Group and action planning process the requirements of the 'Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2001-2011'
- Review and validate the current security arrangements relating to corporate data
- Develop the operational intelligence capacity to support improvements in the effectiveness of emergency response, fire safety and community safety services
- Lobby for the removal of acetylene from the workplace and investigate alternative methods of dealing with incidents involving acetylene cylinders
- Undertake a feasibility study to develop current water support capability into a water rescue capability
- Develop a strategy and tactical guidance to ensure that the proposed benefits are realised from the introduction and operational use of Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs)
- Introduce flexible servicing and maintenance of WMFS fleet to support full availability of front line appliances
- Develop and implement an ICT security strategy
- Co-ordinate and consolidate capacity for resilience and Business Continuity
- Carry out planning and preparations for the Olympics 2012 and other major events
- Develop a radiation strategy
- Lead the Service in carrying out Integrated Risk Management Planning

## Our Plans for 2008 – 2009: Prevention

The Fire and Rescue Service has a duty to promote fire safety and, because the great majority of fire deaths and injuries occur in the home, we are directing much of our work at the need to provide advice to people on how to stop a fire occurring at home and how to increase the chance of escape if there is a fire.

We will continue to reduce death, injury and the impact of property damage on our communities as a result of preventable fires in the home.

### Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC)

The Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) is an important part of the range of services that we provide to make people safer. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of checks that have been delivered, over 40,000 in 2007/08, meaning that we are making many more people safer each month. The increase has come about because of the efforts of station based staff who have focused their efforts on delivery. Comments received from staff who are directly involved in delivering this service has resulted in the creation of the HFSC project. The project has taken suggestions for improvement and is researching different ways of working that will make us more effective at what we do. It will also enable our firefighters to use their time doing what they are good at – engaging face to face with people and reducing risk from fire. The project has received a significant amount of support from operational staff, support staff and the Fire Brigades Union. A number of handheld devices are currently being rolled out which

should result in HFSC information only being entered once and the administration work being completed at the same time as the HFSC being carried out.

The reasons for developing alternative ways to deliver HFSCs are simple. In the same way that we use firefighting tools, we need to provide a range of HFSC tools to meet the need of our diverse communities. We should always strive to provide a 'full' HFSC but if a client prefers that we deliver a part of the full service then it is better to deliver something and start a relationship. This may lead to further advice and guidance being provided at some point in the future. This is better than delivering nothing at all.

Some significant improvements in our HFSC service have been developed from ideas generated by the staff who work at the point of delivery. We need to increase the number of HFSCs so that more people can benefit from our work making sure that quality and quantity go hand in hand.





## Working with children and young people

We have been working in schools to deliver positive messages to local schoolchildren relating to fire safety and safe living. This has some immediate benefit in developing safety skills and deterring anti-social behaviour such as fire-setting and making hoax calls. Indirectly, it will also help to influence parents and family members.

Targeting children and young people will impact on achieving our Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and reducing fire crime.

Our contact with children and young people allows us to explain the hazards associated with fire and, in doing so, we have developed additional programmes. These include programmes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs which are delivered by specially trained firefighters and for secondary school aged young people within schools, based on fire crime and car crime. When children understand how fires are started, they can help to prevent them.

By describing the potential consequences of hoax calls or firesetting, we can help people to see the possible outcomes of these actions and their impact on the local community.

When we visit our local schools, we can help to develop positive attitudes towards safety in the home, healthy living and citizenship.



There are a number of initiatives targeted at children/young people, namely:

- **Fire Intervention Reparation and Education (F.I.R.E.)** - a five day programme designed for young people not undertaking the full curriculum and those who are working with Youth Offending Teams. The programme covers topics such as team work and communication skills through fire service training exercises. It also looks at young people's actions and their consequences. The programme is accredited by the Open College Network.
- **Your Choice** - a series of three programmes designed to deliver facts about road traffic collisions, arson and hoax calls. The programmes are delivered in schools, pupil referral units and in informal education and youth work settings. Hard hitting video and photographic material is used to educate young people about possible consequences and young people are encouraged to make their own choice regarding future actions.
- **Your choice on the Road** - a Fire Service driven education programme tailored to suit a wide variety of targeted road users. The aim is to educate and increase awareness about the consequences of speeding, drink-driving and other causes of road traffic collisions. The presentation is structured and can meet the needs of not only children/young people, but also adults. We are planning to create a mobile road show which will be a powerful resource to assist in the education of

targeted road users, demonstrating the serious consequences associated with road traffic collisions. The road show will be available to all our partners.

We will work with partners to influence reductions in the number of people killed or seriously injured in line with the following national indicators:

- NI 47 people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions
- NI 48 children killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions





## Fire Safety Schools Quiz

For several years, Dudley and Sandwell area commands have held a Fire Safety Quiz for Year 5 pupils. Following the success of the quiz, it was then opened up to all year 5 children in the West Midlands. Pupils take part in Fire Safety lessons and activities in line with the Science, Citizenship and PSHE elements of the National Curriculum. They are also given a colourful booklet with all the fire safety information they need to learn. Following a class quiz in which each child participates, schools are asked to select six pupils who then compete against other schools in station and area command heats. The winning team from each area command then takes part in the Brigade final.

Due to the success of the quiz, this event will take place annually. The benefits of these events are enormous. Not only do hundreds of children have the opportunity to learn basic fire safety, but so do the parents, either by helping their children or by attending the quiz nights. We are able to target hard-to-reach areas. For the quiz events, parents and supporters are invited onto the station therefore creating good links between the fire station and the local community. Many HFSCs have also been generated from these events. The quiz nights themselves are fun, exciting and enjoyable. Educating children can be both fun and life saving; this became apparent following a house fire in which a young girl got her grandmother out safely, prevented the fire from spreading and phoned the Fire Service. This action was as a result of the knowledge she gained by taking part in the quiz when she was at primary school.



## Reducing the impact of arson and fire crime

Though a fire in the home carries the greatest risk to life, the cost of arson in the community is a financial burden on businesses and local authorities. We all suffer the impact brought about by firesetting behaviour and the resulting loss; this damages the local neighbourhood and tends to attract further anti-social behaviour.

We will work with our partners to fulfil our statutory duties and community responsibility to achieve successful outcomes through Local Area Agreements (LAA) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP)

We will continue to support local Education and Children's Services to develop fire safety management in schools and to provide advice and guidance on arson protection.

Our Fire Research and Investigation Section will make use of our Fire Investigation Dog to detect the presence of flammable liquids at fires and to assist with the collection of evidence for use in the prosecution of arsonists.

Following the successful production of SPARX by the Zip Theatre, we are now engaging with the Stopwatch Theatre Company with regard to putting on a school production called Arson About. This is a 75 minute Arson Prevention theatre-in-education programme designed for Year 8 pupils. The play lasts 45 minutes and is supported by a 30 minute workshop. The aim of the play is to demonstrate that, what is considered to be a bit of fun when playing with fire, can turn into a

tragedy. It further develops the audience's understanding of crime and arson and why it is such a problem.







## West Midlands Arson Task Force

A successful Arson – New Initiatives Conference was held at Tally Ho! Police Training Centre in Birmingham. Following opening speeches by Deputy Chief Constable Gormley of West Midlands Police and Chief Fire Officer Sheehan, a series of presentations were given detailing new initiatives and the future management of arson reduction. Topics included new projects, initiatives and up to date issues in the fight against arson, such as void properties, wheelie bins, evidence recovery and preservation, analysis and funding. There were opportunities for delegates to discuss ways forward, exchange advice and discuss some of the problems that might be encountered along the way.

**West Midlands Arson Task Force**

**Targeting Arson**

The West Midlands Arson Task force is a partnership between the [West Midlands Fire Service](#) & [West Midlands Police](#). The team consists of Station Officer Ian Rawlings and Police Sergeant Phil Butler.

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE**  
Police & Fire in Partnership

We operate by carrying out detailed arson investigations and analysis in our region. We agree policies and undertake projects with our partners aiming to improve detection and reduce arson throughout the West Midlands.

**KEEP YOUR SCHOOL IN BUSINESS**  
XFOID Guide

**KEEP YOUR BUSINESS IN BUSINESS**  
NEW - XFOID Pack version 4

© West Midlands Arson Task Force 0121 360 6757

## Site Risk Survey

Work is now well underway on a project designed to provide detailed information about premises instantly to firefighters at an incident scene. The Site Risk Survey (SRS) project will ultimately see important information about key buildings, including construction details and risk warnings, held on a database that can be accessed via the computer terminals on fire engines. The project team is currently developing the forms that will be used to gather the information and considering how that information can be presented on screen. The information and the way it is recorded has to comply with national and regional guidelines. When that phase of the project is complete, work will start on developing the appropriate IT systems.

Information gathered on the SRS forms falls under a number of broad headings:

- Site Details
- General Building Information
- Building Construction
- Risk Information
- Site Hazard Information
- Operational Considerations
- Significant Findings
- Referrals
- Action Required

There is also space for photographs of key locations or sites within the premises, for example electricity isolation points, a building plan of each floor and a street map of the surrounding area, allowing crews to see details of fire assembly points and accessibility for fire engines.

All the information will be gathered by fire service personnel, although it is envisaged that in the future a secure business interface could be developed to allow the owners or managers of a property to update their own details when necessary.

It is planned that the electronic data access system on the new mobile data screens on the fire engines will also enable firefighters on the incident ground to access a range of support information, including:

- Role of specialist crews, eg Breathing Apparatus Emergency crews
- Role of functional officers, eg Water Officer
- Firefax
- Forms
- Open Water Sites
- Rendezvous points
- Appliance inventories
- Flow charts, for example how to issue fuel on the fire ground

## Our Plans for 2008-2009:

### Protection: Advice and Enforcement

The core function of Fire Safety is to ensure that people in all types of premises across the West Midlands are safe from the effects of fire and, in the event that a fire does occur, are able to make their way to a place of relative safety.

We achieve this by giving advice to people, on request, to assist in making their premises safe. We also have a robust inspection regime based upon the identified risk that each type of premise and its use poses to the public.

To aid us in this process we have developed a risk based inspection programme which assists us in targeting those premises types presenting the highest risk to our community and inspecting them on a regular basis.

Our inspection regime focuses on the duty we have as an Authority to enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

We do so using a team of highly trained Inspecting Officers. Any breaches of the regulations they find result in various forms of enforcement activity ranging from informal action for minor offences to prosecution and court appearances for serious offences.

Our Fire Safety Centre teams, by the work they undertake, play a valuable part in reducing the overall risk from fire to our communities here in the West Midlands.

Business processes, the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and staffing arrangements in the Fire Safety Centres will be reviewed.

We will raise awareness of the safer alternatives to the use of acetylene and encourage the reduced use of acetylene cylinders where possible. We will investigate alternative methods of dealing with incidents involving acetylene cylinders.

Working with strategic partners, we will continue to promote fire protection systems, including sprinkler systems, in both domestic and other buildings for example schools.







## Our Plans for 2008-09: Emergency Response

In our Annual Service Plan 2007-2008 we stated our intention to review our emergency response to fires of a low risk such as those involving grass or rubbish. These types of fires are known as 'nuisance' fires as a fire engine is sent to them when they may be needed at more urgent calls.

The introduction of Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs) provides us with an exciting opportunity to review our approach to tackling particular types of fire. We believe that the 'traditional' approach of responding to all incidents with the same type of firefighting vehicle, crewed by a fixed size crew, is outdated. TRVs will be smaller vehicles with a smaller crew using new firefighting techniques to extinguish 'nuisance' fires. We will develop procedures to ensure that our staff are safe, efficient and effective when using this new vehicle.

We will develop strategy and tactical guidance to ensure that the proposed benefits are realised from the introduction and operational use of Targeted Response Vehicles.

This year will see exciting developments in the way we receive, handle and manage 999 calls to the service. We will provide our Fire Control with a new Command and Control computer system to make sure that we provide the best possible service to the public in the years preceding the move to the new Regional Fire Control. The system will allow us, amongst many other things, to track our vehicles by satellite and ensure that the nearest vehicle to any call is always allocated to attend. We will also be able to extract much more useful data to develop our understanding of the risk which we manage within the West Midlands.




Working alongside this we will also be installing the new Firelink radio system as a replacement for our existing radio network. Firelink is a digital system, and will provide us with enhanced resilience and interoperability with other emergency services.

We will procure and implement a new Command and Control system that will be available at the new Headquarters.

We will expand our call challenge initiative to cover the full 24 hour period with regard to Automatic Fire Alarm calls. This will be assessed on a risk-appropriate basis.

We will implement Firelink prior to Headquarters move.





### **Shannons Mill – 3 August 2007**

When a blaze took hold in an historic leather mill in the heart of Walsall town centre, we were faced with the largest fire our personnel has had to fight for 25 years. More than 150 firefighters tackled the fire, which saw the landmark building destroyed and threatened to devastate neighbouring shops and homes. The tenacity and hard work of our firefighters prevented the fire spreading to a large part of the town centre and Walsall being faced with far more serious consequences.







## Incident Support imaging System (ISiS)

West Midlands Fire Service is the first in the UK to adopt the state-of-the-art UAS (un-manned aerial system). The remote controlled aerial camera can be operated above and around the incident ground providing Incident Commanders with live video or high quality still or heat sensitive images. The images can be viewed on the system's own base station screen, or via the visual display screens on the Command Support Vehicles. The system has been adopted and is subject to a nine-month evaluation, during which time it will be operated by the Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) Support Team and is available on primary or secondary response. Comprehensive Operational Protocols and guidance for mobilising have been produced in consultation with the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority).

Incident Commanders can now request ISiS for situations where they feel it will add value to incident management and can be used in a number of situations including:

- Remote Operational intelligence gathering
- Technical Rescue
- Large scale flooding
- Identifying Hazardous Materials remotely
- Incidents involving gas cylinders
- Training exercises
- Promoting community fire safety
- Capturing information for Incident de-brief
- Fire Investigation



When used at incidents, it can be used to identify:

- Casualty location/ people in need of rescue or assistance
- Initial casualty assessment tower cranes/pylons
- Open water supplies
- Rendezvous points/marshalling areas
- Access and egress to incident ground
- Evacuation zones
- Cordons
- Direction and speed of fire spread
- Damage assessment

This is only a flavour of what ISiS can be used for and in truth the true potential will only be limited by the imagination of the users.

It has Global Positioning Satellite capability, which means that once a suitable location for incident observation has been identified the flying craft will automatically maintain its hovering position until instructed to move by remote control to another location.

The craft weighs just 900g and can carry a 200g payload. It is battery powered, with each battery giving approximately 20 minutes flying time. However, a rapid battery-change system means it can offer near-continuous flight.



## Fire Cover Arrangements

Following a 12 week consultation period between 10 October 2007 – 2 January 2008, various changes to fire cover were approved namely:

- The introduction of a Pump Rescue Water Tower
- The removal of the hydraulic platform from Ward End Community Fire Station
- The introduction of Targeted Response Vehicles
- The second fire engine at Highgate Community Fire Station is changed from providing cover for 12 hours (11am-11pm) to one providing 24 hour emergency cover
- The second fire engine at Bournbrook Community Fire Station (providing 12 hour cover – 11am – 11pm) is moved into the Coventry area. This fire engine will provide 12 hour cover (11am – 11pm)
- Resources across the Coventry area are increased to provide eight fire engines. Six will provide 24 hour cover and two will provide 12 hour cover (11am – 11pm)
- One fire engine at West Bromwich will continue to provide 24 hour cover with the second fire engine at that station providing 12 hour cover (11am – 11pm)
- The second fire engine based at Wolverhampton Community Fire Station (currently providing 12 hour cover 11am – 11pm) is changed to provide 24 hour cover
- The existing fire engine at Tettenhall Community Fire Station (currently providing 24 hour cover) will be changed to provide 12 hour cover (11am – 11pm)

By making sure we have the right people in the right place at the right time, with the right skills and equipment, we can make a real impact on saving lives and protecting our local community.







## Pump Rescue Water Tower

The Brigade is always looking at new ways to provide the very best in respect of its response services. The Pump Rescue Water Tower (PRWT) is the latest front line addition to the fleet and combines the water tower capability of a hydraulic platform with the equipment and facilities of a pumping appliance.

The vehicle has the capability to pump large volumes of water from height, greater than can currently be delivered by a Hydraulic Platform; it can also simultaneously direct water in different directions at the same time.

The vehicle can be made available at a wider range of fires and other incidents. It can gain access to a greater range of property fires; its tower provides a camera facility, a lighting capability and a rope rescue function. In addition it will provide a higher degree of safety for our firefighters and a more versatile resource.





## Flooding

Following the extraordinary weather conditions experienced last year when areas of Great Britain were subject to overwhelming flood waters, members of the West Midlands Fire Service played a key role in both mitigating the damage caused and restoring normality to devastated communities.

Under national mutual aid arrangements crews from the West Midlands Fire Service attended South Yorkshire, Gloucester and Norfolk to deal with actual and predicted flooding incidents. Assistance was provided by utilising both New Dimension equipment and conventional crews; in the case of South Yorkshire this involved deployments of up to two weeks. During this period of sustained and heavy rainfall, we also dealt with a number of significant flooding incidents within our own area where we, in turn, received support from other Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The summer floods of 2007 demonstrated that changing weather conditions will impact upon the way in which we provide our service to the public. Our staff worked in both the South Yorkshire and Gloucestershire major flooding events and we gained valuable knowledge from these incidents. Currently our staff are trained and equipped to deal with incidents in, on or near water only in situations such as canals and lakes where the water is not fast flowing. We are re-evaluating our approach to water rescue to ensure that we are adequately prepared to deal with a wide range of water based scenarios. This may mean that we provide crews with enhanced levels of training and equipment, and develop a more specialist capability.



Our Environmental Strategy will be launched in early 2008. We will introduce measures and look for new ways of working to support the environmental agenda and to ensure that the Service is run and managed with environmental impacts in mind. We will have due regard to the social, economic and environmental impact in all that we do - the way in which we deliver our services and support our communities.

We have already established an Environmental Strategy Group, chaired by the Director of Operations Support to drive this agenda forward and to co-ordinate activity and share good practices. We have tasked a number of focus groups with developing proposals in areas such as mileage reduction, office processes, recycling, operations, energy and use of buildings. Our new Headquarters has provided an opportunity to incorporate more environmentally-friendly features into the building design to help support a reduction in our carbon footprint.

We will scan research into climate change and potential impact on service demand.

We will lead the development and implementation of the environmental strategy that reduces the Service's carbon footprint.

We remain committed to delivering training of the highest quality and will be further enhancing hot fire training in the coming year ensuring all our firefighting personnel are regularly refreshed in realistic conditions. Training for those who command incidents is also being extended with enhanced incident command / decision making

training being delivered to all operational officers on a rolling programme. Significant investment is being made in training facilities and personnel in support of these objectives. At the same time the service continues to progress its capacity to deliver in areas such as water rescue, Urban Search and Rescue, pre-hospital trauma care, transport accidents, rescues from height and responding to the threat from terrorism.

A second facility for Fire Behaviour Training will be developed.

A quality assurance process regarding the technical rescue station will be developed.

We will develop and deliver a programme to ensure all command officers receive command training and assessment.



The Technical Rescue Unit will soon move to a purpose-built facility that has been designed to meet their training needs and the storage of their mission critical equipment. It will enable the unit to pool their resources into one central location and the cutting edge design will enable the teams to meet the needs of the West Midlands and the wider resilience needs of the country. When completed the building will house the wide selection of equipment as well as the dedicated vehicles for transporting it. The development will comprise eight double bays for housing a Major Rescue Unit; Water Support Unit; Urban Search and Rescue (USAR); Prime Movers; Demountable Units and a boat for swift water rescue, along with other support vehicles. A separate area of the building will house a Training Rig. Outside the building there will be kennels and dog runs. In addition to the building works the security of the existing site is to be significantly improved. Bickenhill was chosen as it is close to the motorway and major road network routes. The site is large enough to accommodate the building within the existing boundary. The new building is due to be ready by winter 2008.

The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 requires us to make sure that we provide for business continuity in the event of issues or actions which impact upon our normal methods of working. We have already developed a range of business continuity plans, and will be working on further plans to cover critical elements of our activity. Information contained within the existing plans have been put together and obtained by our staff who have had to complete business impact assessment reports. This is constantly reviewed and updated.

Our work with other agencies, both public and private, within the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is key to ensuring that the West Midlands is well prepared for a range of eventualities. In 2007 the LRF agreed

a revised structure and we will be developing and supporting those officers who attend these local meetings.

We will co-ordinate and consolidate capacity for resilience and Business Continuity.

We will make sure that the service has the capability to meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 – Local Resilience Forum and National Mutual Assistance.

We will carry out planning and preparations for the Olympics 2012 and other major events.

We will develop a radiation strategy to include the issue of CLG equipment.

Embedding Business Continuity Management (BCM) into the Brigade is being met with a monthly newsletter. Internal training courses have sections that are entirely about the CCA 2004 BCM and an ilearn package is due to go live shortly that will give an over view to all staff about the Civil Contingencies Act. Individuals who have written up their Business Impact Assessment (BIA) have had presentations and one to one support and guidance offered to them.

Part of the CCA 2004 is the requirement of warning and informing the public of our preparedness measures. This is not only done by the Brigade but our information also feeds into the LRF website titled West Midlands Prepared.

At key times information will be released using the communications strategy that is in place in the Brigade.



## Our Plans for 2008-09: Organisation

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is about focusing and identifying the positive things that take place in organisations etc. The organisation can then use those identified to build on and make any appropriate improvements. Simply put, it is the study of what works well. AI is a systemised approach that is collaborative and highly participative and one that has been used by many big and small organisations in order to make changes. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects it changes the way the organisation looks and sees itself. This doesn't mean to say that any problems are avoided, it merely looks at them from a forward looking and positive angle. One approach to AI is to use the 4D model:

- Discovery – appreciate what is
- Dream – imagine what might be
- Design – determine what should be and
- Destiny – create what will be

Using the 4D model we will review and examine our current vision of 'Making West Midlands Safer' to find out if it still meets our key objectives. More importantly, we need to make sure that, if a new vision is required, this meets the needs of the communities we serve. We will involve our staff in helping to reach agreement on how the organisation will look in 5 years' time. A shared vision will help us to continuously improve over the coming years. To make sure that as many staff are as involved as possible we will hold a series of events including 'Have Your Say' days. These will help us capture thoughts and expectations and the information will be used to shape our new vision for the future.

We will review and examine our current vision of 'Making West Midlands Safer' to find out if it still meets our key objectives.

Our people are our most valuable asset. We will develop the skills and capacity of our workforce to ensure that all our staff are trained and suitably qualified. We will produce a medium to long term (3-5 years) workforce plan and provide sufficient staff with the appropriate skills within the organisation. Reward and recognition structures will be developed and more flexible working practices to support performance improvement will be developed.

We will continue to promote and support a positive health and well-being culture by providing high quality health and fitness education for all employees.

In the field of Equality and Diversity, we will work towards attaining the new Level 3 Equality Standard for Local Government.





During 2007-2008 all Equality and Diversity policies were reviewed and updated in order to reflect the current needs of our organisation. We provided several training courses throughout the year covering topics such as Living the Values; Religion & Belief; Disability. Modules covering race, gender and age will be implemented during 2008. There are several equality schemes in place covering race, gender and disabilities. Our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) policy has been reviewed and information can now be accessed electronically.

Our Equality and Diversity priorities for 2008-2009 will build upon the successes from previous years. We will focus on truly embedding and mainstreaming Equality and Diversity. Our intention is to make sure that all our staff are equipped and are confident in progressing Equality and Diversity in a way that will encourage engagement from the wider community. This will enable us to deliver a service that is effective and appropriate to the needs of our very diverse communities. The Equality and Diversity section's Action Plan includes the following:

- Leadership
- Equality Standard for Local Government
- Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity
- Monitoring & Scrutiny
- Single Equality Scheme
- Local, Regional and National profile.

Developing these areas of work will strengthen our ability to demonstrate our commitment to embracing and celebrating the diversity that exist amongst our service users and our employees.



## Peer Support Officers

A pioneering staff support scheme has been launched in the shape of the Peer Support Officers (PSO) network. The dedicated team of individuals are made up of uniformed and non-uniformed staff. They have been specially trained to support colleagues who are feeling the effects of any type of harassment, bullying or discrimination. They can also explain the options available. Peer Support Officers are equipped with knowledge of our Personnel and Equality and Diversity procedures. The service is completely confidential and available to all staff regardless of rank or role. Peer Support Officers are not trained counsellors but will listen with empathy and will help explore coping strategies so that appropriate resolutions can be sought. Currently there are 20 Peer Support Officers but the intention is to have a team of 30 across the organisation. Every effort has been made to make sure that all sections are represented. The scheme has the full backing of Human Resources and Occupational Health.





The move of West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters from Lancaster Circus, Queensway to Vauxhall Road Nechells, approved by the Authority in November 2006, is moving on at a rapid pace with both buildings planned to be ready to start internal fit-out on or before April 2008. Our staff will start to move into the new building in July 2008 with a completion date of October 2008. Every effort has been taken to make sure that the new building is as energy efficient as possible, with rainwater harvesting, water bore hole, highly efficient variable refrigeration flow heating and cooling system and many other energy saving devices. The building is specified to have a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of at least very good and we are striving for an excellent rating. The environmental features that are part of the design and build of the new Headquarters include:

- A lightweight thermally efficient structure
- High quality double glazing
- Brise Soleil – panels fixed to the outside of the building, reducing direct glare and heat in the summer. In the winter it blocks off less of the lower sun
- Low heat generation within the building
- Computer based energy management system
- High quality VRF air conditioning system – VRF stands for Variable Refrigerant Flow and this moves heat and cold around the building between zones depending on where sunlight is falling in the building i.e. if the sun is shining on the back of the building in the morning the VRF will move heat to the front of the building
- Activity sensed lighting
- Rainwater harvesting



- Solar water heater – this involves rainwater flowing down a black surface area that is heated by the sun, this then reduces the amount of additional heat required to bring water up to a higher temperature
- Water sensors in washrooms
- Green/brown roof - reducing energy due to thermal insulation properties; reducing CO2 emissions; insulation properties can extend the life of the roof and rain run off is slowed down.

A state of the art, scenario based, experiential learning safety complex is being built next to the headquarters building and will be known as 'Safeside at Eastside'. This facility will provide scope to address a number of issues ranging from fires in the home, anti social behaviour, drug use etc. It will also include a water, railway and electrical sub station hazards. Additionally areas have been allocated to show how vulnerable people can achieve independent living and also how we can reduce injuries and deaths due to road traffic.

We will relocate Headquarters and Fire Control from Lancaster Circus to Vauxhall Road

We will develop and implement the 'Safeside at Eastside' facility at the new HQ site

We will develop and implement a strategy to deliver community safety education at Safeside in partnership with public and private sectors



## Our Targets for 2008/09

### Performance Indicators relating to Fires

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2006-2007	Target 2007-2008	Estimated Actual 2007 - 2008	Target 2008-2009
1	The number of accidental fires in dwellings	2,133	2,050	1,963	1,825
2	The number of injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	165	155	134	122
3	The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	19	9	8	7
4	The number of arson fires in dwellings	611	600	551	525
5	The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises	788	750	698	628
6	The number of arson fires in non-domestic premises	390	380	310	300
7	The number of arson vehicle fires	1,883	1,883	1,533	1,518
8	The number of arson rubbish fires	5,742	New	5,832	5,662
9	The number of arson fires in derelict vehicles	141	130	130	130

## Our Targets for 2008/09

### Performance Indicators relating to Fires continued

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2006-2007	Target 2007-2008	Estimated Actual 2007 - 2008	Target 2008-2009
10	The number of malicious false alarm calls received by the Brigade	5,861	5,650	5,121	4,865
11	The number of malicious false alarm calls attended by the Brigade	2,578	2,500	2,253	2,000
12	The proportion of malicious false alarm calls attended	44.0%	44.2%	44.0%	41.1%
13	The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) in non-domestic properties	8,024	8,024	7,124	6,500
14	The percentage of false alarm calls due to AFAs in non-domestic properties with more than one attendance in the financial year	59.0%	59.0%	60.0%	60.00%
15	The percentage of dwelling fires where a working smoke alarm was fitted	36.6%	38.0%	38.8%	40.4%
16	The percentage of dwelling fires where no smoke alarm was fitted	55.4%	50.0%	53.8%	52.4%
17	The percentage of accidental fires in dwellings confined to the room of origin	86.97%	87.50%	88.03%	88.50%
18	The number of Home Fire Safety Checks conducted by the Brigade	26,555	40,000	48,207	At least 40,000



## Personnel Indicators

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2006-2007	Target 2007-2008	Estimated Actual 2007 - 2008	Target 2008-09
19	The percentage of wholetime uniformed and retained duty system employees with a disability	2.35%	2.44%	Not available	2.49%
20	The percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control employees with a disability	6.48%	6.64%	Not available	6.79%
21	The percentage of all employees with a disability	3.38%	3.49%	Not available	4.10%
22	The percentage of women firefighters	2.88%	3.14%	Not available	3.39%
23	The level of equality standard for local government to which the Authority conforms	2	2	Not available	3
24	The percentage of uniformed staff from ethnic minority communities	6.60%	6.90%	Not available	7.25%
25	The percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control staff from ethnic minority communities	12.66%	12.80%	Not available	13.05%
26	The number of all staff from ethnic minority communities	7.93%	8.21%	Not available	9.17%
27	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – wholetime, uniformed staff (excl. Fire Control)	9.44	9.50	Not available	9.00
28	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed and Fire Control staff	New	New	Not available	9.00
29	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – all staff	9.41	9.50	Not available	9.00

## Our Consultation

We consulted on those issues that were thought to have a potential impact on our service to the community.

The specific points we consulted on are listed below:

### **Recommendation One: Aerial appliance cover (Hydraulic Platforms)**

The Pump Rescue Water Tower is introduced into the vehicle fleet.

The hydraulic platform at Ward End Community Fire Station is removed.

### **Recommendation Two: Targeted Response Vehicles**

To introduce one Targeted Response Vehicle in the East of Birmingham and one in the Dudley area.

### **Recommendation Three: Fire and emergency response cover**

#### **a) Birmingham area**

The second fire engine at Highgate Community Fire Station is changed from providing cover for 12 hours (11am – 11pm) to one providing 24 hour emergency cover.

The second fire engine at Bournbrook Community Fire Station (providing 12 hour cover 11am – 11pm) is moved into the Coventry area. This fire engine will provide 12 hour cover (11am – 11pm).

#### **b) Coventry area**

Resources across the Coventry area are increased to provide eight fire engines. Six will provide 24 hour cover and two will provide 12 hour cover (11am – 11pm).

#### **c) Sandwell area**

To maintain one fire engine at West Bromwich Community Fire Station providing 24 hour cover with the second fire engine at that station providing 12 hour cover (11am- 11pm).

#### **d) Wolverhampton area**

The second fire engine based at Wolverhampton Community Fire Station (currently providing 12 hour cover 11am – 11pm) is changed to provide 24 hour cover to enhance resources in the city.

The existing fire engine at Tettenhall Community Fire Station (currently providing 24 hour cover) will be changed to provide 12 hour cover (11 am – 11 pm).

### **Recommendation Four: 'Call Challenge': Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)**

To expand our call challenge initiative to cover the full 24 hour period with regard to Automatic Fire Alarm calls. This may mean that we will not respond immediately to some AFA calls. This will be assessed on a risk-appropriate basis.

## Changes to our Plan following consultation

A summary of the responses received during the consultation period, which ran from 10th October 2007 to 2nd January 2008, can be found on the Authority's website [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net).

We are grateful to all those who took the time to respond. A number of practicalities and concerns were raised which will be fully taken into account in developing our proposals. Full details of the Authority's responses to the consultation can be found at [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net). The level and nature of responses did not lead to any major changes to the original proposals.

## Abbreviations

<b>AI</b>	Appreciative Inquiry	<b>IRS</b>	Incident Recording System
<b>BCM</b>	Business Continuity Management	<b>LAA</b>	Local Area Agreement
<b>BIA</b>	Business Impact Assessment	<b>LRF</b>	Local Resilience Forum
<b>BSL</b>	British Sign Language	<b>PSO</b>	Programme Support Office
<b>CAA</b>	Civil Aviation Authority	<b>PSA</b>	Public Service Agreement
<b>CDRP</b>	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	<b>RBIP</b>	Risk Based Inspection Programme
<b>CLG</b>	Communities and Local Government	<b>TRV</b>	Targeted Response Vehicle
<b>DIM</b>	Detection, Identification and Monitoring	<b>UAS</b>	Unmanned Aerial System
<b>EIA</b>	Equality Impact Assessment	<b>VRF</b>	Variable Refrigerant Flow
<b>FIRE</b>	Fire, Intervention, Reparation and Education	<b>USAR</b>	Urban Search and Rescue
<b>HFSC</b>	Home Fire Safety Check	<b>VTOL</b>	Vertical Take Off and Landing
<b>ICT</b>	Information, Communication Technology	<b>WMFS</b>	West Midlands Fire Service
<b>IPDS</b>	Integrated Personal Development System		



## Notes

All non-emergencies and general enquiries for the whole of the West Midlands call

**0845 5000900**

For a FREE Home Fire Safety Check call

**FREE 0800 389 5525**

If you have any compliments, comments or complaints about our service please contact us.

**Customer Care Hotline**

**0121 380 7404**

[contact@wmfs.net](mailto:contact@wmfs.net)

Public Relations  
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,  
Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham B4 7DE

Our website provides everything you need to know about the services we provide including details on our performance, our future plans and fire safety advice

**[www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)**

For current recruitment opportunities go to

**[www.wmfs.net/jobsonline](http://www.wmfs.net/jobsonline)**

**The information contained in this document can also be provided in other formats including Braille, audiotape and large print. Please call 0845 8009000.**

[www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)

