

Integrated Risk Management Plan

making communities safer



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Foreword

Making Life Safer For You

The new “Fire and Rescue Service” is really in the spotlight at the moment, and this Plan is the reason why. We are embarking upon major change and this document highlights why we are changing and what these changes mean.

The main aim is really very simple: to reduce dramatically the number of people who have to go through the nightmare of seeing their home, community facility or business being destroyed by fire, or, worse still, have families shattered by serious injury or worse.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is changing the way it works to help you reduce those risks and will be working with many partners, traditional and new, to help you to be safer at home and work. Our highly professional Fire and Rescue Service has always been good at learning new skills, and they are working hard to be ready for new risks and threats which are so different to those of a generation ago.

In the past, it may have felt that a public service was done *to* you. It's improved to being done *for* you, but the real target of the Fire and Rescue Service is to provide a risk reduction approach which is done *with* you.

Part of this process is understanding exactly where the risks, especially to life, really are, and make sure that the resources we have are targeted on the right places.

You may not be aware that the standards which affect fire cover for your community were set over fifty years ago! Much has changed in that time.

A lot of professional skill and years of experience has already gone into this Plan, but what's essential to make the Plan as good as humanly possible is your opinion. Although the formal consultation process on the initial draft of this Plan took place from 23rd October 2003 to 6th February 2004, a public service worthy of the name must always be prepared to take on board your thoughts and ideas. Indeed, we have made a number of significant changes to this document as a direct result of comments made during the consultation period. If you'd like to know more, have a look at our website at www.merseyfire.gov.uk or why not invite someone from your Fire and Rescue Service to have a chat to your group or neighbourhood.

The hard work is well worthwhile because it is, literally, a lifesaver, and the Fire and Rescue Service is determined to work with you to make a dramatic difference to risk reduction and make life safer for the community they serve.

Thank you for taking the time and trouble to read our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Peter Corcoran
Chair

I am very proud to be the Chief Fire Officer of Merseyside's Fire and Rescue Service, especially at such an exciting time when we are shaping the future of this vital public service. Merseyside is a vibrant and diverse area and one of the most exciting challenges in leading Merseyside's Fire and Rescue Service is to ensure that we engage with all parts of the community, and that we recognise and respond to their differing needs and aspirations. We are a world leader in our approach to service delivery and community safety. Our goal is to constantly provide the best possible service and we are here to protect our community.

Change, our ability to identify the need for it and to adapt to it organisationally and individually, is key to our continued success. This IRMP is all about setting out foundations for a better Fire and Rescue Service of the future. Everyone stands to gain from reform - the public, the Service and the individuals who work in it.

Two key elements are essential to the successful introduction of the IRMP. Firstly the ability to properly analyse risk patterns in the Merseyside area and, in tandem with this analysis, the ability of the Fire Authority to exercise greater strategic control and flexibility with regard to the use of its staff and resources.

This will allow for a sustained, risk-based focus on the most vulnerable in our communities with concern for life risk replacing the outdated property risk model that has over the years inhibited the Fire Authority's ability to properly target resources at those most in need.

The emphasis within the development of our Plan is on providing local leadership and widening the focus of what we aim to achieve. We will improve our quality of service, our flexibility of service and we will embrace continuous improvement, through being a learning organisation.

This Plan sets out what we already know about the risks that people across Merseyside face, about who is most at risk from fire in particular and about how effective our world leading approaches are in responding to those risks. We are also looking at those areas where we are not using our resources effectively at the moment.

I am committed to making sure if you are facing an emergency, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will be there to help you with an effective and safe response: 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We are all aware of the increased threat from a range of disasters other than fire, including flooding, road accidents and terrorism. We are, therefore, making substantial investment to improve our resilience and our ability to respond to a wider range of emergencies than ever before. The first additional vehicles and equipment are already in place in our fire stations and more will come into service over the coming years.

This Plan sets out a phased approach to improving our services – a fast evolution, not a revolution - because we need to strike a balance between immediate changes and longer term improvements that need further development. We will be developing and expanding our community safety and fire safety enforcement work before making any substantial changes to the way we deliver our emergency response. However, it does identify some ways in which we can use our equipment and our trained and professional staff more effectively.

Tony McGuirk
Chief Fire Officer

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like to obtain further information about any of the aspects contained in this Plan or would like a copy in another language or format, please contact us using one of the methods shown below.

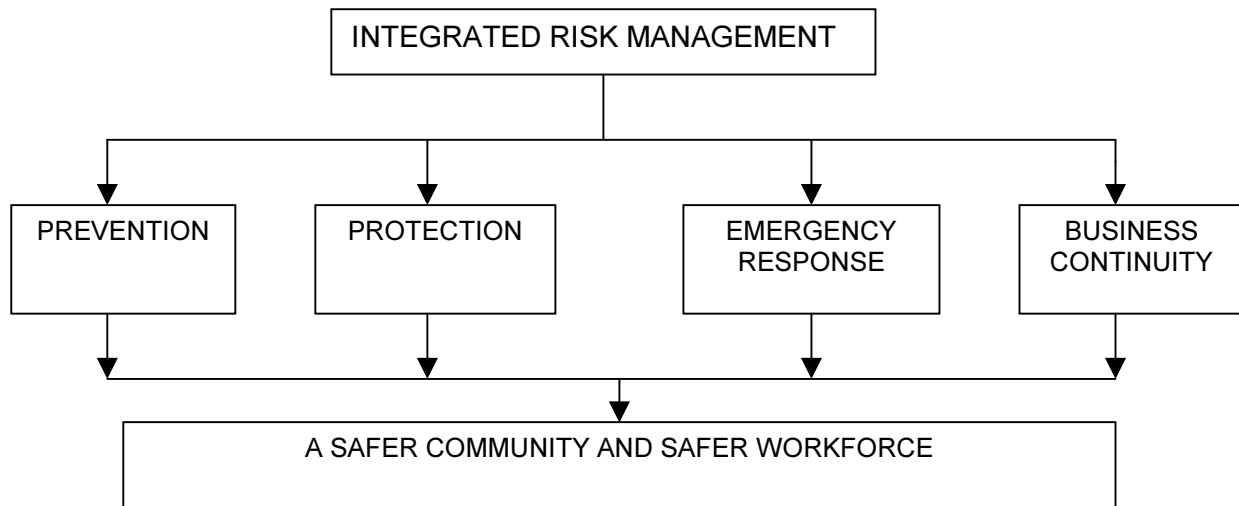
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1 Introduction

What is Integrated Risk Management?

“Integrated Risk Management” is the development of a balanced approach by the Fire and Rescue Service to reducing risks within the community. This achieved by combining prevention, protection and emergency response, on a risk-assessed basis, in order to improve the safety of the community and also create a safer working environment for firefighters. To be added to this ‘mix’ is taking measures to help the community recover quickly in the aftermath of an emergency and minimise the impact both to people and the local economy.



Setting the Scene

In late June, 2003, the Deputy Prime Minister presented a White Paper to Parliament entitled “Our Fire and Rescue Service”. This White Paper sets out the Government’s vision for the fire and rescue service of the future and how the vision will be delivered. Its guiding principle is that the fire and rescue service should have the right resources, in the right place, at the right time, to save lives.

The White Paper includes proposals for changes in the structure of the Service, in its institutions and in the working practices and procedures of all who work in the Service. The proposals in the White Paper have been translated into a Fire and Rescue Services Bill which is currently (March 2004) proceeding through the Parliamentary approval process. The purpose of the Bill is to place the Fire and Rescue Service on an up-to-date statutory footing. It is anticipated that this will become the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

In addition, the ODPM have published a draft Fire and Rescue Service National Framework document which seeks to provide clarity about the outcomes and objectives the Government wants to be achieved, sets out what the Government expects Fire and Rescue Authorities to do to meet these objectives and explains how the Government will help Authorities to do this.

All of these documents are available on our website : www.merseyfire.gov.uk

The Service has not really changed much since the late 1940s. A number of reports in the period 1970 (Holroyd) to 2002 (Bain) have pointed to the need to overhaul the fire service and to change its culture. The Government believes the service must be refocused on fire prevention and flexible responses to fires and a range of other emergencies (including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks). The ultimate objective is for each community to be safe from fire and other hazards. **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service agree with this approach.**

Our vision is for a fire and rescue service that:-

- is proactive in preventing fires and other risks, rather than simply reacting to fires;
- acts in support of the wider agendas of social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and crime reduction;
- has effective institutions that support its role and purpose;
- is well-managed and effective; and
- is committed to developing and adapting to changing rescue demands of society, including the growing threat of terrorism.

The Government has now recognised that in the past it has failed to develop its guidance to fire authorities to achieve these aims. This has meant that the resources utilised by the Service have not always been allocated on the basis of need because of outdated response standards and levels of risk.

When this Authority has been ambitious in its approach to try and change the way it does things, it has sometimes been criticised by Government. The Authority is pleased that the policies it was criticised for in the past, have now been adopted by the Government as the way forward.

By a huge majority deaths and injuries from fire occur accidentally in the home. Fires can spread so quickly that even the fastest attendance targets can mean appliances arrive too late to prevent death and injury. Fire does discriminate. Research shows those most likely to be at risk from fire, whether accidental or deliberately set, are the poorest in society. They are more likely to have a fire in the home and are less likely to be insured. Our key aim, therefore, is to prevent fire occurring in the first place.

This Authority has been commended by the HM Coroner for our ground-breaking community safety approach for reducing death and injury. Our analysis of fatal fires in Merseyside provides further details of underlying factors in such incidents.

Our prevention strategy relies on three main strands:

- designing fire safety into homes, offices and other buildings through the Building Regulations;
- maintaining a safe environment, through fire safety and other legislation, which sets out employers' and commercial property owners' responsibilities; and
- promoting community fire safety to encourage safe behaviour and to reduce the incidence of arson.

To create a safer community, the White Paper sets out the demands for change at Government's level. Government intends to:

- review the Building Regulations to ensure that they address changing trends and new developments in building design;
- rationalise the existing law on fire safety legislation to facilitate compliance;
- invest more in community fire safety and arson reduction; and
- set a new legislative framework and introduce fire cover based upon risk through integrated risk management planning.

Without Government delivering these changes it will be impossible for the Authority to deliver its plan.

Our maxim is "prevention is better than cure". Our fundamental goal is to continue the transfer of a main focus of the Service into one of prevention, particularly by community safety, tackling the root causes of fires in the home. However, we also recognise the changing world we live in and the risk of international terrorism. We will develop our emergency response to meet this new threat.

Traditionally, the fire service has organised its staffing levels and the location of firefighters, stations and appliances to match nationally prescribed fire cover standards originally set in the 1930s. Such national standards will be withdrawn with effect from 1st April 2004. In the future, the Service will plan for, and respond to, emergencies on the basis of risk assessment and management. We will consult local communities on these plans where appropriate and the Fire and Rescue Service will work with the other emergency services to implement them.

This Plan, set out in the following pages, seeks to explain how Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will better protect the public of Merseyside and how, based upon a system of integrated risk management, we will move forward to achieve our vision of safer communities.

Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority

Merseyside is a metropolitan area in the North West of England covering the District Councils of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens and Wirral. It covers an area of 653 sq.km. and has a resident population of some 1.4million. Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority is a local authority created by the Local Government Act 1985. It is made up of 18 elected representatives appointed by the constituent District Councils. The number of councillors from each District is determined by statute and in most cases is representative of the political composition of that Council. At present this is:

Knowsley	2	(Labour)
Liverpool	6	(4 Liberal Democrat; 2 Labour)
Sefton	4	(2 Conservative; 1 Labour; 1 Liberal Democrat)
St. Helens	2	(Labour)
Wirral	4	(2 Labour; 1 Conservative; 1 Liberal Democrat)

Further information about the democratic arrangements of the Authority can be found in our Best Value Performance Plan.

It is worth noting that the Boundary Committee is currently (March 2004) considering a range of options for changes to District Council boundaries, some of which could affect this Authority, if implemented. It is not appropriate, at this stage, to include any details about these proposals.

The Authority is responsible for integrated risk management to ensure the provision of an efficient and effective fire and rescue service for Merseyside, approving the budget and precept charge, consulting with the people of Merseyside, scrutinising the performance of the Service, overseeing major projects and ensuring best value. In making their decisions they will be guided by the advice of the Chief Fire Officer and his Corporate Management Team.

A map showing the Merseyside area and the location of the fire stations is below.



Reasons for Change

Why change?

Because we know we can do better and save more lives! The current standards of response are over 50 years old. Time has moved on and the world is a completely different place to that which existed when the standards were set. Some of the risks are new and different and our solutions and approach should be different to meet these new challenges.

However the fire service response has not really changed with the times and is essentially set up to respond to the same risks as it was 50 years ago. The firefighters and other personnel employed by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service continue to show the professionalism and enthusiasm that they always have done. They have increased their skills in line with new requirements but have been restrained by rules and regulations set over half a century ago.

Evidence, both local and national, from recent years shows that the incidence of fires tends to vary between particular types of buildings, in particular locations and at particular times of the day. We know where these fires are most likely to occur and, unfortunately, where people are most likely to die or receive serious injuries through fire. Consequently the historical provision of firefighters and pumps in fixed locations to meet rigid specified national standards is no longer the best way to deal with this risk. Flexible, locally assessed and determined risk-based standards should more effectively meet the needs of local communities. Furthermore, the Government has specified in its White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" that the fire service will have a (new) statutory responsibility to respond to a range of emergencies beyond fire. Some provision for this is included in the Fire and Rescue Services Bill. This will be done on the basis of risk assessment and management.

However, more than simply planning to respond to fires and other emergencies, the aim of the Service is to direct resources to prevent these occurring in the first place by improving community safety. How Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will do all this is set out in the following pages and in the Action Plan which accompanies this document.

The aim of this strategy is to:

- reduce the incidence of fire and other emergency incidents
- reduce the loss of life in fires and accidents
- reduce the number and severity of injuries occurring in fires and other emergencies
- reduce the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergencies
- safeguard the environment and protect natural resources
- provide Merseyside residents with value for money.

What this all means is having the right resources in the right place at the right time to ensure the public of Merseyside receives the very best possible protection from fire and other emergencies.

Over the forthcoming years Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will continue to provide an emergency response capability to meet the changing needs of our communities. This will involve continuing to provide an effective and efficient response to day-to-day incidents, such as fires and special services. It will also involve an enhanced capability to respond and deal effectively with unfamiliar incidents, such as rescues from water, from height or involving restricted access.

The changing nature of the threat to the community has become apparent following the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. The Service will ensure it can make an effective contribution should we be called upon to respond to such incidents either within our community of Merseyside or to help others in the UK.

In order to provide this capability, we will provide our personnel with the necessary operational training, emergency vehicles and equipment.

The framework of affordability

As we develop a new approach to our future fire and rescue services, we must be conscious of the issue of "affordability" of our plans. We believe the communities of Merseyside place value in the high

investment we make in our community's safety. We recognise that we remain a relatively high cost (per head of population) Authority, although this is not the only measure of cost. The Authority has, for a number of years, been committed to bringing its expenditure and Council Tax levels in line with the average of the Metropolitan fire authorities and has been very effective in catching up with its peer authorities by increasing efficiency within the Service. In setting its budget for 2004/05, the Authority set one of the lowest fire Council Tax increases in the country and is now below the national average fire Council Tax.

Nevertheless, we are concerned that we continue to give you value for your high investment. We are acutely aware of our responsibility to you, to ensure that we modernise our service, to provide a new and wider range of rescue and safety services within a framework of affordability, and we believe it is important to explain to you what we mean by this statement.

This plan contains a number of proposals which it is believed will deliver a more effective fire and rescue service and the Authority will look to allocate its resources to support these proposals in line with the principle of affordability.

Affordability means that we deliver:

- the on-going ground-breaking investment in community fire safety;
- the range of improvements set out in this Plan;
- the range of new services for rescue, resilience and safety set out in this Plan; and
- major investment in appliances and equipment including much improved rescue equipment for every fire station

within a financial risk planning framework that is based on the following principles:

- we would wish to create overtime opportunities where appropriate for eligible personnel in accordance with the National Pay Agreement;
- pay increases of any kind (including overtime) must be funded through improved efficiency delivered in a manner that does not compromise the Authority's determination to improve safety to the communities of Merseyside;
- there will be no compulsory redundancy, relating to the implementation of this Plan;
- we aim to limit precept and thus Council Tax increases.

We would wish to deliver the range of improvements set out in this Plan and we believe this Plan is achievable within this framework of affordability. We invite our personnel, our trade unions, and our communities to work together with us to ensure we achieve this most important of aims.

External limitations

Some of the proposals set out in this Plan have been prepared on the basis of the Government's declared intention to change the national framework and on the assumption that greater flexibility and additional statutory powers will be made available.

The other key external influence is the progress and outcome of national negotiations between the employers and trade unions. These negotiations will need to achieve:

- agreement on the range and detail of nationally determined terms and conditions of employment and the scope provided to develop local terms and conditions;
- clarification of the scope and nature of future industrial relations and disputes machinery.

Core principles

The following core principles have been adopted when developing the proposals in this Plan:

- the combined effect of all the measures in our plan will be to make Merseyside a safer place;
- we must retain an effective, resilient and safe emergency response to calls for assistance;

- while aiming to reduce life loss and injury, we will also do what we can to reduce property and environmental damage, and to protect our heritage, to preserve business continuity and support the local economy;
- we will develop a more flexible service – one which can respond to changing patterns of risk across Merseyside at different times of the day, week, or year;
- resilience to handle major and prolonged incidents (including possible major acts of terrorism) must be developed and maintained;
- we recognise that provision of support and advice after an incident and reducing avoidable economic loss and preserving business continuity are important to Merseysiders;
- as and when the legislative framework develops, the Authority develops a more proactive approach to preventing life loss and injury from those non-fire emergencies where it can make a real difference;
- we will do what we can to involve a wide range of stakeholders, and the public, in decisions about how we intend to organise and prioritise use of our resources;
- our services will continue to reflect the differing needs of Merseyside 's diverse communities;
- we will continue to maintain effective arrangements for partnerships within Merseyside and for cross border working with surrounding Fire and Rescue Services;
- we will work with the other North West Fire and Rescue Authorities to achieve appropriate collaboration work under the Regional Management Board;
- our emergency response arrangements must maintain safe systems of work for firefighters;
- we will continue to secure best value in all our activities;
- we will strive to be a great place to work;
- this IRMP is a dynamic document and will be continually reviewed and amended as appropriate.

Individual Responsibilities

It is vitally important for the public of Merseyside to appreciate that, wherever a fire station is situated, however many firefighters are on duty and however quickly they can get to the fire, there is no guarantee that they can save lives.

What is far more important than reacting to fire is preventing it in the first place, thereby minimising danger to people and property and if fire does occur, ensuring it is detected early giving every person the best chance of escape.

This plan brings with it a personal responsibility on every member of society – to make themselves safer.

Every household should arrange for a free safety check of their home, have smoke detectors fitted, check they are working properly and have an escape plan that is understood by and practical for each occupant in the event of fire. If you do not, you are letting down yourself, your family and your neighbours (see the Section on Prevention and Protection for further information).

Every business should comply with the law and ensure that they have carried out a work place assessment, that their staff are appropriately trained and that they are aware of their individual responsibility for safety in the workplace.

For a free Home Fire Risk Assessment and for fire safety advice to business, ring Fire Service Direct on [0800 731 5958](tel:08007315958) or see our website www.merseyfire.gov.uk.

2 Planning For Change

Supporting Government's Vision

"Fire kills. Preventing fires saves lives and reduces injuries. Preventing fires also saves money. So it makes sense to protect people and to prevent fires from happening in the first place". This is taken from the introduction to the Government's White Paper on the future of the fire service. Part of the Government's vision is for a Fire and Rescue Service that:

"is proactive in preventing fires and other risks, rather than simply reacting to fires;
acts in support of the Government's wider agenda of social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and crime reduction";

This vision comes as no surprise to Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority nor the many people within Merseyside who have benefited from our services. Indeed the Government's vision for a modern Fire and Rescue Service is consistent with that adopted in Merseyside for some time.

The Authority's vision for the last four years has been:

To make Merseyside a fire safe community

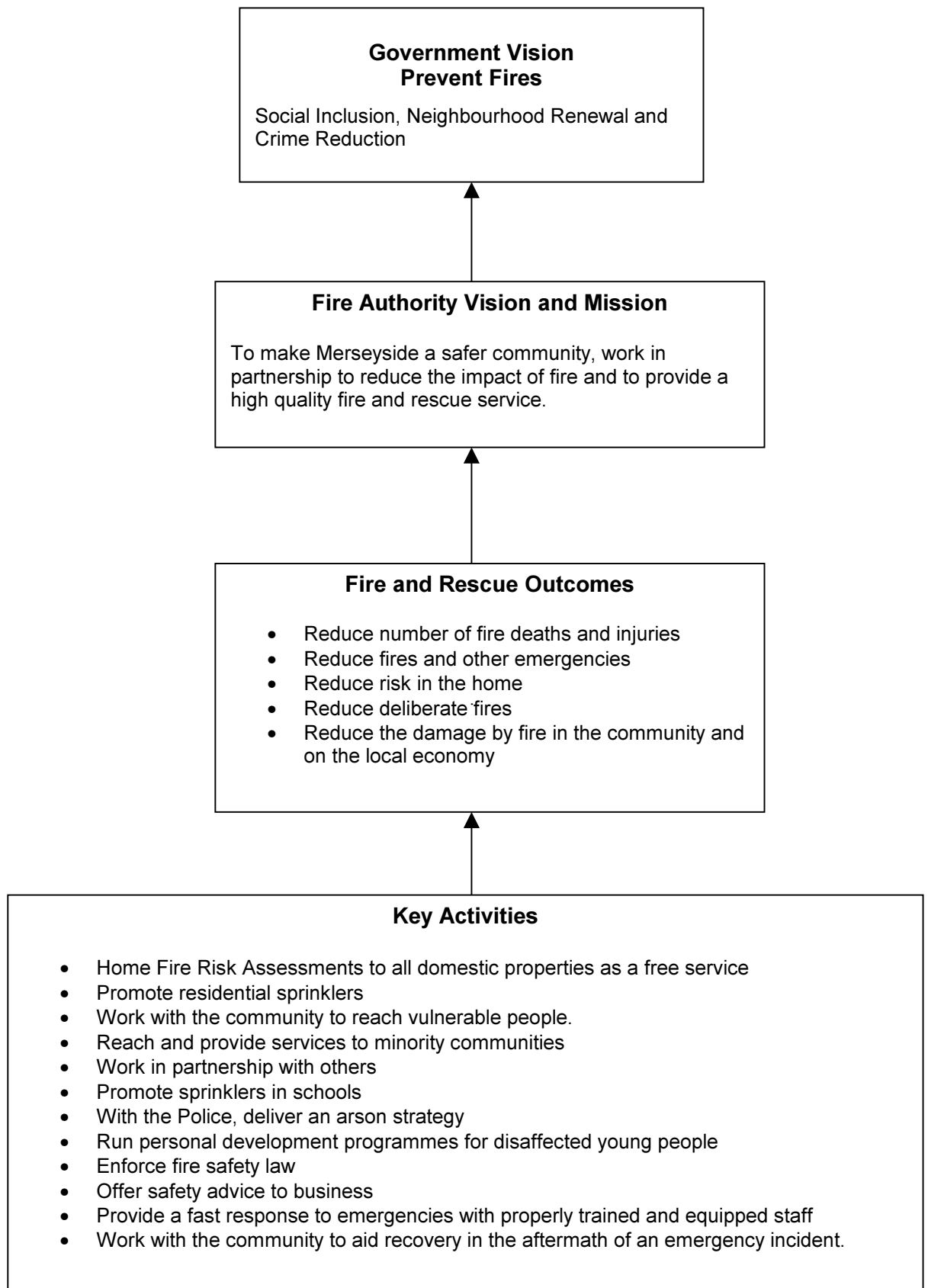
and its Mission is:

We will work in partnership with the community to provide a value for money service which will:

- Reduce death, injury and loss of property due to fire and protect the people and environment including visitors to the region.
- Provide a high quality fire and rescue service within the resources available in accordance with the Best Value principles.

The vision and mission of Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority are evolving to better reflect the Government's vision for a fire and rescue service that reduces risk in a number of areas.

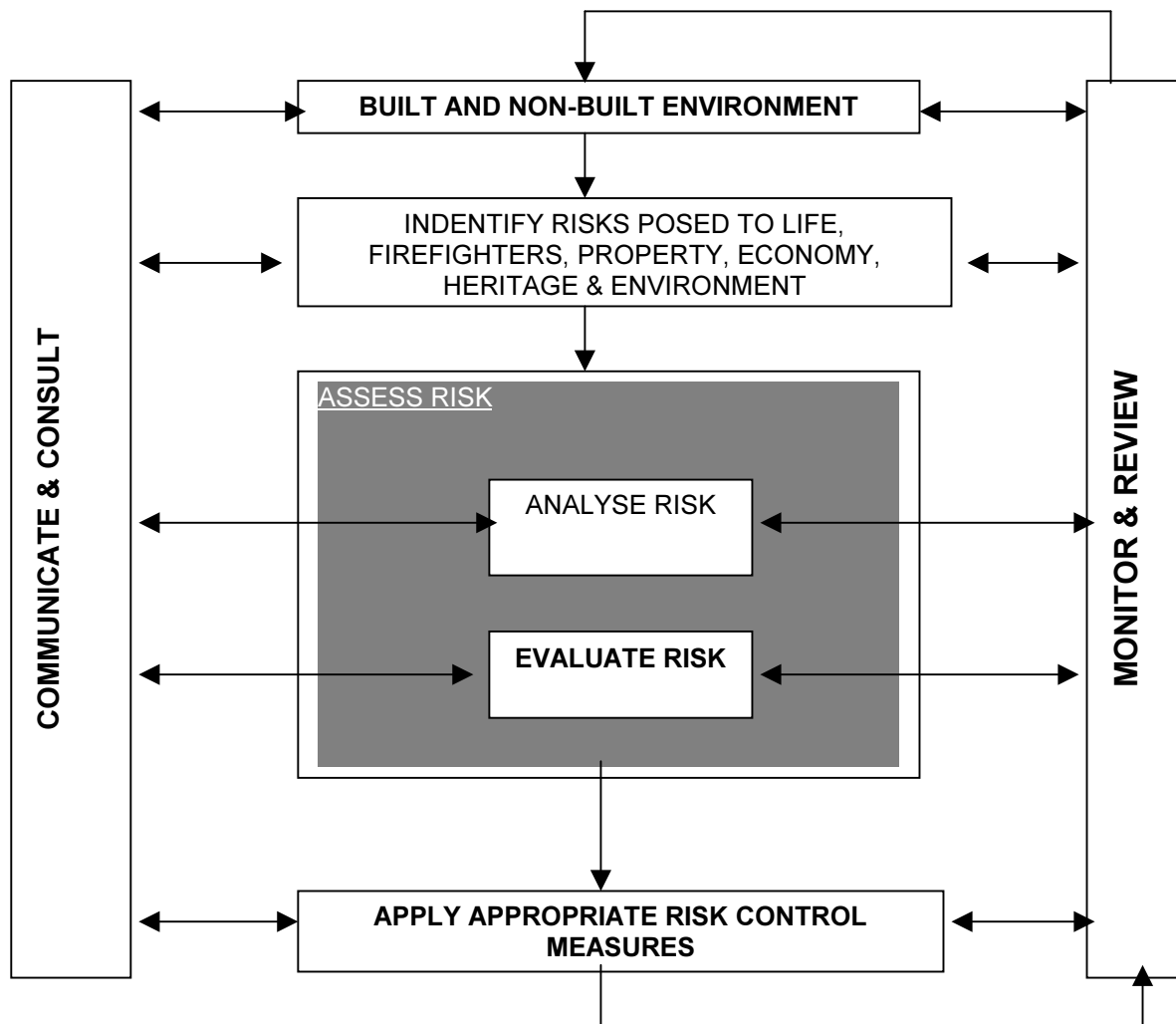
The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the Government's vision and Merseyside Fire Authority's strategy:



Our Action Plan for the forthcoming year sets out how we intend to achieve these outcomes.

Process/Methodology

The risk management process is a system of continuous improvement and the main elements are shown below.



Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has been applying this process in practice for many years. Although some of the data sets we need to gather for the future are slightly different, there continues to be relevance and validity in a wide range of data already available.

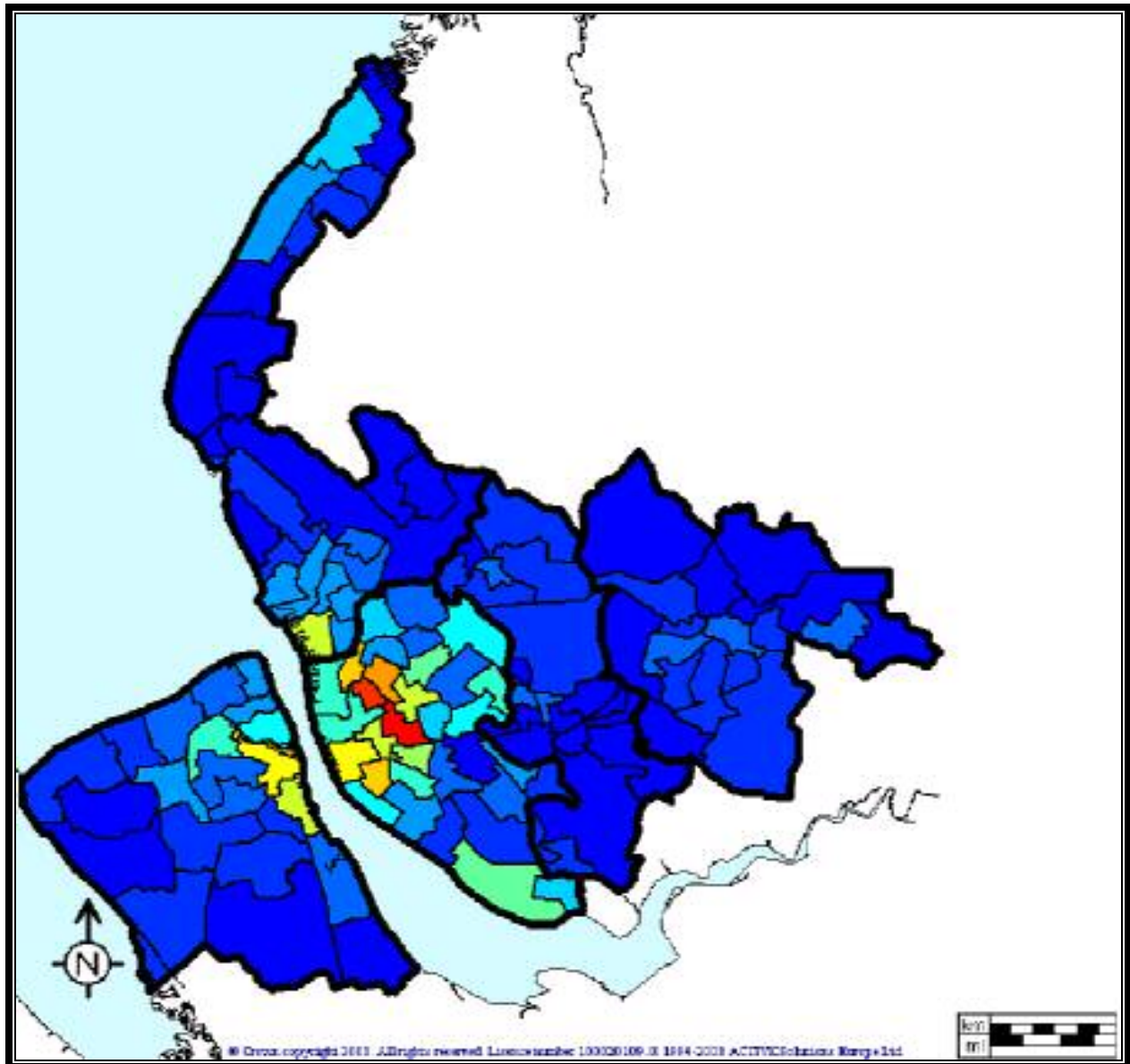
The first significant change from the way we have previously worked has been the formal adoption of the RAPID (Risk Assessed Programme for Incident Deployment) system. This is an IT based risk assessment and reduction model to replace the old standards which will be withdrawn on 1st April 2004. A great deal of work has already been completed in respect of this, as detailed below and whilst a range of technical measures still need to be undertaken, the Authority has sufficient data to support the changes proposed in this Plan.

There is a separate document explaining the finer detail of the above process which is available, free of charge, on request or through our website.

Until recently incident data had not been geo-coded. Geo-coding is the process that assigns a precise map coordinate to an address. Once this coordinate is assigned, the address can be displayed on a map whether it be paper or computer based. As part of the IRMP process all dwelling fires for the last three years have now been geo-coded. All data has been validated and the system audited. Work is on-going on other fires involving non-domestic property such as retail outlets, educational establishments, etc. This geo-coded data resides on a Geographical Information System (GIS). The data is plotted onto the map base and can then be used for analysis purposes.

The dwelling fire data is analysed on a year by year basis which allows “hot spots” to be identified where there have been clusters of dwelling fires over a period of time. These are high risk areas. The map below shows a ward related example of this work.

Dwelling Fires in Merseyside shown by Ward Jan 2000-May 2003

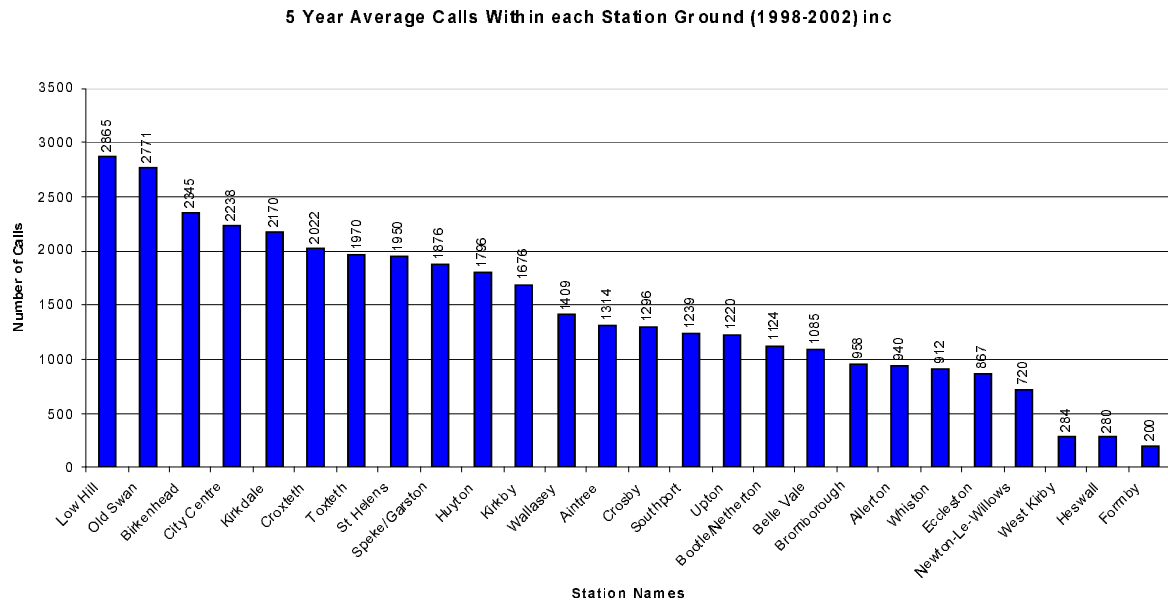


Dwelling Fires between January 2000 and May 2003:

	338 +
	302 to 337.9
	266 to 301.9
	230 to 265.9
	194 to 229.9
	158 to 193.9
	122 to 157.9
	86 to 121.9
	50 to 85.9
	14 to 49.9

Other software used has the very latest demographic and lifestyle data based upon the 2001 census. This is used to highlight areas of high-risk properties based upon known criteria. This is then overlaid on the incident data and comparisons made between the identified “hot spots” based upon fires and areas of high risk properties based upon lifestyle data. There is a high degree of correlation between the two data sets. An example of this lifestyle data can be found as an Appendix to this plan.

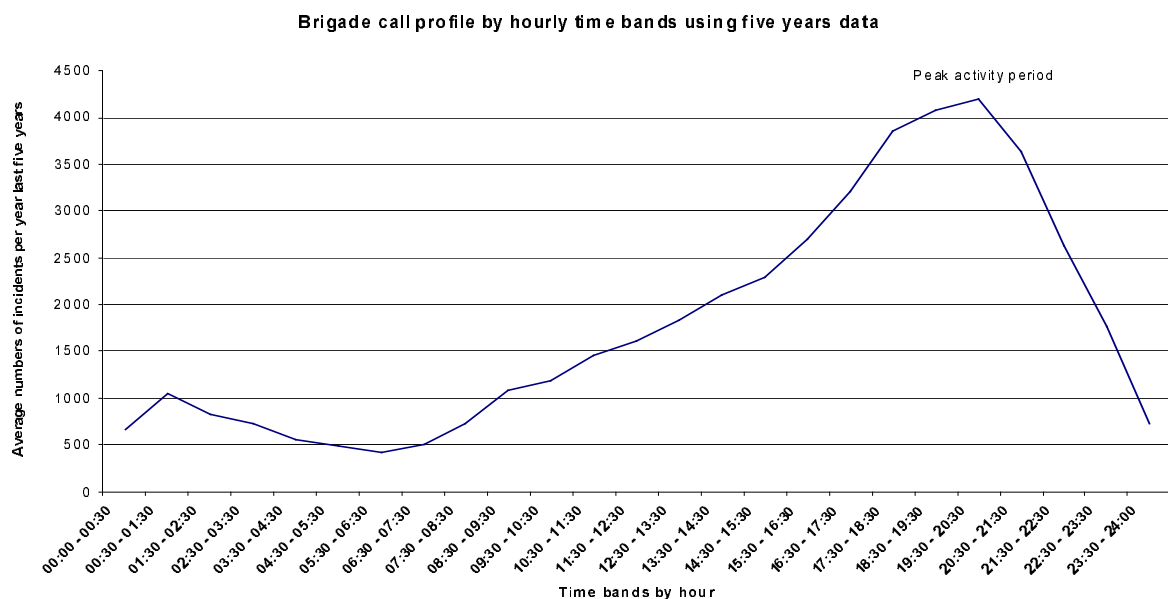
The relative activity level of each fire station has been analysed for the last five years and the chart below summarises this information.



All the data concerning the Home Fire Risk Assessments (see Section 4) we have carried out has also been geo-coded and input on the analytical system. This data is used to concentrate resources in the areas of highest risk.

All fatal fires for the last ten years have also been analysed in detail and geo-coded. Data has been produced showing exact location, cause, time taken from ignition to discovery, time from discovery to first call, time from first call to mobilising and then attendance. This is used for both fire safety and operational purposes. Further details are shown in Section 3.

All incidents for the last five years have been analysed by time of day to show when the busiest times are and when fewer fires occur. This is illustrated below:-



Work has also been undertaken to analyse the pattern of risk across the 24-hour period in order to better determine the best response at different times of the day.

Additional statistical data including high risk chemical sites, accident blackspots, etc., has been input into the system to provide an even more detailed risk map. Unitary Development Plans produced by the District Councils are being scrutinised for any developments which may impact upon any area and vary the risk identified.

When all this work has been completed, this will result in the provision of a comprehensive risk assessment and planning tool for the public of Merseyside. Ultimately this risk mapping software will greatly assist the Authority in making resource (fire engine and special appliances) allocation decisions based on the risk levels highlighted by the model.

Consequently, the mapping software will be used in the first instance for identifying risk which will, in turn, allow a range of community safety initiatives to be directed in those areas where this is most needed.

We are also working with our colleagues in the Police and Ambulance Services to share and standardise the data and information we all maintain in respect of emergency incidents.

Although we are well on the way to developing the full RAPID system, we already have a wide range of data and if we know we can improve something now, that makes you safer, we should get on and do it. We discuss this approach further in Section 5 on Emergency Response.

Electronic Government

The Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Implementing Electronic Government (IEG3) statement and supporting e-Government Strategy have been co-ordinated with the IRMP and will work in synergy by establishing and satisfying common requirements. The following is a summary of key areas of synergy between both strategies.

In line with the shift of focus to putting people first, looking at risks and the options for their reduction and management, the e-Government Strategy identifies our plans for knowledge management. A significant amount of GIS-based information is currently being gathered, and linked to the National Land and Property Gazetteer. This will be used to determine a pattern of risk which will enable fact-based planning for activities to make the public safer. By using new tools and joining with other agencies, sharing information, we will develop a common understanding of risk and by working together we aim to reduce those risks.

Within the framework of a restructured corporate information management role and policy, we are planning to develop a corporate repository which supports the information requirements of our internal and external customers and legislative compliance. Our collaborative partnerships are already significant and will be developed further to enable additional external agency information sources to be used plus greater experience and resources to be shared.

All developments within our e-Government Strategy will comply with relevant Government standards plus other guidelines. This consistent approach will ensure interoperability with other agencies for systems development, data exchange and analysis, so that information can be shared.

In support of our information improvement plans, our e-Government Strategy recognises the potential of the national e-Fire projects, especially the 'national portal', 'risk knowledge management and data sharing', 'fire safety and business' and fire safety in the community' in the context of IRMP.

Electronic service delivery will be implemented through a wide ranging access channel strategy which already includes the 'Loop' Fire Service Direct Contact Centre.

It is anticipated that the automation of the HFRA assessment activity with the use of hand-held devices could significantly speed up the process.

We will consult with our local community to ensure that we provide our electronic and traditional services in the way the community wishes those services to be delivered. Since IRMP will make significant use of access channels for information provision and consultation, we acknowledge the benefits of collaborative access channel planning and development, take-up measurement, consultation and customer satisfaction monitoring.

The processes which deliver services through the access channels will be made more effective and will ensure Freedom of Information Act compliance. A corporate Intranet will contribute to knowledge management and enhance communication to all locations.

Prince2 project management techniques will be used to implement our e-Government action plan as part of a strengthened corporate project and programme management structure.

3 Analysis

The Social Dimension of Fire

Various analyses have been carried out in recent years which show that certain factors represent an increased risk of experiencing a fire. For instance, in the home, fires most often occur in properties which are old, rented, converted flats, terraced property, on council estates, in inner city areas, in high density or socially deprived areas or are in high physical disorder. Householders most likely to suffer fire include those that smoke, use drugs or alcohol, use chip pans, where the head of household is young, have young children, are lone parents, have a limiting disability, have a low income or are elderly.

Most households in these categories are less likely to own a smoke alarm and could be seen as particularly at risk from fire. In many households a number of these factors combine to increase the risk still further.

The important phrase to remember in relation to these facts is that **“fire discriminates”**. Whilst it can strike anywhere, it is more likely to occur in areas and households in the lower socio-economic groups. For example, national statistics show the risk of death from fire is 16 times higher among children in the lower socio-economic group compared to children in the highest. Arson rates are 30 times higher in poorer areas with a 15 times increased chance of death compared to “affluent” areas. It is a sad fact that an older person is far more likely to die in a fire than any other age group.

The 2001 census data has indicated that Merseyside has an increasingly aged population (compared to 1991 census data), particularly in Sefton (18% increase in 85 year olds) and Wirral (17% increase in 85 year olds).

The numbers of pensioners living alone in Merseyside has increased by more than the national average in the 10 years between the censuses. Furthermore, the number of pensioners with a long term limiting illness has increased by over 30% in both Knowsley and Liverpool, although the number of pensioners in rented property has decreased by over 30%. Older people are particularly vulnerable to fire with the vast majority of fire deaths occurring in the over 60s age group. Often this is accompanied by other factors that add to the vulnerability such as mobility and sensory difficulties, and a lack of ability to respond to danger.

The census data also shows that the number of lone parent households is increasing whilst numbers of people in rented accommodation including public sector rented flats is decreasing.

The elderly are statistically less likely to have a smoke alarm than many other groups in society. When additional factors such as living alone and limiting illness are added, the risks to this group increase. We are committed to our programme of HFRA's, detailed elsewhere in this Plan and we aim to target the groups most at risk of a domestic fire and those groups less likely to own a smoke alarm.

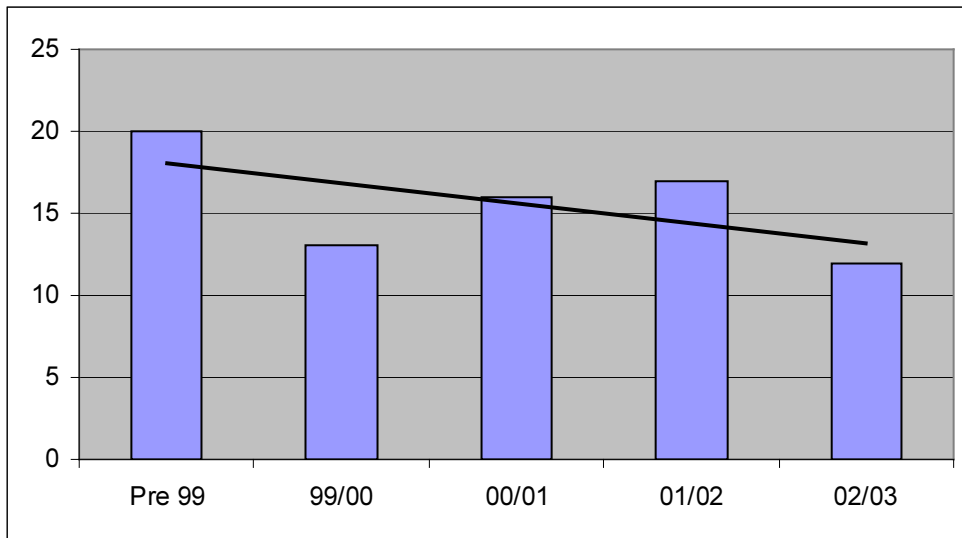
The census also found a big increase in the number of people born outside of the United Kingdom. Nationally this increase is 37%. Most areas of Merseyside show increases of less than this but Liverpool has increased by 56%. This is why we have introduced our innovative Fire Safety Advocate scheme which is already targetting ethnic minority communities within Merseyside and there are plans to extend this initiative in the future.

The picture painted above clearly shows that fire does have a social dimension. It impacts disproportionately on the vulnerable in the community in the most vulnerable areas. These areas and people will share many other characteristics of vulnerable communities such as higher crime, higher unemployment, poorer access to services and other factors. The fact that relatively large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation (Merseyside has 11 of the worst 20, and 23 of the worst 60 wards in England, measured on the Index of Multiple Deprivation) means that the challenge faced by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is probably greater than anywhere else in the country. But it is a challenge we have been addressing for some time and will continue to do.

Fatal Fires in the Home

By far the majority of fire deaths occur in the home. In Merseyside, an analysis has been carried out of fatal fires which has been published separately. This analysis helps to guide community safety activity which is described in the next Section. The following paragraphs summarise details of fatal fires in 2002/03.

Our corporate objectives set demanding 5 year targets for reducing the number of deaths that occur in Merseyside. The target was first set in 1999 when the average figure was 20+. The aim was to reduce this by 40% to 12 by 2004. This figure was achieved in 2002/03 (see the chart below). Every fatality from fire is a tragedy and we aim to drive this figure down further and set demanding targets of less than 11 accidental fire deaths in 2003/04 and less than 10 in 2004/05.



Where are people dying?

All 12 victims of accidental fires in 2002/03 died in their own home with terraced houses (6) and flats (3) the main property type involved. Of the 12 victims, 8 were in the room where the fire started and 4 were elsewhere in the property. Of those 4 that were elsewhere, 3 were on the same floor. Liverpool had the highest number (6) followed by Wirral (4) while Knowsley and St.Helens had one each. Sefton had no fire deaths during 2002/03.

Who died in fires?

Of the 12 accidental fire deaths in 2002/03, eight were male and the ages of victims ranged from 21-85 years old. Nine of the victims were over the age of 60 years which, once again, confirms the vulnerability of older people to fire. The chart below illustrates this graphically.



Of the 12 people that died, six lived alone and five of these were male. In six fires there was evidence that alcohol had either been a factor in the fire starting in the first place, or contributed to the victims inability to escape from fire. We know that three of the victims had recognised mobility problems and regularly used walking aids although it is likely, that because of their age, others also had mobility difficulties.

Sadly, this fits a pattern throughout the country where the factors that make someone most vulnerable to fire are age, mobility difficulties, sensory difficulties and lifestyle issues.

What were the causes of fire?

The causes of fatal fires in 2002/03 were smoking materials (4), cooking facilities (4), radiated heat (2) and candles (2). Of the 12 fires, 5 started in living rooms, 5 in kitchens and 2 started in bedrooms.

It can be seen from the above statistics that the most common cause of fires which led to death are smoking materials and cooking materials. This often involves people who have fallen asleep dropping cigarettes onto soft furnishings and people leaving chip pans unattended. This is also the picture nationally which is why national fire safety/awareness campaigns are targeted at these areas.

How many of the victims had smoke alarms fitted?

Only two of the 12 fatal fires had properly fitted and functioning smoke alarms installed in the affected property. There were a number of incidents where the smoke alarms were damaged or missing. Having a working smoke alarm gives substantial protection/warning against the consequences and threat of fire.

When did the fires occur?

The winter months accounted for the majority of fire deaths yet again with 7 of them falling victim to fire between November and the end of February. This is mirrored nationally every year with more fire deaths during winter as opposed to summer. Once again local and national campaigns will highlight this issue.

2002/03 was unusual compared to previous years in that a significant percentage of fire deaths occurred during the day. 4 fire deaths occurred between midnight and 06.00 hours and 2 occurred in early evening hours.

How quickly do we attend fatal fires?

When domestic fires break out, they can spread so quickly that, by the time the fire service arrives, it can be too late. In addition, the very nature of fire with massive amounts of toxic smoke and heat, a person can quickly die even whilst sleeping. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service achieves very high standards in terms of its speed of attendance at fires. However, an analysis of speed of attendance to fatal fires in the period 1997 to 2002, inclusive, shows that on 89% of occasions, we arrived at the scene within six minutes of receiving the call, yet still the person tragically died. **This is powerful evidence that speed of attendance alone is not going to reduce the tragic impact of fire.**

It is pleasing to note that fire deaths/injuries and dwelling house fires are falling and our main priority is to continue this trend. To achieve our vision we need to access those in our community that are "hard to reach" vulnerable groups. We are committed to working in partnership with other agencies across the area to achieve the vision of a "fire safe community".

To ensure we can further improve our services to the areas of greatest need the database used by our dedicated Incident Investigation Team has been considerably expanded to capture a much wider range of information from each incident investigated. This includes areas such as ethnicity, secondary/tertiary causes of fire, whether a HFRA had been offered, whether other agencies were involved, etc.

Real progress in creating the vision of a Merseyside Fire Safe Community is now being achieved. However, to build on the current reduction trends further stringent, but achievable, targets have been

set for 2004/05 to further reduce deaths/injuries from fire, and dwelling house fires and details of these are contained in the Service Plan.

School Fires

Schools have been proved to be particularly vulnerable to deliberate fires. The impact of a school fire is often devastating and spreads well beyond the damage to the structure. Pupils and staff lose work and materials that are often irreplaceable and represent years of work. Damage to a school cannot be quickly repaired so there is added disruption to pupils and staff as they are 'displaced' to other facilities creating pressure at the new venue.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has been promoting the far wider installation of sprinklers in schools that would prevent such tragedy in the community. We are committed to working closely with Local Education Authorities to find cost effective means of improving safety.

Commercial and Industrial Property

Both local and national analysis of fires in commercial and industrial property highlight the importance of proper workplace risk assessment and measures to reduce the risk of deliberate fires. A fire in a business damages not only the fabric of the building and stock but there are consequential losses in terms of trade and business continuity. Many businesses never recover from a fire with the subsequent loss of employment in the local community.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service recognise the ambitions of all sections of the community to make Merseyside a successful and thriving economy. This is why we will help business to comply with the law regarding fire safety and enforce that law where appropriate. We will also develop our Arson Task Force to reduce the devastating impact of deliberate fires.

Other Fires

Our analysis also allows us to view 'smaller' fires such as vehicles, rubbish, grass, etc. For instance, a partnership with Liverpool University allowed a study of vehicle fires in Merseyside that showed a massive rise in recent years, as experienced nationally, but that a small number of wards experienced a massively disproportionate number of fires. We can then work with local districts in the areas where we are needed the most.

The following chart shows an analysis of fires and non fire incidents over the five year period April 1997 – March 2002.

	STATION NAME	Fire Deaths	All Injuries	Total Calls	FDR1's (Primary Fires)	Dwelling Fires	Rate of Dwelling Fires per 1000 Dwellings	Secondary Fires	Special Service Calls	RTA's
1	Low Hill	7	353	14323	3649	1817	75.35	5568	1136	195
2	Old Swan	11	193	13858	2976	1119	31.52	5529	1193	293
3	Toxteth	4	251	9852	2460	1111	55.44	3490	917	122
4	Birkenhead	7	218	11727	2624	1015	29.48	4618	1219	230
5	Kirkdale	8	211	10852	2462	1004	48.47	4273	986	245
6	Croxteth	3	193	10110	2164	757	29.35	4616	940	235
7	Wallasey	9	190	7048	1612	656	20.61	2308	842	173
8	Crosby	6	212	6478	1201	656	22.51	2623	746	119
9	Speke/Garston	4	158	9377	2248	625	31.47	3863	735	167
10	Southport	8	161	6197	1132	582	16.05	838	1014	201
11	St Helens	4	168	9751	1682	477	15.32	4532	729	154
12	Huyton	0	131	8980	1994	475	19.63	3866	706	166
13	Upton	7	139	6102	1296	464	18.49	2147	557	141
14	City Centre	0	115	11194	1529	431	84.02	1258	1083	159
15	Kirkby	4	186	8315	2006	430	28.15	3361	868	129
16	Bootle/Netherton	4	124	5622	1051	406	15.97	2045	626	171
17	Belle Vale	3	101	5426	1311	391	17.68	2021	548	115
18	Eccleston	1	96	4334	852	325	16.09	1629	448	133
19	Allerton	2	63	4701	830	320	15.60	1034	628	135
20	Aintree	2	116	6571	1366	319	17.45	2098	598	147
21	Bromborough	1	107	4793	1041	301	12.62	1330	529	136
22	Whiston	0	46	4559	912	199	11.98	1451	385	116
23	Newton-le-Willows	1	71	3598	764	192	13.34	1244	446	140
24	Heswall	1	51	1402	274	121	9.14	386	354	81
25	West Kirby	1	22	1418	214	109	9.50	498	264	60
26	Formby	0	17	1003	219	89	8.66	250	198	55
	TOTALS	98	3693	187591	39869	14391		66876	18695	4018
	AVERAGES PER STATION	3.77	142.04	7215.04	1533.42	553.50	25.92	2572.15	719.04	154.54

The Regional Picture

The following chart shows how Merseyside compares with other North West Fire and Rescue Services in a number of categories.

Fire and Rescue Service	Average Deaths per 100,000 population 98-02	Average Injuries per 10,000 population 98-02	RTA Fatalities per 100,000 population 2002	Average Fires per 10,000 dwellings 98-02	Deprivation Score	Net Expenditure per head £ 2001/02
DATA						
Cheshire	0.69	11.44	7.12	20.5	21.6	28.02
Cumbria	0.77	11.66	10.05	23.2	25.5	32.39
GMC	1.04	30.74	3.46	34.0	35.6	35.70
Lancashire	1.04	19.63	4.66	29.5	29.9	32.14
Merseyside	1.13	28.97	4.55	33.1	45.3	44.25
RISK						
Cheshire	36/49	31/49	31/49	31/49	23/46	19/49
Cumbria	41/49	33/49	43/49	38/49	31/46	32/49
GMC	48/49	49/49	3/49	48/49	41/46	41/49
Lancashire	47/49	47/49	10/49	45/49	37/46	30/49
Merseyside	49/49	48/49	9/49	47/49	46/46	48/49
KEY						
Lowest Quartile						
Second Lowest Quartile						
Second Upper Quartile						
Upper Quartile						

The first part of the chart gives statistical data in each of the categories and the second part ranks each Fire and Rescue Service against all others in England and Wales (49 in total, 3 of which are in Wales).

What the chart clearly shows is that Merseyside (and GMC – Greater Manchester) have had amongst the highest number of fires, injuries and deaths in the whole country during the period 1998 to 2002. However, the initiatives that are described elsewhere in this Plan are starting to take effect and the trends in all three of these areas are reducing at a rate greater than the national average. It is anticipated that in years to come, Merseyside's relative position in each of these categories will be lower than is shown in these charts.

It is also relevant to note that Merseyside is the most deprived area in England (there are no equivalent statistics for Wales) measured on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. As indicated earlier, this creates special challenges for the Authority but ones that we are ready and willing to address.

Comment is made elsewhere in this Plan on the relatively high cost of this Authority and we believe that the need to meet these challenges does have an impact on cost.

4 Prevention and Protection

Community Fire Safety

Community Fire Safety (CFS) is a planned programme of intervention, outreach and raising awareness to prevent fire-related deaths and reduce the risk, incidence and cost of fire in the wider community. It is intended to reduce the risk of fire occurring and not merely trying to combat it once it has happened.

In 1999, Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority decided to re-invest and renew to meet the challenge of fire. By staying with conventional approaches it is entirely predictable that there would be the conventional results of unnecessary fire deaths and injuries. The Authority decided to be innovative and creative with its Community Safety Strategy and encourage and foster that within its workforce. By definition, therefore, this created projects both in nature and scale that were uncommon, if not, unique in the UK Fire Service. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service remains at the forefront of CFS initiatives in the United Kingdom.

To illustrate the priority afforded to CFS work, community safety training is now fully integrated into trainee firefighter training courses and is given the same importance as the training given in firefighting and emergency incident response. A firefighter completing a trainee course in Merseyside is fully prepared for a modern fire and rescue service.

Our strategy is described in full in a separate document but the key elements and some of the initiatives that form the basis of these pro-active measures are described below and it is on these strong foundations that we will build more means to improve safety in the community.

Home Fire Risk Assessments (HFRA)

The flagship of the Community Safety Strategy is the Home Fire Risk Assessment (HFRA). This is a free risk assessment of domestic properties within Merseyside, carried out by operational firefighters and advocates in minority communities and is offered to every household in the area. The results of these HFRA's are usually that smoke detector(s) are fitted, free of charge and a 'fire plan' is discussed and agreed with the householder.

Over the last 4 years, 200,000+ HFRA's have been carried out across the Merseyside community. This has resulted in the fitting of over 300,000 smoke detectors and there is real evidence emerging that smoke alarms fitted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have alerted families to a fire in their home from which they have been able to escape. Nationally, 28% of homes that suffer fires have a working smoke alarm. In Merseyside we are currently nearly double this figure.

Merseyside firefighters have embraced the concept of preventing fires and enabling members of the public to avoid fires. Local representative bodies have publicly recognised the value of HFRA's together with numerous visitors and auditors.

If the original home assessment indicates a high-risk property, the case is forwarded to the Community Safety Section, who have a greater level of expertise in implementing risk reduction principles. They may include the provision of a deep fat fryer to replace chip pans, safe sleeping blankets, flame resistant bedding, specialised alarm systems (for instance for deaf people) and ultimately the fitting of residential sprinklers. It is often the case that individuals in high-risk properties are known to other agencies and in these cases case audits are arranged.

The effectiveness of Merseyside's HFRA programme has been independently analysed by Fire Data Research Ltd. This has been done by exploring and quantifying the relationship between the incidences of domestic dwelling fires, the outcomes of each incident in terms of fatalities and other casualties and the implementation of the HFRA programme.

The research clearly establishes that the HFRA programme has made a significant impact upon the levels of accidental dwelling fires in Merseyside. It also clearly shows that the HFRA programme has had a significant beneficial impact upon the numbers of both fatalities and non-fatal casualties resulting from accidental dwelling fires.

The report states that not only are the combined efforts of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service reducing accidental dwelling fires and associated casualties and fatalities but that the tailored and targeted use of HFRA as a key component in risk reduction is achieving reductions net of the national trend in all three of these key measures. These reductions also have a significant impact upon the economy of Merseyside equating to savings of many millions of pounds.

The conclusion of the external "impact analysis" is that there is significant additional potential for further reductions to be achieved through the continuation of the HFRA programme.

Fire Service Direct

In 2000, the Authority approved another unique project – Fire Service Direct, launched by the Rt. Hon. Ian McCartney MP. Fire Service Direct is the development of telephone-based services of trained call centre operators, who target areas, booking HFRA for firefighters to carry out. This frees up fire station personnel and avoids them spending time on the administration of the initiative.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has contracted a call-management company, LOOP, to generate 48,000 HFRA appointments per year. LOOP has also created a database that will include information from the origin of call to completion of HFRA. It allows practitioners to target resources at the 'hard to reach' vulnerable groups and communities. The historical information from the paper-based HFRA already carried out has been added to the database described in Section 2, allowing community safety personnel to access the system. This will determine which of our initiatives are successful, verify the timescales for HFRA being carried out, record the numbers and reasons for cancellations and areas of slow take up. It will allow us to target resources at vulnerable groups and communities.

The freephone number enables members of the public to not only book HFRA appointments but also receive other information about Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

To make an appointment, please phone free on 0800 731 5958

The Fire Service Direct potential has recently been expanded by establishing a partnership with a training provider to offer fire safety advice direct to businesses across Merseyside.

Community Cohesion

We have taken active steps to be a significant player in reducing fire risk in the community. Fire has an immediate community impact – but also threatens community cohesion. For instance, a burned out car or derelict building leaves a 'scar' as well as a hazard in the heart of areas where people live. It can encourage other unwelcome and sometimes criminal behaviour that creates a downward spiral of events. The loss of a school to a deliberate fire goes well beyond the building itself.

We are already working with partners to reduce the impact from fire. Successful partnerships and funding arrangements have been entered into with nearly 20 community groups, trusts, neighbourhood councils, businesses and other groups. We are also represented at many multi-agency organisations.

Fire Reduction through Engagement and Education (F.R.E.E. Team)

In March 2002 we created a team of six from within the existing establishment to set up a series of training programmes to tackle the root causes of fire in the community. Young arson-offenders often come from marginalized sections of those communities, and do not fully understand the impact of their actions. These young people are often at risk of exclusion from school or have already been excluded. The courses are designed to help young people who pose a potential fire risk become the fire safe citizens of the future by:

- Educating them in the importance of fire safety
- Helping them understand the consequences of their actions and prevent re-offending
- Providing positive role models and activities to help them develop confidence and self-esteem and raise aspirations

Referrals to these courses come from a number of partner agencies such as Local Education Authorities, Youth Offending Teams, Youth Inclusion Programmes, Juvenile and Magistrates Courts. We have agreed to underwrite the scheme although sufficient funding has been attracted to make it cost neutral so far. We will look to expand the initiative and where possible, deliver the scheme within local district areas.

Princes Trust Volunteers Scheme (PTV)

In March 2002 we established a partnership with The Prince's Trust to help young people marginalized through lack of qualifications, a criminal conviction or unemployment. The aim is to give these groups of young people self-confidence, motivation and resilience. By helping them to acquire these skills assists towards these people achieving economic independence and employment.

We are now a 'delivery partner', with The Prince's Trust and have delivered a number of courses, from our community central base in Kirkdale. The young people who have attended and completed the course have, in the main, been socially excluded 16-25 year old age group from Liverpool. To demonstrate commitment to the scheme we have agreed to underwrite the continuation of the partnership although it is currently funded through grants. As a result of the success of the programme currently being delivered in Liverpool we have expanded the scheme to Knowsley and Speke/Garston.

Young Firefighter Scheme

During the next year, we will maintain the investment in our fire safety work with young people and we will expand the opportunities for all young people to engage more closely with the fire and rescue service through the creation of young firefighter schemes, initially on a pilot basis on three stations, with a view to rolling out the concept across the whole of Merseyside.

The 60+ Youth Initiative

This high profile initiative is a competition-based project that encourages youth groups to forward referrals for HFRAs in the homes of older people, our most vulnerable group. The youth group or school who gain the most HFRAs receive a specifically designed training and fire experience course. The aim of the initiative is to increase the number of HFRAs to the over 60s via the family and friends of the youth group members and to build a strong partnership with all youth groups from the diverse sections of the Merseyside community, broadening our ability to access and influence these groups. Since 2002, over 2000 youth groups have registered in the scheme and we carried out over 6000 HFRAs as a result.

Bilingual Fire Safety Advocates

For some of our communities whose first language is not English, we have employed Bilingual Fire Safety advocates to improve our aim of encouraging all communities to access our HFRAs. In this initiative, which began last year, the advocates give advice and complete HFRAs, often in difficult to reach sections of our Chinese, Somali and Yemeni communities. The fixed term contract appointments were funded by the Government's Arson Control Forum and underwritten by the Authority.

In addition to carrying out HFRAs, the advocates advise their local communities on issues surrounding arson reduction by giving talks and meeting key local leaders. We will build on the success of advocates working in minority communities/groups of individuals and will employ more in the future to assist us in engaging hard-to-reach vulnerable groups. Some 300 fire safety checks have been carried out in homes in these communities.

Fire Support Network

The Fire Support Network (formerly Friends of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service) is a voluntary organisation started four years ago and based on individual community fire stations. Their main aim is to promote fire safety awareness within all sections of the community to help create a safer community. The objectives set for the Network are:

- Recruit and train volunteers in the Fire Support Network;
- Provide a friendly and accessible focal point of contact between the local community and the Service;
- Promote and raise fire safety awareness within all sections of the community;
- Support the Service's progress towards a fire-safe community;
- Introduce diversity to the Fire and Rescue Service;
- Promote social inclusion.

Currently there are 100+ active volunteers who are, in the main, working from nine of our Community Fire Stations. The Network are planning to expand on issues such as HFRA leafleting, installation of alarms for deaf people, co-ordinating visits to fire stations, leading on fire safety projects with community groups, after fire care/service and local administration of HFRA forms. The Fire Support Network is a registered charity and has been grant aided by the Home Office Active Community Unit.

A new relationship with the voluntary sector will facilitate expansion of this valuable partnership.

Community Safety Advocates

Whilst our personnel have made tremendous progress in accessing over 200,000 domestic properties, it is clear in any risk based approach that HFRA's have to be targetted at the more vulnerable members in the community. Fire investigation results reveal that often other agencies are already assessing these properties, eg social workers and health visitors. We are therefore training such partners to be fire safety advocates who encourage their clients to ask us to carry out a HFRA on their property. This is already resulting in more referrals and it is anticipated that there will be thousands more for the most "at risk" premises. This principle has been expanded to numerous groups of outreach workers.

In addition to the above initiatives, the Authority intends, in the next financial year, to create additional opportunities for fire safety advocates working with the community, in the community and at times of day that suit the community. In many cases these advocates will have particular skills and empathies relating to the community in areas such as mobility and sensory challenges, age, ethnicity and gender. This will be achieved by redirecting existing firefighter community fire safety resources to create 20 posts on a flexible working contract. Our fire prevention work will continue to be delivered around the core messages of Prevention, Detection and Escape.

In April 2004, three "older people" advocates will be employed to further the above aims of reaching this vulnerable group. The provision of external funding has facilitated this being implemented earlier than originally envisaged.

Sprinklers

Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority has been actively involved in the promotion of residential sprinklers since the mid-1990's. Frequent and regular seminars have been held, accompanied by live demonstrations of sprinkler systems to all sections of the community including local MPs, councillors, housing associations, residents groups and members of the public. In addition, we have carried out two full scale "burns" in properties due for demolition, to show the difference in the effects of fire in a room without sprinklers and a room with sprinklers. Two videos/CDs on residential sprinklers have been produced, one for schools and one for domestic properties. Both of these have been distributed on a national basis.

A new demonstration unit is under construction at the Safety Training Centre, Croxteth. This will house an "Aqua-Mist" system, and will allow us to actively demonstrate the two current types of residential sprinkler systems that are being installed in the United Kingdom. We are in partnership

with Aqua-Mist and together we are developing a stand-alone single sprinkler unit for the immediate protection of identified vulnerable people in the community. Staffing changes within Fire Safety will provide a designated officer for the promotion of residential sprinklers in domestic properties as well as technical officers who research and demonstrate the types of systems.

We have, since 2000, provided or facilitated life saving sprinkler installations for at least 100 families on Merseyside.

It is the policy of Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority to continue to lobby the Government and other decision makers with a view to the mandatory installation of sprinklers in all new build domestic property through amendments to the Building Regulations. We will actively promote the value of domestic sprinkler systems with regard to their ability to protect both life and premises.

We will contribute to and encourage innovation in sprinkler design in the home to create systems that reduce risk to tolerable levels but are far more widely affordable. Sprinklers offer the best protection in many business and public buildings. The performance of sprinklers over many years has been outstanding in terms of protection. We will lobby Government and work with the developers and designers of buildings to encourage their widespread use for the protection of the community, business and the firefighters sent to deal with any lives.

Arson Strategy

Arson is currently the largest single cause of fire in the U.K. On Merseyside, there were 23,218 arson incidents last year, with these incidents representing 56% of the total operational workload. As with other types of crime, arson is not evenly spread throughout Merseyside. Study shows that those on the lowest incomes suffer rates of arson fires thirty times higher than elsewhere and are fifteen times more likely to die as a result of a fire.

Arson fires can often devastate whole families to an extent not matched by other crimes. Fire can leave victims with injuries, which cause a lifetime of pain, leaving permanent physical and mental scars. Arson has a financial cost running to hundreds of millions of pounds, per year, nationally. It destroys communities and pollutes our environment.

A separate 'Arson Reduction Strategy' is available and some of that Strategy is detailed below.

Arson Control Forum

In February 2004, a further grant of £380,000 has been awarded to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service from the Arson Control Forum, through to March 2006. This will allow the continuation of funding for the three Bilingual Advocates (see earlier) and the employment of a data clerk as part of the joint Police/Fire Arson Task Force. To expand on our Arson Reduction Strategy, it will also allow the employment of a further Bilingual Advocate in 2005/06 and during 2004/05, the employment of Arson Reduction Advocates to further the work of the Arson Task Force.

Safer Merseyside Partnership

We are a member of the Safer Merseyside Partnership (SMP). SMP have provided help to us to assist with the funding of a dedicated Arson Reduction Manager. This officer is tasked with developing partnerships that will reduce arson, and thus contribute to the Authority's overall aim of creating a fire safe community. This officer leads our Arson Task Force for Merseyside.

Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships

We have appointed officers who will attend the five District Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships. These local forums provide the opportunity to work with partners and respond to problems and issues within local communities.

Merseyside Police

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and Merseyside Police are working together to create an arson and fire investigation protocol. This will ensure a measured response to the arson problem. It will also ensure that the management information systems are compatible, and information can be shared to maximum effect. As part of their commitment to the partnership, we are delighted Merseyside Police have seconded a police officer to work within the fire service. This is the foundation of a dedicated Arson Task Force, and it is anticipated that other members will be recruited from key partner agencies to contribute to effectiveness of the team. We will also examine the Arson Task Force from a regional perspective to ascertain if this offers a more cost-effective method of service delivery.

Incident Investigation Team

Part of our statutory mandate to reduce the incidence and consequences of fire is the sharing of knowledge and information about fire risk and how best it can be managed. We have created a dedicated Incident Investigation Team to perform detailed investigations into causes of fires and other mitigating factors that led to the fire ignition and its ensuing spread. The team works in partnership with Police Crime Scene Investigators to analyse evidence and detect causes of arson. The team have been frequently called as witnesses in the subsequent prosecution of arson offenders, this dovetails into our objectives of detecting and prosecuting arson offending with Merseyside. Reports are produced detailing the results of these investigations which are made available to relevant organisations where the results will help to suggest ways in which similar incidents can be prevented in future and to provide a basis from which to target fire safety advice and prevention programmes.

FREE team

The FREE team play a major part in deterring and preventing arson. Further details of the FREE team can be found on page 27.

Bilingual Advocates

Specific detail of the Bi-lingual Advocates can be found on page 28. However, with specific reference to arson, the team are developing a reporting scheme whereby non-English speaking residents can contact the advocates to report incidences of abandoned vehicles, unsecured property, fly tipping, and accumulations of rubbish. The advocates will then progress these issues on their behalf and thus reduce the likelihood of the potential arson.

Working With Partners

In line with all recent key documents, particularly the White Paper and Fire and Rescue Services Bill, we are working in partnerships and initiatives to reach vulnerable groups where a disproportionate number of fires are occurring. This opens up a number of 'funding' streams in addition to the commitment already made by the Authority in both monetary and personnel terms.

We are already working with partners to reduce the impact from fire upon communities across Merseyside. Since 1999/2000 in excess of £1.4 million has been received in grants towards this effort. Partnership arrangements will continue to be sought with any organisation that assists us to achieve our vision and corporate objectives. Details of a further grant of £380,000 from the Arson Control Forum are above.

Successful partnerships and funding arrangements have been entered into with the following:

- Arson Control Forum
- Learning and Skills Council
- New Deal for Employment
- Local Education Authorities
- Safer Merseyside Partnerships
- Government Office Northwest
- New Deals for Communities
- Liverpool Housing Action Trust

- Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council
- Health Action Zones
- Community Funds

Other successful arrangements have been with:

- Merseyside Society for Deaf People
- Sefton Housing Development
- Pilkington's Pension Trust
- HSBC Bank
- Primary Care Trusts

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is represented at the following:

- North West Accident Task Force
- Merseyside Health Action Zone
- Safer Merseyside Partnership
- Multi-Agency Governance Group
- Crime and Disorder Partnerships in the 5 District Councils
- Trauma and Injury Group
- Merseyside Racial Harassment Forum

Notable successes include:

- Bilingual Fire Safety Advocates;
- Fire Reduction through Engagement and Education (FREE);
- Over 60's Initiative;
- Prince's Trust Volunteers
- Church Watch;
- Friends of the Fire Service

and details of many of these initiatives can be found elsewhere in this Plan.

As stated in a number of key Government publications, the Fire and Rescue Service cannot work in isolation to achieve the aim of preventing fires. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will continue to develop and expand on all partnership working already detailed above and explore new opportunities as they arise. The further development of proactive and preventative strategies will embody the commitment of the Authority to the wider Neighbourhood Renewal and Social Inclusion agenda and will give increased access to the most vulnerable in our community.

Working with District Councils

We believe that the fire and rescue service is part of the mainstream of local government and has an important role to play in improving the quality of life in Merseyside. This is why we have recently changed our organisation, putting in place a District Council-based structure. A District Manager has been appointed to plan and deliver all services in each of the five Districts. This will help us to improve joint working at District level.

A key priority will be the developing of closer links with the District Councils and active participation in local programmes to tackle crime and disorder, social exclusion and economic regeneration. A number of innovative local initiatives (detailed above) have already been launched which have shown the benefits which can be delivered from this new structure.

We also intend to look to develop the role of Station Locality Manager to assist in these initiatives as well as to improve performance. Further details of the Station Locality Manager are in Section 11 on Performance Management.

Fire Victim Support Scheme

We have a partnership with the British Red Cross to assist the victims of serious domestic fires. The service has been available for over 10 years and during that time has provided assistance to over 1500 victims of domestic fire. Assistance is provided by the British Red Cross Fire Victim Support Service. Such assistance can take many forms but all are designed to provide immediate practical and emotional support and help to victims at their time of greatest need. Examples of assistance provided has included provision of replacement clothing, hygiene facilities and has even, on occasion, extended to the provision of temporary accommodation.

The service has two vehicles staffed by volunteers. They provide cover from 1800 to 0600hrs Monday to Friday and 24 hour cover over the weekends and bank holidays.

In 2002 the service provided much needed help following 76 incidents and a further 49 in 2003.

Fire Safety Enforcement

We currently know about some 12,000 buildings through our work in enforcing fire certification and various licensing arrangements.

Our inspection programmes for these buildings are already risk-based in that we grade all buildings according to their primary use and the standards of fire safety and general management observed within the building. High-risk buildings are subjected to frequent and comprehensive inspections. Lower-risk buildings are inspected less frequently, with those presenting the lowest risks being checked on a sampling basis.

As part of our risk based inspection procedure, 27,000 premises have been added to the database and a desk based sampling on a risk based principle will take place over the next 10 years.

It is expected that a fundamental review of fire safety law will come to fruition in Spring 2005 with the introduction of a new Fire Safety (Reform) Order. This will replace existing laws with a consistent risk-based approach covering all buildings used as places of work and/or to which the public have access. Under such an approach the responsibility for carrying out a risk assessment and taking any necessary action to minimise the risks identified during that assessment will rest with the building owner or occupier.

The fire and rescue service would remain as the enforcing agency, based on an inspection regime tailored to the risks presented in each building, rather than the prescriptive and resource intensive programme of prior certification which flows from the current requirements under the Fire Precautions Act. Such an approach reflects that already in place for enforcement of health and safety legislation. If and when such a new statutory regime is put in place, we will continue to apply our risk-based inspection programmes to all Merseyside buildings falling within the remit of this new law. We recognise that self assessment and self compliance with fire safety may be a potentially daunting task for someone without technical knowledge of fire safety systems, or someone who is new to the issue of fire safety management. A building's occupier or owner will need clear and concise guidance on how to comply with the law. We will make sure we maintain a comprehensive set of guidance and advisory notes and make them available to people to help them comply with the law.

We also recognise that in many cases people may employ professionals from the private sector to advise them how to achieve fire safety in their property. They may also need to employ contractors to supply and fit fire safety systems and equipment. Fire safety is increasingly a technically complex area of business and we believe that people need some way of knowing that the equipment they are being supplied with, the quality of work on equipment installation and the advice they are receiving, are all up to a safe and professional standard.

We believe that there may be advantages, as part of the extension of a risk-based approach to fire safety enforcement, to developing a system of third party accreditation, for equipment, system installation and fire safety advice, to support building owners and occupiers in meeting their new responsibilities. This would help to maintain a consistent standard for those businesses participating

in the scheme, and support the identification and exchange of best practice in completing risk assessments and making buildings safer.

We will therefore discuss with the Government, the building, insurance and fire protection industries, other fire authorities and with the commercial sector more generally, the potential benefits of such an accreditation system. To deal with these increased responsibilities for enforcing fire safety we have developed new computer-based systems to handle the information about buildings and to manage the inspection programmes.

Work has also started on proposals to link these information systems electronically to the wider Merseyside community so that buildings owners or occupiers can provide information direct to our fire safety teams and in return receive advice on fire safety matters. Similar links will be developed with other enforcing authorities to streamline the exchange of information and consultation on fire safety and related issues. This will support our work to meet government targets to make all our services available electronically by 2005 (see Section 2 for further details of this).

Currently our inspection work is carried out by specialist fire safety officers, based in District teams.

We will continue to work with bodies and groups with an interest in fire safety issues to develop and evaluate effective fire safety technologies and management systems.

To provide the best service to the local community, we recognise that we must have talented fire safety officers. We are committed to developing existing staff and attracting new staff from a wider background than has previously been possible. A review into our staffing needs will be published later this year.

Conclusion

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service remain confident that the range of initiatives already in being and still to be developed will achieve the desired outcomes. Further development of this approach is dependant upon liberation of resources from within a finite budget, i.e. achieving a risk appropriate/responsive balance between prevention and response.

5 Emergency Response

Assessment of Risk – Current Response Arrangements

The standards of fire cover that have been in place in Merseyside, along with all other fire services in the United Kingdom were set originally in the 1930's but were firmly established in 1958 by the Home Office. They were subsequently more clearly defined, revised and consolidated in 1974 and again in 1985. Fire risk assessment, until the current year, has been based upon this guidance, which consists of a prose description of the risk categories and a formula designed to determine a points rating or fire grading of premises.

When the risk category of an area had been determined, the criteria set by the Home Office demanded that the fire service response to emergency calls met minimum requirements in terms of speed and weight of attack.

Category 'A'

Built up areas in large cities containing large commercial and industrial premises or high rise property where there is a strong chance of fire spread. The recommended minimum first attendance was three pumps, two to attend within five minutes and one within eight minutes.

Category 'B'

Areas in towns and cities such as smaller industrial areas, extensive shopping centres and factory estates. The recommended minimum first attendance was two pumps, one to arrive within five minutes and the other within eight minutes.

Category 'C'

Extensive areas of residential dwellings such as terraced property, blocks of flats or light industry/commercial. The recommended minimum first attendance was one pump within eight to ten minutes.

Category 'D'

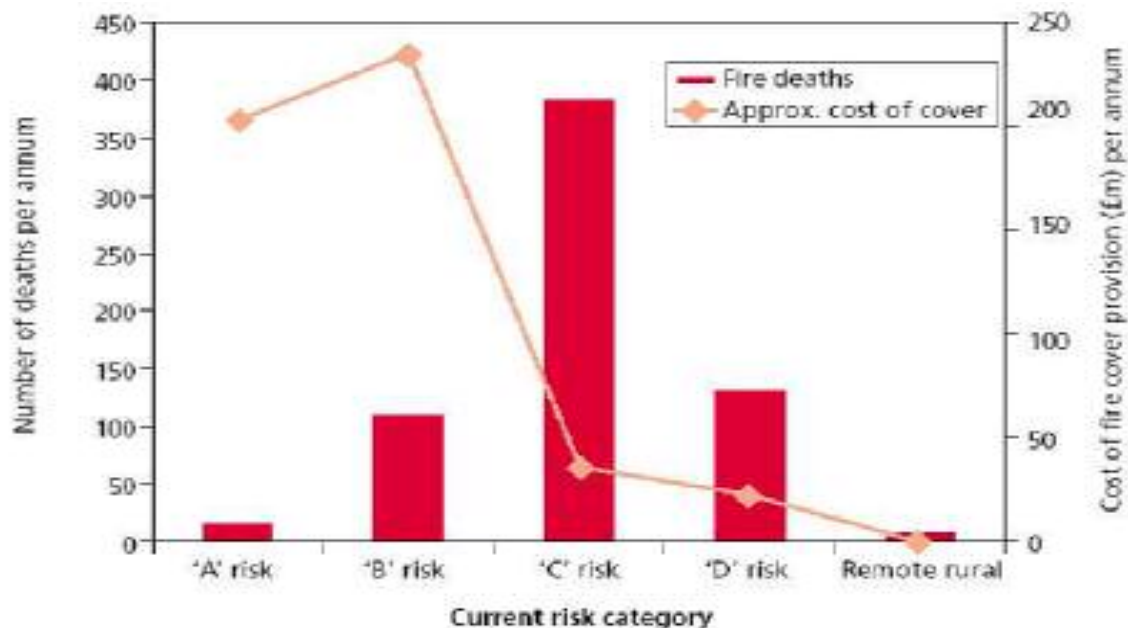
Consisting of rural property, villages and farms. The recommended minimum first attendance was one pump within 20 minutes.

The majority of Merseyside (91%) is classed as C or D risk.

It is these old standards that have sparked much debate in recent years as they meant there was no need for a 24 hour a day immediate response from a number of fire stations on Merseyside. However, with new guidance recently published, it is right and proper for a reassessment to take place to consider if a delayed response is still appropriate.

These old standards cease to be effective from 1st April 2004 when the new standards set out in this IRMP and associated Action Plan take effect.

The following chart compares the current allocation of resources (on a national basis) to fire deaths and illustrates that the majority of deaths occur in C risk areas but that the majority of resources are spent covering A and B risk. Merseyside's own fatal fire analysis confirms that most fire deaths occur in C risk areas.



New Emergency Response Standards

The old standards achieve the highest levels of response to A and B risk areas. These areas are predominantly commercial risk when in fact the life risk in our community is concentrated around C risk areas. However, we do recognise the importance of protecting the community and business infrastructure that is vital to the prosperity of the region. For this reason, the new approach aims to have a better standard of response to life risk, whilst maintaining a high level of response to commercial risk.

Moving to the new approach will be done on a phased basis.

During year one, as a result of our risk assessment work, we will seek to categorise areas as high, medium or low risk. We recognise that intervention time is important to a successful outcome and in particular, the speed with which the first fire engine arrives. Our aim is to produce attendance times for these new risk categories.

The important issue for this Plan is that we should set out what standards we intend to put in place for the future in the communities of Merseyside, and the overall effect of our standards should be improved safety.

In the previous approach we were set times of response we had to achieve. As stated above, around 91% of Merseyside came within two categories of risk, namely C risk and D risk. Around 95% of all homes are what was previously classed as C Risk. In this category (C Risk) we had to send one fire engine in a maximum of 10 minutes and in D Risk we had to respond with one fire engine in 20 minutes.

Our achievements on the speed and weight of attack across the whole of Merseyside in the years 2000/01 to 2002/03 are shown below. These were measured using Best Value Performance Indicator 145.

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	3 Year Average
A	79.15%	84.05%	97.25%	86.82%
B	91.31%	93.49%	92.40%	92.40%
C	76.60%	80.69%	93.17%	83.48%

- A** - relates to the appropriate number of pumps attending
- B** - relates to the appropriate number of riders attending
- C** - relates to the achievement of attendance times

We have already stated our commitment to improve something now, if we believe that immediate change makes you safer, and one example of this is our response to fires in these homes. We will change. We have produced a range of interim attendance standards supported by our risk assessment information which we will aim to achieve until the new risk map of Merseyside is produced and associated new attendance targets set for this. Details of the interim standards are detailed in the 2004/05 Action Plan and these standards are an overall improvement on the national standards that are being withdrawn.

These “interim” standards will form the basis of the continued evolution of our risk management system over the next few months. We recognise that the time of intervention, particularly of the first fire engine is important to us, and to your safety and the well being of the community.

We want to ensure that we are able to demonstrate our rationale behind our approach, and therefore we are examining how we can develop intervention standards, that ensure we can aggressively deal with a fire in your home, in a way that should confine that damage and danger created by that fire, to the room of origin.

The combination of improved overall emergency response standards that relate to currently available research with ground-breaking community safety work means the community of Merseyside will have some of the best protection anywhere in the country from its Fire and Rescue Service.

Flexible Station Response System

At present, all our fire stations (26) and all our fire engines (42) are staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We are the only Fire and Rescue Service outside London to have these staffing levels. Some stations have 2 fire engines, some have 1 and Southport has 3 full time fire engines.

It is clear from our risk assessment information that the numbers of calls and the risk of fire occurring vary by time and day and by location. Some stations consistently have a low level of activity and risk (LLAR). Under the old standards, these would have meant recommendations for ending this immediate response capability. The new standards place far greater emphasis on the first response. Therefore, we will keep an immediate response from each of our fire stations as part of this Plan. This gives greater flexibility to consider the use of our support pumps and to place them in the right place, at the right time, whilst still meeting these high standards.

Already, there has been a pilot whereby three front line fire engines and their crews at any one time have been put on secondary cover in order to carry out training routines. We anticipate the new risk analysis model will allow more fire engines and crews the facility to both maintain skills and develop new skills without compromising the new, improved standards.

Following the analysis of the evidence we have gathered and taking into account the results of consultation, we have decided to change the staffing on the third pump at Southport Fire Station from wholetime to retained.

Section 8 provides details on the future for our staff. What is clear is that the settlement of the recent national dispute agreed between the employers and the Fire Brigades Union paves the way for firefighters to earn substantially more whilst being more flexible in their working practices. This allows the potential for maintaining a 24 hour immediate response from fire stations from staff working different patterns from before. Better paid, better skilled staff working to improved standards is part of providing a better fire and rescue service for the community.

Crew Level Maintenance Team

We are committed to ensuring that we are able to achieve safe crewing levels and therefore, we will put in place a two-year pilot of a “Crew Level Maintenance team” (the CLM team).

It is likely that the CLM team will be made up of flexible (shift) based teams whose team members volunteer and are chosen for their extensive skill, experience, commitment and their ability to easily fit into any team.

They will be on similar shift systems to their colleagues but will be giving what is known as “recall to duty” cover, when not at work. This scheme is a nationally agreed scheme in which firefighters respond to duty for major incidents. However, we are also considering other options such as “annualised hours”.

The CLM team would be used to ensure that overall watch staffing levels can be maintained at a level to ensure that the public always receive our response of a Rescue Pump and a Support Pump, staffed by appropriate numbers of firefighters.

They will not have a single base station but will report for duty at any station across the Service, dependent upon crewing levels. This will enable us to manage “peaks and troughs” in crewing levels, through planned absence. Any unforeseen or unplanned absence will be dealt with through overtime.

The CLM team will receive an allowance that recognises the inconvenience to their usual work pattern, as well as having some form of transport support. The fine details of this pilot have yet to be negotiated but we do not anticipate any major issues in securing sufficient volunteers for this opportunity to work at a variety of different work locations across Merseyside.

Attendance at calls received via automatic fire alarms

Installing systems for the early detection and warning of fire is an effective part of reducing fire deaths. Promoting ownership of domestic smoke alarms is a priority for the Authority and a main focus for our community fire safety initiatives.

While fitting an alarm in the form of a smoke detector is optional in private dwellings, installation of automatic fire detection and suppression equipment is a requirement we stipulate for many commercial properties as part of our fire safety enforcement work. There is no doubt that installation of such equipment has helped to improve workplace safety in business and commercial property, and to reduce fire deaths and property damage. This is why we are also promoting the use of smoke detectors and sprinklers in people’s homes.

Our approach will therefore be to continue to work closely with building owners, occupiers, insurers and with the fire alarm companies, to make sure the alarms are correctly installed and maintained, and to develop good building management practices to reduce the number of false alarms.

Fire alarm systems in commercial buildings must conform to the relevant British Standard. Over the years this standard has improved and evolved but revised standards only apply to new and altered systems and so there are older systems still in operation. The latest version of this standard does place a duty on alarm providers to reduce false calls.

We have already started working closely with a number of alarm companies and building occupiers in Merseyside to address the problem of repeated false alarms. We welcome their co-operation in this work, which has already shown some signs of success. However we are looking to expand these initiatives for the benefit of the companies concerned and the general public, as well as ourselves.

Where efforts to work with building owners and occupiers fail to reduce the number of false alarms in their buildings we will be prepared, where appropriate, to publicise the diversion of public resources which they are causing and also where appropriate, to take enforcement action to improve the management of their buildings.

Given the importance of automatic detection and suppression equipment in detecting fires early, thereby helping to improve public safety, to reduce fire spread and property damage and to help maintain business continuity, we will continue to send a rapid emergency response of two fire appliances to all alarms which do sound, unless a risk assessment has determined an exceptional initial attendance is required.

The approach for responding to automatic alarms has been the subject of a risk assessment, which confirms that our approach is consistent with our overall objective of making Merseyside a safer place.

The policy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service when responding to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) is to minimise the risk to the safety of the public and to our own members of staff. The response to the actuation of an automatic fire alarm, and the possibility of fire, has to be balanced against the health and safety duties of the Authority resulting from the Health & Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

Our policy is to reduce false alarm calls from Automatic Fire Detection Systems which currently average at over 90%. False alarms have a major impact upon the Service and cause concern for the following reasons

- They divert essential resources rendering them unavailable with the possibility of delayed attendance to genuine calls
- They create unnecessary risk to firefighters and members of the public when appliances respond under emergency conditions
- They are disruptive to work routines, particularly HFRA's and training
- They impose an additional financial burden on the Authority in terms of overtime costs and vehicle usage

The role of call receiving centres

Call receiving centres are remote sites, which make the 999 call on behalf of the occupiers when an alarm goes off. We propose to work more closely with those centres to encourage them, in line with the relevant British Standard, to put in place some filtering and additional monitoring on calls received in their centres. For example, the call centres would either call back the buildings where the alarm was sounding to confirm the situation, or with more complex alarm systems, actually monitor where and how the alarm was caused. In these cases (and some other scenarios) the call centre operator can postpone the 999 call until additional information is verified and confirms that a Service attendance is needed. However the expectation would be to always err of the side of caution, and where there is any doubt the Service should be called.

Such a collaborative approach is already in use by police services who experience comparable problems with false calls to burglar alarm systems. We will consider further, and consult as appropriate, on whether to propose a similar scheme in relation to fire alarms – although certain safeguards would need to remain in place to make sure the public safety is maintained.

Incident Command

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will treat the command and management of incidents as a core skill of every responder and we will view our Incident Command System (ICS) as a critical success factor of our organisation.

Underpinning the capability to respond to all types of incidents is the command and control processes that must be put in place to allow the deployment of resources in an effective, yet safe manner.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will:

- review all our procedures to ensure consistency with ICS principles.
- train all personnel likely to be involved in incident response in ICS principles, and continue this training on a regular basis.
- create dedicated, ongoing training programmes for officers so that they are proficient in using ICS principles during large and complex incidents, even if involving terrorism, chemical, biological and radiological materials, and attacks to critical infrastructure.

The ICS is the means by which all UK fire and rescue services manage emergency incidents. ICS principles dictate that all first-responding officers and supervisors be able to perform any assigned role effectively at a variety of incidents. However, for large, complex incidents it is beneficial to deploy personnel who are highly trained and specialised in the specific functions of incident management (eg operations, planning or logistics).

To accomplish this, we will form an Incident Command and Continuity Team (ICCT) composed of individuals who will receive specific training on incident command and rescue management.

The team will be made up of high-performing individuals and each member of the team should be highly specialised in one specific function of ICS, but be able to carry out any other role within the ICS organisation.

It is intended that an ICCT member will attend and support the incident command of any significant emergencies. Senior Officers will also receive further training in the management of major emergencies and disasters in concert with colleagues from the other emergency services.

The team will attend incidents to ensure all Officers managing an emergency incident have a clear framework in which to work and one which is also capable of being expanded, as an incident becomes larger and/or more complex in nature. In order to achieve maximum benefit from the enhanced level of command support and greater incident ground firefighter safety, the team will need to respond to incidents, in the early stages. They will also provide training to fire officers to develop skills in incident command based on the lessons learnt at incidents.

Types of Appliances

In line with our enhanced role of Fire and Rescue Service, we are establishing strategic task specific appliances, staffed and equipped to the appropriate level to provide the best and most cost effective incident response to a wider range of emergencies, serving the community of Merseyside.

Rescue Pumps

Rescue pumps carry advanced rescue equipment to deal with rescues from all accidents involving road and rail traffic, chemical incidents etc. They also carry firefighting equipment but not quite as much as support pumps. There will be a rescue pump on every fire station on Merseyside.

Support Pumps

Support pumps carry a greater amount of dedicated firefighting and ventilation equipment than rescue pumps, together with a more limited amount of rescue equipment. There are support pumps available to meet all requirements identified as necessary to meet all of our response needs.

Support Vehicles

Combined Platform Ladder (CPL)

CPLs provide aerial capability and are currently strategically sited at five stations in Merseyside (see section below).

Prime Movers

A prime mover is the appliance used for transporting the specialist demountable pod units (see details on the following pages) to the incident ground. There are currently seven prime movers based at stations within Merseyside with a further one held as a reserve. Further comments on prime movers and special appliances are below.

Aerial Appliances

Traditionally, aerial appliances have been on the predetermined attendance for rescue purposes for premises of more than three floors containing a sleeping risk (eg hotels), premises of more than three floors containing a high risk to life (eg hospitals, large stores, schools & office blocks) and high/mid rise residential property (eg tenements and multi-storey property). Merseyside currently has five aerial appliances garaged at City Centre, Croxteth, Birkenhead, Eccleston and Southport Fire Stations, but with a pan Merseyside response area.

However, over the last 25 years, the impact of fire safety legislation and building design has meant the introduction of fire safety measures that enable people to afford themselves a safe means of escape in the event of a fire. The effect of this is to reduce the use of aerial appliances for the traditional rescue scenario at the early stages of fire. This coupled with the use of dynamic risk assessment by the incident commander means aerial appliances, when deployed, are now used predominately for firefighting rather than rescue.

A careful analysis has been made covering demand, workload, appliance downtime and training requirements.

As part of the analysis, aerial predetermined attendances have been examined to ensure:

- consistency in the assessment of risk
- consistency in allocation of aerial appliances to the predetermined attendance
- provision of an audit trail of the decision making process.

Advances in building design and fire prevention technology have made rescue by aerial appliance very rare. The review has shown that based upon the frequency that aerial appliances have been used at fires during the analysis period there is no justification to maintain five combined platform ladder appliances in Merseyside based purely on workload alone. Furthermore the data analysis shows a significant reduction in the number of aerial appliance mobilisations as a direct result of changes in the Service's policy regarding response to unconfirmed actuations of AFAs in June 2000. However, we will maintain a fleet of aerial appliances, strategically located across Merseyside in such a way that their use can be targeted at those types of incidents where they can make a real difference.

We have, as an interim measure and prior to finalisation of the new risk map, planned that an aerial capability will be able to attend incidents in Merseyside within set times, details of which are in the Action Plan.

These changes will make sure aerial appliances will be able to arrive in time to undertake all of their roles at fires and other emergencies. The strategic distribution will allow an aerial appliance to reach an incident in sufficient time to perform its full range of functions effectively. Our risk assessment shows that 4 strategically placed aerial appliances will meet these new standards.

An Integrated Risk Management Plan for the future must make best use of new technology. Therefore, we are considering replacing 2 of the remaining 4 aerials with Combined Pump Platforms (CPP), an appliance that can both operate as a fire engine or aerial appliance. We are considering adopting this type of appliance as a core element of our aerial appliance capability and our Action Plan sets out how we intend to progress the provision of this exciting new technology.

Special Appliances

The Fire and Rescue Service attends many types of emergencies and it is the Government's intention to make these and other emergency situations a statutory duty on the Authority to broaden the scope of our responsibilities. We must therefore hold equipment to enable it to deal with a wider range of incidents, which, although very infrequent, must be prepared for. Specialised equipment needs to be called upon only occasionally and it is not possible to carry all equipment on all fire appliances, where it would take up valuable space which should be occupied by more frequently used equipment. However special equipment should be available for immediate deployment should a major incident occur. This specialised equipment is carried on special appliances, which do not usually respond to the most frequent incidents but are held in readiness to respond when needed.

Since 1990 special appliances within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have been based around the demountable pod system. This consists of tractor units (prime movers) and pods (large containers). These pods are stored on strategic stations when not in use. When required, they are mounted onto a prime mover for delivery to the incident ground and the prime mover will demount the pod and be available for use elsewhere, with the pod being collected when no longer required at the incident.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has a range of equipment available on its special appliances, which adequately provides for foreseeable emergencies. Pods currently in service and their location are:

Hose Layers (3) Bromborough, St. Helens & Old Swan

A hose layer is a pod capable of transporting large quantities of water to locations or to supplement existing supplies.

Operational Support Unit (2) Speke/Garston & Bromborough

This is a pod carrying equipment to mitigate environmental damage due to the escape of hazardous substances into the environment. Much of the equipment carried is provided by the Environment Agency as part of a collaborative approach to chemical/bio-hazard releases.

Foam Units (4) Kirkdale, Birkenhead, Speke/Garston & Wallasey

This pod carries foam concentrate and foam making equipment far in excess of the capability of a front line appliance to cater for firefighting at aircraft, shipping, oil fires etc.

Special Rescue Unit (2) Kirkdale & St.Helens

This pod is used at incidents where large and/or heavy equipment is used, such as a major RTA, incidents involving machinery, entrapments in mud or building collapses.

Marine Unit (1) Kirkdale

This pod is used predominately for ship firefighting and carries the equipment such as lifejackets and stability equipment necessary for marine incidents.

Chemical Incident Unit (1) Old Swan

This is used for chemical incidents and carries more equipment than frontline appliances including chemical protection suits, air shelters etc for the handling of hazardous materials.

Breathing Apparatus Support (1) Birkenhead

This unit has a portable compressor for the replenishment of BA cylinders at incidents of a protracted nature involving breathing apparatus

Damage Control Unit (1) Wallasey

This unit is for salvage use at incidents as well as damage control during and after firefighting operations.

Incident Command & Control Unit (1) Wallasey

This pod is used at protracted incidents and is a mobile command & control point with various communication media and accommodation for operational planning. It acts as a control point for all firefighting actions.

General Purpose (2) Kirkdale & St.Helens

This pod carries an inflatable boat and acts as a heavy transport vehicle. It also carries rescue equipment for road, mud and water incidents.

The prime movers associated with these pod units are currently situated at Birkenhead, Bromborough, Kirkdale, Old Swan, Speke/Garston, St.Helens and Wallasey fire stations. There is a further prime mover held as a reserve.

Operational Resource Centres

We believe that significant efficiency improvements could be made by combining this specialised capability at centralised depots. The proposed role of these resource centres is part of our work in our expanded rescue role. We have decided, taking account of analysis of relevant information, that the most appropriate locations for those operational resource centres are Birkenhead and Kirkdale Fire Stations. We may, however, still need special appliances at other location(s) as risk determines.

Mobilising

One of our core responsibilities is to make efficient arrangements to respond to calls for assistance from the public.

We have, for several years, been planning to replace our current system for mobilising appliances. In line with Government guidance, we have liaised with the other Fire and Rescue Services in the North West, and with the other emergency services in Merseyside, concerning the possibility of a regional or shared control and mobilising facility. Following detailed discussion with these bodies, it was decided to proceed with a new mobilising system solely for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service but with the capability of providing equivalent services to others, if required in the future. Feasibility studies have been carried out, specifications drawn up and tenders sought for the mobilising system. However, following the publication of the White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service", and subsequent Government guidance, a regional fire control facility covering the North West region will be implemented in the medium term. Consequently, only essential upgrading to the current mobilising system will be carried out pending the joint regional control implementation.

We are participating in a major national project to replace the radio system through which our mobilising centre communicates with our fire engines and operational officers, and to provide radio communications at incidents. By joining together with other fire authorities to provide this new system we will share the development costs, and secure effective procurement arrangements. This joint approach will also make sure we can communicate effectively both with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services and with other emergency services such as the police who use compatible technology.

At the moment all calls for assistance receive an immediate response (though of course only a single response when more than one call is received about the same incident) unless we are satisfied that it would be inappropriate for us to attend (for example, calls from people locked out of their buildings where there is no risk of fire or other humanitarian reasons for us to help out).

Unwanted Calls

In the last few years, we have attempted to reduce the number of unwanted mobilisations by adopting a call challenge policy. When a control operator receives a call which they believe to be malicious, the operator has the discretion to either send a reduced mobilisation or not to mobilise any appliances at all. This policy will be reviewed and extended with a view to further reducing unnecessary mobilisations and to release more time for operational staff to carry out additional duties proposed elsewhere in this plan (such as prevention work or training).

We therefore propose to make the following changes to the way in which our control staff deal with calls for assistance. These changes are directed at making more efficient and effective use of our skilled resources. They will not affect our ability to continue to provide a rapid emergency response to all fires and other calls for assistance, commensurate with the risks which they pose.

Hoax Calls

Our control staff will question callers using predetermined questions where there is reason to suspect that a call may not be genuine. We believe this will help to reduce the large number of malicious calls which we have already begun to reduce following agreement with mobile phone companies to disconnect phones used repeatedly to make hoax calls. Similar policies have been applied successfully elsewhere in the country.

Abandoned Calls

These are calls where the person rings off while still in contact with the phone company operator (i.e. before they are put through to our control centre). We do not respond to such calls from mobile phones (as the location of the caller is not known). We propose to respond in future to abandoned calls from public phone boxes, only where a further call is received about an incident in the area, or where our control operators have any reason to believe that the call may have been genuine. These calls would continue to be referred to us by the phone company operator, and we would record the details of the call. This will enable us to monitor the impact of this change closely.

Referrals to Transco

We presently receive calls each year to attend domestic gas leaks or carbon monoxide detectors which are sounding. However Transco have arrangements in place to deal with such incidents (with appropriately trained personnel) and our experience is that they are best placed to deal with these incidents. We therefore propose to refer all such calls direct to Transco, giving callers safety advice but not mobilising an appliance.

Dangerous buildings

We are sometimes called out (particularly during high winds) to help where structures (such as buildings, scaffolding etc) are in precarious positions. We believe that local authorities, working with builders and developers, are in a better position to deal safely with such incidents, and that the police are best placed to establish a cordon to preserve public safety until the building is made safe. We will open discussions about putting in place effective arrangements for us to refer such calls to an agency better placed to deal with them.

Response to Secondary Fires

A secondary fire is a fire of a relatively minor nature, in the vast majority of cases posing no real threat to life or property.

The existing mobilisation criteria which provides an immediate response by the nearest appliance to every secondary fire will be reviewed. A risk assessed approach will be used to secondary fires unless they offer a real threat to property or further calls are received. Responses may be made with a support pump rather than a rescue tender, regardless of its proximity to the fire.

We are currently examining alternative methods of responding to secondary fires, including a pilot involving the use of more appropriate specialist vehicles, utilising flexible crewing methods. Details of this are in the Action Plan. The pilot scheme will be based on overtime staffing and will not be part of our overall staffing approach.

Section 2 & 12 Arrangements

These are arrangements, made under Sections 2 and 12 of the Fire Services Act 1947, which enable neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to provide assistance to each other. In light of proposals made in this IRMP, and by our neighbouring services in Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Lancashire in their equivalent plans, we are liaising with each other to ensure that there is no diminution of fire cover in an area of one Authority covered by the Fire and Rescue Service from another Authority, as a result of the IRMP. Where one Authority charges another for providing such cover, as allowed under Section 12 of the Act, such charges are also being reviewed. Arrangements will also be further reviewed in the light of any impact on existing arrangements arising from the Fire and Rescue Services Bill.

6 Rescue

Specialist Rescue

We recognise that the White Paper, the Fire and Rescue Services Bill and, indeed, society's expectations place a major new set of roles on the fire service. We will be establishing a dedicated rescue team to ensure we can meet these expectations in a professional and highly competent manner. This new role brings with it a range of financial issues in terms of staffing and equipping such a team and our financial plans will deal in detail with how we intend to fund this new range of responsibilities.

As and when the legislative framework allows, we would wish to take a more proactive approach to preventing life loss and injuries from those non-fire emergencies where we can make a real difference.

High Access Training

High access rope rescue training will continue to be provided to operational personnel to ensure the Service can deal with rescues from places where access is restricted or difficult. Further training will be provided to selected personnel to allow techniques that are more advanced to be employed.

Rescues from Water

Following Government acceptance of a study into the emergency arrangements for the River Thames in London, a search and rescue organisation for that river was established in January 2002. Flowing from the successful implementation of that organisation was a methodology for assessing the adequacy of search and rescue in most marine environments, particularly major estuaries, rivers and other waterways. This methodology has been developed into a working risk assessment tool which is being used to risk assess the River Mersey.

The main aims of the risk assessment will be to recommend rescue resources on and around the tidal River Mersey to meet required response criteria and to ensure full integration of all resources required for search and rescue.

The work on this is being overseen by a steering group with representatives from the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, Liverpool City Council, the Liverpool Port Authority, Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

The outcome of this risk assessment process will inform future response arrangements to the tidal River Mersey.

Water rescue training will be provided to enable Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to work safely on or near water during emergencies and to enable the Service to rescue firefighters, fellow emergency workers, and members of the public in difficulty in inland water situations.

Urban Search and Rescue Equipment

Training in urban search and rescue will be expanded. The Service will augment its current rescue equipment with additional equipment. Although much of this will be provided by central government, as is the case with mass decontamination, additional equipment will be provided by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service where appropriate. This area of rescue may apply to the wide range of underground risk across Merseyside, however, there are no proposals to undertake cave or mountain rescue, as no such risks have been identified.

Merseyside Resilience

In parallel to the development of this plan, we have been looking over the last year at how we can improve Merseyside's resilience by developing our capacity to respond to and work with other agencies to cope with a variety of different emergencies, including environmental disasters and terrorist attacks which could involve a risk of fire.

The protection of the communities and environment of Merseyside is at the heart of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's core function. It carries out this role in many different ways described elsewhere in this document. Since the events of September 11th 2001, one of the additional areas of responsibility is that of "New Dimension" which compliments the already well established roles of operational planning and emergency planning. New Dimension was launched following the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. It set out to review the Fire and Rescue Service nationally (including Merseyside) for its preparedness against a potential terrorist threat.

The programme is led by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and has identified work streams that will ensure that all Fire and Rescue Services are sufficiently equipped and trained to respond and deal effectively with major chemical, biological, radiological and conventional terrorist incidents not only within their own county, but also on a regional and national scale.

Britain has been used to the changing nature of the terrorist threat and has lived with a heightened state, for a number of years. In this new environment we must remain vigilant to new types of threat. Recent attacks have been on the least well protected targets. The principal threat at present comes from international terrorism, in particular extremist groups, who have a much broader agenda and will use whatever means necessary to deliver their method of attack.

We are playing a role at regional and national levels, in the preparation for a response to a terrorist attack, should one occur. More importantly we are ensuring that National Response Plans are fully embedded within our own contingency plans, which have been prepared for such incidents to ensure the protection of the communities of Merseyside.

A New Dimensions Assistant Planner has been allocated to the project, financed by the ODPM and works full time on matters of regional and national resilience. He works within the Community Protection Department, which ensures issues emanating from the ODPM are immediately captured by officers of this Service and are acted on. The Community Protection Manager responsible for the Department also spends a considerable amount of his time working on resilience and contingency planning and assessing the impact on the Service of the New Dimension work streams.

In common with all other Fire and Rescue Services Merseyside has, in partnership with the Department of Health, accepted responsibility for the management of Public Mass Decontamination in the event of a chemical, biological or radiological attack.

Following a thorough assessment of the potential risk, a new system of decontamination has been employed. To meet the needs of this system money was made available by Government, to purchase some of the best equipment available in the world. This includes portable shower units and specialist protective clothing.

We are also introducing additional vehicles to help us to perform this role. These vehicles will be an integral part of our capability to provide assistance at a range of emergencies (for example, they will also improve our ability to respond to a major incident at an airport or on the railways) and will be available for use at any incident where they can make a contribution. They will not be kept in storage only to be brought out if and when a major incident happens.

The improvements in public safety which these vehicles and equipment will provide should be made as soon as possible. We are, therefore, bringing them into service as soon as the vehicles and equipment are available and our crews have been trained in their safe use.

Merseyside officers continue to be involved extensively with the multi agency groups dealing with New Dimension issues, along with the associated resilience and contingency planning necessary to support and underpin those issues.

Non Fire Emergencies (Special Services)

The Fire Services Act 1947 and the Local Government Act 1972 give fire authorities the necessary legislative power to undertake special services work. Section 3, subsection (e) of the Fire Services Act 1947 empowers fire authorities to employ the fire services maintained by them, or to use any equipment so maintained, for purposes other than firefighting and if the fire authority sees fit, to make such charge as they may determine for such services. These services, which are diverse in nature, are known as "special services". Examples of special services are given below. The current legislation is discretionary in nature and fire authorities do not have to respond to special service calls. However, the Government have recognised that as the fire service nationally respond to some 180,000 non-fire incidents each year, there is a need to put this work on a statutory footing and the Fire and Rescue Services Bill will provide the legislation to do this. It is noted that no additional funding has been promised by the Government for these proposed additional statutory functions.

It is the current policy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to respond to special service incidents. At present there are no set response times. We aim to establish response standards to life threatening non fire emergencies, after a full analysis of incident attendances has been concluded.

An agreement already exists with Knowsley Housing Trust that we will not respond to certain non fire incidents (ie. flooding and people confined in lifts). We look to extend this initiative to further areas next year.

Special service calls are currently classified as:

Humanitarian (Rescue Role)

This includes incidents where life is at risk or members of the public are suffering or could suffer undue pain or discomfort. Examples might include persons trapped, first aid, sporting accidents, aircraft accidents, attempted suicides, removal of items causing distress. It is the policy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service not to charge for attendance at humanitarian special service incidents.

Public Interest

This class includes incidents where members of the public are suffering, or could suffer, from personal distress. It will also include incidents where not to render assistance would lead to a deterioration of circumstances and consequently threaten life or cause distress to members of the public. Examples might include Road Traffic Accidents (not persons trapped), animal rescue, standing by or precautionary action, assisting police, isolation of energy source, investigations or provision of advice and inspections. Under normal circumstances requests for assistance from other emergency services, charitable institutions and religious establishments are classed as public interest. It is the policy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service not to charge for attendance at public interest special service incidents.

Chargeable

This class includes incidents best described as non emergency and where, under normal circumstances, a private contractor could be employed to carry out the work required. Examples might include flooding, removal of water, spillages, isolation of water supply, filling of pools, making safe, lift release and effecting entry. It is the policy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to charge for attendance at such special service incidents.

The above categories will be reviewed, in light of the forthcoming legislation, particularly as the Government have undertaken a consultation exercise on proposals contained in the Fire and Rescue Services Bill to revise the powers of authorities to charge for various services they provide.

Co-Responder Scheme (Helping people who are having a heart attack)

Sudden Cardiac Arrest often strikes otherwise fit people in their 40s-50s and is currently fatal in all but 5% of cases. Whilst many will associate chest pain as the first sign of heart attack in around 30% of cases the first indication of the problem is that the victim suffers a sudden cardiac arrest.

In the UK today around 150,000 people die of sudden cardiac arrest annually, many within their homes and local communities and long before an ambulance can reach them. However, this need not be the case as 85% of these sudden deaths are potentially avoidable using a defibrillator if applied quickly. These devices are used to 're-boot' the heart muscle into effective action with an electric shock.

In the United States defibrillation has long been a part of a firefighter's role with many lives having been saved in the communities local to the fire stations.

The Government wants to see co-responder partnerships develop and implemented more widely. We intend to enter into a partnership arrangement with the Heart of Mersey organisation and Mersey Regional Ambulance Service with the aim of reducing the effects of coronary disease in Merseyside, in line with Government targets. Under these arrangements, firefighters, when they are first on the scene at an emergency, are trained and able to use basic life support skills including the use of automated defibrillators, to keep casualties alive until professional medical assistance arrives. Evidence and experience worldwide is that early defibrillation is safe, effective and achievable by minimally trained individuals.

Whilst there is understandable concern over some issues on the use of early defibrillation by non-medical/paramedical staff, this is a logical extension of current first aid practices. Training for firefighters, who are already competent in cardiac pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), will be built into first aid training regimes.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service intends to pilot the provision of defibrillators on some rescue pumps as a trial in 2004/05. Firefighters will be appropriately trained in their use. If a rescue pump arrives at an incident where a person has suffered a cardiac arrest before an ambulance, firefighters will use the defibrillator in the appropriate manner, whilst awaiting the attendance of the Ambulance Service. The pilot will be closely monitored by both the Ambulance Service and ourselves throughout the trial to ensure it is achieving its objectives. At the end of the twelve month period, the scheme will be jointly evaluated to see whether it should continue and, if appropriate, be extended.

We will also examine ways in which the local fire station can act as a community resource in wider areas such as:

- fitness opportunities for targeted groups
- health surveillance opportunities with the fire station as a "road show" venue
- opportunities for diet and lifestyle advice

These areas would be explored as part of our support of the wider health agenda to reduce coronary heart disease across Merseyside.

7 Business Continuity

Helping Business

We also recognise that we have an important role to play in supporting the continued development of business on Merseyside. We have adopted an enforcement concordat, which sets out our approach to working in partnership with business, to ensure the safety of the public and employees is improved through our work with business, whilst at the same time minimising the financial burden on business of achieving a safe environment. The Community Safety and Arson Strategies referred to earlier in this Plan detail a number of initiatives that contribute to business continuity.

In addition we must ensure that our enforcement and inspection personnel are available to work with businesses on Merseyside, at a time and in a flexible manner that suits the needs of a modern, developing business economy – predominantly Monday to Friday during office hours.

To achieve this we will be introducing changed work patterns for some of our uniformed fire safety specialists. Previous work patterns meant that these staff (and other “day related” uniformed staff) worked a system called the 9-day fortnight (week one Monday to Friday, week two Monday to Thursday). We are proud of the commitment and dedication of our fire safety specialists, who frequently attended for duty on “days off” to meet with businesses and discuss safety improvements.

We will be introducing changes to this system to a full 42 hour week over the next few months on a phased basis in consultation with employees’ representatives.

We have also been “trailing” the use of technical officers with no emergency response reference in our fire safety teams, to develop a wider pool of skills for business to access for advice and support about how to improve safety. This trial has been extremely successful and we will be extending the concept in the coming years. Specialist technical officers offer a range of skills that complement the existing fire prevention expertise and the important operational experience of fire-fighting, of our uniformed specialists. It is our aim, over the next five years, to achieve a better balance between uniformed specialist and non-uniformed technical staff.

The specialist technical officer role also opens up opportunities for a wider group of the community to access careers in the fire service. An example could be someone with a degree in fire engineering, structural engineering or building construction, who possesses very extensive skill and knowledge about the design of buildings, who can develop practical knowledge of fire development.

We will also adopt this principle of matching role working patterns to organisational need in a wide range of other roles within an agreed national framework.

The modern and innovative design of buildings that will inevitably be an important feature of the impact of Capital of Culture, as well as the need to ensure that we protect our architectural heritage, means that the Fire Authority must be absolutely sure it is able to call upon the widest pool of talent, skill and experience possible to deliver building safety advice without compromising economic reality.

The key criterion will be to ensure we have the right skills to meet the business community’s needs. We do not want any artificial barriers to attracting talented and ambitious people to work with us.

Business continuity, in terms of the ability of this and other organisations to continue to function effectively following a major calamity will also be addressed in due course. The recently published Civil Contingencies Bill (when enacted) is likely to place additional duties on fire and rescue authorities and other partner agencies. Indeed, the full implications of the Bill and the subsequent Act of Parliament may not be known until Regulations, made under the Act, become available. As and when these additional duties are known, the IRMP will be revised where appropriate. The preparations made by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in respect of major calamities are detailed in earlier Sections.

We will also investigate how, in partnership with the Insurance industry and the private sector, we can help a business recover in the immediate aftermath of a fire. This may be by acting as a facilitator between a business and a disaster recovery service.

Emergency Planning

Emergency Planning in England and Wales is funded directly by the Government in the form of specific grant. Each of the five District Councils of Merseyside and Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority pool those funds to create a central resource which is the Merseyside Emergency Planning Department. This Department co-ordinates the activities of the District Councils and liaises with emergency services and other agencies to provide contingency plans for dealing with natural disasters or commercial incidents.

The Department maintains an on-call duty officer, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The officer is available to give advice and, if necessary, answer a call to the scene of an incident to assist in the co-ordination of the local authority response. This emergency planning provision is the key to activating an appropriate response from agencies and resources that can assist the public of Merseyside in time of need.

Local authorities have a vital role to play in the emergency planning process by supporting the emergency services and other agencies involved operationally in response to incidents that effect our communities and environment. To respond effectively and achieve a combined and co-ordinated approach to an incident, the capabilities of local authorities must be linked with those of the emergency services and other agencies.

Irrespective of the particular responsibilities of local authorities, emergency services and other agencies all work together adopting an integrated emergency management approach to achieve the following key objectives to:

- Save life and protect public health
- Prevent the escalation of disaster
- Relieve suffering
- Safeguard the environment
- Protect property
- Facilitate criminal investigation and judicial, public, technical or other enquiries
- Continue to maintain normal services at an appropriate level
- Inform the public
- Promote self help and recovery
- Restore normality as soon as possible
- Evaluate the response and identify lessons to be learned

To deliver the emergency planning key objectives above, Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority has adopted the following strategy to:

- Standardise local authority procedures as far as reasonably practical
- Ensure that there is a common approach to the planning for and response to a major incident in order to establish a system of crisis management
- Recommend procedures based upon best practise which will enable local authorities and other services and agencies to provide support along rational and predetermined lines
- Ensure co-ordinated planning with emergency services and other agencies is achieved through the process of integrated emergency management
- Ensure that planning is underpinned by the training of individuals, together with exercises to test the effectiveness of the plans and training
- Ensure that emergency planning arrangements are easy to understand and flexible in order for them to be adaptable in a wide range of circumstances
- Ensure that all officers who have a role to play in an emergency response are involved in the development of the emergency management arrangements.

The Emergency Planning function on Merseyside is currently under review. The District Councils are reviewing arrangements from their perspective and Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority is also reviewing arrangements in light of the implications to the Authority of the Civil Contingencies Bill.

8 Human Resources

Our People

We can only deliver the improvements proposed in this Plan, through the work of all our staff whether in an emergency response role or part of the support services. Therefore, we will continue to do all we can to recruit, develop and retain a high quality, professional workforce; one which continues to attract the respect of both the general public and the other agencies with which we work. However the new approach proposed in this Plan, and some of the longer-term developments which will flow from it, mean that there need to be a number of changes in the roles and responsibilities of our staff. This in turn means that some changes to way in which we currently operate are essential.

Emergency Response Staff

Significant change was envisaged for our firefighting staff when the recent national dispute was settled with a significant pay increase agreed linked to modernisation of the service and increased flexibility in working arrangements. There remain a number of details to be settled about implementation of the pay agreement. We will do what we can to help settle these details quickly and harmoniously.

We believe that the approach agreed by all parties to settle the dispute, will provide the opportunity to work constructively with our staff, and their trade unions, to improve the services we can provide, while also improving job satisfaction for staff and providing more opportunities to achieve a reasonable balance between their working and private lives.

We will continue to work closely with the fire service employers, other fire authorities around the country and all recognised trade unions, to revise and update the conditions of service for firefighters (set out in what is known as the *Grey Book*). This will maintain a national framework of conditions of service linked to national pay scales, while increasing the flexibility for local fire authorities, in discussion with the trade unions, to develop local solutions geared to improving community safety locally, flexible working patterns and reflecting the particular needs and circumstances of the communities they serve. These national discussions will also address the scope for moving away from the current system of single point entry for firefighters (whereby all uniformed staff join the service as firefighters and can then progress through the ranks).

Agreement has been reached nationally to introduce an Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) which will be at the heart of how we recruit, train, develop, promote and assess our staff. This system identifies the core job roles which all operational personnel need to carry out, and in what areas they need to be competent to work effectively in those roles. We will review how these core roles are defined, and the competencies associated with each of them, in the light of the proposals in this Plan.

A key element of this system is to make sure that our structure reflects the number of core roles identified. Currently there are more ranks in the Service than there are core roles. As part of the agreement reached when the recent pay dispute was settled and an overall pay increase agreed, we will now move as quickly as possible to a new role based salary structure for our operational staff, assimilating all our existing operational staff into the new structure. The details about how this will be done, will be discussed in full with the trade unions, in line with our agreed arrangements.

We will also consider developing local arrangements to make additional payments to recognise special skills which particular staff may develop.

We will, after consultation with the trade unions, extend our existing arrangements for pre-arranged overtime that currently apply to our control room, workshops and our non-uniformed staff, to all firefighters to be worked where this can help us improve our services in a cost effective way.

Our plans have developed on our commitment to implement and offer flexible working patterns to our employees. For example, an increased focus on community engagement and preventative work

means that our staff need to be available when local people or businesses are ready and able to work with us. This means that much of such work will need to be carried out during normal working hours (for businesses) and in the early evening or at weekends if we are to engage with members of the public who are also working. Delivery of this IRMP, therefore, requires alternative duty systems.

We will therefore develop over the coming months proposals for a range of different working patterns available to firefighters. The development of more flexible working patterns was a key part of the modernisation of the service which formed an essential part of, and justification for, the recent pay award for firefighters.

There is a need for a core shift system which maintains 24-hour cover and so there will remain plenty of opportunity for those existing firefighters who wish to do so to remain on their present shift pattern. However, we will also want to introduce ways in which staff can:

- work part time;
- focus on day time, or evening shifts but reduce the commitment to night time working;
- work their contractual hours in a more flexible way
- vary working patterns so that they are not necessarily based at a single fire station or local office, but could move to different parts of Merseyside to address the particular risks faced by different communities.

Such different working patterns would provide a range of opportunities for staff to adjust their working patterns with their differing domestic commitments and help to increase the flexibility available to achieve a work-life balance which best suits them and the Authority.

We understand that many of our staff do find the current shift pattern attractive, and are concerned about any perceived threat to it. Our objective will be to develop more flexible patterns by agreement, and through recruiting new staff on a more varied menu of working patterns, whilst continuing to utilise the current shift pattern. However we remain committed to using more flexible working patterns where this can help to improve community safety, improve working conditions for staff or help us to operate more efficiently and effectively and deliver better value for money for the community.

We also need to change the current duty system for flexible duty officers (those officers who provide managerial and operational cover outside of normal working hours) with a view to producing a model which can be used to ensure sufficient officers are available to meet foreseeable demands, yet are available in the office environment on a more regular Monday to Friday basis. Again, this is crucial to the delivery of our IRMP.

It is unavoidable that the recent industrial action will have had an impact on staff morale and relations between managers and staff. However now the dispute has been resolved, we will do all we can to develop a positive and constructive industrial relations climate so that staff and managers can work together to improve community safety. We will need to look at our local industrial relations procedures in the light of the review being undertaken of the national procedures in accordance with the national agreement reached with the Fire Brigades Union and as outlined in the Government's White Paper. One example may be the formal recognition and participation in our negotiating and consultative machinery of other trade unions.

However, inevitably management and the trades unions will not always agree on everything. We will, therefore, put in place effective and speedy disputes resolution machinery, which enjoys the confidence of both parties.

Support Staff

The fire and rescue structure will be enhanced by the role and development of the support staff function to assist in the delivery of all organisational goals. This IRMP identifies growth in a number of areas for support staff including Fire Safety Advocates, Fire Safety Inspectors and Station Locality Managers.

Employee skills development through both the introduction of IPDS principles and continued professional development will enhance service delivery and increase the move towards single status

and equality of opportunity throughout the Service to enable all staff to actively contribute towards the community they serve.

Clear recruitment strategies will enable the Service to reflect within its workforce the representation of the community it serves, and a clear commitment to the principles of work life balance will enable those employees to contribute within work patterns that suit their individual needs.

Our Commitment to Diversity

A key priority for us is to develop our services in a way which is sensitive to the differing needs and aspirations of different parts of Merseyside's diverse communities. In order to engage with each of those communities effectively we must develop and maintain a workforce which is representative of the communities we serve. This will not only help us to provide more responsive services, but will also help to build confidence in each community that we understand and respect their particular situation and concerns.

We will continue to develop programmes, working in partnership with other agencies, to make sure we not only meet these objectives, but can also show that we are meeting them.

During our recruitment period between 2001 and 2003, we have increased numbers of uniformed personnel from under-represented groups. Whilst good progress has been made in this area, we wish to improve further. Therefore, whenever recruitment is necessary, we will continue to utilise our award-winning positive action strategy to ensure that the Service is representative of the communities we serve.

We are an inclusive Service. Forthcoming changes in the existing regulations that have governed our ability to provide opportunity for all will soon provide opportunity for development at all levels. We will, through working toward competence, move towards a consistent approach to all staff - "single status" ensuring that we employ the very best people for the Service within roles at all levels.

We have a range of measures in place to support and help our staff achieve a fair and healthy work/life balance, through family friendly policies covering areas such as maternity and paternity leave, special leave arrangements, job sharing etc. All staff have available a first class occupational health service as part of the commitment to a healthy workforce.

We will continue to make sure our clothing, protective equipment and the design of our operational equipment does not create any artificial barriers to employment.

We have arrangements in place to challenge and deal with harassment and bullying wherever it may occur in the organisation. This is backed up by confidential support arrangements available to staff through our Equal Opportunities Department, Welfare and Occupational Health Service. There are also grievance procedures, a complaints and compliments procedure and arrangements for whistle-blowing, which staff who are unhappy with the way in which the issues are being managed are encouraged to use.

We have developed a Corporate Action Plan based on the Commission for Racial Equality standards, that sets out the steps we will continue to take to ensure policies, practices and procedures meet the needs of a diverse workforce and community.

We have a programme in place to make sure we meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and will have completed a programme to carry out the necessary building works by 2005.

We will develop our procurement strategies to make sure our contractors are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of Merseyside's diverse communities.

We will encourage Merseyside's diverse business communities to apply for Authority contracts, and make sure our contract strategies facilitate and encourage such applications.

We will promote equality of opportunity to all our contractors and collect evidence to show their commitment.

We will introduce monitoring systems across all key areas of employment and service delivery to ensure that our policies are fair and do not disproportionately disadvantage any particular group.

Health and Safety

We will continue to do everything we can to secure the health and safety of all of our staff, especially those operational firefighters who may be exposed to hostile environments as part of their work to protect the community.

We will work closely with the Health & Safety Executive to make sure we put in place safe systems of working for all aspects of work; and we will continue to work closely with colleagues around the country and with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire Services to make sure best practice is exchanged and that we can learn from the experience of others.

We have developed, as part of our safety management system, a comprehensive inventory of the risks associated with our operational activities. We maintain a central register of the risk assessments we have carried out against that inventory and have developed comprehensive guidance for managers on health and safety issues.

We will continue our duty of care towards the community to ensure that no acts or omissions compromise their health and safety, or the environment in which we carry out our activities. We will continue to provide specialist health and safety advice within the organisation and have recently overhauled our systems to collect information about all safety events (given that as much can be learned from near misses as from actual accidents).

We are particularly concerned at violence or aggression directed at our staff and we will examine every possible avenue to protect our staff, and pursue strong action against any individual who acts in an aggressive manner to our personnel. Our Action Plan highlights our intention to pilot closed circuit TV on fire appliances as part of this approach to placing the safety of our personnel at the heart of our response.

We have well established and sophisticated arrangements in place to investigate those accidents which do happen, and to take any necessary action to prevent similar accidents happening again in the future.

We have taken a lead in promoting the management of occupational road risk (MORR) to deal effectively with the health and safety issues of our employees driving our vehicles. There is clearly an element of risk to both our employees and other road users from driving our vehicles and we have been proactive in bringing these essential working activities into the mainstream of health and safety management.

Our policy, introduced in 2002, involves checking licences, testing our drivers, monitoring the maintenance of our vehicles and generally raising awareness of the issues involved to all our employees. We will continue to develop and refine our policies in light of changing circumstances and policies.

9 Regional Issues

Collaboration

Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority agrees with the views of the Government that more collaborative work can and should be undertaken at regional level, but also strongly believes that control of the fire and rescue services should remain with local fire authorities

In order to achieve appropriate collaborative work, the Authority agrees to the joint discharge of the following functions and activities by the fire authorities of Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire, Manchester and Merseyside

- ensuring resilience to emergencies, especially potential chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attacks
- developing specialist or common services
- establishing regional control rooms
- introducing regional based procurement or procurement to national standards (e.g. provision of a firelink radio system)
- developing regional training strategies and delivery
- introducing regional personnel management and human resource management functions
- any regional dimension of integrated risk management plans
- anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to any of the above functions

Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority has agreed to the appointment of a joint committee (the North West Fire and Rescue Management Board) of the North West Fire Authorities with delegated powers on behalf of the Authority to determine matters in respect of the functions identified above, comprising of 20 voting members (or their substitutes) to be appointed by the Authorities in accordance with the principles of political balance as follows:

- Cheshire Fire Authority – 3 members
- Cumbria County Council – 1 member
- Lancashire Combined Fire Authority – 4 members
- Greater Manchester Fire & Civil Defence Authority – 8 members
- Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority – 4 members

The Management Board has determined a Vision Statement and its own Procedural Standing Orders governing its operation and has made appointments of officers to provide support services. Merseyside is providing the legal and secretarial support to the Board.

The Chief Fire Officer and all other appropriate officers have also been requested to assist the Management Board in determining and implementing the relevant matters within its remit

A framework agreement, setting out the basis for the work of the Management Board, has been approved by the Authority. The framework agreement has been adopted by all five North West Fire Authorities.

10 Financial Risk Management

Financial Implications

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority is committed to allocating its resources so that it maximises their impact in reducing the risks from fire for the people and businesses of Merseyside. Brief details of the proposals are set out below and these have been included in its approved budget for 2004/2005 and the medium term financial planning cycle.

Overall financial position

Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority recognises that it remains a relatively high cost and high Council Tax authority and has for a number of years successfully sought to move closer to the average of other metropolitan fire authorities. The Authority has set a budget of £73.576 million for 2004/05. The Authority has issued a precept on the five Merseyside District Councils of £21.826 million, which is equivalent to a Council Tax of £52.00 for a Band D property. This represents one of the lowest fire Council Tax increases in the country and has allowed the Authority to move below the national average (£52.71) for fire Council Tax. It has managed this while coping with financial pressures of:-

- Ongoing increases in costs from firefighters pensions
- Relatively low levels of grant increases (less than 3.5%)
- The impact of modernisation and in particular managing the implementation of the firefighters pay agreement (averaging 16%) in conjunction with delivering the savings and improvements required. Firefighters pay makes up 56% of the Authority's costs.

The Authority is committed to continue to reduce costs relative to other Metropolitan Fire Authorities.

This has been achieved at a time when the Authority has invested far more resources into its world first CFS work than other authorities:-

- Carrying out HFRAs
- Fitting free smoke alarms
- Bilingual Fire Safety Advocates
- Community work with the most vulnerable to fire
- Working with young people to reduce fire-setting

The good work has been continued at a time when we are delivering this IRMP which includes:-

- Further investment of £1.3m in CFS in addition to the £5m already being spent;
- Investing £2.3m in advanced emergency response;
- Investing £1m in the new rescue roles demanded of a modern fire service.

The Authority is committed to continuing this investment and will seek to recycle efficiencies to allow more resources to be allocated to preventative work whilst maintaining the very high standards it has set for its emergency response service.

New developments

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has to respond to the national and international agenda and the Authority will allocate resources in conjunction with the five Districts of Merseyside to ensure that it will be in a position to respond to any situation of major emergency resulting from terrorism or other threats.

Managing Financial Risks

The assessment and management of risk has been an integral part of the Authority's process of budget making and choosing the appropriate level of financial reserves for several years now. The Authority is therefore well placed to respond to the new statutory demand to consider these issues in the Local Government Act 2003.

The financial risks at present include:-

- Impact of a firefighters pay deal
- The full impacts of modernisation
- Ongoing pensions increases
- Uncertainty about firefighter retirement profiles
- Impact of regionalisation
- Industrial relations history and potential cost of alternative fire cover
- Litigation costs
- Risks associated with large capital projects
- Inflation and interest rate exposure

Capital Assets

We have a total of 26 fire stations (at which are housed our 42 front line appliances) which are located as follows. The numbers in brackets are the number of fire appliances currently at each location.

<u>Knowsley</u>	Kirkby (2), Huyton (1), Whiston (1)
<u>Liverpool</u>	Kirkdale (2), Croxteth (2), Low Hill (2), City Centre (2), Toxteth (2), Allerton (1), Speke/Garston(2), Old Swan (2), Belle Vale (1)
<u>Sefton</u>	Bootle/Netherton (2), Aintree (1), Crosby (2), Formby (1), Southport (3)
<u>St. Helens</u>	St. Helens (2), Newton-le-Willows (1), Eccleston (1)
<u>Wirral</u>	Wallasey (2), Birkenhead (2), Bromborough (2), Heswall (1), Upton (1), West Kirby (1)

The map on page 8 shows the location of these stations.

We also have a Headquarters building in Bridle Road, Bootle and a Control Centre at Derby Road, Bootle, a vehicle workshop in Speke and a Safety Training Centre in Croxteth.

Under current proposals from the Government, our Control Centre will be replaced, in the medium term, by a regional Control Centre covering the area of the five North West Fire and Rescue Services. The proposed location for the regional Control Centre has not yet been determined. The timescale for the regional Control Centre to become operational is not yet clear.

We will look to collaborate with the other emergency services on Merseyside to see if there are opportunities for increased efficiencies arising from shared accommodation.

The Authority has set a five year capital programme of £18m investment in its capital infrastructure, including:-

- £7m on vehicles, including creating the rescue pump/support pump concept;
- £5m on buildings, including the new City Centre fire station;
- £4m on mobilising and information technology.

City Centre Fire Station

Liverpool City Council has entered into a major partnership arrangement with a developer for the area including Canning Place. As a result, the current station is due for demolition and the developer is building, at no cost to the Authority, a new fire station at St. Anne Street, Liverpool. This is scheduled for completion in 2005 and upon completion City Centre fire station will relocate to the new building. This site has been identified, with the assistance of Liverpool City Council officers, as meeting the needs of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service for the foreseeable future.

The vision for future development of Liverpool city centre is for an increased population. The current station is partly constrained by its proximity to the river due to its former coverage of the docklands and relocation of City Centre fire station to the new location will provide a more advantageous position for a response, both reactive fire suppression and proactive community safety, to the whole station ground, including the proposed new developments. It will also allow connection to the primary road routes through the city centre and give improved access to residential areas. Furthermore, relocation presents options to build a modern community centred facility to replace an outdated building.

There will be slight changes to the boundary with Toxteth fire station to ensure that appliances responding can continue to meet the response times set out elsewhere in this document. Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate has commented upon the relocation proposals and is satisfied that the (previous) national fire cover standards could be met from the new site. In light of this advice, the Secretary of State was minded to approve the relocation as detailed here although such approval is no longer required under the IRMP.

The above comments are subject to the outcome of a public inquiry into the development proposals for the Paradise Street/Canning Place area which is due to report in March or April 2004.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

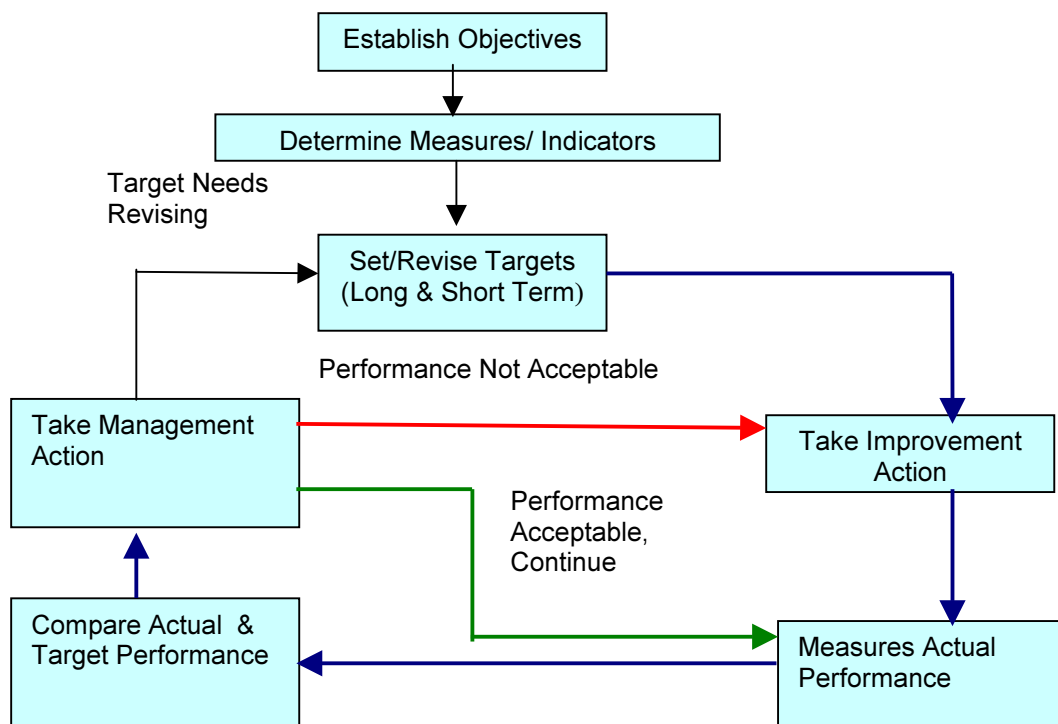
A joint bid, with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, has been submitted to the ODPM for the redevelopment of 16 fire stations (13 in Merseyside; 3 in Lancashire) under the PFI. This is in the form of an "expression of interest" and a decision on whether this bid has been successful is expected in March 2004.

11 Performance Management

Measuring Performance

Using indicators and measures, and setting targets that reflect the strategic goals and objectives of the organisation is an integral part of managing performance. It is a proven way to focus activity and resources to make sustained improvements and achieve continuous improvement of service delivery. In other words what gets measured usually gets done.

The process of using targets to achieve improvements is termed 'Performance Management' and it can be applied at both organisational and station levels together with other levels within the Service. The performance management framework is illustrated in the following diagram:



The setting of objectives, determining measures (indicators) and setting targets for many front line services will be outcomes from the Integrated Risk Management Planning process. For the areas not covered, in particular, support services, the objectives and targets will continue to be developed within the current planning arrangements.

For the indicators themselves, the existing suite of Best Value indicators is far from perfect and does not cover all relevant objectives of the Fire and Rescue Service and its partner organisations. For Community Safety, the objectives address specific types of fire, unwanted alarms and casualties. For fires, these are initially broken down into 'deliberate' and 'non-deliberate (accidental)' which challenges the traditional approach that uses primary and secondary. An initial list of suggested indicators for all of the front line services is being developed, however this will need further refinement.

Targets will be set at various levels in particular at organisational and station level. It is anticipated that targets will be set at organisational level and devolved to stations, however, it is recognised that this is an area that will need further development.

To achieve the targets, most of which are aimed at improving on existing performance, action must be taken. This will be of two types. The first is where a process must be changed and the second is where it is necessary to use existing techniques but apply them in such a way that improved performance is achieved.

To identify the most appropriate improvement action to take will require problems to be identified and the causes to be analysed. This should be relatively straight forward where the problems are associated with a single process. However, for Community Safety, some improvement actions will be established in the IRMP, for example, the use of HFRA's to address dwelling fires and the associated casualties.

For other Community Safety areas, whilst the problems should be obvious, the process of analysis to identify a solution that is likely to succeed is somewhat more complex and may involve reviewing performance data and taking account of the knowledge of individuals. It is again recognised that more detailed guidelines will need to be developed to cover actual problem scenarios. It has also been recognised that the current knowledge management and project management needs to be improved to better support the analysis process.

Having taken the action, it is important that its success is evaluated. Periodically, the actual performance of all of the key indicators will be measured and compared with that targeted. Producing comparisons is relatively straight forward as, for the key indicators, most of the data is available on the existing system. However it is evident that this would be more effective with a computer system that specifically supported performance management and we have recently obtained such a system.

The outcome of the comparison will result in management action being taken:

- If it is predicted that the target will be met, no changes to the current approach are necessary.
- If the target is likely to be bettered, the action may be to revise the target to reflect what is predicted to be achieved or, resource may be directed to other targets that are unlikely to be achieved.
- If it is predicted that the target will not be achieved, the reasons need to be analysed and appropriate action taken.

To ensure that the above process is working successfully, periodic control reports will be produced for review by management and the Authority. The two key documents are the station and the corporate (organisational) reports. The reports need to be based on the above performance management cycle and in particular, if it is predicted that a target is unlikely to be achieved, they must summarise why and what action is to be taken to improve the situation. Conversely, if the target is to be bettered, they must also explain why, i.e. what actions have resulted in such a good performance.

At station level the performance comments should be linked to the specific actions undertaken. This will enable good practice to be identified that can be used elsewhere. At corporate level, the comments should summarise the comments of the station reports. Further reports may be produced at other levels where the comments on performance should again reflect those made at station level.

For some indicators, the impact of a campaign to reduce the level should be relatively easy to evaluate. However, where the numbers of a problem are relatively small, the impact on the problem is virtually impossible to measure. In such cases, there is a need to measure the impact on 'subsidiary' objectives that are based on the messages of the campaign. For example, the messages relate to fitting smoke alarms, calling out the Service rather than risk injury, getting rid of chip pans, etc. If people have responded to these messages, then the risk of the problem occurring will have been reduced. Evaluating improvement actions or campaigns will be key to achieving sustainable performance improvements.

Further details of specific targets and measures are contained in the Authority's annual Service Plan.

An example of the graphical information produced by our Performance Management software is given below:-



Station Locality Managers

We also intend to pilot a new concept of Station Locality Managers. This will be a front line role aimed at monitoring and improving station performance in a wide range of areas, as well as contributing to partnership working.

The role is similar to a “practice manager” in a GP surgery to the extent that they “point” managers and supervisors to the proper use of the policies, procedures and systems of the organisation, they do not “line manage” the relevant managers.

Their main areas of activity would cover:-

- Data management and accuracy
- Community liaison
- Communications with partners, station personnel, etc.
- Monitoring performance
- Voluntary Sector working promotion

The Authority wishes to extend voluntary sector working and is committed to investing more resources into improved and increased working with voluntary sector bodies and agencies. We want to ensure that such bodies are able to play a full and developing role in our plans for the future.

In particular, we intend to develop a Service Level Agreement with the Fire Support Network to support the Authority’s community safety objectives, explore opportunities for income generation by the Fire Support Network to support their work and appoint a liaison officer from within our existing staff to improve the working of the partnership.

12 Consultation

The following is an extract from our draft engagement and consultation strategy which shows how Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority intends to engage and consult on a wide range of issues including future changes to this IRMP where (and to the extent that) consultation is appropriate.

Aims of the Strategy

To engage and involve stakeholder groups in the work and future direction of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, by establishing effective methods of consultation that will determine the needs of the various groups, and establish their views on the performance and future direction of the service.

The strategy is based on the following principles:-

- This strategy is part of the overall communications strategy.
- Good practice guidance and advice will be incorporated into the strategy at all stages.
- There is a need to influence and lobby appropriate external organisations with a view to raising the profile and understanding of the work of the fire and rescue service.
- Outcomes from consultation exercises will be used to provide a baseline measure of the success or failure of identified improvements.
- The strategy is flexible in nature and will be constantly monitored and reviewed to ensure it remains relevant.
- Consultation will be undertaken jointly with other organisations where it is deemed appropriate.
- Consultation will be undertaken to address specific issues in certain areas with hard to reach groups for example in areas with high incidence of car fires, disabled people, the elderly, young people and ethnic minority groups.
- The strategy recognises the importance of cultural and community diversity and all exercises will be undertaken with reference to the Equality Action plan
- Specific methods of consultation will be used as deemed appropriate for individual stakeholder groups and the strategy will include all forms and methods of consultation.
- Employees, representative bodies and elected members will be actively encouraged to participate in the development of strategies and policies developed as part of working groups.
- Ensure that awareness of the work of Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority is maintained at all levels of the organisation through the provision of appropriate training and communication.

Deployment of the Strategy

The Strategy will be based on the stakeholder analysis and achieved by consulting on three levels:

- Generally at local level with external stakeholders such as the general public, service users and external organisations.
- Consultations on specific issues with external stakeholders for example, hard to reach group or fire safety enforcement users.
- Involvement and consultation at all levels with internal stakeholders including employees, Fire Authority members, Corporate Management Team and representative bodies.

In addition whenever a consultation exercise is being considered account will be taken of:-

- The need to promote and re-enforce the brand image of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Fire Service.
- What role influential advocates can have in supporting the exercise for example senior officers, local community leaders, journalists, policy makers in external organisations.

In order for this strategy to be effectively deployed specific consultation exercises will need an individual action plan producing. The plan should include the following elements:-

- The reason for undertaking the consultation exercise.
- Type method of consultation being used e.g. focus group, survey etc.

- The size and scope of the exercise i.e. Merseyside wide, all employees, 20 service users.
- Any cultural or diversity issues relevant to the exercise.
- The time scales of the exercise.
- The resources required - who will be involved in the team.
- Any external costs i.e. use of consultants.

At the highest level the strategy includes all forms and methods of consultation but will be based on a number of core methods as follows:

- Surveys both paper based and telephone
- Focus Groups
- Face to Face Interviews

When a project team or working group is being established consideration should be given as to how the various stakeholders should be involved. An analysis of the various stakeholders should be undertaken as part of the initial project definition and scope. It should be established how the various groups could be involved in the project or working group. The following list provides some examples of possible ways to involve stakeholders and is applicable to both external and internal stakeholders:

- Invited to sit on the group.
- Given specific tasks as part of a project.
- Invited to seminars and events.
- Used as a 'sounding board' for emerging issues.
- Consulted about action plans, policies and outcomes.
- A combination of some or all of the above.

The results of any consultation exercise are likely to identify gaps between perceptions and reality. The output therefore from an engagement or consultation exercise should be an action plan designed to bridge the gap. Further information can be obtained from the Corporate Communications Director.

It is envisaged that consultation will be undertaken each year on the IRMP and associated Action Plan for the forthcoming year. Adequate time will be given for stakeholders to take part in the consultation exercise.

At the end of the consultation period, the Authority will consider all of the responses received before any final decision is taken with regard to implementation of the IRMP and associated Action Plan. The outcome of the consultation exercise will be published on the Authority's website.

Independent Scrutiny

As part of our commitment to an approach based on knowledge rather than assumption, we have engaged independent risk management consultants to review and validate our risk assessment processes and outcomes to ensure they conform to best practice in risk management techniques.

Wallasey

Key Statistics

Dwelling Fires	469
HFRA's	5615
Households	31461
% HH Surveyed	18%
Fires per 1000 households	14.91

Deprivation Analysis

Wards	IMD	Access	Employment	Education	Health	Housing	Income	Child Pov
BIDSTON WARD	23	7157	10	926	29	770	9	1
LEASOWE WARD	289	5777	174	1427	203	1531	313	241
LISCARD WARD	928	7993	514	1714	454	5495	913	1109
MORETON WARD	2187	5357	1492	3729	1078	5628	2276	2421
NEW BRIGHTON WARD	1115	7656	444	3623	456	6433	1086	1565
SEACOMBE WARD	179	7944	172	343	172	1794	182	211
WALLASEY WARD	4067	6932	2336	5890	2578	8260	3641	4371



Wallasey Lifestyle Analysis

Lifestyle Predominance - HFRA

Lifestyles	HFRA	%	Cum %
L2 - Suburban Semis M8 - Pebble Dash Subtopia	1844	23%	23%
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M30 - Bijou Homemakers	1178	15%	38%
L6 - Victorian Low Status M29 - Rejuvenated Terraces	830	10%	49%
L4 - Low Rise Council M16 - Low Rise Subsistence	664	8%	57%
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M31 - Market Town Mixture	420	5%	62%

Lifestyle Predominance - Dwelling Fires

Lifestyles	Fires	%	Cum %
L6 - Victorian Low Status M29 - Rejuvenated Terraces	62	13%	13%
L4 - Low Rise Council M16 - Low Rise Subsistence	59	13%	26%
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M30 - Bijou Homemakers	56	12%	38%
L2 - Suburban Semis M8 - Pebble Dash Subtopia	41	9%	47%
L6 - Victorian Low Status M26 - Rootless Renters	41	9%	55%
L5 - Council Flats M18 - Families in the Sky	35	7%	63%
L9 - Independent Elders M40 - Elderly in own Flats	27	6%	69%
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M32 - Town Centre Singles	20	4%	73%
L4 - Low Rise Council M15 - Low Rise Pensioners	16	3%	76%

Target Lifestyles

L2 - Suburban Semis M8 - Pebble Dash Subtopia
L4 - Low Rise Council M13 - Coalfield Legacy
L4 - Low Rise Council M15 - Low Rise Pensioners
L4 - Low Rise Council M16 - Low Rise Subsistence
L5 - Council Flats M18 - Families in the Sky
L6 - Victorian Low Status M26 - Rootless Renters
L6 - Victorian Low Status M29 - Rejuvenated Terraces
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M30 - Bijou Homemakers
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M31 - Market Town Mixture
L7 - Town Houses & Flats M32 - Town Centre Singles
L9 - Independent Elders M40 - Elderly in own Flats

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APPENDIX

ABBREVIATIONS USED & GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1(l)(d) Inspection	A familiarisation exercise carried out by operational personnel at commercial premises to establish risk
Appliance	A fire engine or vehicle with a specialist role
Attendance Time	Time taken from receipt of call to arrival at an incident
AFA	Automatic Fire Alarm - a mechanical means to detect fire in a building, automatically notifying the Service of a potential problem
CFBAC	Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council
CLM	Crew Level Maintenance team
CPP	Combined Pump Platform Vehicle
COMAH	Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations
CFS	Community Fire Safety – a programme of intervention, outreach and raising awareness
e-Government	Electronic Government – any electronic means by which people can contact Government bodies and local authorities
FACE	Fire Awareness Child Education Programme
FDR 1	A form produced by the ODPM to record Primary Fires
FREE (Team)	Fire Reduction through Engagement and Education. A team aiming to help young people who pose a fire risk to the community
FSD	Fire Service Direct. Our Call Centre contacting people to arrange HFRAs and providing fire safety advice
Geo-coding	Allocation of a unique reference to a location to allow it to be plotted on a map
GIS	Graphical Information System – a database relating information to its geographical location
HFRA	Home Fire Risk Assessment – a home visit by professional fire service personnel to identify and reduce the risk of fire
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate (of Fire Services)
ICS	Incident Command System
ICCT	Incident Command and Continuity Team
IEG	Implementing Electronic Government
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System – a role based system with a structural training path to maintain and develop skills
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
LLAR	Low Level of Activity & Risk (stations where a flexible response is being piloted)
MACC	Mobilising and Communications Centre
MORR	Management of Occupational Road Risk
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
Pod	A container carrying specialist equipment
Primary Fire	Reportable fires generally involving property or vehicles.
Prime Mover	A vehicle for transporting pods to incidents or other locations
PTV	Princes Trust Volunteers
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PI	Performance Indicator
RAPID	Risk Assessed Programme for Incident Deployment (an IT based risk assessment and reduction model)
RTA	Road Traffic Accident
Secondary Fire	Reportable fires but no involving property or vehicles. Generally of a more minor nature than primary fires
Section 2&12 Arrangements	Arrangements whereby neighbouring fire and rescue services provide assistance to each other
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
Special Service	A non fire related attendance
TRV	Targetted Response Vehicles (for use at secondary fires)