

Annual Review of Partnership Working 2025

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report outlines Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's collaborative partnerships, evidencing their contribution to community safety and operational resilience. It also responds to inspection findings by enhancing governance and evaluation to better demonstrate the value and impact of partnerships.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report

3 Background

This report constitutes the annual review of partnership working across Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). It provides an overview of current collaborative arrangements, assesses compliance with internal governance requirements, and outlines developments across the reporting period.

Partnership working is a central pillar of SFRS's strategic approach to achieving its vision of "Making Shropshire Safer". Effective collaboration enables the Service to deliver improved outcomes for communities, enhance public safety, and make more efficient use of shared resources. By working with other public bodies, voluntary organisations, and private sector stakeholders, the Service is able to extend its reach, target resources more effectively, and support innovation in prevention, protection, and response.

4 Overview

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service engages in a range of partnership types, each varying in formality and scope.

These include legally mandated collaborations under the Fire and Rescue Services Act and Civil Contingencies Act, as well as formal agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs), and Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

The Service also participates in informal partnerships and data-sharing arrangements that support operational delivery and community safety. These partnership types enable the Service to meet statutory duties, enhance resource efficiency, share risk, and promote innovation, while ensuring clear accountability and mutual benefit for all parties involved.

Partnerships are developed in accordance with a clear and accountable framework that ensures each arrangement is based on sound evidence, mutual benefit, and alignment with the Service's core objectives. All partnerships are subject to appropriate due diligence and risk assessment and are recorded on the Service's Partnership Register. The Register is maintained and regularly reviewed by the Service Management Team to ensure that all partnerships remain current, productive, and strategically relevant.

5 Current Partnership Register

As of this reporting period, the Service maintains 47 active partnerships, each recorded on the centrally held Partnership Register. These partnerships span multiple departments and reflect a broad scope of collaboration that supports the delivery of the Service's strategic objectives.

Key areas of focus include:

- **Prevention and Protection**, with partnerships such as Exeter Data, Baywater Healthcare, and Supreme Homecare facilitating data sharing and improved safeguarding of vulnerable individuals.
- **Operational Response**, including collaborative arrangements with West Mercia Police for vehicle maintenance and property sharing, which support resource efficiency and operational resilience.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**, through partnerships with groups such as the Asian Fire Service Association, Women in the Fire Service, and local organisations promoting disability and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

The Register has undergone regular review and validation to ensure it remains current and strategically aligned.

6 New Partnerships

Over the past 12 months, two new partnerships have been formally added to the Service's Partnership Register, reflecting ongoing work to enhance operational delivery and public safety through collaborative arrangements.

The first is a Data Sharing Agreement with Baywater Healthcare, a partnership aimed at improving protection for individuals using home oxygen therapy. Baywater Healthcare supplies weekly data identifying patients across the county, allowing Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to proactively offer Safe and Well visits. This sensitive data-sharing arrangement enhances the Service's effectiveness and supports its duty of care to vulnerable residents.

The second is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Jon Beech Recovery, which provides electric vehicle (EV) recovery services to support incident response. The partnership ensures operational resilience in cases involving complex vehicle extrications, while also offering cost efficiency and public safety benefits. Both partnerships are aligned to the Service's strategic aims and are subject to regular review.

7 HMICFRS Inspection 2024 – Area for Improvement

The Service was subject to inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as part of the national inspection programme in 2024. The subsequent report, published in November of that year, identified an Area for Improvement (AFI) directly related to partnership working and evaluation.

The AFI stated:

The service collaborates with others but needs to review and evaluate this work.

We were pleased to see that the service carries out activity to support its statutory duty to collaborate. It considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. For example, it works with the ambulance service to help enter premises if there are concerns for occupants' welfare. We also found it jointly purchased light vehicles with West Mercia Police.

However, the service can do more to consider and participate in collaborative activities. It was disappointing that opportunities for collaboration and co-location with other emergency services in the Telford fire station redevelopment haven't been realised. Additionally, we found that the strategic alliance with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service hasn't been successful in meeting many of its objectives, for example in building ICT capacity and resilience, and procurement.

The service needs to do more to monitor, review and evaluate the benefits and results of its collaborations. Its current reviews and evaluation are limited in scope. The service doesn't learn from them to make sure it achieves value for money.

The service is working on a joint command and control system with three other fire and rescue services (Hereford and Worcester, County Durham and Darlington, and Cleveland). This collaboration aims to provide increased

resilience by helping the services to take emergency calls for each other and mobilise resources when necessary. We look forward to seeing this project progress and to reviewing the service's evaluation of the benefits achieved and lessons learned from this work."

In response to this AFI, the Service has acknowledged the need to strengthen the monitoring, review, and evaluation mechanisms that underpin its partnership activity. This includes a commitment to establishing more robust and routine evaluation processes, ensuring all collaborations are assessed not only for operational impact but also for strategic value and return on investment. As part of this approach, the Service is reviewing its internal governance for partnership oversight and updating the evaluation criteria linked to the Partnership Register. This will ensure greater accountability, transparency, and the ability to demonstrate organisational learning and continuous improvement from collaborative work.

8 Conclusions

While the value of partnership working can often be difficult to quantify in purely financial or performance terms, its impact in reducing risk and enhancing community safety is increasingly evident across the county. From data-sharing arrangements that help identify the most vulnerable residents, to collaborative initiatives with West Midlands Ambulance Service enabling safe entry to premises during welfare concerns, partnerships are delivering tangible benefits. Further, the strategic collaboration with other fire and rescue services to implement a resilient, multi-service fire control system demonstrates how joint working is enhancing operational effectiveness and futureproofing critical infrastructure.

The 2024 HMICFRS inspection identified an AFI in the Service's ability to monitor, evaluate, and demonstrate the value of its partnership work. In response, the Service is in the process of revising its Partnership Policy and supporting guidance to set out clearer expectations for collaborative working. This will be accompanied by a refreshed governance model that strengthens oversight, integrates risk management, and embeds a consistent approach to evaluation throughout the partnership lifecycle.

This revised approach will support a more evidence-led understanding of the impact and value of partnerships, helping the Service to better assess the feasibility and strategic benefit of future collaborations. It will also ensure continuous learning, accountability, and a stronger alignment between partnership activity and the Service's core mission of making Shropshire safer.

9 Capacity

There are no capacity impacts arising from this report.

10 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

All departments will continue to explore possibilities for new partnerships and other collaboration.

11 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

12 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

13 Community Safety

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

14 Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

15 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An e-EQIA is not, therefore, required.

16 Health and Safety

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

17 Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no impacts on compliance with the Fire Standards Core Code of Ethics or human rights arising from this report.

18 ICT

There are no ICT impacts arising from this report.

19 Insurance

There are no insurance impacts arising from this report.

17 The On-call Service

There are no impacts on the On-call service arising from this report.

18 Public Value / Service Delivery

There are no public value or service delivery impacts arising from this report.

19 Reputation

There are no reputational impacts arising from this report.

20 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

21 Training

There are no training impacts arising from this report.

22 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

23 Background Papers

[SFRS Partnerships Register](#)