

Communications and Engagement Strategy for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

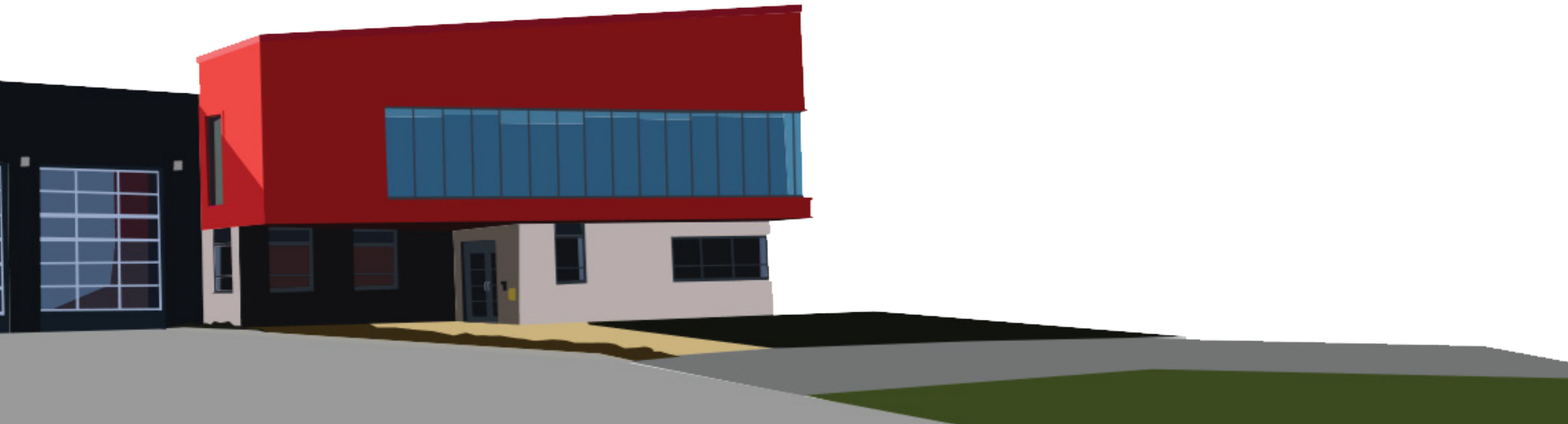
2024-27



MERSEYSIDE
FIRE & RESCUE
SERVICE

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Introduction

Merseyside fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) wants to build and maintain lasting relationships with the people it serves and those who work within the Service. Delivering clear and effective messages to stakeholders and developing levels of involvement that help keep people safe and encourage our employees' sense of belonging is key to this.

This Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out how we will take a consistent and strategic approach to communications, using best practice. The following core principles underpin our strategy:

- Making sure our Values are always at the forefront of how we communicate and engage.
- Being clear consistent and honest.
- Maintaining our Corporate branding and design.
- Being open and transparent.
- Ensuring our communications and engagement are always targeted, relevant and timely.
- Being accessible to all our audiences.

We believe that in combination, communications and engagement will make a positive difference and help MFRS connect, interact, and build lasting relationships with our audiences.





WE ARE MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

OUR STORY

There is nothing more tragic to us than loss of life so we will do everything we can to prevent this happening.

Saving lives and keeping our Firefighters safe matters to us.

We are a team of diverse people undertaking different roles but working together to achieve outstanding impact.

We are part of our community - it's where we are from, it's where we have brought up our families. We reflect our area - looking after each other and showing kindness.

Our teams continue to shape our story putting our community at the heart of everything we do.

We have a long and proud history of being bold - a mindset of let's try it- let's do it.

For Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, good enough is never good enough.

We are our community and we know the part we can play - **our place, our culture and our people** are what make us great.

OUR VISION

To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.
One team, putting its communities first.

OUR PURPOSE

Here to serve. Here to protect. Here to keep you safe.

OUR AIMS

Protect

We protect people from harm, provide advice, guidance and when absolutely necessary use enforcement to keep the public and our firefighters safe.

Prevent

We are there for you. We are a visible presence that provides reassurance, support and advice. Alongside our partners, we protect the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities.

Prepare

We will always be the best that we can be by having highly skilled and trained people who plan for every risk and keep our teams safe and effective.

Respond

We will be there when you need us most, pulling out all the stops to save lives. Whether we are taking 999 calls, or attending incidents, we keep our communities safe.

OUR SERVICE

We are bold

Embracing new ideas to build on the confidence and trust the community place in us.

We are professional

Always giving our best to be the best we can be.

We are safe

Protecting lives and keeping our firefighters safe.

We are built to help

Looking after people and looking after each other.

We are positive

Recognising how far we have come and being positive about the future.

We are relentless

Overcoming barriers to help people feel safe.

OUR VALUES

We serve with **Courage**

- By never settling for the status quo
- By being decisive and calm under pressure
- By having determination to see things through
- By being prepared to fail
- By celebrating diversity and being open to new opportunities and challenges
- By setting high standards and not being embarrassed for doing so
- By challenging ourselves to be better

We serve with **Integrity**

- By doing the right thing even when it is hard or no one is looking
- By leading by example
- By standing up for what matters
- By being open, honest and fair
- By making decisions based on facts
- By explaining the why
- By being consistent
- By always doing what we say we are going to do

We serve with **Compassion**

- By acting with empathy and kindness
- By actively listening - hearing what is being said
- By going the extra mile to help
- By looking after and supporting each other, noticing what is going on for people
- By recognising each other's contribution
- By creating a sense of belonging
- By embracing and understanding difference

Our Communication & Engagement Objectives

Through our communication and engagement strategy we will:

- **Raise public awareness** of our plans for the future and fire safety and prevention initiatives within the Merseyside community and beyond, increasing community understanding of the work we do and the services we provide.
- **Promote Community Engagement**, fostering inclusivity, building a strong relationship with our communities, enhancing engagement with diverse community groups and promoting MFRS as a great place to work through publicity, partnerships and events.
- **Collaborate with local partners and stakeholders** to build partnerships that strengthen community ties and enhance community safety efforts.
- **Warn and inform** the public during emergency incidents and communicate clearly and effectively during a crisis.
- **Through our Internal Communication** activity, continue to foster strong internal messaging, ensuring that staff, Authority Members and volunteers are well-informed, engaged and have a strong sense of belonging and appropriate behaviour
- **Develop and protect our brand** as a trusted and responsive fire and rescue service and a great and inclusive place to work
- **Promote training opportunities** to commercial customers and other fire and rescue services



We will deliver our strategy to our target audiences:

- **General Public:** Residents of Merseyside, including families, businesses, and community organisations.
- **Specific Demographics:** Vulnerable populations (elderly, disabled, deprived communities), multicultural communities, children and young people,
- **Internal Stakeholders:** Fire and rescue service staff, Authority Members and volunteers,
- **External Partners:** Central government, local councils, other blue light services, health services, educational institutions and businesses.
- **Media Outlets:** Local and regional newspapers (including online), radio, and television stations.

We will base our communications and engagement on the following key messages. Often, these messages will be directly related to our corporate plans and strategies:

- **Safety Awareness:** Importance of fire prevention, road and water safety and emergency preparedness.
- **Community Involvement and commitment:** Opportunities for the public to engage with MFRS through events, consultation and initiatives.
- **Service Updates:** Information on performance, services, training, and response capabilities.
- **Service Innovations:** Updates on new initiatives and technologies, training programmes, and community safety projects.
- **Recognition:** Celebrating the contributions of staff, volunteers, and community partners.
- **Fire Safety Awareness:** Importance of fire prevention, home safety tips, and emergency preparedness.
- **Community Engagement:** Invitation to participate in community events and initiatives.
- **Staff Awareness:** Helping staff understand the role, values and achievements of the Service and changes that take place.
- **Belonging and Behaviour:** facilitating positive and supportive messaging, engagement and feedback for staff and volunteers

We will deliver our communications and engagement strategy using the following channels and tactics as appropriate to our aims:

- **Social Media:** Regular updates on platforms such as Facebook, X, Nextdoor, WhatsApp and Instagram to engage with the community and share safety advice.
- **Website:** Maintain an informative and user-friendly website featuring resources, safety tips, career opportunities and news updates.
- **Press and Media Releases/conferences:** Provide timely updates to local media about significant incidents, safety campaigns, and community events.
- **Collaboration with partner organisations:** To optimise our own communication resources.
- **Community Events:** Publicise and contribute to open days, workshops, and demonstrations to engage directly with the public.
- **Newsletters:** Produce regular newsletters such as Hot News, to update staff on activities, events etc.
- **Engagement sessions with interested stakeholders and staff:** To develop our relationships with diverse communities and our workforce.
- **Surveys and feedback forms:** To engage with higher number of stakeholders effectively.
- **MFRS Intranet Portal:** For two-way engagement with staff and volunteers.
- **Noticeboards:** For informing staff, volunteers and visitors.
- **Email services:** Using email marketing tools to promote safety messages and positive messaging for internal and external stakeholders.

We will use the following content in ways that engage with our target audiences to achieve the required outcomes:

- Educational and promotional materials: brochures, leaflets, posters and digital content on fire safety, emergency preparedness, careers, events and services offered.
- Success Stories: Sharing real life experiences and case studies highlighting successful interventions and community impact.
- Behind-the-Scenes Content: Showcasing the day-to-day operations and challenges faced by fire and rescue personnel as well as career opportunities.
- Visual and Digital Content: Use videos and infographics to convey messages quickly and effectively.
- Webinars and Blogs: to engage on areas such as fire safety, careers and community concerns.
- Apps and online forms/surveys: to enhance engagement internally and externally.

We know that some types of communication channels are more impactful in relation to our Net Zero targets, so we will give careful consideration to the channels we use and why we use them to minimise environmental impact.

Planning & Delivering Communications & Engagement

We will develop plans for individual campaigns and initiatives using the Government's OASIS communications planning process:

<https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/marketing/delivering-government-campaigns/guide-to-campaign-planning-oasis/>

Our communications team will work with relevant departments and other stakeholders to establish required outcomes and appropriate content and channels. MFRS staff and internal departments will not provide official communications without involvement from the Communications team and staff will abide by related internal documents (see section 6). Any inappropriate communications will be dealt with using the Service's staff conduct procedures. Requests for communications content, campaigns etc. should be made to corporatecommunications@merseyfire.gov.uk



Crisis Communications

Our approach to crisis communications involves setting up crisis teams, developing a media protocol, using pre-prepared statements and content and providing regular updates. We will do this in conjunction with the Business Continuity Planning team where appropriate.

Action Plan

We want to develop our approach to communications and engagement and have set out some key actions for the life of the plan.

Action	Deadline
Corporate Communications	
Promote this strategy to staff and stakeholders.	Q3/4 2024/25
Develop and implement a work request management process including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised request and service delivery process • A methodology for the prioritisation of requests based on this strategy and the key Service plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social media plan • Performance/evaluation metrics • An annual communications calendar/plan 	Q4 2024/5
Develop our Crisis Communications Plan.	Q1 2025/6
Develop and deliver individual communications action plans and calendars for key plans, initiatives and events.	Ongoing
Community Engagement/Community Risk Management Planning	
Develop and implement a community engagement plan incorporating the principles of the “Ladder of Participation”. (see appendix1)	Q4 2024/5
Develop and implement online community engagement for staff.	Q2 2025/6
Update the Community information resource for staff; “Reaching all communities on Merseyside”.	Q4 2024/5
Carry out a mid-CRMP consultation exercise.	Q4 2025/6
Carry out CRMP 2027/30 consultation processes.	Q2-4 2026/7
Carry out Staff Engagement Survey.	Q3 2024/5 Q2 2026/7



Evaluation & Feedback

We will measure performance against our strategy and actions through Performance metrics: we will monitor engagement and reach through social media analytics, event attendance, and feedback surveys to help us understand what works.

- **Community and stakeholder feedback:** we will consult regularly with stakeholders on the development and delivery of our Community Risk Management Plan
- **Staff engagement:** we will regularly evaluate staff satisfaction and engagement through surveys and focus groups.
- **Outcomes:** we will work with other departments to determine the impact of our communications and engagement.
- **Media coverage:** we will track the media coverage of our communications to evaluate effectiveness.
- **Internal feedback:** Regularly gather input from staff on communications effectiveness and areas for development.

We will use evaluation and feedback for Continuous Improvement. We will:

- Use evaluation results to refine and adapt our strategy and adjust communication tactics.
- Stay informed about emerging trends in communication and community engagement.
- Support a positive culture of inclusiveness, learning and adaptability within MFRS.

Other Relevant Documents

Service instructions:

- 0640 Communicating with the media
- 0699 Using social media
- 0834 Print services, graphic design and video production requests
- 0061 Fire service attendance at film productions



Legislation, Governance & Accessibility

All official MFRS communications and engagement will be produced by or in collaboration with the Communications department. Any enquiries should be made to corporatecommunications@merseyfire.gov.uk or via the Contact section of our website <https://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/get-involved/contact/>

When communicating and engaging with stakeholders MFRS will ensure compliance with relevant legislation, including laws related to privacy, equality, accessibility, data protection, and advertising. This will help minimise any risks associated with communications and engagement. Risk registers will be completed for campaigns and other activities when required.

Key legislation includes:

- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Equality Act 2010 and The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- The Communications Act 2003
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Digital Economy Act 2017
- Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008
- Accessibility Regulations 2018 (WCAG)
- The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and CAP Code
- Telecommunications (Data Retention) Regulations 2014
- The UK National Fire Standard for Communications and Engagement



We want to make sure our communications and engagement is accessible and we welcome any feedback that will help us improve. We aim to:


Key legislation includes:

- Ensure digital accessibility (Websites, Social Media, Emails, etc.)
- Offer multiple formats
- Ensure physical accessibility for in-person communications
- Use plain, inclusive and considerate language
- Provide Clear contact Information for support
- Make use of technology and tools
- Ensure social media accessibility
- Give people time to engage and avoid overloading with information

Conclusion

This communications and engagement strategy for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service aims to build stronger connections with the community while promoting safety and resilience. By focusing on proactive communication and inclusive engagement, MFRS can effectively serve and protect the diverse communities of Merseyside and support a positive workplace culture. Regular evaluation will ensure that the strategy remains relevant and responsive to community needs.

Appendix 1

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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