



Emergency Cover Review 2023

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was created in 1996 however, the model of our emergency cover and the locations and crewing arrangements have remained relatively unchanged since the post war era.

North Wales as a region has continued to evolve and so have the risks faced by the public. In 2008, in addition to being a responding service, we positioned ourselves as a preventative service. Since then we have worked hard to bring down the number of fires and resulting deaths and injuries.

In the meantime, other risks have emerged with climate change increasing the frequency and severity of wildfires and flooding and advances in technology such as solar panels and electric vehicles which pose new risks to the public and to our firefighters.

Having started to support other emergency sector colleagues we have seen an increase in what we know as special service calls. As a result we are becoming more of a Rescue Service than a Fire and Rescue Service.

Whilst we can work to improve our average cover and performance, there will be still areas, especially in rural locations where we could continue to work to respond more effectively.

We also need to be mindful of our need to train our firefighters to keep themselves and the public safe and provide the highest quality of response.

To achieve all this we would need to be in the right place, at the right time and with the right skills.

Currently, we have guaranteed emergency cover at only eight of our fire stations located predominately along the A55/A483 dual carriageway corridor in our region. Elsewhere we rely on part time or on-call firefighters with their availability to respond to calls during the daytime being challenging due to their other commitments.

We have therefore been exploring scenarios for providing emergency cover in the future with a view to improving the cover whilst also recognising the current financial challenges. Working with independent specialists we have been modelling exactly how we could optimise our resources and respond in the most effective and efficient way.



How did we use Modelling and Data Analytics to develop the options?



The Service engaged [ORH](#) – ‘a company that helps emergency services around the world to optimise resource use and respond in the most effective and efficient way’.

Project Objective:

The overall objective was to support North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) with a data-driven review of the risk in North Wales and the optimal distribution of resources to manage these risks.

- Utilising five years of incident and deployments data (2017/18 – 2021/22) and,
- on-call firefighter availability data from 2018

Project Scope:

- Carry out a **data capture and analysis** exercise, to allow the modelling of fire cover within NWFRS.
- To conduct a **review of the key risks**, stations, and crewing arrangements within North Wales, and how NWFRS resources can be best used to manage these risks.
- To complete **joint workshop tasks** with NWFRS, to develop available modelling options.
- To complete a **fire cover review** exercise, and to provide a written report summarising all the review findings, together with recommendations.
- Carry out further **optional analysis** exercises, to further enhance the modelling of fire cover within NWFRS.



Pre-consultation Engagement

Stakeholder engagement included:

- A wide variety of staff across the Service, including Senior Leadership Team, Middle Manager and Supervisory briefings - April and May 2023.
- Individual meetings with 17 Council Leaders and Politicians – May and June 2023.
- Three meetings with various representative Bodies – 18 Apr, 22 May, 19 June 2023.
- Four groups representing equality, diversity and inclusivity – May and June 2023.
- Independent expert guidance from the Consultation Institute on best practice and assurance for pre-consultation – throughout the pre-consultation period
- Fire and Rescue Authority Executive Panel and Audit Committee - 19 June 2023.
- On line stakeholder feedback session (including staff and community representatives) – 19 June 2023.

Initial proposals for consideration by Fire and Rescue Authority Working Group

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Station and/or Duty System Changes	Stay the same – no changes to Duty Systems	Increase resources to change between 1 and 5 stations from on call to Wholetime during the day	Use existing Wholetime staff differently	Use existing Wholetime staff differently and reduce the number of Wholetime staff	Use existing Wholetime staff differently and reduce the number of Wholetime and on-call staff
Wholetime Stations Introduced	No change	Day staffing at 1-5 more stations	Day Staffing at 3 more stations	Day Staffing at 3 stations	Day Staffing at 3 stations
Station Closures	None	None	None	None	Reduction of 5 on call stations
Wholetime Staff Numbers	No change	Increase of 14 - 70 wholetime Firefighters (14 required for each station)	No change	22 Fewer Wholetime Firefighters	36 Fewer Wholetime Firefighters
On-Call Staff Numbers	No change	No change	No change	12 % Reduction	19% Reduction

The Options Development Journey – first slide

Fire Authority Working Group	Summary	Outcomes/Decisions
Working Group Meeting 1 14/3/23	Introduced the Team and ORH consultants and gave a flavour of the 'art of the possible' using the consultants expertise Discussed that difficult decisions will need to be made	
Working Group Meeting 2 4/4/23	<p>Discussed 5 potential options as presented on the previous slide</p> <p>Discussed initial pre-consultation findings: 2 stakeholder pre-consultation briefing comments; how will changes impact on Community Safety and ability to deal effectively with wildfires; Important that changes don't impact on ability to respond to large scale events; Fire Brigades Union re-consultation briefing comments; Concerns about affected staff; Changes should not be made due to Financial restraints; Middle manager Pre-consultation briefing comments; Emphasis of prevention and protection activity.</p> <p>Presented the outcomes of Consultation risk profiling of Working Group options to assess the risks of each the options and generate a consultation risk profile and SWOT analysis for each option taking into account: Public, Management, Political, Legal, Leadership.</p>	<p>Stay as we are and accept the availability risk – requires shortfall to be met fully</p> <p>Changing the crewing models in Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham, adding 3 additional day staffed stations but reducing the budget requirement</p> <p>Changing the crewing models in Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham, and closing 5 RDS stations but providing 2 additional day staffed stations thus reducing further the budget requirement.</p>

The Options Development Journey – continued 1

Fire Authority Working Group	Summary	Outcomes/Decisions
Working Group Meeting 3 2/5/23	<p>Overview of risk profiling work and responses from initial pre-consultation briefings; discussed the potential options selected in Workshop 2:</p> <p>Option 1: Stay as we are and accept the availability risk</p> <p>Option 2: A model which also keeps our station locations and redistributes staff which allows an increase of 3 day-staffed stations realising savings of approximately £1.1 million, reducing the estimated £6 million deficit</p> <p>Option 3: A model which keeps our wholetime station locations and includes two additional day-staffed station but closes 5 on-call stations realising savings of over 2.4 million, further reducing the £6 million deficit</p> <p>Decide if all or some of these options require closer examination.</p>	<p>Option 1: The risk of the FA not acting to address availability challenges is too great. Meeting the full deficit of circa £6m is also cost prohibitive</p> <p>Option 2: Potential improvements to availability, increased prevention and protection work in rural areas, a reduction in financial deficit, merited further analysis and modelling on this option for presentation at the next Working Group</p> <p>Option 3: The closure of stations and greater reduction in wholetime staff numbers was not an option that members wished to pursue further.</p> <p>Project Team to work with ORH on response models within Option 2 for presentation at the next Working Group</p> <p>Pre-consultation to continue to inform full consultation</p>
Working Group Meeting 4 06/06/23	<p>Recap the emergency cover review aim and the first three Working Groups; discussion of potential options selected in Workshop 3, further information about incidents; discuss pre-consultation progress, including representative bodies communication; decide if the Working Group is ready to recommend to the Fire Authority, via the Executive Panel, the options for full consultation.</p> <p>Proposal 1: No change, the availability risk is accepted and daily availability intervention management ceases. The estimated deficit is fully funded</p> <p>Proposal 2: The estimated deficit is fully funded and NWFRS maintain a 24 hour wholetime response model at the existing wholetime stations but reform the service to add 3 Day Staffed stations located at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau</p> <p>Proposal 3: Rhyl and Deeside change to day staffing and Wrexham's third appliance is removed. 3 day staffed stations are introduced at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau. A reduction in wholetime staff numbers by 22 realises a £1.1 million saving against the estimated deficit</p> <p>Proposal 4: Wholetime changes as Proposal 3 however, only 2 day staffed stations are introduced and 5 RDS stations are closed. A reduction in wholetime staff numbers by 36 and 5 RDS station closures realises a £2.4 million saving against the estimated deficit.</p>	<p>Proposal 1: No change, the availability risk is accepted and daily availability intervention management ceases. The estimated deficit is fully funded</p> <p>Proposal 2: The estimated deficit is fully funded and NWFRS maintain a 24 hour wholetime response model at the existing wholetime stations but reform the service to add 3 Day Staffed stations located at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau</p> <p>Proposal 3: Rhyl and Deeside change to day staffing and Wrexham's third appliance is removed. 3 day staffed stations are introduced at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau. A reduction in wholetime staff numbers by 22 realises a £1.1 million saving against the estimated deficit</p> <p>Proposal 4: Wholetime changes as Proposal 3 however, only 2 day staffed stations are introduced and 5 RDS stations are closed. A reduction in wholetime staff numbers by 36 and 5 RDS station closures realises a £2.4 million saving against the estimated deficit</p>

The Options Development Journey – continued 2

Fire Authority Working Group	Summary	Outcomes/Decisions
<p>Working Group Meeting 5 - Extended to full Fire Authority 22/06/2023</p>	<p>Recap the Emergency Cover Review aim and the previous workshops; pre-consultation feedback; discuss the proposals selected in Working Group 4; Decide if all or some of these proposals are viable for presentation to the full Fire Authority prior to consultation.</p> <p>It was noted that Option 3 does not have the professional support of the Chief Fire Officer. This is because it does not improve emergency cover, reducing the number of households in North Wales who are able to receive a response within 20 minutes by 2,087. It also removes 74 firefighter posts which reduces the capacity of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) to deal with any future Major Incidents. In addition, any possible merger of RDS fire stations can only be considered in the future when the three additional day staffed are in place and providing guaranteed day time emergency cover.</p>	<p>Members discounted two options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue with existing emergency cover arrangements, accept the daytime availability risk and to no longer put in place the daily relocation of firefighters to mitigate those risks. • To continue with the existing emergency cover arrangements and introduce three additional day staffed stations at an extra additional cost of £2.25 million <p>In summary, the status quo was rejected because of the inequality of response service across North Wales, the risks involved to firefighters and to the public and the costs involved.</p> <p>Members indicated that they wished to consult on those options which seek to meet the aims of the review by reallocating existing firefighters to new day staffed stations – as outlined in the table of the options presented in the final slide.</p>
<p>Full Fire Authority Meeting 17/7/23</p>	<p>Members were asked to either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the recommendation to commence a public consultation around options 1 and 2; or • Alternatively, agree to commence a public consultation around options of 1, 2 and 3 	<p>Members unanimously voted to commence public consultation around Options 1,2 and 3.</p>



Click [here](#) to read the full documented Options Appraisal Journey



Click below to read the full pre-consultation feedback from:

[Regional and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion focus groups](#)

[Senior NWSFR Staff](#)

[NWFRS Middle Managers](#)

[Fire Brigades Union](#)



Equality Interest Groups

During the pre-consultation phase, various equality interest groups were approached to participate in the consultation. 28 established groups can be broadly described as local equality charities, community groups, equality advisory groups, support groups and faith based organisations from across North Wales.

As part of the pre-consultation, engagement methodology included focus groups which were conducted online and in person, while some groups wished to communicate initially via email and telephone. The range of communication methods used has widened access and we were able to capture feedback. This feedback has been used to shape the ways we will engage and communicate with different stakeholders during the full consultation and the views of equality interest groups has contributed towards the development of the three options.

In summary, pre-consultation feedback from equality interest groups themed mostly around prevention activity and the Services capacity to attend community events, deliver safe and well check, provide fire safety advice in the future. Therefore, the three options have been developed to have some focus on prevention activity and the literature provided highlights the potential impact on presentation activity. Two options will add value in terms of capacity to deliver prevention work in the local community. This engagement enabled the Service to explain how most prevention activity is delivered by prevention staff, but operational teams do add value. No other concerns were raised during the pre-consultation phase.



Summary: Final 3 Options Chosen for Public Consultation

The Fire and Rescue Authority Working Group reviewed the financial, workforce and sustainability modelling of the options making adaptations in response to the feedback from stakeholder and using evaluation criteria based on:

- **Emergency cover** - how our fire appliances respond to emergency calls.
- **Protection and prevention services** - how we keep your homes and businesses safe.
- **Affordability** - keeping our services as affordable as possible, providing best value for money.
- **Workforce** - impact of changes on our teams.
- **Fair and equitable service** - having our staff at the right place, at the right time and with the right skills.
- **Social value** - recognising the impact of any changes we make on our communities.

This meant that the original Options 1 and 2 were not taken forward as options for public consultation as they did not meet the criteria of the review for a fair, sustainable and equitable emergency response

The potential closure of fire stations remained within the set of options as the Fire and Rescue Authority **voted unanimously** in favour of seeking public feedback on how service reductions could result in a way of reducing costs to householders.

The final 3 Options were presented to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting on 17 July 2023 where a **unanimous vote** was recorded in favour of taking the three options to public consultation between 21 July and 22 September 2023.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Station and/or Duty System Changes	Rhyl and Deeside move to Day Crewing and Rural Wholetime Duty staff are relocated	Rhyl and Deeside move to Day Staffing, Wrexham's 3rd appliance is removed and Rural Wholetime Duty staff are relocated	Rhyl and Deeside move to Day Staffing, Wrexham's 3rd appliance is removed and Rural Wholetime Duty staff are relocated
Wholetime Stations Introduced	Day Staffing at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau	Day Staffing at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau	Day Staffing at Porthmadog and Dolgellau
Station Closures	None	None	Abersoch, Beaumaris, Llanberis, Cerrigydrudion and Conwy
Wholetime Staff Numbers	No Change	22 Fewer Wholetime Firefighters 12% Reduction	36 Fewer Wholetime Firefighters 19% Reduction
On-Call Staff Numbers	No Change	No Change	38 Fewer On-Call Firefighters 8% Reduction
Percentage of North Wales households receiving a 1st response within 20 minutes	Increased to 92.7%	Increased to 92.2%	Decreased to 91.5%
Difference with current response model	2,148 more households receive a response within 20 minutes	321 more households receive a response within 20 minutes	2,087 less households receive a response within 20 minutes
Change in Prevention and Protection Activity per annum	1,740 extra residential safe and well checks. Increased industry and business engagement in rural areas	1,740 extra residential safe and well checks. Increased industry and business engagement in rural areas	1,160 extra residential safe and well checks. Increased industry and business engagement in rural areas
Social Value	Increased community engagement in rural areas e.g. school visits, safety campaigns, partnership events. Increased potential for future wholetime employment opportunities in South Denbighshire and Gwynedd	Increased community engagement in rural areas e.g. school visits, safety campaigns, partnership events. Increased potential for future wholetime employment opportunities in South Denbighshire and Gwynedd	Reduced community engagement and reduced employment opportunities in the 5 areas where on-call stations would be closed. Increased potential for future wholetime employment opportunities in South Gwynedd
Estimated cost per household per annum	£171.02	£167.29	£162.88
Difference with 23/24 cost per household per annum	£20.36 increase	£16.63 increase	£12.22 increase

negative change

positive change