

# **Equality Impact Assessment**

## **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Budget**

***IMPACT OF YEARS 3 AND 4 OF THE SPENDING REVIEW***

***INCLUDING EIA REPORTS FOR:***

- 1. INTERGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013-15***
- 2. SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEW***
- 3. BUDGET IMPLICATIONS OF COUNCIL TAX RISE PROPOSALS***

## 1. Integrated Risk management Plan ( IRMP) 13-16 Equality Impact Assessment report

<b>Title of policy/report/project:</b>	<b>Integrated Risk Management Plan ( IRMP) 2013/15</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Strategic Planning</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>8.1.13</b>
<b>1: What is the aim or purpose of the IRMP and proposed changes it contains</b>	
<p>The IRMP is MFRA's primary planning document. It is a statutory requirement of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and is compiled in line with the National Framework 2012. The plan presents MFRA's short and medium term aims in relation to managing and reducing risk in Merseyside and the contribution made by MFRA to regional and national resilience. The plan is based on the risks and the needs of our local communities and sets specific actions for the years 2013/14 and 2014/15.</p> <p>The IRMP has been developed in conjunction with the outcome of the Public Spending Review, which ultimately affects MFRA with a cut of £10 million to its 2013/14 - 14/15 budget and our IRMP Budget Principles.</p> <p>The IRMP has been developed to address the key risks and challenges facing local communities and sets out the approach we aim to take in order to deliver the most effective fire and rescue service to the local communities of Merseyside whilst considering the public's views, where possible to; minimise station closures, maintain the same levels of service and avoiding compulsory staff redundancies. These were the key outcomes of the public consultation events held in 2012, where members of the community across Merseyside's 5 districts were invited to provide their opinions in relation to forthcoming budget cuts and our broad proposals in relation to these cuts in funding.</p> <p>The IRMP has established the following proposals to help the MFRA to respond to the cut in it's budget :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Fire Station Proposal</b> <p>Merseyside would try to keep open the current 26 stations, of which two would have 2 fire appliances and all of the other remaining fire stations would house 1 fire appliance, providing an important presence in all communities will allow us to localise prevention and protection activity with a focus on the most vulnerable people continuing our progress in improving safety and reducing incidents. We will endeavour to keep all of our remaining fire appliances immediately available 24</p> </li> </ol>	

hours a day. This option supports the importance of recognising that speed of first response is important to reducing the risk of death and injury in emergencies. By keeping all fire stations open, with one appliance on each, we will have faster attendance times for the first appliance. - This option is operationally more effective and within budget. MFRA also considered alternative options such as closing 10 of our 26 stations, keeping two fire appliances at the 16 remaining fire stations. This option would be financially more efficient but **not favoured** by the Public ( as identified by public consultation in 2012) or the Chief Fire Officer.

## 2. Response Standards Proposal

We understand the importance of the first appliance attendance at emergencies and have used this as the primary factor when assessing the impact of any changes to our response standards.

Currently Merseyside has one of the fastest and most challenging response standards in the UK and has achieved this standard in over 90% of occasions since its introduction in 2004; the current response to fire standards for Merseyside are as follows

- High Risk – Attendance within 5 minutes 59 Seconds, additional support in 10 minutes 59 Seconds.
- Medium Risk – Attendance within 6 minutes 59 seconds, additional support in 11 minutes 59 Seconds.
- Low Risk – Attendance within 7 minutes 59 seconds, additional support in 12 minutes 59 Seconds.

As an action in support of our current IRMP, these standards have been reviewed to ensure we reflect the changes in risk which have occurred on Merseyside since the standards were established in 2004 and to take into account the current financial restraints being placed upon us. The proposal is to move to a simplified single response standard but to extend the standard to all emergencies where lives may be placed at risk. The proposal is :

- To attend any emergency where lives are at risk on Merseyside in 10 minutes of being requested.

Why :

- The single standard is clear and fair for all residents of Merseyside.
- We will still send the same number of fire appliances to all emergencies as we do now.
- The average attendance time for a first appliance to arrive will not change significantly, currently it is 5 Minutes 15 Seconds our predictions indicate it to be 5 minutes and 22 seconds in the future. The importance of the first appliance attending is significant to the outcome of reducing significant life risks death and injuries – home office research tells us that there is little difference in terms of casualties between attendance times of 1 -5 minutes and 6 to 10 minutes.
- The average attendance time for a second appliance is predicted to be 9 minutes and 15 seconds some 2 minutes 28 seconds slower than we currently achieve.

**2: Who will be affected by the changes proposed in the IRMP**

All communities on Merseyside  
Visitors to Merseyside  
MFRA Employees  
Authority Members  
Local Authorities and other Emergency Services  
Other Community Partners

**3. What monitoring data have you considered**

*Summarise the findings of any monitoring data you have considered regarding this policy/report/project. This could include data which shows whether it is having the desired outcomes and also its impact on members of different equality groups.*

**What monitoring data have you considered?**

Equality data and Demographics report for Merseyside - [http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/asp/pages/equality/pdf/Profile\\_of\\_Merseyside\\_Demography\\_Equality\\_and\\_Diversity.pdf](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/asp/pages/equality/pdf/Profile_of_Merseyside_Demography_Equality_and_Diversity.pdf)

MFRA Customer Insight Data and MFRA Risk Maps: 1 to 5

MFRA Performance Indicators 2012/13

**What did it show?**

The report shows that there are 1.4 million residents in Merseyside , an increase of 1% since 2001 ( 13,400 people) The population is split into 48.6% males and 51.4% females. Merseyside has a lower proportion of children (16.5%) and higher proportions of working age residents (66.3%) and older people (17.2%) than the North West averages. The trend shows an aging population with older groups increasing and younger age groups decreasing.

Merseyside is not as religiously diverse as the rest of Northwest with the biggest proportion of residents being Christian at 74%.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has developed a risk model, which focuses on the risk to life and is based on the factors which we know have most impact upon risk. This approach uses relevant data sets, including the Indices of Multiple Deprivation as well as local, historical incident response data. Weightings have then been used to represent the differing influence of these data sets on risk. All of these factors are then totalled, banded and then mapped by area to establish the MF&RS risk map.

These themed maps help us to understand the likelihood of a particular event occurring in a given area, which in turn forms a part of the risk assessment process. It ensures we target our resources at locations with identified risks.

There are some large areas of Merseyside that fall within the highest levels of social deprivation. There remain large pockets of deprivation with high levels of social exclusion and crime; 40%

	<p>of wards in Merseyside are ranked in the top 5 percentage of the most deprived wards in England.</p> <p>Merseyside is safer and stronger as a result of the actions that the Service has taken since 1999 to prevent fires and other incidents. In particular our performance indicators show that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall incidents have fallen from 27,199 to 19,702 in the last 5 years</li> <li>▪ On an average day we attend 20% more fewer incidents – showing our prevention work is effective at preventing fires and other rescues</li> <li>▪ Accidental dwelling fires have reduced by 9% and Liverpool in particular has seen the largest reduction at - 21%</li> <li>▪ Fatalities in accidental dwelling fires have fallen from 9 to 5 during between 2007 and 2012- however injuries have increased from 77 to 131 during the same period</li> </ul>
<p><b>4: Research</b></p> <p><i>Summarise the findings of any research you have considered regarding this policy/report/project. This could include quantitative data and qualitative information; anything you have obtained from other sources e.g. CFA/CLG guidance, other FRSS, etc.</i></p>	
<p><b>What research have you considered?</b></p> <p>Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 and National Fire and Rescue Framework 2012</p> <p>Appropriate legislation as it applies to the Fire and Rescue Service e.g. Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation 2012 reports</p> <p>Previous MFRA EIAs carried out Key Policies</p> <p>Research into response times e.g. reports by the Home office</p>	<p><b>What did it show?</b></p> <p>Establishes the powers and duties of the FRS and sets out the requirement to undertake an IRMP and what needs to be covered.</p> <p>Sets out the legal framework which the MFRA needs to comply with in relation to assessing the impact of any changes to services on different equality groups</p> <p>Describes the public consultation process, approach and outcomes for the 5 district forums. (See section 5 Consultation for more detail) this intelligence has been our guiding principles for making proposals for change to services to meet the budget cuts imposed by the government.</p> <p>Help to identify any Equality Issues to consider when making any changes to service provisions to the public and the impacts on different groups of staff.</p> <p>Shows background information on response times and their effect on reducing the risk of death in fires and critical incidents.</p>

## 5. Consultation – Background on the IRMP 13-15 consultation process

The current National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service sets out the expectations on Fire and Rescue Services to engage with communities regarding the decisions it makes about service provision when stating:

*“Fire and rescue authorities are accountable to their communities for their actions and decision making. They need to have transparent processes in place to deliver this and engage with their communities to provide them with the opportunity to influence their local service. Local accountability is a vital check on the services provided by fire and rescue authorities.”*

MFRA is also greatly aware when developing consultation plans of the Localism Act, which provides a greater opportunity for the public to scrutinise and challenge the decisions made by local authorities. For this reason that MFRA began consultation with the public early in June 2012 to enable the public to shape the proposals for change as a result of the funding cuts from government.

In addition, The Public Sector Equality Duty sets out arrangements for public bodies (including FRA) to consider the needs of different Protected Groups<sup>1</sup> in the way it designs its services and policies. It is therefore of great importance to ensure that consultation on the IRMP involved people from all diverse groups. The decisions made by MFRA have been able to reflect the needs of communities and be supported by them and this resulting in greater transparency and accountability, and members of the community will have a stake in the development of levels of service that affect them.

The MFRA’s IRMP Scrutiny panels held in March and May 2012 approved the continuation of an externally facilitated deliberative consultation process for IRMP; i.e. public forums. In addition it was agreed to continue with on line surveys to solicit wider public responses.

### **What Consultation has taken place and what did it say?**

The report on the outcomes of the 2012/13 IRMP consultation forums is attached at **appendix 1**. The forums were very successful and resulted in some high quality comments and views that members and officers found useful in making decision about the needs and the priorities of different community groups.

In summary there were 5 public consultation forums held across the 5 districts. Each forum had a good representation of all protected groups.

The major areas considered by the forums to be considered when making decisions about priorities and resources as a result of any budget cuts were:

#### **1. “Reducing the number of fire stations (and thus fire-fighters and fire engines)”**

The forums were asked to select the criteria they believed to be most important Participants considered Emergencies and Special Risks to be the most important criteria, followed by Deprivation, Volume of Incidents, and Demographics and, lastly, Distance from Other Stations.

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<sup>11</sup> The Equality Act 2010 covers Protected Characteristics of : age, disability,gender,gender reassignment,pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief,sexual orientation and marriage & civil partnerships.

Also, when looking at the maps of fire stations and relative risk across Merseyside, participants noticed the varying numbers of fire stations in each area

**2. “Re-defining response times (for example, adopting a single response standard of, say, ‘attending 90% of life incidents with at least one fire engine within eight minutes’)”**

eight-in-ten participants supported the adoption of a single response standard of **“attending 90% of life incidents with at least one fire engine within eight minutes “providing it continues to endeavour to get to incidents as quickly as possible**

**3. “Introducing alternative crewing systems to match variations in ‘demand””**

The vast majority of participants across all five forums thought that MFRA should consider more flexible crewing systems to match variations in demand

**4. “Reducing support services (including prevention and protection activities)”**

A majority of participants agreed that, given its diminishing resources, MFRA should target its prevention work towards higher risk areas, higher risk people (in low risk areas), and areas that have slower response times.

Charging for providing smoke alarms in low risk/affluent areas was also endorsed by a large majority, who felt that those who can afford to pay should expect to have to do so *(note this is dealt with in more detail in the EIA document “ Support Staff Review to EIA” attached to this report)*

**5. “Raising council tax levels beyond the capping level.”**

Although several participants felt that they themselves could support a large council tax rise, it was widely felt that the population at large would not do so in the current economic climate

There was also concern that a large Council Tax increase could set two undesirable precedents – that is, it could:

- Be a precedent for other authorities to make similar increases in Merseyside
- Encourage central government to think that more central taxation could be transferred to the local level.

Even those participants who supported the idea of an increase felt that the MFRA would not win the five referendums needed to authorise such a policy

*(note this is dealt with in more detail in the EIA document “ Proposals to raise Council tax EIA” attached to this report)*

The outcomes of the public consultation have been taken into consideration when developing proposals in the IRMP. The key points raised by the public were :

- No closure of fire stations
- Change crewing and rotas to be more flexible to meet demand
- Standardise response times and be transparent about remote areas with slower response times
- Reduce support staff resources where they are not focused on high risk activities

## 6. Conclusions

On reviewing the research, data and consultation together with the proposals outlined in section 1 above, it is envisaged that there will be very little negative impact on any particular protected group and no perceived disproportionate service delivery compared to the current level of service received by these groups currently.

There is a small exception to this conclusion; a small geographical area around Rainford of 2.18 Square Kilometers. **Map 2** shows that this area is outside the 10 minute attendance time but the area is deemed as predominantly **Low risk** in relation to our risk methodology.

**Map 1** shows the area again but with the overlay of Skemesdale station and thus significantly reduces the area outside the 10 minute response.

On further investigation our intelligence tells us the following about this area :

- 1) The area is made up of predominantly low risk community profiles using the community insight database and therefore less likely to experience a property fire or RTC
- 2) There has been some high risk prevention and protection interventions carried out in the area – **see Map 4**
- 3) The average attendance over the last 3 years for this area has been 8 minutes and 39 seconds and is not significantly different to our current average attendance standard for low risk.

We will explore possibilities of working with our neighbouring partners to assist with Fire and rescues in this area.

### (a) Age

#### Service Delivery in relation age :

- The majority of Merseyside population will see little or no difference to the way in which we are planning to deliver our service compared to their levels of service they currently receive; regardless of our chosen option.

#### Community risks in relation to age :

- Older people have been identified as more at risk from fire. As a result, prevention activity will continue to be targeted towards them.
- Middle aged men living alone have been identified as more risk from fires. As a result, prevention activity will continue to be targeted towards them.
- Young people are more likely to be involved in fires relating to anti-social behaviour. As a result, prevention activity will continue to be targeted towards them.

Delivery plans and service plans will continue to plan for innovative and efficient ways to engage with different communities of different ages to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level of response.



**(b) Disability including mental, physical and sensory conditions)**

**Service delivery in relation to disabled people**

- It is not envisaged that the impact of the changes on either proposal 1 or proposal 2 will have any significant detrimental impact on disabled people. Option 1 would ensure that disabled vulnerable people at risk of fire and life risk incidents will get the fastest and most efficient response which is critical to those with significant health complications. The ability to maintain community fire stations and link closely with disabled community groups is key
- The way in which MFRA classifies disabled people as high risk will not change and we will ensure that their needs in relation to Fire and Rescue services will be met. Services and policies will continue to take into account their needs of this group.

**Community risks in relation to Disability**

- People with disabilities have been identified as more at risk from fire occurring and in some cases, less able to escape when a fire does occur. Further consultation with Disabled People will be carried out during the lifespan of the IRMP to establish their experiences and impacts of the service changes.
- Hate crime involving fire as a weapon targeted at people with mental and physical disabilities will be monitored throughout the life of this IRMP to establish where further prevention and protection can be targeted

Community delivery plans and service plans will continue to plan for innovative and efficient ways to engage with different disability groups and support agencies to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level of response.

**(c) Race (include: nationality, national or ethnic origin and/or colour)**

**Service delivery in relation to race**

- It is not envisaged that the impact of the changes in either proposal 1 or proposal 2 will have any significant detrimental impact on different ethnic groups. Option 1 would ensure that those at risk of hate crime and fire and life risk incidents will get the fastest and most efficient response. The ability to maintain community fire stations and link closely with different ethnic minority groups is key to ensuring the service we provide meets the needs/risks of the communities.

**Community risks in relation to race**

- Some minority ethnic communities have been identified as being at greater risk from fire and where we identify this we will work with those communities to target prevention activity.
- Racial differences can place people at increased risk of hate crime and this can include the use of fire as a weapon. Our prevention and protection work with the police and other partners helps people to protect themselves and assists in the prevention of such crimes. Monitoring of such incidents will be key to understanding the needs and experiences of these community groups.

Community delivery plans and service plans will continue to plan for innovative and efficient

ways to engage with different ethnic minority groups and support agencies to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level of response.

**(d) Religion or Belief**

**Service Delivery in relation to Religion/belief**

- Merseyside is predominantly Christian (79%) and less diverse in terms of religion than the rest of UK. We are not aware of any particular religious groups that will be affected disproportionately either by either option 1 or 2 or changes to the response time.

**Community risks in relation to religion/belief**

- Some religious groups have been identified as being at greater risk from fire and where we identify this we will work with those communities to target prevention activity.
- Religious differences /tensions between groups can place people at increased risk of hate crime and this can include the use of fire as a weapon. Our prevention and protection work with the police and other partners helps people to protect themselves and assists in the prevention of such crimes. Monitoring of such incidents will be key to understanding the needs and experiences of the different faith groups.

Community delivery plans and service plans will continue to plan for innovative and efficient ways to engage with different faith groups and support agencies to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level of response.

**(e) Sex (include gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity)**

**Service Delivery in relation to Gender**

- It is not envisaged that the impact of the changes in either proposal 1 or proposal 2 will have any significant detrimental impact on different genders. Option 1 would ensure that those at risk of fire and RTC will get the fastest and most effective response. The ability to maintain community fire stations and link closely with different gender groups is key to ensuring the service we provide meets the needs/risks of the communities.

**Community risks in relation to Gender**

- There is evidence to suggest that men are generally more at risk from fire and road traffic collisions. We regularly monitor the fires where people die and older women tend to be the highest risk group. As a result, prevention activity will continue to targeted towards these groups at risk

Community delivery plans and service plans will continue to plan for innovative and efficient ways to engage with different gender groups and support agencies to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level of response.

**(f) Sexual Orientation**

**Service delivery in relation to Sexual Orientation**

- It is not envisaged that the impact of the changes to service delivery in either proposal 1 or proposal 2 will have any significant detrimental impact on people from different sexual orientation. Option 1 would ensure that those at risk of fire and RTC

will get the fastest and most effective response. The ability to maintain community fire stations and link closely with different LGBT groups is key to ensuring the service we provide meets the needs/risks of these communities.

**Community risks in relation to Sexual Orientation**

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people can be at an increased risk from hate related crime and this might include the use of fire as a weapon. Our prevention and protection work with the police and other support agencies helps people to protect themselves and assists in the prevention of such crimes.

Community delivery plans and service plans will continue to plan for innovative and efficient ways to engage with different LGBT groups support agencies to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level of response.

**(g) Socio-economic disadvantage**

We have extensive business intelligence which shows that socio-economic disadvantage is significant risk factor in relation to all types of fire. As a result many of our prevention activities focus on those areas with the highest levels of deprivation ( 40% of Merseyside is in the top 5% most deprived areas in England)

**7. Decisions**

*If the policy/report/project will have a negative impact on members of one or more of the protected groups, explain how it will change or why it is to continue in the same way. If no changes are proposed, the policy/report/project needs to be objectively justified as being an appropriate and necessary means of achieving the legitimate aim set out in 1 above.*

The information provided in sections 1 to 6 explain the ways in which different protected groups may be affected by the aims and objectives set out in the IRMP, specifically the proposed changes to service as a result of the significant reduction in funding by the government. Option 1 provides the best support for all protected groups and helps to maintain and increase community engagement whilst maintaining current standards in responses to fire and rescue.

**8. Equality Improvement Plan**

*List any changes to our policies or procedures that need to be included in the Equality Action Plan/Service Plan.*

**9. Equality & Diversity Sign Off**

***The completed EIA form must be signed off by the Diversity Manager before it is submitted to Strategic Management Group or Authority.***

**Signed off by:**

Wendy Kenyon

**Date:**

18/02/13

**Comments :**

Action Planned	Responsibility of	Completed by
<p>1.Ensure that Low Risk HFC's are carried out as a priority to the areas where 10 minute response time may not be fully met</p> <p>2. Consider increasing community interventions early in 13/14 for the areas where 10 minute response times may not be met :</p> <p>3. Engage with Lancashire FRA to establish opportunities for skemersdale station to cover Rainford area rescue responses.</p> <p>4. Continue to establish innovative and efficient ways to engage with all the protected groups</p> <p>5. Monitor hate crime in relation to fire and each protected group</p>	<p>St Helens Community Safety Teams and Eccleston station</p>	
<p>For any advice, support or guidance about completing this form please contact the <a href="mailto:DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk">DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk</a> or on 0151 296 4237</p> <p><b>The completed form along with the related policy/report/project document should be emailed to the Diversity Team at: <a href="mailto:DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk">DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk</a></b></p>		