

## Introduction

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service continuously develop and monitor the services **we** provide to establish 'where we are now'. This enables us to determine our ambitions for the communities of Tyne and Wear and 'where we want to be'; our ambitions are based on:

- Expectation of central government
- Expectations of local communities
- Our own expectations for continuous improvement

Central government's focus is on:

"Ensuring safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies."

April 2009 will see the introduction of two indicators within the new local government performance framework which relate directly to the work of Fire and Rescue Services:

- Deliberate primary and secondary fires
- Number of primary fires and related fatalities and non fatal casualties, excluding precautionary checks

The three key priorities of **central** government are:

- Delivery of an enhanced resilience capability
- Fire and Rescue Authorities taking ownership and successfully implementing the Equality and Diversity Strategy; and
- That in a tighter fiscal climate, Fire and Rescue Authorities meet public expectations of a modern, efficient and effective Public Service.

The Authority will work closely with the constituent councils and other partners to agree the priorities for the local area and to deliver improved prosperity and improved outcomes for that area. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the local priorities that make your town, city or community a better place to be; they have been negotiated between all the main public sector organisations in your area, your local authority and central **g**overnment. LAAs simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances.

## **Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

To support this, the Audit Commission have implemented the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA looks at how well local services are working together to improve the quality of life for local people. This means that CAA will look across councils, health bodies, police forces, fire and rescue services and others responsible for local public services, which are increasingly expected to work in partnership to tackle the challenges facing their communities.

Our involvement in CAA is facilitated by District Managers working in each local authority area. These Managers work with local authority officials and other agencies. To enable them to identify improvement targets, they will use previous incident data to assess the occurrence of specific incident types and work toward reducing them.

In line with national indicators, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service will work to:

- Reduce the number of primary and secondary fires
- Reduce the number of primary fires and related fatalities and non-fatal casualties

Through local involvement with partners and the effective allocation of resources, the Authority is confident that work in each of the districts will achieve lasting improvements for local communities.

Within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority we will continue to work to deliver a modern, effective service by;

- Improving the diversity of our workforce to better reflect the community; by implementing and promoting the Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Aligning the way we deliver our services and resources with other agencies to make sure that we deliver holistic, value for money outcomes for communities
- Examining all aspects of our response function to ensure that we have the right people with the appropriate skills, equipment and information to manage emergency incidents safely and effectively

Our plans are driven by our Vision: “Creating the Safest Community,” and by our Mission: “To save life, reduce risk, provide humanitarian services and protect the environment.”

The biggest single influence on our Strategic Community Safety Plan is our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). This Plan identifies and assesses the existing and potential risks within our community and develops ways in which further improvements can be made with regards to prevention and response to fires and other emergencies, ensuring that:

- We understand the risks to the community, and who within the community is at greatest risk (IRMP)
- We know how to reduce those risks and deliver our services effectively (Mission) and
- We know the other major influences upon our services

Using this knowledge we have developed four high level goals (Level 1):

1. To prevent loss of life and injury from fires and other emergencies and promote community wellbeing
2. To respond appropriately to the risk
3. To plan and prepare for exceptional events, and
4. To deliver a modern, effective service, ensuring value for money with staff who reflect the communities we serve

These goals provide focus to all of our services. Any activity that we undertake links directly to achieving one or more of these goals. In light of our commitment to working with partners and implementing the Equality and Diversity Strategy, we have amended the goals slightly to reflect this.

From the Level 1 goals we have developed seven key priorities:

1. Prevent the incidence of fire, and deaths and injuries from fires
2. Work with partners to protect the community, make them more aware of emergencies and their consequences and promote community wellbeing
3. Determining and deliver resources as identified by the risk
4. Work with relevant partner agencies to prepare and maintain effective emergency plans to deal with exceptional events and other emergencies
5. Provide the capacity and resources to respond and deal with exceptional events
6. Promote and deliver equality, diversity and flexibility of opportunity, to ensure we reflect the community we serve
7. Provide a well managed efficient and effective service through highly developed people and systems

The seven key priorities give us greater focus to our work. They provide some detail about how we will achieve each of our Level 1 goals. For example, to achieve Goal 1: Prevent loss of life and injury from fires and other emergencies and promote community wellbeing; we will at Level 2:

- Prevent the incidence of fire, and deaths and injuries from fires
- Work with partners to protect the community, make them more aware of emergencies and their consequences and promote community wellbeing

The Level 2 key priorities also identify associated measures and targets. The measures are what we are delivering, whilst the target is what is intended to be achieved as a result of carrying out the measure.

The diagram overleaf explains the relationship between our Vision, Mission, Goals and Priorities;

The diagram below illustrates the relationship of our Level One Goals and Level Two Priorities, in support of Levels One and Two there are Level Three Strategies that are developed by each department and also as a combined plan between each of the five districts and the stations within those associated districts.

The Level Three Strategies and Plans detail how each department, district and station will contribute toward Levels One and Two. In addition, the area of responsibility and key links associated with the strategies are detailed within the plans.

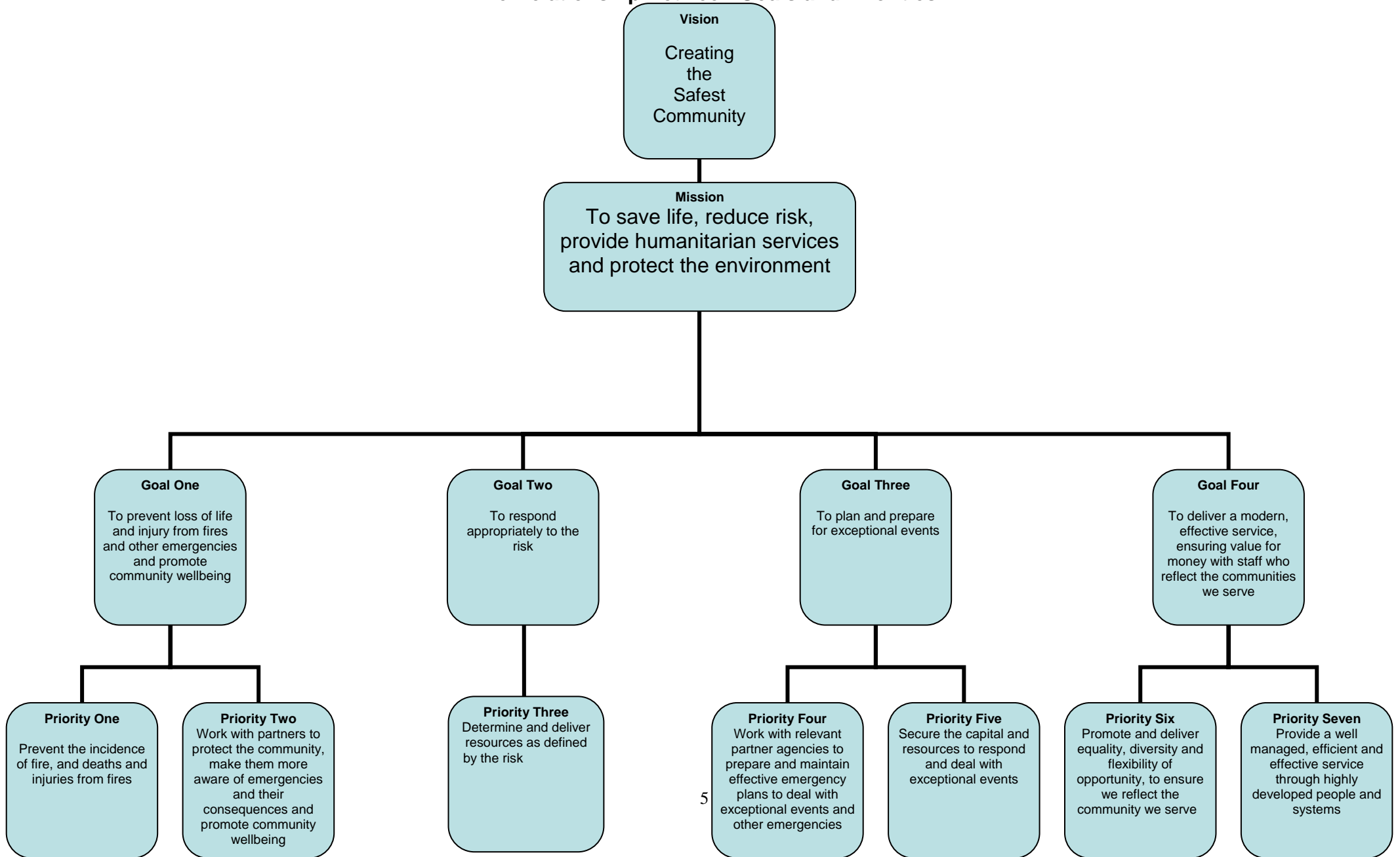
Level Three strategies are developed by managers who are required to;

- Consult with their staff
- Prioritise each action (high/medium/low)
- Identify and budget requirements, and
- Carry out a risk assessment of the proposed actions

The Level Three District and Department plans do not form part of this document; they are maintained by District/Departmental managers and are regularly monitored and reported. These plans define specific actions that will be delivered by the District and Departments over the next twelve months and as such, are key to improving the performance of the Service.

Copies of individual District Plans can be accessed at [www.twfire.gov.uk](http://www.twfire.gov.uk)

### The Relationship Between Goals and Priorities



### **Key External Priorities**

Our external priorities are influenced by our IRMP, the Fire Service National Framework National Government, and in particular the Public Service Agreement target which is:

By 2010, reduce the number of:

- (a) Accidental fire-related deaths in the home by 20%, and
- (b) Deliberate fires by 10%.

These are seen as key priorities and therefore link into the first two priorities for Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority.

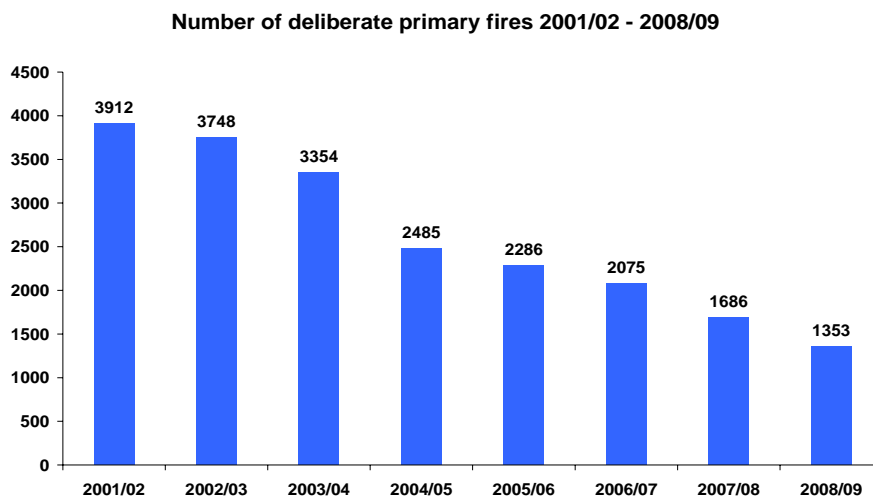
### **Accidental fire-related deaths in the home**

For target (a) above, the baseline is the number of fire related deaths in the home over the five-year period to March 1999, this was 46, an average of 9.2 such deaths each year. Therefore, in order to meet the 20% reduction target, we need to maintain an average of 7.2 fire related deaths in the home, during the period to March 2010. Our current performance is 5 deaths per year for the period April 1999 to March 2009.

Our ambition is zero fire deaths each year, and our long term aim is to achieve this. Our first priority is to prevent fires from occurring, especially accidental fires in homes. We are confident that by providing fire safety guidance in homes and schools we can influence people's behaviour and reduce the numbers of fires in homes. Such advice and information is given when our community firefighters visit people in their homes. In addition to providing fire safety guidance, our community firefighters offer to fit a free smoke detector where one is not already fitted. This should offer the occupiers some warning in the event of fire allowing them to escape without injury.

### Deliberate fires

The baseline for the number of deliberate primary fires is taken from the financial year 2001/2002, when the Authority reported 3,748 such incidents. Targeting a 10% reduction by March 2010 would give us a target of 3,373.



The chart above shows the progress to date for deliberate primary fires, it is clear that the Authority has recorded a continuous reduction in the number of such incidents attended year on year. Results show that this year we will have attended fewer than 1,400 deliberate property fires, a 65% reduction on the 2001/2002 baseline. In order to continue with this positive performance the Authority has set a target of 1299 such incidents to be achieved by March 2010, reflecting a targeted reduction of 67%.

In order to achieve this reduction the Authority continue to work in partnership with the police, local authorities and others to deliver arson reduction initiatives, such as; “abandoned vehicle uplift schemes.” Evaluation, carried out nationally, of previous arson control projects estimates that for every £1 spent, £16 has been saved in costs of fire to the economy.

## **Other External Priorities**

A third external priority is to plan and prepare for exceptional events, for example terrorist attacks, chemical, biological and radiological or nuclear incidents or major flooding that could result in crisis.

We will work with our colleagues in the region, other fire and rescue services, police and other emergency services, local authorities and Government Office North East to ensure that, as far as possible we have the appropriate equipment, and that our personnel are trained and practised in the appropriate techniques, to be able to deal with such events.

This is a key priority following the terrorist attacks on London in 2005, and the major flooding incidents that have affected several parts of the country in recent years, including Northumberland, in 2008.

## **Key Internal Priorities**

Our internal priorities are concerned with ensuring that we provide a modern, well managed service that delivers value for money.

In providing a modern service we would like our organisation profile to reflect the profile of the community we serve. Currently 1.23% of our staff are from ethnic minority communities, whereas 7.2% of our community is made up of ethnic minority persons of working age.

Additionally, 4.7% of our firefighters are women, whilst 51.6% of the population of Tyne and Wear is female.

As we strive for excellence in delivering our service to the community, we have identified equality and diversity as a key priority in realising our Vision. We genuinely appreciate that we need to fully embrace the principles of equality and diversity in how we work together as members of the Service; how we treat each of our stakeholders and how we interact with our diverse communities.



We acknowledge that both women and ethnic minority communities are underrepresented in the Service. We have adopted, and are committed to implementing the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018. The Fire Authority has shown a clear commitment to working towards diversifying the workforce by adopting stretch targets with specific regard to the recruitment of female and minority ethnic employees. By 2013 we aim to achieve:

- 18% for new women entrants joining the operational service;
- 9.2% for the recruitment of new employees from minority ethnic groups entering into the Service across all employee groups by 2013 (the same percentage as in the local working population); and
- Equal rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women

The demographic make-up of our society is changing and we recognise that by employing a workforce which better reflects the diversity of the local working population that we can gain a greater understanding of our diverse communities needs.

This also links directly to our sixth priority and is therefore one of our key priorities.

We will work with our colleagues in the region to develop strategies to address these issues. Our aim is to encourage women and people from minority ethnic communities to join the Service by:

- Raising awareness of the successful and rewarding careers and opportunities the Fire and Rescue Service can offer, and
- Making the Service more accessible to those with caring and other responsibilities

The Service is also committed to creating a safe and healthy environment for all employees and we have a robust Attendance Management Policy in place to enable us to effectively manage absence in a fair, consistent and supportive way.

As an organisation we are striving toward an 'attendance culture' and recognise that positive management of ill health and sickness absence can achieve improvements on our overall efficiency and performance.

In September 2008 the Health and Safety Executive and Communities for Local Government undertook a study of the management of sickness absence and our Service was evaluated as part of this study. While we received praise for a number of positive aspects of attendance management, the review highlighted some areas for improvement which are currently being implemented to attempt to further reduce absence due to sickness. Furthermore, a regular internal audit carried out by Sunderland City Council in April 2008 concluded that our Attendance Management systems and arrangements are good and that effective controls are in place and are consistently applied.

An Attendance Task and Finish Group was established in late 2008 to critically review how we manage attendance with an aim to reduce absence across all employee groups. The group is examining each area of attendance management and considering measures some fire services have taken to cut days lost through sickness as identified in the Audit Commission report 'Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency' published in December 2008.

## **Integrated Risk Management Plan**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 supported by the Fire and Rescue National Framework introduced new legislation to ensure that communities are provided with a modern, efficient and effective fire and rescue service.

Central to this process is integrated risk management planning, a national approach that saw Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority publish its first Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in April 2004, covering the years 2004/2009. This plan aimed to drive down the risks that communities face. It was a major shift in how services were planned and delivered, particularly focussing on preventing fires and other emergencies.

This year we launched our IRMP to cover the period 01 April 2009 to 31 March 2012.

The 2009/2012 IRMP continues to identify and assess the existing and potential risks within our community and develop ways in which further improvements can be made with regard to prevention and response to fires and other emergencies and is influenced by a number of external factors.

The objectives of the 2009/2012 IRMP were determined by detailed analysis of the changing risks that our diverse community faces. We have continued to develop our process for responding to these risks and allow us to plan how to deploy our resources in the most effective manner; this includes striking a balance between proactive community safety activity and emergency response provision. This is because we acknowledge that keeping people safe from fire cannot just be assured through the provision of fire appliances. The 2004/2009 IRMP had a number of successes in this area and we intend to continue to build upon this achievement.

Our 2009 - 2012 IRMP objectives for the next three years are:

**IRMP Objective 1**

In developing our IRMP we acknowledge that we must continue to reduce the number and severity of preventable fires and other emergencies and their consequences on all the communities we serve

**IRMP Objective 2**

To help us achieve this objective we need to ensure we have an appropriate, trained, competent workforce representative of the community we serve and who are capable of performing the challenging roles in a high performing fire and rescue service

**IRMP Objective 3**

We recognise that we have a responsibility for responding to the challenge of climate change and we will take all necessary steps to protect the environment

**IRMP Objective 4**

Work in partnership with key stakeholders to prevent the incidence of fire and other emergencies to make strong, safe and prosperous communities

To compliment these objectives we are going to implement the following improvement actions during 2009/2010:

### **1. Introduce a Community Engagement Team.**

To enable us to engage with all of the community we believe that our workforce should reflect its diversity. We promote equal opportunities in employment and we will take an incremental approach in increasing the proportion of staff from our under-represented communities. To achieve this we are going to establish a team to lead this community engagement.

Evidence suggests that some areas of our communities are not fully aware of the Service as an employer. The team will focus on breaking down barriers and making the service attractive to all as an employer. Initially a Community Engagement Coordinator will be appointed. A Community Advocate will support the Coordinator. These roles will be externally focussed and require individuals who are able to genuinely engage with our diverse communities.

### **2. Conduct a quality assurance audit of the Home Safety Check process.**

To achieve our strategic goal of reducing deaths and injuries from fires and other emergencies we must ensure that Home Safety Checks (HSC) are delivered in a way to address risk. Risk is determined by the circumstances of occupants and their lifestyle and the HSC must be tailored to the individual and applied to a consistent standard. In addition to the fitting of smoke detectors this may also involve influencing the behaviour of people at risk.

To ensure a consistent approach is applied across Tyne and Wear we intend to complete a comprehensive review of HSC.

The findings of the review will be implemented to ensure the prevention of fire and fire related deaths and preventable injuries in the home.

### **3. Review our current working relationships with local authorities.**

In order to establish the Service's identity as a high profile and effective partner within key partnerships we will provide clear strategies for partnership and community engagement to ensure that resources are efficiently targeted towards people at risk.

### **4. Special Emergency Response Vehicles**

To respond appropriately to the emerging risks we face as our region develops we must ensure we deliver our services in an efficient and effective manner. A review of our Special Emergency Response Vehicles (ERV), such as Aerial Ladder Platforms and Emergency Tenders, will be carried out to determine how often such vehicles are mobilised and used. The review will also investigate where incidents occur against the location of the Special ERV. All of this information will be used to help to determine if the Special ERV are ideally located and if staffing levels are appropriate.

### **5. Review equipment carried on and the type of Emergency Response Vehicle.**

To ensure we achieve part of our IRMP objective of ensuring we have a workforce that is capable of carrying out the challenging role of a high performing fire and rescue service we aim to review the equipment carried on our ERV (Pumping Appliances) to ensure that we are most appropriately equipped to address the risks that our crews face when responding to emergencies.

As a Fire and Rescue Service we need to be flexible in our response to the community. To cope with our continuously changing environment we will review our ERV to ensure they are appropriate for the incidents that our crews encounter. We will continue to evaluate new ERV that are available within the Fire and Rescue Sector. This will enable us to keep abreast of all advances in technology and feed into the procurement process. The procurement process will focus upon the risks within Tyne and Wear and the most appropriate ERV to best meet those risks.

### **6. Review of Personal Development Planning Process.**

To enable all staff to carry out and record individual performance reviews in accordance with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11 we will review and amend the current Personal Development Planning (PDP) process.

### **7. Design and implement policies/systems to enable us to respond dynamically to risk.**

The management of risk requires a flexible response to enable us to manage and deploy assets as we strive to reduce the number, severity and consequences of fires in the home. Policies and systems will be developed to enable the service to provide dynamic solutions to support risk reduction strategies within an efficient and cost effective delivery framework.

### **8. Embed Operational Assurance across the Service.**

As a fire and rescue service we need to be flexible in our response to the community. To ensure we can respond effectively to operational demands we have established an Operational Assurance Team. The team will undertake an independent audit of operations by attending a cross section of incidents and simulations in order to determine the level of compliance with standard operating procedures and ensure our service to the public continues to be safe and effective. The Operational Assurance Team will review all aspects of operational performance throughout the service, including operational training. Such a review process will both validate the information gathered on operational performance and verify compliance with standard operating procedures.

### **9. Collect data to enable the measurement of the impact on the environment of fire and rescue service activities.**

We take Corporate Social Responsibility seriously. Broadly speaking this is the way we manage our core business to add social, environmental and economic value in order to produce a positive, sustainable impact for our community, our partners and the service.

## **Audit Commission Assessments**

In October 2008 the Use of Resources (UoR) and Direction of Travel (DoT) audits about the Service were carried out by the Audit Commission, as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for fire and rescue services.

DoT assesses our progress from the last inspections whilst the UoR assesses the value for money we provide and how well we run the Service financially.

For the third year running we were scored '**Level 3, Improving Well**' in the DoT. This is an excellent achievement and shows our year on year improvement. For UoR we were given top marks of '**Level 4, Performing Strongly**', improving on last year's assessment of 'Level 3, Performing Well'.

In April 2009 the Audit Commission launched the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA is the independent assessment of how well people are being served by their local public service. All audit and inspection activity for fire and rescue services will be undertaken within the CAA framework. There are two main elements, which will inform each other:

- An area assessment of each of our five local authority areas that looks at how well local public service are delivering better results for local people in agreed priorities, such as health, economic prospects and community safety, and how likely they are to improve in the future; and
- An organisational assessment of the fire and rescue service, combining the appointed auditor's assessment of value for money (through the use of resources them) with an assessment of the fire and rescue service's performance (through the managing performance theme) into a single judgement.

In addition there will be a scored fire and rescue service assessment which has an emphasis on service delivery and includes a performance information element and an operational assessment of service delivery (OASD). This will be provided by Communities for Local Government (CLG).



## **Improvement Planning Process**

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CAA) has encouraged the Authority to identify strengths and weakness in the way we operate and the services we provide.

In order to maintain our strengths and improve in other areas we continuously review our Improvement Plan. New actions are added to the Plan following each assessment and progress is monitored on a monthly basis and regularly reported to the Authority. Any completed actions are then removed from the Plan.

Key improvements derived from the Improvement Plan include:

## **Improvement Planning - Progress**

### **1. Local Strategic Partnerships**

The Authority is now represented on all Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) within the Tyne and Wear area. This raises the profile of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) and increases opportunities for joint working. TWFRS acceptance as a board member on the constituent LSP's has increased the influence of the Service on factors influencing community life which is outside of our traditional role. We have been instrumental in the production of the respective Safer Community Strategies and had parity of influence on the LAA priorities chosen by each local authority and approved through Government Office North East.

Representation on LSP's has given a strategic connection which was previously lacking on Crime and Disorder Partnerships, and we can now approach local authority working in a linear manner. Through the LSP and their subsidiary bodies, we are involved in the Participatory Budget process, and are able to take part in debates and decisions affecting all of our Service area.

## **2. Community Safety Advocates**

The Authority has now adopted a more strategic approach for communications with 'hard to reach' groups within the community. This has been aided by the successful appointment of four full-time community advocates in 2008.

Three Black Minority Ethnic (BME) and one Young Person's Advocate were appointed to develop new links between groups that TWFRS has historically found it difficult to engage with, e.g.:

- Single parents
- Young parents
- Punjabi, Bengali and Arab communities

The young person's advocate has developed links between TWFRS and 'hard to reach groups' such as single parents, young parent families and families with newborn babies with the aim of raising fire safety awareness among these groups.

The Community Advocates have successfully engaged with these groups to deliver core home safety messages and communicate the work of TWFRS in their communities. This includes bringing groups onto community fire stations and visiting their places of worship and other places where minority groups congregate. The Advocates frequently work with Recruitment & Selection Department to promote TWFRS as an employer of choice.

### **3. Operational Assurance Team**

In July 2008 the Authority created an entirely new Operational Assurance Team (OAT), to improve firefighter safety and provide an independent cross departmental function, ensuring continuous improvement in service delivery through effective and efficient monitoring and review of performance across the FRS.

The OAT has made progress in developing new policy and procedures covering operational assurance, operational debriefing, performance & review & station inspection and audit.

Monitoring and review in these areas is providing TWFRS with clear, wide ranging performance evidence that underpin both internal and external audit requirements; it also supports and improves our current position and maintains the cycle of continuous improvement.

The initial focus of the OAT has been directed at the following areas:

- Significant Incident Debriefs
- Document Audit & Review
- Training Frequency Analysis
- Development of Analytical Risk Assessment process

To support the timely collection of new data a bespoke quality assurance (QA) database is currently being developed.

The database currently allows the OAT team to record, report and analyse themes across the organisation, monitoring issues to ensure action plans are formulated and applied within prescribed timescales by the appropriate stakeholder/department and that development needs are actioned as required.

#### **4. Positive Action Plan**

The Authority have identified that the workforce is currently underrepresented by females and individuals from the BME community, therefore a specialist group, made up of recruitment and selection and equality and diversity professionals, were instructed to devise a set of initiatives to address the issue.

In 2007/08 the group implemented a Positive Action Plan covering a range of workshops and fitness events to promote the role of a Firefighter and give candidates an insight into the recruitment process. With the implementation of the plan the Authority saw a substantial increase of 36% of females (191) and 350% of BME (134) applicants compared to the 2006 recruitment campaign (143 – females & 27 BME). These candidates were tracked throughout each stage and out of the 84 'Positive Action co-hort' 13% were successful throughout the whole process.

After analysing the success of the 2007/08 Positive Action Plan a revised plan has been devised and implemented for 2009. Within this plan there is greater emphasis on the physical demands of the firefighter role plus a more targeted approach to attracting individuals from underrepresented groups.