



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

SUMMARY REPORT

Consultation Responses to
NIFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-21

Date: November 2016

Prepared by: Director of Operations

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report summarises the responses received to the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2016-21 consultation and NIFRS comments in relation to these responses.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 NIFRS draft IRMP 2016-21 outlines the risk based approach to the provision of an effective and efficient fire and rescue service through Emergency Response, Prevention and Protection. It contains 6 key proposals on how NIFRS will better identify and manage risk over the next 5 years.

Proposal 1	Develop our risk analysis capability to effectively target resources
Proposal 2	Review our Service Delivery and Management structure in line with risk
Proposal 3	Explore options to deliver a road safety awareness campaign targeted at 16 to 24 year olds
Proposal 4	Review and effectively manage the Retained Duty System (RDS)
Proposal 5	Review existing Emergency Response Standards (ERS)
Proposal 6	Explore opportunities for collaborative working with Health & Social Care (HSC) Services

- 2.2 The initial Section 75 Screening Report did not identify any adverse impact for any of the Section 75 groups and the IRMP 2016-21 was 'screened out'.
- 2.3 A 12 week public consultation ran from 8 July to 30 September 2016. An email was sent to all NIFRS personnel on 8 July 2016 informing them of the consultation and directing them to the consultation documents on the NIFRS website. NIFRS also emailed 212 stakeholders across Northern Ireland regarding the consultation and it was highlighted to the general public via Twitter and Facebook.

3. OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK

- 3.1 There were 9 written responses to the IRMP consultation from a variety of stakeholders.
- 3.2 In general feedback on the overall IRMP 2016-21 was very positive. The respondents welcomed the new 5 year IRMP outlining NIFRS strategic direction for identifying, assessing and mitigating risks. They found the document comprehensive and easy to understand.
- 3.3 One respondent stressed the importance of transparency going forward and the need for any IRMP proposals to explicitly state whether they are motivated by true efficiency measures based on risk or cuts forced upon NIFRS by budgetary constraints.
- 3.4 Respondents welcomed the opportunity to be included in the consultation process and stressed the importance of continued ongoing consultation.

4. RESPONSES TO THE 6 IRMP PROPOSALS

- 4.1 This section summarises the consultation responses received under each of the relevant 6 IRMP Proposals and NIFRS comments in relation to these responses.

Proposal 1: Develop our risk analysis capability to effectively target resources

This IRMP has focused on how we as an organisation have invested a significant amount of time on analysing risk. We have developed a dedicated Department to focus on this important area and utilise a range of risk assessment methods to inform this process. With the potential for future budget reductions and subsequent declining resources NIFRS must focus on becoming an intelligence led organisation where deployment of resources accurately reflects risk.

Communities and Local Government have withdrawn their support for the National FSEC risk modelling software which will impact on currency and availability of the system going forward. To counter this NIFRS will invest in state of the art risk analysis/modelling tools and ensure suitably skilled personnel are provided to assess risk. We also acknowledge that interrogation of additional information such as its Incident Recording System (IRS) and insurance industry information to assess the extent and cost of fire damage will further enhance our capacity to profile risk. Further work will be completed in this regard where resources allow.

We have also highlighted how particular groups of people are more at risk from death or injury in accidental dwelling fires. Information on these particular types of individuals is already held by other partner agencies. NIFRS must put in place data-sharing protocols with relevant partner agencies to ensure those most at risk of fire are identified and targeted for prevention activities.

Proposal 1: Consultation Responses

This was welcomed as a very positive initiative. There was support for the use of a sound risk methodology and enhancing the scope of our data analysis through appropriate risk modelling software to develop a more accurate risk profile of Northern Ireland. There was also strong support for increased data sharing with relevant agencies to identify people at risk and target prevention activities.

Proposal 1: NIFRS Comments on Consultation Responses

NIFRS welcome the support for the development of our risk analysis capability. We recognise the benefits in risk-based planning to provide accurate, targeted and balanced emergency response, prevention and protection.

We believe that by improving our ability to analyse data and model risk we can enhance our operational response and ultimately increase the safety of our community and firefighters.

We value the benefits from data sharing and partnership working and will continue to build upon existing relationships and foster new relationships with relevant agencies to identify people at risk and target our prevention activities.

Proposal 2: Review our service delivery and management structure in line with risk

Sections 4 and 5 of the IRMP 2016-21 details how our community risk assessment and risk analysis of incident data are already being used to inform how we deliver our services. A number of factors have been identified that will influence the future shape of our operating model, including future funding, Firefighter headcount, integrated working with District Councils through community planning, etc.

Based on effective risk analysis, NIFRS will have to continually review resource deployment to ensure service delivery arrangements match risk:

- We will research/develop innovative crewing models to effectively manage resources with least impact on community safety;
- We will target community engagement activity where needed most. We will focus on vulnerable groups identified through internal metrics or signposted by partner agencies, and higher risk areas identified through risk mapping; and
- We will review our current Area and District management structure.

Proposal 2: Consultation Responses

There was general support for this proposal with respondents stating that NIFRS structure is no longer appropriate for the changing roles and responsibility of a modern fire & rescue service and would benefit from being coterminous with other emergency services/public sector organisations.

One respondent offered cautious support for this proposal acknowledging the benefits in streamlining interaction with public authorities. They raised concerns regarding reference to 'future funding' and firefighter headcount' and the potential for this proposal to be used to reduce Flexi-Duty Officer (FDS) posts.

The importance of future negotiation and consultation in the progression of this proposal was stressed by 2 respondents.

Proposal 2: NIFRS Comments on Consultation Responses

NIFRS welcome the support for this proposal. In recent years our statutory responsibilities have increased and we need to balance our provision of emergency response, prevention and protection. We will remain committed to risk-based planning to ensure the safety of the public and our firefighters.

Improving our capacity to align our work processes and sharing of data with the 11 District Councils and other emergency services will help us identify and resource how we target people at risk.

We will continue to work closely with the representative bodies and engage with stakeholders through consultation. Any consultation responses to this and all other IRMP proposals which relate to the future development and outworking of this proposal have been provided to the relevant Lead Officer for consideration.

Proposal 3: Explore options to deliver a road safety awareness campaign targeted at 16 to 24 year olds

Published RTC statistics for 2015 indicate that a quarter of all deaths or serious injuries on our roads have impacted upon the 16-24 age group. Although NIFRS do not hold a statutory duty to deliver preventative programmes, we have historically used our resources to support the wider road safety message. We continue to recognise and support the need for all public bodies to provide a collaborative response.

We will review our current Road Safety Strategy and refocus our efforts to influence a reduction in death and serious injury statistics and improve behaviours exhibited by some road users, in particular those within the 16-24 age group.

Proposal 3: Consultation Responses

Respondents fully supported the proposed review of NIFRS current Road Safety Strategy with a specific focus on the 16 to 24 age group. There was acknowledgement that our education and youth engagement reduces risk and needs to continue.

One respondent called for additional funding to resource Road Safety activities. Another asked if consideration had been given to identifying the risk associated with the over 65 age group.

Proposal 3: NIFRS Comments on Consultation Responses

NIFRS welcome the acknowledgement that our prevention work is having a positive impact and the wider continued support for our involvement in this work.

We will remain committed to working with our partner agencies and the public to increase awareness of road safety and reduce the number of people being killed or seriously injured as a result of RTCs.

All consultation responses which relate to the future development and outworking of this proposal have been provided to the relevant Lead Officer for consideration.

Proposal 4: Review and effectively manage the Retained Duty System (RDS)

Gartan ERAS enables RDS Officers and Firefighters to schedule their availability through an electronic platform. The System allows managers to oversee RDS Firefighters' availability and monitor crewing levels at any location. Firefighters can organise their personal availability remotely via the internet, text message or smartphone.

The System has enabled management to identify patterns of when and where instances of low RDS availability occur and the implications for medium/long-term service delivery. For example, the System has enabled NIFRS to quantify an already identified weakness in RDS cover in particular Station Areas Monday to Friday during conventional working day hours due to our Firefighters' primary work commitments. The Gartan data will be used to inform future crewing models for RDS, analysing a range of time periods to ensure we have appropriate levels of fire cover.

A new RDS Steering Group has been established to review RDS and develop recommendations for future management.

Proposal 4: Consultation Responses

4 respondents commented on this proposal with 3 stating their overall agreement. One NIFRS employee felt that Gartan allows too much flexibility with regard to time off, while another suggested that RDS personnel should be allowed to respond from more than one location.

The formation of the RDS Steering Group was welcomed. However, concern was expressed regarding possible changes to the RDS contracts and minimum hours of availability.

Proposal 4: NIFRS Comments on Consultation Responses

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) recognise the excellent contribution and commitment of the Retained Duty System (RDS) in providing operational service delivery to over 76% of the total population. The RDS Steering Group will work to develop strategies and policies, mitigate risk and identify and manage value adding projects regarding our RDS.

A number of RDS personnel currently provide emergency response from dual locations and NIFRS will continue to review this.

All consultation responses which relate to the future development and outworking of this proposal have been provided to the relevant Lead Officer for consideration.

Proposal 5: Review existing Emergency Response Standards (ERS)

NIFRS has applied its risk model across the 4,537 Small Area Census boundaries, which are the lowest level of geographic area used to measure Census data. The average number of each incident type and the level of impact have been assessed to calculate an overall risk score for each Small Area. Banding of these risk scores allows us to evaluate levels of risk for the whole of NI. The project has enabled us to predict the areas that are more likely to suffer the consequence of a FRS emergency and informs an integrated strategy which targets prevention, protection and emergency response in an appropriate way to manage risk across NI.

NIFRS currently has ERS which act as a key performance indicator based on the time taken for our appliances to attend dwelling fires. The location of our existing emergency response resources are based on the ERS introduced in 2006 which categorise the region into high, medium and low response areas and apply 3 different response time standards for each.

Unlike urban FRSs which can provide the same emergency response times across their entire area it is impractical for NIFRS to do this. Much of NI has relatively low levels of risk; however there are higher levels of dwelling fire risk in larger population settlements and areas with higher RTC risk along main arterial routes between settlements.

Our existing ERS, are no longer accurately matched to risk, are based on a risk profile of major dwelling fires only and do not reflect additional community risks associated with non-dwelling fires, RTCs and other special service calls.

NIFRS will therefore review its current ERS to ensure that our standards of response complement our recent community risk assessment. Any proposed changes will be subject to a full public consultation exercise.

Proposal 5: Consultation Responses

Generally there was support for this initiative and acknowledgement that there are risk classification models that could be applied to improve the safety of the community and NIFRS personnel.

One respondent welcomed any initiative to improve response times, while others highlighted that the current standards were not reflective of current demographics and population and that an accurate and complete risk methodology reflective of life risk and community needs was fundamental.

2 respondents stressed the importance of recognising the relationship between response times and lives saved with one calling for any review to consider the number of appliances and firefighters to ensure safe and effective operations.

One respondent expressed reservations if a review involved the removal of resources.

Proposal 5: NIFRS Comments on Consultation Responses

NIFRS will ensure that any proposals to revise the current Emergency Response Standards are based upon an appropriate risk methodology and community needs. Any future proposals will be subject to public consultation.

All consultation responses which relate to the future development and outworking of this proposal have been provided to the relevant Lead Officer for consideration.

Proposal 6: Explore opportunities for collaborative working with Health & Social Care (HSC) Services

We will work together with HSC and Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) to identify how we can collectively deliver an improved service to the community we serve.

NIFRS currently work closely with our colleagues in NIAS at operational incidents, particularly RTC and bariatric incidents, and also share a number of our station facilities with them. As part of this collaborative approach, we will explore how our trained Firefighters can contribute through our existing response capability to further complement existing NIAS resources.

We will also explore how our prevention activities can be widened to deliver an enhanced wider community safety and well-being agenda.

Proposal 6: Consultation Responses

There was support for this proposal from the 5 respondents who commented on it. It is seen as a positive opportunity to use existing skills and equipment within NIFRS to save lives and improve the health and well-being of the community.

Respondents were positive about NIFRS Emergency Medical Response pilot scheme which started in Lurgan Fire Station on 19 September 2016. The pilot scheme involves a Wholetime NIFRS crew responding at the request of and along with NIAS to incidents of cardiac arrest or chest pains. There was also support for any future NIFRS proposals where prevention activities could enhance the wider community safety.

One respondent stated that they were keen to see future proposals where the contribution of NIFRS Support Staff would be considered.

Another stakeholder felt that NIFRS taking a more proactive approach in HSC would reduce the workload on the wider healthcare system as long as this was not at the detriment of resource provision or primary role of other HSC providers.

Proposal 6: NIFRS Comments on Consultation Responses

NIFRS continue to work on the Emergency Medical Response pilot scheme in Lurgan Fire Station. Initial analysis of data suggests that we are having a positive impact in supporting NIAS at incidents of cardiac arrest or chest pain. A 6 month review of the pilot will be completed in March 2017.

We will continue to explore options to work with HSC and NIAS to enhance the wider community safety and well-being agenda.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Based on the positive consultation responses received, the NIFRS Board has approved the IRMP 2016-21.

6.2 Over the next 5 years NIFRS will work to research, develop and implement strategies and initiatives to deliver outcomes for our 6 key IRMP proposals. This work will be monitored and managed through our annual business planning process.