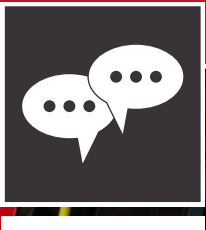


Communications & Engagement Strategy

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service



2025–2028

Making Cumbria a safer place for all



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Overview

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service is a service which communicates, listens, and responds.

For many people, fire and rescue will conjure images of a hose reel, fire engine or ladder, but good communication and engagement can be equally effective tools in our mission to make Cumbria a safer place for all.

As a modern fire and rescue service, we must be prepared to employ a variety of communication methods to inform and engage with people both inside and outside of the service.

Good external communication breaks down barriers to hard-to-reach communities and shares key messages which can reduce the number of fires, road traffic collisions and water rescues we respond to.

Communicating effectively with our staff will enhance understanding of our objectives and how we aim to achieve them. It will also enable the service to instil a culture of making the most of opportunities, shining a light on best practice and creating an environment where staff can inspire and encourage each other to perform at their best.

All staff should be effective communicators and ambassadors for the service and this strategy outlines the principles and methods which will underpin the delivery of that objective.

With more being demanded of fire and rescue services than ever before, it is important that we seek bold and innovative solutions to minimise risk and keep our communities safe.

We should be open and ready to adopt new technologies and methods to enhance how we communicate, while remaining professional and consistent in our approach.

Community is at the heart of everything we do as a service, and communication is no exception. By listening, consulting and engaging with our stakeholders, we can adapt our approach to suit their needs and deliver maximum impact.

We need to know our communities and the people who live, work and visit there – and they need to know us through proactive, successful communication and engagement which builds trust and confidence in our objectives and how we make use of our resources to achieve them.

Vision, aims and objectives

Our vision

A community-focused, professional, and trusted fire and rescue service that makes Cumbria a safer place for all.

Our aim

To deliver a planned and sustained approach to communications and engagement that will enable effective stakeholder involvement in CFRS, support the delivery of the service’s strategic priorities, and underpin the organisation’s decision-making processes, and protect and enhance its reputation.

This strategy will aim to:

- ▶ To ensure mechanisms are put in place to create meaningful, two-way dialogue between the organisation and its stakeholders
- ▶ To ensure that Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service communicates in an open and transparent way with its stakeholders
- ▶ To protect and enhance the reputation of the service
- ▶ To ensure that the service communicates safety messages with the public
- ▶ To ensure that the service’s stakeholders are kept informed about the work of the service
- ▶ To enhance levels of staff engagement and satisfaction

Our communications and engagement activity will have four key dimensions:

- To inform** – Providing our stakeholders with the information they need, either to perform their role, understand the organisation and its goals, share facts or report progress
- To listen** – We will enable the organisation to listen to stakeholders and respond to feedback
- To engage** – Encourage involvement and invite dialogue from stakeholders
- To influence** – Shaping good corporate decision-making and beneficial stakeholder positioning

Communications principles:

These principles will underpin Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service’s approach to communications:

- ▶ **Visible leadership** – CFRS senior team must be an active and highly visible presence within the whole service to convey the vision for the service as well as demonstrating the service’s behaviours
- ▶ **Consistency** – regular communications at a consistent time and in a consistent branded format
- ▶ **Relevance** – ensuring that people’s time is not wasted with information that is not relevant to them
- ▶ **Professionalism** – starting with the assumption that colleagues are professionals who take their job seriously and want to do the best for the service and the people of Cumbria
- ▶ **Recognition** – focus on highlighting where best practice exists and recognising the people involved
- ▶ **Engagement** – all leaders and managers to actively drive and participate in strategies that support and encourage the commitment, engagement and wellbeing of all CFRS staff
- ▶ **Opportunities** – promoting a proactive and positive culture of seeking out and making the most of opportunities and a growth mindset

Our stakeholders

Internal

Our objective is to have an informed and engaged workforce that understands what the service is trying to achieve, is invested in delivering that vision, understands how their work contributes to achieving it and is positive about working for the service.

Wholetime operational staff
On-call operational staff
Non-operational staff
Managers
Cumbria PFCC
Trade Unions

How will we achieve this?

- We will:
- ▶ Create an environment where our staff understand and share the organisational vision and objectives
 - ▶ Develop a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement through communicating best practice and learnings
 - ▶ Have effective channels, which ensure CFRS staff get timely information required to undertake their role efficiently and effectively
 - ▶ Equip and empower management and staff to help them take responsibility for effective communication in their work
 - ▶ Create the right culture, values and behaviours to make CFRS a brilliant place to work that is inclusive for all
 - ▶ Ensure two-way communications and engagement channels are in place to gauge staff morale, and have strategies to address any areas of concern
 - ▶ Provide communications expertise to support the delivery of CFRS priorities

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service Internal Communications Framework - Communication channels for staff and distribution methods

Channel	Distribution method
CFRS Weekly Update	Distributed via: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email• Printed on Stations by Watch Manager (On-call & Wholetime)• Stored on CFRS SharePoint• Archive on Gartan (roster system, daily usage)
Text Message System	Used for urgent communications for example, major incidents or system issues.
WhatsApp	All station teams have a WhatsApp group set up (personal numbers) where we can cascade updates to via Watch Managers.
Corporate Message	Sent via email to share important messages separate from Weekly Update.
Status magazine	Glossy magazine produced in-house to share lighter, engaging content.
SharePoint / Teams	My Fire Station pages – all resources in one place and News section.
Noticeboards	All stations have noticeboards on stations, printed documents are displayed.

Frequency of communications

Frequency	Communication	Channel
Weekly	CFRS Weekly Update	Email, print, SharePoint homepage, Gartan archive
Ad hoc	Corporate Message	Email, print, SharePoint homepage
Monthly	Press releases	Social media, website, media distribution list
Quarterly	Status maga zine	Print, SharePoint
Ad hoc	SLT briefing	Via Microsoft Teams or face to face

External

Our objective is to have enhanced trust and confidence in CFRS and understanding of our objectives through clearly identifying our target stakeholders and the means to reach them efficiently and effectively, and with maximum impact.

Members of the public
Partner agencies
National Fire Chiefs Council
HMICFRS
Local authorities

How will we achieve this?

- We will:
- ▶ Have a clear and consistent narrative articulating CFRS' role, purpose and objectives
 - ▶ Maximise our activity through a multichannel approach
 - ▶ Target our communications activity to best meet the needs of our various audiences
 - ▶ Have a strong and consistent identity and reputation which builds trust with stakeholders
 - ▶ Equip and empower all staff to deliver consistent CFRS messages to our communities
 - ▶ Create the right culture, values and behaviours to make CFRS a brilliant place to work that is inclusive for all

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service External Communications Framework- Communication channels for staff and distribution methods

Channel	Distribution method
Statement	A statement, like a press release, should be written in line with the Service's style guide. It should be accurate and informative. A statement can but does not necessarily appear the in the form of quote, or it can include a quote. It is not written to the same structure of a press release.
Press release	A press release is an article that tells a positive or informative story about the service. Press releases are written and issued by the Communications Team and should not be done by any other member of staff.
CFRS website	The website serves as both public facing tool and a method of demonstrating compliance with the Service's legal obligations. The site is a point of contact between the organisation at the public. It holds a host of up-to-date information on the Service, such as its stations and other facilities, incidents, Safe and Well visits, campaigns, vacancies and policies.
Social media	The service currently has a corporate Twitter, Facebook and Instagram account. These are accessed by the Communications Team. Individual stations also have a social media account if they have a designated social media champion and can provide evidence that they will utilise the account appropriately and regularly. These accounts are monitored and reviewed by the Communications Team.

Messaging strategy

All communications and engagement activity will be underpinned by the service’s four core priorities:

People:

We will have a motivated and committed workforce that is innovative, supported, skilled and customer focused.

Prevention:

We will prevent fires and other emergencies by prioritising the most vulnerable.

Protection:

We will protect people, property and the environment by working with partners to ensure compliance with legislation.

Response:

We will plan for and respond effectively to emergencies when they arise.



The following principles will be used when developing messages to ensure there is a consistent and compelling narrative aligned to the priorities:

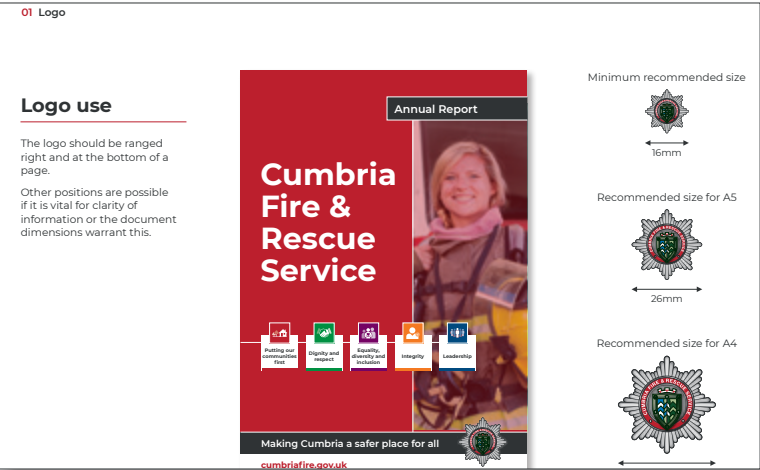
- We will:
- ▶ Messages will be appropriately aligned to individual stakeholders
 - ▶ Better articulate the broader role of today’s fire and rescue service
 - ▶ Continue to maximise the strong public image held by our front line colleagues
 - ▶ Better demonstrate the outcome of the work the service does rather than the technical delivery
 - ▶ Use more relevant supporting imagery

Brand and identity

Having a strong brand is essential in helping to secure an excellent reputation for Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service and is key to helping the service improve its identity and overall visibility.

CFRS’s brand is made up of a range of elements – everything colleagues in the service do and say has a direct effect on the brand and reputation of CFRS.

Brand guidelines can be checked with the Communications team or found on SharePoint.



Evaluation and measurement

To ensure that this strategy remains on track to deliver its objectives, all internal and external communication activity will be monitored throughout implementation.

All communications campaigns and initiatives will use an established and consistent plan and a set of objectives which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

How we measure success:

- ▶ Social media analytics (views, engagement)
- ▶ Website analytics (page views, time on page, downloads of resources/documents)
- ▶ Event attendance (virtual or in-person)
- ▶ Public and staff surveys (response rates)
- ▶ Intranet usage stats
- ▶ Engagement with Weekly Update
- ▶ Participation in polls or feedback forms

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Our Code of Ethics

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Putting our communities first

Integrity

Dignity and Respect

Leadership

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Making Cumbria a safer place for all

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