

## What have we learned on the Notts FRS collaboration journey?



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When Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service formally started its collaboration journey last September with the launch of a Collaboration Strategy, the perception was that we might have some way to go to catch up with other organisations.

It wasn't until we started to pull together a register of existing and on-going projects that we realised how far down the collaboration route we actually are.



Station Manager Paul Gair, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig Parkin, Police and Crime Commissioner Paddy Tipping and Supt Paul Burrows.



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There is no doubt that, as a service, we could have challenged ourselves to push the boundaries further with our collaboration projects, particularly with regards to Nottinghamshire Police, prior to collaboration becoming a statutory duty.

But, taking stock of collaborative activity across the service, as well as submitting details of over 20 existing NFRS collaborations for the Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group's national database, brought to light several – albeit small scale - projects that have already been completed, and others that are under way.

### Impact of the duty to collaborate

With the increased political pressure brought about by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, NFRS recognised the need to strengthen its collaborative relationship with Nottinghamshire Police.

The establishment of a joint governance structure was a major step forward, and the Strategic Collaboration and Collaboration Delivery boards now meet regularly to set strategic direction, ratify decisions and scrutinise progress.

From the start of our 'journey' we have been fortunate in having support and buy-in from senior leaders.

From the Fire Authority, on which Police and Crime Commissioner Paddy Tipping now sits, to our Strategic Leadership and Executive Delivery teams, senior managers and workstream leads.

Their commitment and enthusiasm to collaborate has seen some positive conversations taking place, relationships built, and progress made towards a joint collaboration vision.

Having undergone SSA Collaborative Transformation and Leadership programmes themselves, senior leaders were inspired to invest in SSA training for the service's collaboration leads, giving us the tools, knowledge and confidence to support project leads and teams and move the collaboration agenda forward.

Sixteen NFRS employees have so far completed Collaborative Transformation Practitioner (CTPrac™) courses, with some bespoke managers' workshops currently in development.

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NFRS also sees the benefit of maintaining a dedicated collaboration team to help support project development and delivery, and this has been further enhanced by the secondment of Police Sergeant Dave Mather.

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#### **What have we learned?**

Increased pressure and an inevitable keenness to 'be seen' collaborating has led to some projects being initiated outside the process map and governance structure.

This has meant some formal decision-making is now being done retrospectively, which not only delays things but makes it difficult to achieve consistency in how projects are managed.

Having the right processes in place from the outset (and agreement by both organisations) would have helped ensure projects are sustainable, of sufficient benefit to both parties and subject to the correct governance. Finally, early communication is key.

While some communication activity has taken place, a more strategic approach might have helped achieve greater buy-in from managers and staff, as well as promoting positive relationships between partners.

No-one said collaboration would be easy. It takes time, energy and investment. But after a bumpy, and arguably delayed, start we are now well on our way to future collaboration - and we're excited to see where it takes us!

#### **Current Nottinghamshire FRS Collaboration Projects**

- Shared Operational Communications Advisors
- Airwave/ESN Regional User Groups
- Tri-Service Control
- Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum
- Emergency Services Network
- NILO Airwave radio programming training
- Sparkton online prevention tool
- Shared Estates - Ambulance
- Shared Estates - Police
- Joint Estates Strategy
- Community Heartbeat Trust defib units
- Joint Procurement of Finance System
- Primary Authority (Boots)
- Shared pensions administration
- Joint operational training
- Joint procurement of new occupational Health database
- Gaining entry to premises
- Community First Responder
- Future Leaders Programme
- Prince's Trust Team Programme