



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

# Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023-26

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**Report to:**

Service Delivery Board  
Commissioner's Board  
Deputy Mayor Fire and Resilience Board  
London Fire Commissioner

**Date:**

15 March 2023  
19 April 2023  
12 May 2023

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**Report by:**

Helen Coleman, Director of Communications

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**Report classification**

For decision

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**For publication**

# PART ONE

## Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

### Executive Summary

This Communications and Engagement strategy covers the three-year period 2023 – 2026. It is a strategic framework, setting out:

- How we align our work with corporate priorities and deliver LFB's communication needs
- How we understand our audiences
- How we operate and improve our channels
- How we plan, organise, deliver, evaluate and report on work

This strategic framework also identifies our priorities and key work for the coming year, which will be planned in more detail using the mechanisms set out.

Each year, we will review this strategic framework against LFB's services strategies and CRMP Delivery Plan to ensure that we are delivering our contribution and are focused on the correct priorities.

### Recommended decisions

*For the London Fire Commissioner*

That the London Fire Commissioner approves the Communications and Engagement strategy for 2023 – 2026, attached at Appendix 1, and authorises the Director of Communications to implement it.

## 1 Introduction and background

The Brigade last approved a Communications Strategy in January 2022, before the publication of the CRMP. This new strategy sets out how the Communications and Engagement Directorate will support the delivery of the CRMP and core business.

## 2 Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy has two core objectives:

- To increase public, staff, community and stakeholder trust in London Fire Brigade, as measured by our public opinion polling and staff and stakeholder surveys.

- To serve and protect London, using communications to prevent fires and other incidents, change public behaviour and promote community safety, with outcomes measured on a campaign-by-campaign basis using specific metrics and the social impact tool.

### **3. Equality comments**

**3.1** The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.

**3.2** It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.

**3.3** The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.

**3.4** The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

**3.5** Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

**3.6** The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

**3.7** Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- tackle prejudice

- promote understanding.

**3.8** The Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out how we will tackle key equality issues, such as culture change, which will improve the experience of our diverse workforce and include our service to communities. We also show how we will be improving our connection to and work with seldom heard communities.

**3.9** An equalities impact assessment has not been carried out as the changes being proposed are relate to the strategic direction. As certain approaches or specific products are introduced over the life of the strategy, it may be equalities impact assessments need to be carried out at that time.

## **4. Workforce comments**

4.1 Staff affected by proposed structural changes are being consulted, along with staff unions.

## **5. Financial comments**

5.1 Delivery of the proposed strategy outlined in this paper is fully funded from the combination of base budget and growth bids approved from the 2023/24 budget onwards.

## **6. Legal comments**

6.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "LFC") is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office.

6.2 Section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 states that the LFC is the fire and rescue authority for Greater London.

6.3 The proposals in this report are consistent with the LFC's functions power under section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 whereby the LFC has the power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting. Furthermore, under section 5A the LFC has the to do anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying out of any of it functions. This includes the development of the attached Communications and Engagement strategy.

6.4 The LFC is also a 'best value' authority under the Local Government Act 1999 and must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The proposed strategy considers both, "How we plan, organise, deliver, evaluate and report on work" and "identifies our priorities and key work for the coming year", indicating this duty will be complied with.

6.5 Under the LFC's Scheme of Governance, the LFC has reserved the following matters to himself:

- To agree and decide major amendments to corporate strategies and the Corporate Plan
- To agree all matters that have a significant impact on the organisation or service

delivery, as determined by a Director

6.6 Consequently, this matter falls to the LFC to decide.

## List of appendices

| Appendix | Title                                | Open or confidential* |
|----------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1        | Communications & Engagement Strategy | Open                  |

## Part two confidentiality

Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part Two form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a Part Two form: **NO**

## **Appendix 1: Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023 – 2026**

### **1.0 Context**

#### **1.1 London Fire Brigade's vision and strategy**

London Fire Brigade's vision is to be trusted to serve and protect London. Our Community Risk Management Plan, Your London Fire Brigade, sets out our strategy to realise our vision. It was published in January 2023 and runs until 2029. It describes how we will focus our existing prevention, protection and response services on areas of highest risk and introduce new services for preparedness, recovery and engagement. Plans to deliver the strategy are published each year in our CRMP Delivery Plan.

#### **1.2 Other contextual factors**

Our Communications and Engagement Strategy is designed to support this vision and strategy with the following contextual factors in mind:

- HMICFRS report that LFB 'requires improvement' in each of its three inspection pillars and placed the brigade in 'enhanced monitoring' for its culture in 2022.
- The Grenfell Tower Inquiry second phase report will be published later this year, and we will be consulting with communities on restorative justice processes.
- In Nov '22, the Independent Culture Review diagnosed LFB as institutionally racist and misogynistic and made 23 recommendations for improvement.
- The Mayor of London has published his priorities for his term in office, and the Brigade should show how we are supporting these.
- There is growing societal discontent that threatens trust in public services.
- A cost of living crisis is affecting both our staff and the people we serve, particularly the most vulnerable, who are already at the highest risk.
- Our communications strategy must meet the NFCC Communications Standard (which was recently under consultation) and align with corporate objectives.

These drivers combine to mean that our communication and engagement strategy must align with our vision, deliver complex change in a simple way under close scrutiny, maintain trust in a challenging environment and support changing service delivery.

### **2. Communication objectives**

We have set two core communications objectives to address the LFB vision directly over the next three years:

- We will increase trust in London Fire Brigade as we continue to change and improve.
- We will serve and protect London, using communications to prevent fires and other incidents, change public behaviour and promote community safety.

### **1. Communications and Engagement activity**

Our communications and engagement strategy will ensure that activity is aligned with three main areas of Brigade activity:

### **3.1 Vision, values, strategy, leadership and transformation**

We will support LFB's strategy to achieve its vision through effective leadership and well-supported and understood transformation by:

- Delivering a strong, visible and trusted leadership proposition, to inspire confidence and enable change.
- Introducing new, simple language about change, using 'Your LFB' as the banner for all change and using three delivery themes that link change to working lives:
  - Service Delivery
  - People and Skills
  - Equipment and Facilities
- Using an annual delivery calendar to communicate the impact of change through a series of linked narratives.
- Making a visual link between Your LFB and our key activities for staff using a new identity system.
- Reporting on CRMP to FREP and other stakeholders through the existing framework of pillars and commitments, as these are consulted and approved.
- Using live activity showcases to bring change to life.
- Positioning communications for culture change within our overall delivery themes in order to mainstream change, after the initial tranche of delivery.
- Communicating and embedding the new LFB values set, once agreed.
- Careful management of the events relating to the Grenfell Tower fire this year to demonstrate learning and maintain trust.
- Taking an open and transparent approach to criticism and demonstrable accountability to the communities we serve, to ensure that our reputation keeps pace with our transformation.
- Building trust, community and shared purpose through our #WeAreLFB campaign, which will run internally and externally.
- Using a calendar of cultural events and other milestones to plan a range of proactive communication and engagement activities to build trust in the brigade.

### **3.2 Communicating core service delivery**

LFB is developing strategies for each of our six core services through the course of 2023, so communications and engagement plans will support existing services as they are, and then be reviewed and adapted once the new strategies are complete.

Prepare, Recover and Engage are new services, and communication plans will be developed in support once the strategies to deliver them are finalised.

The CRMP introduces a new Service Catalogue and this will be communicated to staff, initially by providing the structure for service content on Hotwire.

### **3.2.1 Prevent**

We will support the Prevent service by prioritising our public safety campaigns according to risk, focusing on:

- Directing high risk people to our in-person HFSV and lower risk people to our online checker to reduce fires in the home.
- Safe behaviour with alternative fuels - EPPVs and Lithium batteries.
- Preparing for and responding to weather related events such as wildfires and floods.
- Alongside this, we will continue to communicate key safety information in response to specific incidents as they occur.

### **3.2.2 Protect**

We will support the Protect service by providing information, guidance and services for business and influencing public policy to reduce the risk to London:

- Running public policy campaigns on built environment issues – single staircases, sprinklers, PEEPs, Modern Methods of Construction, EV charging points.
- Co-ordinating responses to external consultations on relevant policy issues.
- Showcasing enforcement activity to demonstrate impact and value.
- Targeted online safety advice for businesses, including a new online fire safety checker.
- Preparing for and supporting the King's Coronation in May.
- Targeted access to online services and information as they are rolled, out, for example, the new Fire Safety Portal and new requirements for Care Homes.
- Ensure that stakeholders understand our risk-based approach to inspection and guidance and its impact on our targets and delivery.

### **3.2.3 Respond**

We will support the Respond service by providing information and learning about incidents:

- Providing timely information about incidents is a central element of Your London Fire Brigade.
- Promoting our response to larger and high-profile incidents on our website and social media channels, which are usually picked up by the media or shared.
- Updating records to provide information about fatalities, when known and in agreement with the police, as well as the cause of the incident following an investigation.
- Using incidents to increase the use of our online home fire safety checker, including targeted promotion and supported by borough feeds.

- Maintaining a stock of messaging on most incident types to use as and when.
- Showing learning from incidents, with focused updates for the public and learnings for staff.

And by dealing with and learning from extraordinary risks and other crises:

- We have prepared targeted communication plans to support each of the extraordinary risks identified in the Annual Assessment of Risk
- These communication packages sit within our crisis communications plan. This also covers other potential crises and reputational risks that may arise on incidents:
  - Poor performance or behaviour (staff or organisation)
  - Health and safety, including injuries and fatalities
- We will also ensure that learnings from each major incident review are shared with all our audiences, and that staff and stakeholders know what has changed as a result.

### **3.2.4 Engage**

We will develop a new Community Engagement Strategy by July '23. This will provide the strategic framework for community engagement across the Brigade, including borough-level engagement and post-incident response.

### **3.3 Underpinning services and support**

We will also provide communications and engagement support to our support services and help them serve and connect to our front-line services, seek and respond to user feedback and demonstrate improvements and change.

### **4.0 Understanding audiences and delivering effective channels**

We have analysed our staff, stakeholder, public and community audiences and propose four new principles that will shape our channels and delivery. Our communications channels must:

- Support *meaningful conversations* – providing genuine opportunities for discussion and collaboration.
- Be *targeted and appropriate* – they must reach and work for their intended audience.
- Be *useful* – meet people's needs in seeking information or doing their job.
- Be *integrated* – building a coherent narrative across audiences and channels.

### **4.1 Communicating and engaging with our staff**

Our analysis shows that:

- Our staff are mostly operational and non-desk based, dispersed in over 100 locations and organised into over 400 teams, on a shift pattern
- There are high levels of neurodiversity, particularly amongst new recruits.
- Over half feel we communicate with them poorly and are not open and honest. Fewer than one in ten feel they get the information they need.

- Union involvement is high, and union consultation important.

With this understanding and our principles in mind, we'll develop our channels by:

- Introducing a single, weekly Brigade Briefing email update consolidating the multiple emails currently sent, and including a weekly Commissioner column
- Reducing Shout to four issues a year, with more in-depth and less time-sensitive articles and providing better co-ordination with other departmental newsletters
- Developing Hotwire as a service delivery point for staff, with better organised and up to date content, integrated as web content rather than including PDFs
- Increasing face to face communications for staff, by equipping managers to deliver briefings, providing resources and support and publicising opportunities for face to face engagement with senior staff
- Holding monthly Director-led online all staff briefings on a theme, with contributions from across the Brigade and reviewing other Brigade meetings so there is a clear cascade line through LFB
- Moderating Yammer as a social network and introducing community rules, utilising more functionality
- Introducing a new Staff Insight Group, and more regular pulse surveys and feedback routes

## **4.2 Communicating and engaging with stakeholders**

We have analysed our stakeholder audiences according to their levels of scrutiny and policy influence and propose that:

- We focus our attention on bespoke engagement plans for priority stakeholders who hold high influence and scrutiny: The Mayor of London, HMI and Home Office.
- We improve the way we co-ordinate and service stakeholders who scrutinise us, such as FREP, MPs and AMs and Public Inquiries.
- We use our influencing powers to shape the policy agenda of key stakeholders such as DLUHC, HSE, BSR and BSI.
- We'll develop our capacity to operate as a 'good partner' to organisations who could further our objectives, amplify our messages or provide sponsorship or support.

Stakeholder communication and engagement channels and activities will be improved:

- Fully map our stakeholders so that we have a comprehensive digest of their interests and our connection
- Increase the use of SMART, our relationship management system, so that the benefits are maximized.
- Seek out a wider range of partnerships with organisations who can amplify our messages and support our objectives, including through sponsorship and fundraising.

- Museum emphasis back to face-to-face activity and building partnerships to help deliver a new permanent home.
- FREP and other scrutiny committees are always supported by a press officer, and the outcomes are shared across the brigade.
- We'll integrate public affairs monitoring into our standard channels.
- Produce and distribute Key Issues Briefing for staff that engage directly with stakeholders.
- Produce and distribute a proactive update bulletin for more distant stakeholders.

### **4.3 Communicating and engaging with Londoners and London businesses**

London and London Businesses are understood through analysis of their level of engagement with us and their levels of risk. The analysis shows that:

- The highest risk are also the least engaged, and to reach these people we rely on our community engagement function to work with representative groups
- The highest volume of incidents affect the general public, who are unlikely to engage with us until an incident arises, and must therefore be carefully targeted with safety messaging, and provided with information and guidance that is easy to access in an emergency.

We'll adapt our channels to meet our audience needs by:

- Developing closer relationships with journalists, to optimize opportunities to share messaging and build trust.
- Growing our Twitter followership to provide incident updates and safety messaging.
- Growing our Facebook followership to promote safety posts accurately.
- Developing and growing Instagram as a channel for the 'friends of LFB'
- Using LinkedIn to develop our employer brand and celebrate professional success.
- Introducing Snapchat and Tiktok to promote safety messaging.
- Developing our YouTube channels as a repository of safety advice, shared and promoted in other channels.
- Developing the website as a platform for our local service delivery and business advice, with new transactional functionality.
- Maximising the potential of our 30k-strong email list.

### **4.4 Communities and their representatives**

The highest risk Londoners tend to be the least often heard, so we work closely with representative groups to reach them. We work with representative community groups, and this year we will:

- Offer a service approach within LFB, so that departments delivering change have easy access to community engagement support, and targeted engagement plans in support of each initiative.
- Hold a monthly community engagement forum, where we hear ideas, invite feedback and share plans at an early stage to allow for co-production wherever possible.

- Deliver a series of facilitated community conversations with specialist groups to access the seldom heard.
- Provide a regular newsletter for 277 subscribed community groups, informing them about the changes we make, linking back to their feedback and needs.
- Continue specific engagement with the Grenfell community to provide ongoing transparency and involvement, as well as accountability to them on the changes we make in response to the fire.
- Developing the social impact tool to assess change in terms of its community benefit.
- Supporting plans to position fire stations as a community resource.
- Delivery of the Community Engagement Strategy by July 2023, to launch the new Engagement service within Your LFB, provide the strategic framework for post-incident support and recovery and for the development of BRMPs.

## **5. Underpinning enablers**

We will improve the way that the Directorate is organised, operates and supports the rest of the Brigade:

- We will change the name to Communications and Engagement Directorate to better reflect our role.
- We will deliver targeted, integrated multi-audience campaign and delivery plans for each of the identified priorities.
- Other issues will be addressed by communicating messages through our channels according to our annual calendar of opportunities and in response to incidents.
- We will increase communications capability in both the directorate and across the organisation, through a focused development programme.
- We are restructuring the team so that we are organised around our main audience groups and introducing new ways of working that will support matrix working.
- We'll provide a single relationship manager to each LFB department and a mechanism to lodge communications support requests.
- We'll review and update the policies for which we are the owner.
- We'll review the Communications and Engagement risk log with this new strategic framework in mind.

## **6 Priority Campaigns for 2023/24**

6.1 We will develop proactive campaigns this year for the following priorities:

- Transformation
- Culture
- Safety
- Leadership
- Alternative Fuels
- HFSV

- Building safety (MMC, Single Staircases, Sprinklers)

6.2 Other issues will be addressed by communicating messages through our channels according to our annual calendar of opportunities and in response to incidents: Cold weather – Severe flooding – Storms – Water safety – Hot and dry weather – Smoking – Candles.

## **7. Measurement and evaluation**

We will measure our two objectives separately:

### **7.1 Trust**

We'll measure trust through:

- Our twice-yearly public opinion polling, assessing the extent to which the public trust London Fire Brigade to serve and protect London, have a positive opinion of London Fire Brigade and feel that we understand London's different communities.
- Our staff survey Your Voice, where we will assess the extent to which staff feel proud to work for LFB, feel that the leadership have a clear, motivating vision and experience change positively.

### **7.2 Serve and protect**

We will evaluate the extent to which our communications campaigns and activities are serving and protecting London through metrics attributed to specific campaigns. This will include the use of the new social impact tool, which will provide a monetary value to the behaviour change we achieve.

### **7.3 Next steps**

Once approved, the Communications and Engagement team will share their plans for change with the rest of the organisation, populate campaign plans for our priorities and translate the many activities within this strategy into a delivery plan, which will filter down into individual objectives for staff and form the basis of their performance reviews.