

Collaboration Annual Report 2025-26

Emergency services across the Thames Valley have a legal duty to consider opportunities to collaborate, and the Thames Valley collaboration group continues to coordinate joint activity between the three fire and rescue services, Thames Valley Police and the South Central Ambulance Service. I represent Royal Berkshire Fire Authority as the lead member within this forum.

Collaboration has long been part of how the emergency services in Thames Valley operate, with thousands of incidents every year requiring close partnership working, often in challenging situations.

Key achievements this year

Strengthening operational alignment

Officers across the three fire and rescue services continued to align policies and procedures to remove ambiguity and improve interoperability, supporting consistent service delivery for the public. The joint approach to reducing attendance at automatic fire alarms has delivered positive results, increasing capacity for training, prevention activity and emergency availability.

Delivering national recommendations

All three fire and rescue services have worked collectively to address recommendations from volume 2 of the Manchester Arena Inquiry. RBFRS led key elements of this work, delivering specialist officer training and introducing new equipment, including adoption of the national mass-casualty triage tool.

Further work improved fireground communications in response to the Grenfell fire, enhancing how information is shared during major incidents and supporting public safety.

Joint operational delivery

The shared Thames Valley fire investigation team, working with police forensic specialists, is now responding to complex incidents across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

Collaboration has also supported four high-profile state visits this year, with officers working in multi-agency teams to help ensure public safety during the visits of the Presidents of France, Germany, the United States and Nigeria.

Training and exercising

The training and exercising programme placed strong emphasis on joint activity. Officers invited partner agencies to 66 events held in Berkshire, and RBFRS participated in a further 12 exercises facilitated by partners. These exercises covered a wide range of scenarios, from large fires and water rescues to terror attacks, involving Category 1 and 2 responders and wider partner organisations including the Royal Household, Atomic Weapons Establishment, Lowland Rescue, the Forestry Commission, Network Rail and the Canals and Rivers Trust.

Estates, fleet and infrastructure

This year saw the successful procurement of eight new fire appliances as part of a Thames Valley collaborative project, alongside a five-year fleet working agreement with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service. The newly established Thames Valley estates delivery group is supporting shared premises initiatives, including co-location with Thames Valley Police in Reading.

Forward look

Work continues to align incident command support arrangements, improve response to tall buildings and develop a joint Thames Valley breathing apparatus manual, strengthening safety, resilience and interoperability across the three services.

Several procurement programmes will progress next year, including the replacement of ageing PPV fans, light portable pumps and firefighter personal protective equipment.

A significant programme is also under way to replace Thames Valley Fire Control Service technology. This includes renewing the inter-authority legal agreement and represents a major investment in the security and resilience of a key shared function.

Conclusion

Successful collaboration relies on strong relationships, joint commitment and effective governance. These principles continue to underpin our work across the Thames Valley, and I am confident that we will build on this year's progress to deliver further improvements for the public we serve.

Cllr Simon Werner

Collaboration Lead Member