

Post Manchester Arena Timeline

Since the Manchester Arena Attack in 2017, GMFRS has implemented a number of changes to its policies and procedures, ways of working with partner agencies, training and exercising, and our capability to respond to terrorist or mass casualty incidents. The timeline below highlights some of those changes and where they have been effective during major incidents.

2017 (post-arena attack)

MAY

- Changes to North West Fire Control (NWFC) action cards to ensure a GMFRS commander is automatically sent to the scene of an incident.
- Implementation of a tri-service multi-agency radio channel – tested three times a day between control rooms.
- Changes to National Interagency Liaison Officer (NILO) procedures to enable officers to coordinate a response remotely.

JUNE

- Dedicated line created to Greater Manchester Police's (GMP) Force Duty Officer (FDO) for blue light services.

JULY

- Manchester Arena multi-agency debriefs carried out – leading to changes within our procedures and training.
- Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, commissioned the Kerslake Review.

NOVEMBER

- Exercise Powerhouse – a multi-agency 'no-notice' exercise involving NWFC, GMFRS, GMP and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) to test the initial response of the emergency services to a major terrorist incident.
- Publication of new national Joint Operating Principles for terrorist attacks.

2018

MARCH

- Kerslake Review published with recommendations for GMFRS to improve the organisation's understanding of partner agencies' capabilities and procedures.
- Mayor of Greater Manchester announced a review of GMFRS known as 'Programme for Change'.

SEPTEMBER

- Exercise Knotweed took place – a multi-agency, mass casualty scenario to test the plans of organisations in response to emerging threats.
- Exercise Socrates 2 took place – a tabletop based exercise to test Greater Manchester's framework for mass casualty incidents and ensure lessons from the Arena attack had been learnt. The learning outcomes shaped multi-agency plans.

OCTOBER

- A series of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) commander training courses for emergency service partners began. The training was based on national JESIP training with elements developed by Greater Manchester blue light partners incorporating learnings from the Arena attack. Sessions saw all GMFRS officers – from Station Manager to the Chief Fire Officer – receive training between October 2018 and June 2021.

2019

JANUARY to MARCH

- A series of eight multi-agency exercises took place to test JESIP principles, which worked well and further improvements were identified to improve interoperability radio communications and co-locating.

JANUARY to OCTOBER

- Two multi-agency emergency crisis management courses took place to develop managers in working in Tactical and Strategic Coordinating Groups. The training was introduced to develop managers in crisis management and improve multi-agency working.

FEBRUARY

- All recommendations from the Kerslake Review were implemented within GMFRS.
- Frameless stretchers became available on all frontline fire appliances following the Kerslake recommendations.
- New Joint Operating Principles for terrorist attacks were published. Policies and action cards within NWFC were updated and training delivered to all operational staff.

MARCH

- Exercise Socrates 3 was held – a classroom-based exercise to test Greater Manchester’s framework for mass casualty incidents and ensure lessons from the Arena attack had been learnt. The outcomes further influenced multi-agency plans.

APRIL

- Exercise Largo was a multi-agency desktop exercise led by British Transport Police (BTP) to test Greater Manchester MTA response.

JUNE to DECEMBER

- Exercise Cascade was held – to test Greater Manchester’s cascade notification process and sharing of METHANE messages. This was completed three times and involved all category one and two responders.

OCTOBER

- A multi-agency incident took place where Operation Plato was declared by police, NWFC followed the revised Plato action cards and deployed GMFRS resources to the scene and to an agreed RVP as per the procedures.

DECEMBER

- GMFRS seconded a senior officer to the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum to enhance collaborative working. This partnership developed the Commissioning Group for Exercise and Training and multiagency training strategy supported by annual training plan.

2020

FEBRUARY

- GMFRS and our partners attended tactical and strategic emergency crisis management courses.

FEBRUARY to MARCH

- Exercise Lionheart 2 was held, involving a series of four multi-agency exercises at the Manchester Arndale to test the non-specialist and specialist response to an MTA incident. The training developed fire crews' knowledge of police firearms tactics and procedures in a mass casualty or MTA incident and also enhanced multi-agency working between commanders.

MARCH

- As an outcome of multi-agency exercises and the move of FDO into GMP force headquarters, the GMFRS duty NILO became co-located with the FDO at GMP HQ.

APRIL

- Blue light partners began testing a new secure messaging system to share information across services.

JUNE

- An Operation Plato exercise was delivered – a desktop-based MTA (firearms) scenario.

SEPTEMBER

- New Chief Fire Officer Dave Russel joined GMFRS and made improving leadership and culture his priority.

OCTOBER to DECEMBER

- JESIP commander training delivered to multi-agency partners

NOVEMBER

- Multi-agency MTA and Operation Plato classroom based training exercises took place relating to new procedures.

DECEMBER

- Updated national MTA Joint Operating Principles were published and changes included zoning.

- NWFC, NWAS and the North West fire and police services signed up to use a new radio channel that allows emergency services control rooms to directly share information about incidents.

2021

JANUARY to APRIL

- Multi-agency training was delivered to all specialist responders and NILOs in conjunction with GMP firearms and NWAS HART.

JANUARY to DECEMBER

- 10 JESIP commander training sessions were delivered to blue light partners throughout 2021.

MAY

- Exercise Connect was held – a no-notice mobilisation exercise involving MTA specialists mobilised by NWFC.

JUNE

- The Resilience Forum agreed to use the secure messaging system as another method of sharing information amongst wider partners to enhance cascade of information.

JUNE to JULY

- Four multiagency MTA and Operation Plato classroom-based exercises took place with blue light services.
- Exercise Halo was held – a multi-agency exercise relating to a major incident event at Manchester Arena.

SEPTEMBER

- Exercise Lone Wolf took place – a multiagency Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) tabletop exercise.

2022

JANUARY

- Second exercise Lone Wolf took place – a multiagency Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) tabletop exercise.

JANUARY to FEBRUARY

- Four multi-agency MTA and Operation Plato classroom-based exercises took place with blue light partners.

JANUARY to OCTOBER

- Eight JESIP commander training sessions were delivered to blue light partners throughout 2022.

MARCH

- Exercise Clayton was held – a multiagency response to an aircraft emergency at Manchester Airport.

APRIL

- During a GMFRS chemical incident – the incident commander used operational discretion to prevent further escalation of the incident.
- Introduction of GMFRS's new MTA concept. GMFRS have improved the capability and capacity to respond to a terrorist incident. All firefighters are trained and equipped to provide one of the best levels of capabilities in the UK.

APRIL 2022 to APRIL 2023

- Roll out of 3-day MTA training courses for all GMFRS operational personnel to support the introduction of the new MTA concept. Day three of the course involves multiagency practical learning. Once completed all frontline GMFRS staff will be trained and equipped to respond to MTA and mass casualty incidents.

MAY

- Start of next three-year JESIP training cycle for blue light commanders – this is national training with a bespoke Greater Manchester package.

SEPTEMBER

- Suspect package incident – GMP declared major incident relating to suspect packages. The collocation of blue light partners GMFRS demonstrated successful multiagency working in a complex situation.