

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	16 January 2023
Lead Officer	ACFO Stuart Millington
Contact Officer	ACFO Stuart Millington
Subject	Manchester Arena Inquiry



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide an overview of the contents and implications of the recently published Manchester Arena Inquiry - Volume 2 report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 In November 2022, the second volume of the Manchester Arena Public Inquiry was published.
- 3 Volume 2 focused upon the emergency response phase and made 149 recommendations, distributed across all of the emergency response services who attended on the night of the attack.
- 4 Many of these recommendations are applicable to the fire and rescue sector across the UK and the completion of a gap analysis to fully understand the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) position has already begun to be developed, with input from all relevant staff members and departments.
- 5 Progress against these recommendations will be managed and coordinated through the Organisational Learning Committee, which in turn reports to the Service Leadership Team.

RECOMMENDATION

- 6 That Members:
 - (i) Note the content of the report.

BACKGROUND

- 7 On 22 May 2017, a lone terrorist detonated an improvised explosive device in the foyer of the Manchester Arena, during the final encore performance of an Ariana Grande concert.
- 8 The explosion claimed twenty-two lives and severely injured more than one hundred others.

- 9 Since then there has been extensive scrutiny, not only with regards to the sequence of events that led to the attack, but also about the multi-agency emergency response.
- 10 Soon after the attack the Mayor of Manchester, Andy Burnham, commissioned Lord Kerlake to complete an 'Independent review into the preparedness for, and response to, the Manchester Arena attack'.
- 11 In March 2018 the review report that is now referred to as the Kerlake report was published. This review made 29 recommendations.
- 12 The Kerlake report criticised a significantly delayed Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) response as well as highlighting a number of areas in which poor communication had led to confusion and a lack of shared situational awareness between attending agencies.
- 13 In North Wales we examined our position against these recommendations and identified 13 specific activities that were to be implemented to improve our position in the event of a similar attack taking place in North Wales.
- 14 Progress against these actions has been, and continues to be, monitored.
- 15 On the 22 October 2019, the Home Secretary established a public inquiry to investigate the deaths of the victims of the 2017 Manchester Arena attack, with hearings beginning on 07 September 2020.
- 16 In June 2021, Volume 1 of the inquiry report was published. Volume 1 focused on the security for the Arena and made a number of recommendations, 9 of which were to be monitored and required reporting against. These 9 recommendations were not relevant to fire and rescue services (FRS).

INFORMATION

- 17 On the 03 November 2022, the second volume of the public inquiry was published and this document focuses on the Emergency Response phase.
- 18 Volume 2 consists of 916 pages and contains 149 recommendations, of which 21 are to be monitored. Of those 21, four were applicable to GMFRS directly and 13 were considered to be multi-agency recommendations. Any recommendations made for specific organisations in inquiries of this type have a read across the entire sector, and so can be considered relevant for attention here in North Wales.

- 19 There was significant confusion on the night of the attack and the communication breakdown between emergency services was at the heart of a series of problems that developed.
- 20 The review also called into question how the role of a National Interagency Liaison Officer (NILO) should be utilised in the future, as on the night of the attack a decision taken with the safety of crews in mind to not collocate at an identified rendezvous point, was the catalyst for a number of other problems that followed.
- 21 Clearly there are some areas of similarity with the Kerlake report and as more than five years have passed since the attack, the Service is well on its way to ensuring that these problems would not occur here; however, we must never be complacent as recent exercises in other parts of the country have identified that similar issues and confusion continue to be prevalent today.
- 22 In a similar way to how we examined Kerlake in 2018, we have already begun to complete the gap analysis against the 149 recommendations through our established governance committee structure.
- 23 The Organisational Learning Committee has commissioned the Operational Learning sub group to complete a gap analysis, and to produce an action plan for implementation of any changes to policy, training or equipment. This will ensure that our staff would be able to respond professionally and safely to any large-scale multi-agency incident in North Wales.
- 24 In addition to this, work has begun with partners through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure that collectively we are as prepared as we can be.
- 25 Also, work has commenced from a National Resilience perspective to ensure a consistent approach to terror attack response across Wales.
- 26 Both the work with the LRF and with National Resilience will result in an increase in boots on the ground and desktop multi agency exercises, and an increased profile for regular multi-agency training.
- 27 A progress report will be brought to a future Authority meeting.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Work to achieve any changes that are required after the completion of the gap analysis will assist in striving towards a more resilient Wales.
Budget	Any additional equipment that is required as the result of this work will be procured from within existing departmental budgets. Funding for stretchers to be placed on every front-line fire appliance in North Wales has been secured from Welsh Government and they will be received before the end of the 2022/23 financial year.
Legal	<p>The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is directly relevant to this work, in that the Authority must make provisions for rescuing and protecting people at other emergencies.</p> <p>The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 requires Category 1 responders, of which the Service is one, to effectively train for, and respond to, multi agency incidents.</p>
Staffing	There will be training implications for all operational staff.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	N/A
Risks	All operational learning and any recommendations regarding changes to operational policy, equipment or training are prioritised and implemented at the earliest possible occasion. Due to limited resources it can take varying periods of time for changes to be fully implemented. In the event of a similar event occurring in North Wales it will not be possible to fully mitigate all risk until all areas have been implemented and operationally assured.