



Responding to emergencies more effectively with technology-enabled collaboration

Case study

capita



We're helping neighbouring fire services to work together to quickly get the closest and most appropriate equipment to the scene of an emergency.

Local government finances are constantly under review, with all vital county-wide services being assessed. And with 999 control rooms costing millions of pounds a year to run, many fire and rescue services, especially rural and non-metropolitan ones, are finding it harder to fund crucial emergency response services by themselves.

These funding pressures are combining with government initiatives to share critical services, prompting many local authorities to merge their command and control operations. So, an increasing number of fire and rescue services are sharing their services – and the cost – to ensure that people caught up in emergencies get the help they need as quickly as possible.

Capita is helping fire and rescue services to pool their emergency response resources with our VisionDS solution, which combines high-performance command, control and communications with integrated mapping and an intuitive user interface. VisionDS has a central core that fire services can integrate extra modules and third-party applications with, making it fully interoperable with their existing systems.

2.1m

Combined population served

1,393 sq miles

Combined area

21,250 approx.

Combined incidents attended (2018 data)

50

Combined number of stations



The interface allows control room staff to keep track of all the fire and rescue service's resources, equipment and appliances while VisionDS's intelligent automation highlights which resources are available and makes it easier for them to deploy the best response to an emergency.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has been successfully using our VisionDS solution since 1993 and, early in 2019, invited West Sussex to join it as part of a government drive to foster more collaboration within the fire service. Teams from our Secure Solutions and IT Networks businesses worked with them and took less than six months to transfer all of West Sussex's operational data from its legacy command and control system onto Surrey's existing platform, using their decades of experience of moving and analysing data to deliver the project on time and to budget.

Surrey and West Sussex launched their joint emergency control room in December 2019.

We were able to carry out the project quickly because of Surrey's and West Sussex's determination and drive, and everyone's willingness to work together to achieve a common goal. This collaborative approach combined with our data expertise and understanding of our clients' business to create a joint emergency control room run on an established user-friendly system that offers greater value for money and improved operational benefits for each service. It's implemented within Surrey County Council's hosted data centre and complements national government initiatives to run services from a shared cloud-based platform.

“ Capita's team submitted a number of options papers to both fire services and worked extensively on the solution and how improvements could be delivered rapidly, without comprising the provision of mission-critical services. The fact that the joint solution was transitioned on time and without any loss of system integrity and availability was testament to the planning and professionalism of all parties.

**Alan Hall - Capita Business
Consultant for Fire Systems**

The initiative to bring West Sussex and Surrey together was partly driven by our workshops and whitepapers demonstrating VisionDS's capability and how readily it could be used to bring neighbouring services together.

“ Our mobilising control system is state of the art, tried and tested, and has the capacity to take a high volume of emergency calls.

We welcome new opportunities to collaborate with others for the benefit of all our residents. This arrangement will increase our resilience and is likely to result in efficiency savings.

**Steve Owen-Hughes, Surrey Fire and
Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer**

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The new 999 combined control room provides an efficient and effective emergency call handling service for West Sussex and this was at the forefront of our decision making.

**Sabrina Cohen-Hatton,
West Sussex Chief Fire Officer**

Now, thanks to the new combined control room, operators can send the nearest and most suitable appliance or piece of equipment to emergencies, regardless of where in West Sussex or Surrey they happen. The two fire services are no longer divided by the county line and their unified response to calls for help means that citizens benefit from a greater pool of resources available to deal with emergencies.

They've been able to improve service levels while saving money. The VisionDS system automatically directs appliances and officers to the scene of the emergency, reduces the amount of voice traffic over the radio, and tells operators whether appliances are available – reducing operators' workload and the possibility of human error.

This isn't the closing chapter in this story of collaboration, however. East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is due to join its Surrey and West Sussex colleagues in the joint emergency control room during 2021 – allowing even more people to benefit from a bigger, better managed pool of resources.





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