

Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme

Chronology of events - October 2022

- As a result of the end of contracts for the current Airwave communication system between 2016 - 2020, the Government has been developing an integrated communication system for the three Emergency Services in the United Kingdom. This programme is known as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and is Home Office (HO) led. The Fire and Rescue Sector is represented on the Programme through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).
- The existing radio communications system is known as Airwave and is provided by Motorola. This system was introduced to the Fire sector in 2009 and was due to be replaced in 2019. Whilst the voice provision by this service is excellent, this system is not able to provide broadband data services. It therefore will not be able to support future technology so needs replacing. The Airwave system is also expensive in comparison with other services. EU legislation required a re-competition for the provision of contracts.
- The programme to deliver the new system (known as the Emergency Services Network or ESN) has been established for some years now and is the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme or ESMCP. It will utilise the commercial mobile network operators using 4G LTE for the transmission of voice and data traffic between emergency service resources.
- Contracts awarded by the Programme (held by the Home Office and not individual services) are:
 - Lot 1: *Delivery Partner - Deloitte* to provide project/programme management for the delivery of the new network
 - Lot 2: *User Services – Motorola* to develop and provide the devices to connect to the network
 - Lot 3: *Mobile Services – EE* to build the private ESN mobile network which will sit on top of the EE commercial network. **Note** – Motorola also completed the acquisition of Airwave in 2016.
- Since 2015, the South Central team have been fully engaged with ESMCP, supporting, and providing the Programme with information, opinion, and challenge. The Programme was originally scheduled for completion in 2019 with the proposed ‘big bang’ approach known as ‘Plan A’ and which was supported by a Full Business Case (FBC) at ministerial level.
- In 2017, the Programme realised that the delivery timeline was over ambitious and there had been a significant under estimation of the work and complexities involved to deliver ESN. The Programme went into what was known as a ‘reset’ to re-evaluate the way the Programme was being delivered.
- The Programme estimated that the ‘reset’ would take 3 months. Unfortunately, the Programme did not come out of the ‘reset’ until early 2019 with what was known as ‘Plan B’.
- ‘Plan B’ took a more incremental approach to delivering the technology and provided an estimated timeline for completion by the end of 2022. This was supported by an interim FBC.
- Throughout this period, the South Central team engaged fully with the Programme by responding to any requests for information, engaging with all ESMCP workstreams and maintaining a robust internal governance structure.

- By early 2020, there was a realisation that the 'end of 2022' completion date was unachievable due to several ongoing challenges around the delivery of the Programme. The new Programme Director, John Black, decided to re-baseline the plan to provide user organisations with a more realistic and achievable timeline. A new and revised formal FBC was presented to user organisations during the autumn of 2020 which had two timeline options. The preferred option was to complete the Programme (Airwave switch off) by the end of 2026 with a contingency option which estimated completion by mid-2027. User organisations were asked to endorse the new FBC and to start preparing for delivery. User Organisations (UO) were promised an Integrated Programme Plan (IPP) on the back of the new FBC by mid-2021, which would have provided timelines for the deployment of each UO. This never materialised.
- The early part of 2021 presented more challenges for the Programme, as progress in delivering the technology was slow. This was further compounded, as in mid-2021, a challenge came into the Motorola by the Competitions and Market Authority regarding their association with Airwave and their performance in the delivery of ESMCP. The resultant outcome will not be known until the end of 2022, but the Programme has since announced that they will be moving away from the supplier and are preparing themselves for re-lotting process which will be a full procurement of Lot 2.
- Currently, the Programme is carrying out an impact assessment of the re-procurement and its knock-on effect. The Programme have confirmed that they are stepping down some teams working on the latter part of the delivery but will maintain the teams required to support the procurement process and maintain other critical parts of the Programme. Further detail on this has yet to be released by the Programme.
- The Programme plans for delivery will be shared in the coming months which will detail the activity that should continue (coverage, device developments etc) as they believe stopping them will only cause further delays. The date from when these plans will be made available has yet to be advised.
- The 'stop start' nature of the Programme has been difficult for the South Central ESMCP team to manage internally. The local Project Managers (PMs) workloads from ESMCP have increased at short notice and de-escalated as quickly, and much work from the Programme has been issued with very short turnaround times. In addition, updates to Service strategic teams tend to continually pass on information about delays and a negative environment has been building around the feel for the Programme for some time.
- The delays within the Programme have meant that more immediate projects within Services have been given priority and the PMs have needed to balance this with their interactions on ESMCP.
- The Fire Sector regions are assessing how to react to the delay, with the strategic short-term focus from the NFCC trying to ensure Services stay engaged with the Programme.

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