

News story: New strategic direction for the Emergency Services Network (ESN)

The emergency services will begin benefiting from their new mobile-based communications network in the New Year following the Home Office's decision to roll the project out in phases.

The department today announces it has set a new strategic direction for the Emergency Services Network (ESN) following an in-depth review.

The decision secures the future of ESN, which will save the public purse £200 million a year once it has fully replaced the original radio-based network, Airwave.

The new incremental approach means police, fire and rescue services, ambulance services and other users will be able to use data services over the network from early next year, with voice capabilities following soon after.

It will also leave the emergency services free to test and choose which ESN products they want as and when they become available, rather than having to wait for the network to be fully implemented.

The dedicated 4G network will transform emergency services' mobile working, especially in remote areas and at times of network congestion, with sim cards giving them priority over commercial users.

Products will include a 'push-to-talk' capability for mobile phones, effectively turning them into emergency service radios with data capability, a package of telephone, messaging and data services, and an air to ground communications app.

ESN also has the potential to enable emergency services to communicate on the London Underground.

The Home Office is engaging with its commercial partners, EE and Motorola, regarding future changes to their contracts.

Further details will be provided to Parliament in due course.