

Beyond fighting fires 2

Fire and rescue service transformation



Foreword

The fire and rescue sector is transforming the way that it delivers services. The Local Government Association's (LGA) publication '**Beyond fighting fires**' (April 2015) showcased some of the ways in which the fire and rescue service was working to improve the public's health and wellbeing. But transformation is going further than this.

The case studies contained within this new edition outline the huge variety of collaborative projects that are happening across the sector. From working in partnership with clinical commissioning groups, to setting up a limited liability partnership with the Police, these activities showcase the sector's ability to lead the way on collaboration in order to improve services for local people and deliver a more efficient and cost effective service.

Collaboration and transformation are at the heart of the fire and rescue service. It is clear that fire and rescue authorities, as the legally responsible bodies for delivering the fire service, have a key role in developing and driving these changes. Councillors, working in and with their local communities, are well placed to help develop new partnerships and improve joint working with a wide variety of partners, from the other emergency services to council public health and social care teams.



Councillor Jeremy Hilton

Chair, LGA Fire Services Management Committee

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

Ground-breaking data analysis is enabling Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) to pinpoint precisely which residents are most at risk of fire and falls and in need of intervention.

The visits by firefighters go well beyond the traditional home safety assessment model and are making a vast difference to the quality of life of many elderly residents.

Under the Springboard initiative – a partnership with local authorities, health services and Age UK – as well as giving potentially life-saving advice, fire service staff are also able to refer households to other agencies and arrange vital support.

In one moving comment, a resident said the visit and subsequent support “made me feel I wasn’t worthless any longer”.

In previous years, a broad brush approach was taken by the fire service to home visits. It looked at the number of fires over a five year period, divided it by the number of dwellings in each ward and then put those wards into a high, medium or low risk group. The data would be given to crews who would decide where they went.

As a result, certain groups had higher levels of uptake and some leafy suburbs, that were actually low risk, had high completion rates.

Philip Usher, the CFRS Business Intelligence Manager, explains: “We were taking a very geographical approach to risk. But actually risk is not like that. There may be fewer fires in the low risk wards but that doesn’t mean that high risk people did not live there and vice versa. We did not want the more vulnerable to fall through the net.”

Thanks to a data sharing agreement with the NHS, the service now has access to GP registration Exeter data, giving the gender, age and address of some 211,000 residents aged 65 or over. This is overlaid with information about whether someone lives

alone, mortality rates, geo-demographic risk factors – such as whether they live in social housing – and fire service response times.

It means the most at risk can be targeted very precisely. For instance, the Tattenhall area of the county – a generally low risk area and some distance from a fire station – was less likely to have been visited under the old system. When the new methodology was applied, pockets of high risk emerged. Out of the 400 over 65s, there were five males in their 90s, who lived alone in high risk demographic groups, in an area of high response times – which put them in the top one per cent in terms of risk.

Under the Springboard initiative, during home visits firefighters assess the needs of elderly people and are able to refer the more vulnerable on to health, social services and other support teams.

The fire service is on track to carry out 25,000 Safe and Well visits this year and 40,000 next year. Half of the referrals to the Supporting You service in Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council now come from CFRS.

After consultations with colleagues in health, from May the visits will also focus on smoking cessation and alcohol reduction, reducing hypertension and blood pressure and informing residents about bowel cancer screening. The fire service aims to make 40,000 visits in the coming year.

CFRS’s pioneering approach has now been extended across the country. Since October, Exeter data has been shared with every fire and rescue service in England, allowing each to take its own approach to targeting.

Councillor John Joyce, Chair of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority, said; “This work highlights Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service’s commitment to making people safer through the use of innovative data sharing and risk analysis.

“We want to keep updating and improving our approach and this year we will be extending our services to promote safety and wellbeing among those we visit, which includes related risks, such as slips, trips and falls and bowel screening.”

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service

In a typical week, Andy Hitchens could be one of the crew attending a house fire or car crash, dealing with troublesome neighbours or giving vital lifesaving attention to someone suffering a heart attack.

Andy is Cornwall’s first tri-service community safety officer, working out of a new station in Hayle, occupied by fire, police and ambulance services.

He has been seconded from the fire service to take on the new role for a two-year pilot, paid for by government transformation funding. To prepare Andy for the role, in addition to the skills he has as an on-call firefighter, he has completed police basic driver training, ambulance co-responders training, supported through shadowing a paramedic over eight shifts and a nine-week community neighbourhood policing residential course. He has also received training in identifying child sexual exploitation, the Prevent anti-terrorism agenda, dealing with anti-social behaviour and vulnerability screening.

On a day-to-day basis Andy’s role is focussed on reducing community risk through activities that help people live safe and well. He is involved in youth engagement and local policing, home and business safety visits and gathering information on community risk. In support of the ambulance service, he can be mobilised to medical emergencies as a first responder. At the same time, he is one of 12 retained firefighters who can be called on to form part of a five person crew in fire and rescue call-outs.

Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Paul Walker, of Cornwall Fire, Rescue and Community Safety Service, said: “The view of senior police officers and myself is that it creates a face of community safety. It’s a great role and we are looking to expand it to other rural communities in Cornwall.

“As is the case across the country, incidents of fire have reduced. The fire service has developed a prevention role and this is taking it a step further. Although Andy does not have powers of arrest this has not proven to be an issue – much of what the Police deal with can be classed as social welfare rather than crime. That is where Andy’s role is important, particularly in a smaller rural community.”

Cornwall’s tri-service officer project, which has now been picked up by Durham and Darlington Fire And Rescue Service, is a forerunner of the closer working relationship that is likely to develop between fire and police as the fire and rescue service moves from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the Home Office.

CFO Walker is in discussion with colleagues to look at how the tri-service can be funded when the pilot ends. He said that a split of the salary would make financial sense for all three services and from a fire service view, could also assist in resolving the problems of recruiting retained firefighters in rural areas.

The tri-service officer role builds on work that the fire service has undertaken in the area of health and social care.

Working with South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust, five co-responder units, trained in basic life support, the use of external defibrillators and oxygen therapy, have been long established in the county and a sixth is about to come on stream.

Providing medical care in advance of an ambulance attendance has been particularly important in isolated parts of the county. Over the past three years firefighter co-responders have made a total of 1,848 lifesaving interventions.

One family is particularly grateful for the speedy intervention the fire service can provide.

When a Mullion resident suffered a heart attack in November 2015, co-responders from Cornwall fire and rescue service delivered CPR until paramedics got there.

The family said: “Barry had the very best chance possible from these wonderful people and I am glad to say he is making a good recovery...how lucky we are to have the support of the Mullion fire crew who respond so quickly and professionally when needed for medical emergencies”.

Councillor Geoff Brown, Cabinet Member for communities, said:

“Cornwall has embraced the concept of closer interoperability between the emergency services and is leading nationally on a number of initiatives. As a fully integrated service of Cornwall Council unitary authority, our fire fighters do so much more than fire and rescue. They play a key role in the health and wellbeing of the community which reduces the pressures on the NHS.”

Cumbria County Council Fire and Rescue Service

Plans are in place for the County of Cumbria to receive its first blue light tri-service building. The new Furness Peninsula Blue Light Hub will accommodate not only the fire and rescue service, police and ambulance, but also other Cumbria County Council departments.

The new building, which received more than £4.6 million from the government fire transformation fund, will be a “one-stop-shop” for the local community. It will enable the various services, departments and third sector volunteers to increase their interoperability and collaborative working to provide an effective, efficient and resilient service to the public.

The Hub will also provide a shared training facility for joint learning and development, allowing each service to develop a greater understanding of other services’ roles, responsibilities and capabilities, as well as joint exercises to improve operational efficiency at emergency incidents.

John Wall, Cumbria County Council Fire and Rescue Service Operational Commander for Barrow & South Lakes, said: “The new training facility will provide a platform for collaborative learning and development. Due to the nature of our environment we will not only be training with other blue light services but also with our colleagues from the volunteer rescue sector for incidents such as flooding, wildfire, sand rescues and animal rescues.”

During the flooding in Cumbria in December, firefighters from the area responded to an emergency call from North West Fire Control that proved to be particularly critical.

In the Levens Valley area of South Cumbria where the River Kent had broken its banks, a young woman was trapped in her car by the volume of water. Stuck in a flooded ditch, the woman was up to her neck in water with her face pressed against the rear windscreen of the near-submerged car. With minutes to

spare, two firefighters waded to her, smashed the rear windscreen and pulled her to the safety.

“The firefighters showed great professionalism and bravery to rescue the lady that day,” said Operational Commander Wall. “By collaborative training, the critical lessons and experience learnt from such an incident can be shared with other services, to ensure the safety of both the public and colleagues when dealing with such emergencies.”

Regular day-to-day collaboration will enable services to share their knowledge, intelligence and resources to both identify and reduce the risk to the most vulnerable in the community along with effective targeted prevention interventions. The enhanced community facilities will also support community youth activities such as the young firefighter scheme. Operational Commander Wall said:

“There will be opportunities in the future for joint community safety initiatives, where personnel working within the Hub will be able to identify and deliver on various issues such as domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and anti-social behaviour. As a fire and rescue service we can use our prevention experience to emphasise fire safety awareness to the public as well as staff from other departments.”

Operational Commander Wall said the future direction of travel was to work in partnership with the North West Ambulance Service to provide a joint response to medical emergencies.

Cumbria County Council Cabinet Member, Councillor Barry Doughty said “The Blue Light Hub will provide for more effective and efficient operations across the whole Furness peninsula. Cumbria has a first rate fire and rescue service that is valued by its local communities and we welcome this investment in our local front line services.”

The Hub offers the opportunity for increased efficiency savings arising from removal of the duplication of property costs and savings through shared utilities. Other efficiencies may include the sale or re-use of existing sites and properties.

Building work will start on the Hub in March 2016 and it will be open by the end of the year.

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) and the Derbyshire Police have formed a limited liability partnership (LLP) which could be used as a blueprint for similar arrangements in other parts of the country.

The LLP is the financial and legal foundation for a new joint fire and police headquarters, which will replace out-dated, increasingly expensive old buildings.

Both the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable are keen to ensure that not only will the new headquarters cut costs, it will also herald a new era of cooperation between the two organisations, whilst maintaining distinct service delivery arms.

According to Richard Brunt, (DFRS) Area Manager, there was a “very rational business case” behind the LLP model.

It allowed the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and fire and rescue authority (DFRA) to protect their interests and investments in a scenario where the Police were putting in a bigger share of the money.

DFRA has contributed 34 per cent of the capital stake based on its occupation level of the new building. However fire and police have a 50/50 vote on any decisions concerning the headquarters. The LLP gives each partner registered title to the land and buildings, maintains individual brand identity, and is tax efficient and transparent.

“In an investment sense without the LLP we would be more of a tenant than a partner,” said Brunt.

“The LLP gives us credibility and influence in decision making.”

“From the outset, it has been important to develop and maintain cross-party political support”, said Joy Smith, service lead for the project and Deputy Chief Executive for DFRS. She also recommends jointly sourcing specialist tax and legal advisors.

“Taking time to understand the police perspective was important,” she said, “as was exploring widely potential business opportunities early on to ensure that the LLP is strategic enough to reflect the long term intentions of both parties”.

The other piece of advice to colleagues in other parts of the country who are considering a legal partnership is to put the time and effort in early on to get the vision and governance right. The LLP legal agreement and the key operating principles that were forged between the two partners have been the key reference point through which differences have been resolved.

“One challenge that should not be underestimated is the effort needed to engage employees in the plan.”

The LLP is responsible for awarding all contracts associated with joint police/fire asset development, and maintenance. It can employ staff if required (though it doesn't do this currently). Smith suggested that such arrangements could provide an alternative to fire and rescue authorities being abolished and fire and rescue services moving under the control of PCCs. It allows both organisations to meet their duties to collaborate, share facilities and services without having to merge as one.

The LLP business plan is estimated to provide efficiencies of approximately £1.5 million a year but it should not be seen as a quick fix to balancing budgets, more a long term plan towards a sustainable future.

The new three storey building, will house 150 fire and 350 police support staff. From the outset, both organisations agreed that rather than have an “east wing and a west wing”, all corresponding police and fire teams would be co-located.

Work is ongoing to bring IT systems together and overcome problems caused by the more stringent national IT security requirements of the Police.

“If there is a major push for public sector organisations to deliver integration of IT, it should be at the forefront before organisations are put together,” said Smith. “If there was a single approach to remove barriers it would be significantly more economical than numerous work rounds undertaken by different services.”

A joint training centre and firing range is a recent addition to the LLP plan. The facilities will allow firefighters and police officers to finesse their emergency response to crisis incidents in line with Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) requirements.

Councillor Steve Marshall Clarke, Chair of Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority, said: “These two key projects provide opportunities for both organisations to work more closely together and make further efficiencies to close their long term funding gap, whilst maintaining individual brand identity”.

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service

The tragedy of 13 separate fire deaths in one year has led to a transformation in how Dorset firefighters work with partner agencies to enable residents to live safely in their own homes.

In 2008, house fire death figures in the county hit double fires – a huge spike compared to the one or two fatalities that can be expected in an average year.

Investigations by Dorset Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) found that half of the fires were caused by smoking materials and the other half by electrical factors. What also became clear was that the majority, if not all, of the people who died (average age 68) were known to one public sector service or another. The problem was that the fire service and its partner agencies had no effective way of sharing information about their most vulnerable clients.

DFRS set up a high level multi-agency seminar to persuade its partners that it was vital to collaborate in order to help identify and influence those most at risk.

The agreement that emerged has led to the Safe and Independent Living (SAIL) initiative. Agencies across Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset, including the Police, NHS, welfare and councils, now use a common risk assessment sheet when they visit a client's home. The agency will do its own risk assessment but also include risk issues which fall under the remit of other partners. For instance, the A4 referral form might include concerns about security locks, smoke alarms, benefits, issues with heating and insulation or accessing food and nutrition.

Residents identify which services, support or information they would like to access and sign the referral form to agree to have their details passed on. A calling card is left with the client so that they have details of the SAIL initiative.

Age UK has been commissioned as a clearing house to forward the forms to the relevant agencies, a process which is just about to be made electronic. More than 600 referrals have been made to DFRS through SAIL and firefighters have referred nearly 1,000 residents to other agencies.

One elderly resident who was helped by SAIL said it had “unleashed an army of people” to see her.

Initially concentrating on the over 50s, the scheme is now being widened to include vulnerable families with young children.

Darran Gunter, DFRS Chief Fire Officer, said: “In the past, firefighters on a home fire safety visit might have noticed some other issue but come away feeling powerless. They may have put in all the fire prevention measures but might think ‘this person’s wiring is shot, what can I do?’ We now have a way that they can redirect that anxiety and have it acted on.”

DFRS employs home safety advisors, who are not operational firefighters, and it has trained 100 volunteers to carry out additional visits. Operational firefighters also do checks, fitting them around their core commitments.

To ensure SAIL is as effective as possible, Bournemouth University Dementia Institute has trained DFRS personnel who will carry out cascade training to 550 frontline staff. The fire service is also researching how to map fire risks and prevention strategies for people affected by dementia and develop best practice guidance.

Councillor Rebecca Knox, Chairman of the Dorset Fire and Rescue Authority and Dorset County Council’s Cabinet Member for health and wellbeing, communities and public health, said the SAIL programme had proved so successful it was being taken up in other areas.

“Vulnerable residents who were being rescued by the fire service were often known to other services, such as social services, health and GPs. What had been missing was the opportunity to share information about who each service recognised as in need of help, she said.

“DFRS initiated SAIL which prompted the sharing of data and the referral of individuals to services they might require but had not been known to them. It’s a multi-agency partnership with everyone working towards the goal of keeping people safe in their homes.”

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

The reputation of the fire and rescue service in the public psyche means firefighters can often gain access to households where other services are turned away.

This trusted status is enabling Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) to play a vital role in a Public Health England (PHE) pilot, aimed at reducing the winter pressure on NHS and local council services.

Before starting the pilot, GFRS had already started to focus its prevention activities on the most vulnerable groups and to look at making it more wide ranging.

John Beard, GFRS Head of Community Safety, said: “Rather than just carry out traditional home fire safety checks, we started working more closely with colleagues in safeguarding teams and adult social care, exploring how the interactions our staff were having could deliver benefits across a much wider section of the public sector”.

The approach from PHE gave this work added impetus. Since October 2015 firefighters have been delivering Safe and Well checks, aimed primarily at the age 65 and over.

As well as routine fire safety, firefighters are talking to householders about everything from keeping warm to flu jabs.

“We’ll be discussing cold homes and issuing residents with room thermometers. We’ll talk about the flu jab and refer them if they have not already been contacted by their GP. We talk to them about social isolation, which is a big issue,” said Beard. “On top of that we also carry out a simple mobility test, seeing how quickly they can get out of a chair and move across the room. Then we can refer them to a range of agencies to ensure they get the support needed to reduce the risk of them falling.”

The fire service is also conducting an increasing number of coordinated visits with partners from other agencies, such as social workers, adult care staff, Age UK and teams of specialist practitioners.

John Beard said “We are making the most of our time when we are invited into people’s homes. If we can take the opportunity to pass on messages and advice from partners we will do so. We go further though as we are actively signposting those in need to the services most able to provide the early intervention”.

These early interventions are having a significant impact in reducing the demand on services that are already under immense pressure.

“In particular we are proving successful at reducing demand on the NHS from accident and emergency and hospital admissions,” said Beard. “Improving the health and wellbeing of communities is much wider than healthcare, it’s about behavioural patterns, social circumstances and environmental exposure. Our firefighters explore all of these.

“Other agencies find our approach very refreshing and we have done a lot of work making a compelling case to partner agencies about what we are capable of doing.”

The small rural fire service will carry out 2,000 Safe and Well visits by March 2016, a huge increase in the volume of work compared to two years ago

Most of the visits are made by operational staff from the service’s five whole-time stations. A team from the 20 retained stations has also been set up to carry out the enhanced checks.

An emphasis on flexibility and professional judgement has ensured that the new demands dovetail well with the fire service’s core emergency work.

The visits do incur additional costs and the fire service is receiving some funding from PHE in the short term.

Beard said the approach was sustainable in the long term because of its effect in reducing demand for emergency responses.

Councillor Andrew Gravells, Gloucestershire’s Cabinet Member for public health, added: “Our Gloucestershire firefighters make a huge contribution to the safety and wellbeing of people in the county. We want to continue to make sure we’re helping as many people to stay as independent and safe as possible in their own homes. This new initiative will help them to do that. By avoiding things like hospital admissions for falls or the flu, we’re helping to free up hospital beds for emergencies which helps everyone.”

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service

Firefighters in Humberside are providing the first response to reports of falls in the home in a pilot that is helping to reinvent the role of the fire service.

Every year, several thousand call-outs to deal with falls are received by the emergency services in the area. Official figures show that, last year 1,016 people aged 65 or over were admitted to hospital in Hull with injuries due to falls.

The frequency of this kind of incident makes significant demands on the time and resources of the ambulance service.

Now a partnership between the clinical commissioning group (CCG), Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS), means that whole-time firefighters in a dedicated vehicle are often the first port of call when reports of falls are triaged.

The six month trial, which began in September 2015, has already had a major impact, freeing up capacity for YAS to deal with more serious call-outs, providing a quicker service to those that have fallen and putting in place prevention measures to minimise the chances of reoccurrence.

Dene Sanders, Humberside's Chief Fire Officer (CFO), explains: "Before we set up the team, people who had taken a tumble at home were being routinely shipped off to Accident and Emergency departments, often blocking up a bed when they generally didn't need to be there and then struggling to get out again because social care packages might not be in place in time.

"What we realised quite quickly with this pilot is that often what the faller needed was somebody to go and check them over, see that they were not seriously injured, literally stand them back up and give them a cup of tea."

Ambulance services are brought on if necessary but the use of technology is being explored that would give firefighters on-scene access to clinical advice via a video link.

Firefighters are not only providing a medical response, they can also implement preventative measures and equipment fitting at the same time.

"If the individual can suggest a reason, or we can readily identify why they have fallen over and we can fix it, we do it at source," said CFO Sanders.

"We have gear on the vehicle so that we can fix a loose stair carpet or put in a hand rail, for instance. It gets sorted there and then."

HFRS is now dealing with a significant volume of calls – 530 to 550 a month – which is approaching two thirds of the emergency fire and rescue calls that the service receives in the same period.

Firefighters involved in the trial are not required to perform their normal duties so fire cover for Hull is unaffected by the initiative. If the trial proves successful and the service is subsequently commissioned by the CCG, a more permanent staffing model would be agreed with the potential to enhance the role and service still further. Early indications are that there would be no shortage of applicants from the firefighter cadre to carry out the new role. It would also provide an opportunity for firefighters to rotate in and out of this specialist area enhancing their skills.

Councillor Helena Spencer, Portfolio Holder for public health and adult services at Hull City Council, said: "This ground breaking scheme means that people can be helped quickly, and can remain in their own environment. A win-win, not just for the individual and their family, but also for the public purse.

“The public sector, working together, is a force to be reckoned with. We can be innovative and challenge stereotypes. Humberside Fire and Rescue have proved that through this one scheme alone and we are proud to be working with them.”

HFRS is exploring other ways of widening its remit, against a backdrop of falling demand which has seen a 50 per cent decrease in fire calls over the last decade.

Consideration is being given to HFRS Control Room delivering out of hours Telecare services, using firefighters to deliver fitness packages for the public, and giving support to end-of-life care where a package includes physically moving the person to a better location within their own home.

One major development will see a new fire station co-located in an Integrated Care Centre in the east of the city. The centre will be a ‘half-way house’ between hospital and returning to independent living.

“What I want is staff in the fire station to be completely integrated with what health teams are trying to achieve in the rest of the building,” said CFO Sanders. “For instance, a patient in post-operative recuperation that may be doing 20 minutes on a treadmill could easily be supervised by a firefighter.”

CFO Sanders envisages “a new breed of firefighter” that has a much wider social health and wellbeing remit to their job.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

When a report of a vulnerable missing person came through to police in Liverpool recently, they turned to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) to help them in their search.

Fears for the safety of the resident, who lived near Garston Dock, were heightened because of the close proximity of the River Mersey and other potential hazards in the area.

With their expertise in search and rescue, firefighters were able to access difficult areas where the Police would have struggled. Fire service dogs, trained in finding people in collapsed structures and confined spaces, proved invaluable.

The operation was run from Merseyside Fire and Rescue and Merseyside Police joint command and control centre.

In an arrangement that many fire and police services across the country are moving towards, the operational, planning and policy teams of the two blue light services are located together and joined-up.

Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Dan Stephens said: “The police force centre manager and fire mobilising officer are effectively next to each other. Our urban search and rescue team is trained across a broad spectrum of areas and assist the police in things like gaining entry, safe work at height and confined space work – areas that it is problematic for police to maintain skills in. For us, that’s what we do. That knowledge of each other’s capabilities is invaluable.”

In another example of that co-operation, MFRS has helped police gain access to cannabis farms, using techniques similar to those used to extract people from collapsed buildings and vehicles to tackle doors fortified by drug dealers.

MFRS also has joint arrangements with the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS). The NWAS Liverpool hazardous area response team is co-located with the fire service urban

safe and rescue team. Crews attend the same incidents, train together and eat together, providing a “seamless first class service”.

Integration with other blue light services is now going further. MFRS is building a new community fire station which will also be a police station. The facility will be fully integrated, with shared communal spaces, gym and youth engagement facilities.

It will bring significant savings by eliminating the cost of maintaining old fire stations, cutting capital costs and halving overheads.

The new build is one of three such arrangements, where pairs of older fire stations will be replaced with a brand new facility roughly equidistant from the obsolete ones. MFRS was awarded £1.5 million from the Government’s transformation and efficiency fund for each station.

The plans minimise the impact on the public of budget cuts which have led to the loss of 100 firefighters and a reduction in the number of fire appliances from 42 to 28.

CFO Dan Stephens said: “Minimising the effect on response times was critical. The new buildings will be staffed with one whole time fire engine that will be the first response engine, maintaining that essential level of cover”.

A second fire engine at each station will be crewed by ‘whole time retained’ staff – firefighters from across Merseyside who can be called in when off-duty – on a 30 minute call out basis.

“This extended response time gives us a strategic reserve when the overall supply of fire engines falls below a certain point,” said CFO Stephens. “It also ensures we have highly trained staff so we don’t have to worry about recruiting and retaining and retraining other people.”

Setting up shop in the same building as Merseyside police is just the start of greater integration: “We are moving towards what, in essence, would be a shared support services function, such as shared estate and ICT. We are currently taking that through to a final business case,” said CFO Stephens.

Councillor Dave Hanratty, Chair of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, said the authority encouraged closer cooperation with police and ambulance services wherever possible.

“If we can share facilities, it offers a greater amount of protection of those facilities and working together means offering a better service to the public,” he said.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Firefighters are delivering life-saving treatment at certain Red One emergencies in a collaboration which is transforming the way services are delivered to residents in Surrey and Sussex. A combination of factors has set the scene for increased cooperation between blue light partners, including rising demand for police and ambulance services, fewer fires but the need to maintain essential fire service cover for a wide range and scale of incidents, and tighter budgets for all the blue light services.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, Surrey Police, Sussex Police and South East Coast Ambulance are the main partners, while Surrey and Borders Partnership Mental Health Foundation Trust is a key stakeholder, along with the county councils.

The partners are working together in a range of areas.

More than 330 Surrey fire service staff have been trained to attend medical emergencies as a first response if they are the closest resources but always backed up by an ambulance.

Since the trial was established in September there have been more than 300 requests to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service for mobilisation to cases such as cardiac arrests, choking and loss of consciousness. Analysis shows that firefighters are often getting there within minutes, potentially saving lives and improving the chances of recovery.

The pilot is just one initiative to emerge from the collaboration programme.

Linda Wood, Programme Manager, said: "Imminent legislation will put increased duties on emergency services to collaborate so this partnership is ahead of the curve."

With the award of government innovation funding, the services were able to look at some of the gaps and overlaps in their work.

One ambition, for some of the partners, (Surrey and Sussex Police together with Surrey Fire and Rescue) is to establish joint contact, control and dispatch arrangements to handle 999 calls through to mobilising resources.

"We have a range of initiatives in place designed to bring arrangements closer through technology and considering bringing staff who handle calls together. If they are located in one place that could bring further opportunities, including making joint decisions about the resources needed to attend incidents based on shared intelligence", said Wood.

In a first step towards this shared vision, a number of the partners are looking to join up the various IT systems and platforms that are in use, procuring an information exchange mechanism that has so far connected some of the partners.

Transport is another area where savings and efficiencies can be made. The partnership is looking at where it can reduce the number of workshops across the various services, for instance, or getting a better deal on contracts for fuel, breakdowns, major repairs and vehicle hire.

"We are looking at what we can standardise and what we can't," said Wood. "It's a simple example but the fire appliances of the three fire and rescue services all have a slightly different specification to meet local geographical needs but there may be opportunities to standardise a number of the main attributes over time. A very simple example might be the make and type of ladder used, rather than each service dealing with potentially different suppliers."

“In the longer term, subject to there being a sound business case to deliver changes, and funding to support it, this collaboration will improve the service to the public whilst reducing costs and increasing resilience. It should mean less overlap in service provision and an increased ability to align resources and to meet demand.”

Councillor Kay Hammond, Chair of the Emergency Services Collaboration Programme governance steering group, and Cabinet Associate for Community Safety Services said: “Governance between six culturally different organisations is difficult but the benefits that will come from such innovative collaboration will be of huge benefit to local residents and communities as a whole. After nine months we have already seen benefits to our residents and there is a promise of much more to come”.



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