

Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee
15 July 2013

Report by the
Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive

MEDICAL RESPONSE: TRIALS POCKLINGTON AND GRIMSBY

REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper updates Members on the progress made so far during the medical response trials taking place at Pocklington and Grimsby.

Participating staff have been trained and provided with a response vehicle. Both schemes have been in place since April 2013 and both have been deployed to medical emergencies. Feedback from participating staff has been positive.

Recent discussions with Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) concluded with agreement to form a working group to identify further opportunities for collaboration. Firefighters in Scunthorpe have expressed interest in crewing a medical response car therefore research is underway to see if that is feasible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members consider this report and endorse further discussions with Yorkshire Ambulance Service and LIVES with a view to exploring further collaborative opportunities.

REPORT DETAIL

2. The past decade has seen the number of emergency calls received by Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) fall by approximately 45%. This has been caused by a combination of direct intervention by Community Safety staff, effective partnership working, changing perception of risks and different attitudes within society. In 2012 HFRS attended less than 10,000 calls for the first time in its history.
3. All fire stations have seen a general reduction in calls though some of the quietest stations have occasional increases due to local issues such as flooding. Whilst firefighters make good use of their time in essential activities such as training, gathering risk information and community safety it is widely acknowledged by staff that they have capacity to do additional emergency work.
4. All HFRS firefighters are well trained in Immediate Emergency Care which enables them to treat patients who have suffered trauma or severe medical emergencies. They do not, however, have many opportunities to practice vital skills due to the generally low level of calls.
5. Two years ago a proposal was put forward by an operational fire officer at Grimsby to provide a medical response vehicle on a voluntary basis crewed by off-duty firefighters.
6. His sustained effort has been rewarded by an agreement between HFRS and LIVES to provide an emergency medical response in the Grimsby area. The vehicle went on the run in the third week in April 2013. Since then it has been mobilised to more than 120 medical emergencies ranging from cardiac arrest to slips and falls.
7. The volunteers are finding the work highly rewarding in that they are providing valuable assistance to people in distress whilst honing their enhanced medical skills.
8. One week later a medical response vehicle, this time in partnership with Yorkshire Ambulance Service, went on the run in Pocklington. This vehicle is crewed by RDS firefighters from Pocklington Fire Station who are mobilised by YAS in a similar way to our own fire engines. The vehicle is available throughout the evening and night and at weekends to ensure that the fire engines remain fully crewed.
9. So far it has attended nine incidents which is less than anticipated. This is partly due to the limited three mile turn-out radius which has just been increased to five miles. Again the crews are finding the work rewarding but would like to be mobilised more often.
10. These trials are due to be completed at the end of September 2013 and it is important to fully evaluate their effectiveness. So far at this mid-point in the trials it is clear that the crews have the necessary skills to safely operate a medical response. Fears that the Service might be overwhelmed with medical calls have so far proved unfounded. At this early stage it appears that HFRS can make a meaningful contribution to community safety by attending medical emergencies.
11. In anticipation of a successful conclusion to the trials a meeting was arranged between the YAS Chief Executive and the Chief Fire Officer supported by the appropriate Directors.

12. It was agreed that there is further potential to provide an emergency medical response in the East Riding of Yorkshire particularly in the areas around Goole, Patrington and Driffield. There may also be an opportunity to share premises at Brough and Preston. It was further agreed that a working group of HFRS and YAS officers be formed to establish the potential for further collaboration.
13. The North East Lincolnshire LIVES Response scheme has stimulated a great deal of interest amongst firefighters. In view of this the scheme is likely to be expanded to cover the whole of Northern Lincolnshire.
14. Members should appreciate that all staff involved in the trials have volunteered their services and I would like to commend them for their enthusiasm and professionalism in taking this important initiative forward.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY

15. Contributes to Strategic Objective 1: Preventing loss of life and injury and community impact from emergency incidents.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCES/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

16. Both trial projects are cost neutral. The Grimsby scheme involves unpaid volunteers and in Pocklington the number of calls is below the threshold for additional payment. Cost recovery has been discussed with the YAS Chief Executive. Any service provided beyond the trials will aim to be cost neutral to HFRS.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. A Memorandum of Understanding between interested parties has been signed and covers the duration of the trial. A more formal agreement will accompany any more permanent arrangements.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/HR IMPLICATIONS

18. A detailed EIA will be carried out should a more permanent arrangement be implemented.

CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

19. These trials may help to secure resources for HFRS due to higher utilisation. They are likely to reduce corporate risk.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

20. These trials have been fully risk assessed.

COMMUNICATION ACTIONS ARISING

21. This is the first update for HFA Members. A further paper will precede any proposal to move to a more permanent arrangement beyond the trials.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

22. Informal discussions have been held with appropriate representative bodies.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE FOR ACCESS

23. None.

RECOMMENDATIONS RESTATED

24. That Members consider this report and endorse further discussions with Yorkshire Ambulance Service and LIVES with a view to exploring further collaborative opportunities.

R HANNIGAN

Officer Contact: Richard Hannigan ☎ 01482 567417
Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive

Humberside Fire & Rescue Service
Summergroves Way
Kingston upon Hull

RH/EML
3rd July 2013