

Partnership Working

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an overview of the partnership working being undertaken by the Fire Authority and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service).

2 Recommendation

The Fire Authority is asked to note this report.

3 Background

Partnership working is a key element in the Service strategy to meet its vision of "Putting Shropshire's Safety First". It is also a key theme of the Fire Service National Framework. The Fire Authority and the Service are actively involved in a number of partnerships, which are risk assessed for liability and reputation and scrutinised by the Service's Risk Management Group. This Group maintains a partnership register and monitors the outcome and productivity of each of the partnerships.

Over recent years the Service has developed several new partnerships, which primarily support its prevention activities, in particular, providing a means to target some of the most vulnerable people in the community. All partnerships have been risk assessed and measurable objectives set.

Given below are details of the more significant partnerships, in which the Service is involved.

4 Prevention Partnerships

Supporting the Health and Wellbeing agenda to drive down demand is a national topic of discussion amongst the public sector. The Chief Fire Officers Association and a number of Fire and Rescue Services are supporting this drive with a range of initiatives including Community Risk Intervention Teams.

This Service is heavily engaged in a number of areas locally to examine how we can best use our limited resources to make every contact that we have with the public count. Given below are details of some of the partnerships established to achieve this goal.

Telford & Wrekin Council

In 2014 the Service embarked on an ambitious new partnership project by embedding a supervisory officer within Telford & Wrekin Council. The purpose of the partnership was to produce a data-sharing protocol to enable the passing of data sets held by the Council to the Service. Much work has been undertaken by both organisations to ensure that the protocol meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

The current data sets relate to one of the Service's most vulnerable groups, the over 75's, living alone and in receipt of some kind of benefit payment. Following the six months' secondment a robust data-sharing protocol now exists to enable important data, held by the Council, to be sent securely each month to the Service.

This is used primarily by the wholetime watches and Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters at Telford, Tweedale, Newport and Wellington to carry out scheduled community fire safety work. Since the start of the project at the end of 2014 up to the end of March 2015, these stations carried out 222 visits and fitted 125 smoke detectors. Current year to date figures (end of May) indicate a success rate so far of 118 visits with 82 smoke alarms fitted. The next dataset will include Adult Social Care commissioned services, which will represent a significant proportion of the prevention work for these stations, moving forward.

This protocol has since been used as a template to create and service other partnerships with organisations, such as Bluebird Care Ltd and Severnside Housing, with the assurance that the agreements comply with legislation and essentially provide a robust number of referrals to the Service. These agreements came into force in June 2015 and will result in scheduled work for Shrewsbury wholetime watches and RDS, as well as the Prevention Team's Vulnerable Persons Officers, who will be assigned the most vulnerable cases.

Health Visitor Groups

In order to target the opposite end of our vulnerable groups spectrum (those aged 5 and under) work has been undertaken to re-energise the partner agency referral form used by Health Visitors and Community Midwives to identify those most at need of intervention from the Service. Talks by Prevention Team members at meetings have stimulated a limited response in this area.

Efforts are being concentrated on the individual Health Visitor Area Managers to ensure that the fire safety in the home agenda is promoted to the teams and that the referral pathway is more widely recognised.

Family Nurse Partnership

The newly formed Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) is an American concept, adopted by the NHS, aimed at young teenage mothers to provide support and education in the early years. Assigning a specialist Health Visitor or Midwife as a Family Nurse for a two-year period should produce specific outcomes in terms of demand reduction for a number of public services. The Prevention Team will be working with the FNP across Shrewsbury, Telford and Wrekin to ensure that home fire safety is delivered as part of the programme.

NHS General Practitioners

For a number of years “Exeter” * data has been actively sought by the Fire and Rescue Service to provide details (names, gender, date of birth and address) of those individuals, who are over the age of 65 within the community. After a national effort undertaken by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) this information will now be made available in July 2015. A number of lessons have been learned and now shared as a result from two pilot programmes delivered in Cheshire and Merseyside. The Service will be seeking to utilise this excellent data set to deliver scheduled prevention work to our RDS workforce across the more rural areas of the County.

* The Exeter system is a database of all patients registered with an NHS General Practitioner in England and Wales. It is used by all health authorities in the two countries and is one of the largest population databases in operation in the UK.

Children’s Services

A pilot project has been undertaken this year to explore the feasibility of young volunteers supporting the Prevention Team during the busy Crucial Crew weeks in the summer months. Based on a concept pioneered by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, this project will result in a number of young people receiving valuable opportunities to re-engage and participate in team activities. The projected end result will be twofold: one is that the dataset for the many young people falling into the category of ‘not in education or employment (NEET)’ can be accessed by the Prevention Team to ensure that fire safety education in the home is delivered; the other is one of a moral and social responsibility in providing opportunities for young people to reinvigorate and take stock of their lives. It will allow them to leave the programme with useful experiences, a reference, input on their CV and interview techniques and, possibly, some qualifications. The Service aspires to provide some direction in terms of apprenticeships, job opportunities or a return to full-time education.

Safeguarding Adults and Children’s Boards

Membership of the Boards and / or associated working sub-groups gives the Service access to other agency members. This allows the Service to identify and address any individuals or groups and explore the best way in which to intervene and protect them from fire or other emergencies.

Taking part in Significant Event reviews or Serious Case reviews allows lessons to be learned and communicated across the multi-disciplinary teams. Additionally, officers can ensure that our services, including the “I learn” fire setting intervention programme, are widely known and freely available according to identified risk. Other benefits to the Service include access to the free training modules for Prevention Team members to increase their skillsets to recognise and address all areas of vulnerability.

Sevenside Housing and Other Housing and Care Organisations

In 2012 the Service entered into a risk reduction partnership agreement with Sevenside Housing, who own and manage in excess of 5,300 homes in Shrewsbury and its surrounding villages. Whilst most of these homes are located within areas previously targeted for home safety advice, many harder-to-reach tenants have never received fire safety advice.

Following on from the success of the Telford & Wrekin data sharing agreement, Sevenside Housing have now entered into an agreement to provide data that will provide Shrewsbury watches scheduled leads to access the vulnerable. Bluebird Care Ltd are also allowing one of the Service’s Vulnerable Persons Officers to carry out joint home visits to enable elderly people to remain safer for longer within their own homes.

The success of these partnerships, including evidence of the real difference they can make to people’s lives and the influence the Service has on Sevenside Housing staff, has resulted in the roll-out of partnerships with other social landlords. Similar work with Wrekin Housing Trust, Meres and Mosses and South Shropshire Housing is in progress. The Sevenside Housing relationship has been key to this, as it has encouraged uptake by the other providers. The Service’s new “hub” based approach with a Prevention Team member geographically located in all corners of the County will continue to support this approach.

Wrekin Housing Trust

Officers are currently involved in two major work streams with Wrekin Housing Trust (WHT). 31 independent living schemes are being jointly visited by a Vulnerable Persons Officer and the scheme managers. Additionally, joint general needs visits with a WHT housing officer are being carried out with high-risk clients.

Sure Start

The Service’s Outreach Worker carries out visits to Sure Start centres, which enable people to have a basic home safety check carried out in an independent environment instead of their home.

Rural Partnerships

The Service’s Fire Crime Officer writes regular articles for the National Farmers Union (Midlands), Shropshire Rural Hub and Neighbourhood Watch, raising awareness of rural fires, especially those involving farms and barns.

The Outreach vehicle and members of the Prevention Team also support Police and Crime Commissioner rural crime events in Shrewsbury and at Harper Adams University, Edgmond.

The Women's Institute

The Service came to an agreement with the Women's Institute (WI) in Shropshire for their members to carry out home fire safety checks in remote areas on a voluntary basis. Each local WI is encouraged to provide volunteers. To date 15 groups (more than 300 members in total) have offered their services and training has been given. Some groups will carry out home fire safety checks and fit smoke alarms; others have offered to report derelict properties, action removal of fly tipping, or just be more aware of home safety, when visiting friends and family, signposting to the Service, if necessary. The partnership is particularly productive in Cleobury Mortimer, which is especially pleasing due to its rural nature.

The British Red Cross

The British Red Cross supports a number of young carers across Shropshire. These young people look after adults in the family home, often parents, with a variety of issues. An agreement has recently been reached to ensure that 260 of these young people are visited by Prevention Team members to ensure that the relevant smoke detection is present and escape planning information has been delivered

Domestic Abuse Forum

The purpose of this Forum is to encourage agencies and organisations to work in partnership in order to create an environment where domestic violence and abuse is not tolerated and to reduce the impact on victims in Shropshire. This comes under the Safer Stronger Community Partnership.

Sanctuary Scheme

This group meets quarterly and is made up of representatives from West Mercia Police, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, Shropshire Council and Severnside Housing. The group's aims include looking at providing a secure and a safe environment from domestic violence, raising awareness of domestic abuse, ensuring that people affected by domestic abuse have access to appropriate advice and support at an early stage and driving forward the good practice developed in tackling domestic abuse in Shropshire. This Service provides smoke alarms and lockable letterboxes, where appropriate.

The Burns Extrication Partnership

The Burns Extrication Partnership is working well since its introduction and crews are utilising the forms and reporting injuries as they occur. The Prevention Station Manager is also closely connected to the Clinical Commissioning Group and is able to check on the status of any reported casualties to ensure that our Public Value measure for serious fire injuries is reported accurately.

West Mercia Youth Offending Service (YOS)

The Service works in partnership with the YOS to educate clients in the judicial system, charged with arson and vehicle crime, with the aims of reducing the number of people killed or injured on the roads, reducing the number of arson incidents and reducing the re-offending rate by young people through education. The Service delivers the fire crime courses and the vehicle crime course to young people as part of their court order. These are for either arson crime or driving related incidents and are delivered on a 2 to 1 basis (2 x Fire Service and 1 x young person) at fire stations around the County. Each subject session lasts 3 hours.

Arson Task Force

The West Mercia Arson Task Force aims to reduce the number of arsons and increase the number of arson detections by prevention, education, detection, and investigation.

Working with partners to concentrate efforts on the Service's statutory duties, such as prevention and fire education, is of key importance to the Service. Officers are, however, also involved in a number of road safety initiatives.

The Honest Truth Partnership

This project involves the Safer Roads Partnership, local authority road safety officers and the Fire and Rescue Service forming a partnership with driving instructors. This is a Devon and Somerset initiative, which is sweeping across the UK as a way of changing behaviours of young people at the point that they take the wheel for the first time. The programme, through a half-day seminar, is delivered jointly, initially to interested Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs). Then, using the Honest Truth pack, the ADIs incorporate the behaviour lessons into the usual lesson curriculum.

The Institute of Advanced Motoring and Safer Roads Partnership

The Service continues to work with the Institute of Advanced Motorists, targeting young drivers with more advanced tuition immediately after they have passed their driving test. This Service's Chief Fire Officers (CFO) have been actively engaged in the partnership for a number of years and the current CFO has been installed as President for a further term. The Service is also a member of the Safer Roads Partnership in West Mercia, which directs road safety education across the County. The Team Leader Prevention represents the Service in this area.

CFOA and Highways Agency Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) Programme

A new area of partnership working has just been presented to the Service as part of a national programme to drive down unnecessary delays on UK transport hubs. The Service has been asked to hold sessions with LGV owners and providers selected from a database of those that have experienced incidents which have caused delays of more than 30 minutes. This initiative is funded by the Highways Agency and officers are currently exploring the feasibility of carrying out this work.

Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Joint Committees

The Service continues to maintain strong links with the statutory partnerships, such as the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (Shropshire) and the Safer Cohesive Communities Partnership (Telford & Wrekin) and a number of sub-groups focussing on specific areas. The Chief Fire Officer attends the Telford & Wrekin Local Strategic Partnership and the Shropshire Chief Officers meetings.

The Service also attends Local Joint Committee meetings, to provide information to the local population on matters of interest from the Service. Meetings are normally attended by local station personnel, demonstrating commitment to local issues.

Bronze Level Tasking Groups

These Groups operate both centrally as well as specifically in Shrewsbury town centre and are well attended by multi-agency partners, co-operating in joint initiatives. The “Day of Action” programme provides a joined-up approach from partners for a specific 24-hour timeframe. This benefits both the community and targeted groups with services collaborating with a shared vision and resources. The statistics demonstrate that the rubbish removed by the Council, the visits to schools by the Fire Service and the increased Police presence all contribute to a reduction in calls and a general improvement in people’s lives.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

The Service’s Fire Crime Officer is engaged with the multi-agency group, which meets to discuss and plan for specific threats to the community, such as released offenders. A recent case involving an arsonist has resulted in specific plans and protocols to ensure an appropriate weight of response from both Fire and Police.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Domestic violence is a particular area of concern, as fire can often be used by offenders as a method of threatening individuals or families or as retribution. The Service’s Fire Crime Officer liaises with partners to address areas and individuals of specific concern and measures, such as lockable letterboxes, are employed to target harden premises against the risk of attack.

Team Shrewsbury

Team Shrewsbury is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which forms the basis of an Integrated Community Management Partnership between various public sector partners, and the business, community and voluntary sector. It was established to demonstrate the parties’ commitment to collaboration and innovation in the delivery, management and use of the public realm. The MoU defines and formalises the relationship between the parties and sets out their roles and responsibilities within the Team Shrewsbury partnership.

Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT)

This partnership enables the Service and TCAT to benefit from an exchange of services. The Service will support the BTEC Public Uniformed Services course at TCAT by providing lectures and allowing students to attend the Service's training centre. In return TCAT will provide the Service with two places on their PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) courses. This will promote greater understanding of the Fire Service and help in training and development within the Service.

5 Protection Partnerships

Domestic Sprinklers

The Protection Team Station Manager has pioneered joint funding for a sprinkler system to be installed in a domestic dwelling by working with Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing (STAR) Ltd. STAR manage all 4,200 Shropshire Council owned homes in the Oswestry and Bridgnorth areas. Working in partnership the Service, STAR and Autoquench, a sprinkler supplier from Birmingham, have ensured that a sprinkler system has now been installed in a home, which is currently awaiting occupancy.

Other initiatives currently include joint inspections of waste recycling plants in conjunction with the Environment Agency and the continued lobbying of the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted to promote the benefits of a formal data sharing agreement.

Primary Authority Scheme

The Primary Authority Scheme is an area of business, in which the Service has not engaged previously. However, negotiations with two companies, one national and one regional, are currently advancing well. The guidance from the Better Regulation Delivery Office is providing officers with direction for discussion and negotiation.

Less formally, the Service has worked closely in partnership with Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council in relation to fire safety information for planning applications. This has resulted in a net reduction on time spent processing planning applications alone.

6 Operational Response Partnerships

Baywater Healthcare Ltd

An agreement with Baywater Care has resulted in operational crews being aware of the location of medical oxygen cylinders throughout the County, providing improved safety for firefighters. At the same time, the Prevention Team is able to direct resources to carry out home safety visits with oxygen users, who tend to be suffering long-term or chronic illness.

The British Red Cross

In May 2013 the Service, in partnership with the British Red Cross, took ownership of a new Fire Emergency Support Service vehicle. This is operated by a cadre of British Red Cross volunteers, who provide support to victims of fire and other emergencies, either whilst fire crews are still on scene or when they have left.

Ennstone Partnership

This is a joint collaboration with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Ennstone Concrete Products, which involves both Brigades using surplus concrete blocks to train crews in urban search and rescue techniques. The advantage to the company is that they do not have to break up the concrete blocks at their own cost, as this is done by fire crews during training.

Local Resilience Forum

This Forum is required under the Civil Contingencies Act and is a legal duty through the Regional Management Board. The purpose of the Forum is to ensure effective delivery of those duties under the Act, which need to be developed in a multi-agency environment. A shared approach is taken to dealing with risk and responding to incidents.

7 Equality and Diversity Groups and Partnerships

The Service's Equality and Diversity Team works with a range of partnerships and groups, including Shropshire Disability Network, Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND), Older People's Forums in Shropshire and Telford, the Shropshire Hate Crime Reporting Group, Gender Matters, the Rainbow Film Festival, and Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH).

The Service was among the first corporate members of FRESH, which was established in 2013 as a Community Benefit Society (community co-operative) to support improved equality and anti-discrimination policy and practice within and beyond Shropshire. The Service is committed to FRESH and its work, and hosts many of FRESH's meetings at Service Headquarters.

8 Financial Implications

Information on income and expenditure within partnerships is collected and updated in line with the frequency of monitoring, which takes place on each partnership and is recorded on the partnership register.

Any changes to income and expenditure are logged and discussed at meetings of the Risk Management Group and a report is taken to the Service Management Team annually. Income and expenditure also form part of the risk assessment of the partnerships.

9 Legal Comment

The functions exercised within the partnership working arrangements fall within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the aims and objectives of the Fire Authority.

10 Initial Impact Assessment

This report sets out factual details of partnerships, in which the Service is involved. An impact assessment is not, therefore, required.

11 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

12 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.