

Student Number:

Module: Community Safety and Social Policy (5FF008)

Reducing Harm to the Communities of Leicestershire

Purpose of the Report

This report has been conducted for the Chief Fire Officer of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) with the intention of identifying aspects of the service's plan for community fire safety that can be improved. I shall detail my own vision of how the organisation can succeed in building partnerships with other establishments, and the community as a whole, to collectively reduce the risk of harm.

There is a general acceptance among many that, in terms of community safety and prevention agendas, the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has a latent capacity. This means that it generally fails to use its resources in a way that allows it to fulfill its potential.

Background Information

In 2013 Sir Ken Knight (CBE) composed a review entitled '*Facing the Future*'. This focused on the efficiencies of the UK's FRSs in general and made reference to the community fire safety work on which we will be focusing. In *Facing the Future*, Sir Ken recognised that "*fire and rescue authorities are spending very different amounts to provide broadly the same service.*" (**Knight, K., 2013**). Sir Ken theorised that the appropriate solution would be to have a mixture of community safety work delivered by operational firefighters whilst utilising "*Green Book staff for work involving regulatory fire safety.*" (**Knight, K., 2013**) In this case, "*green book staff*" refers to those who work for the local authority as opposed to the higher-paid fire service employees. (**unitetheunion.org, 2005**)

According to the National Audit Office there was a "*17% estimated real-terms average reduction in spending power of stand-alone fire authorities from 2010-11 to 2015-16*" (**NAO, 2015**). It also

stated that there was a “22% fall in the number of fatalities in fires in England from 2010-11 to 2014-15.” **(NAO, 2015)** This correlation may seem surprising but it goes to highlight that exorbitant funding is not a guarantee of performance; instead, the results are dictated by the Fire Authority’s allocation of resources.

Opportunities and Potential Partners

LFRS would benefit greatly in its community safety efforts if it could establish and maintain effective cooperation with agencies and organisations that could highlight members of the community most in need of fire safety improvements. Organisations that could provide this type of information include:

- Police stations;
- Doctors’ surgeries;
- Ambulance services;

In *Facing the Future*, Sir Ken Knight noted that one county’s fire authority was taking advantage of its close working relationship with other parts of the county council. Through this, vulnerable residents already known to the Council were referred to the FRS for home fire safety checks. Additionally the fire service highlighted vulnerable people who had been involved in incidents to the attention of relevant council sectors **(Knight, K., 2013)**.

Sir Ken also recounted another county authority beginning to work with local doctors’ practices. The doctors identify those in need of support and advice for fire safety and provide them with a ‘prescription’ for a home fire safety check. Through this, the fire service can be made aware of such individuals. **(Knight, K., 2013)** Similarly, Bedfordshire FRS has begun working with Experian, a provider of analytical services on UK consumers, to help identify groups that may be at higher than average risk of fires. **(bedsfire.com, 2016)**

London Fire Brigade has established relationships with local registered petroleum keepers. Through this it can enforce regulations on petroleum storage thus ensuring the risk of serious fire is mitigated **(LFB, 2017)**.

Evaluation of partnerships

According to the document *Collaborative Arrangements*, on the **leicestershire-fire.gov (2016)** website, LFRS collaborates with other organisations in many areas of its work. With regard to community safety and legislative fire safety, it names the following organisations as some of its key partners:

- Road Safety Partnership (for educating mainly young drivers on road safety);
- Leicestershire Police (to identify potentially vulnerable members of the community);
- Better Regulation Delivery Office (to give scope for LFRS to advise companies on how to conform to safety regulations). (**Leicestershire-fire.gov, 2016**)

Conclusions

It is notable in the previous section how few partnerships LFRS actually has with specific regard to community fire safety. This may want to be addressed by exploring some of the ideas proposed in the next section.

While the NOA has recorded the 17% reduction in spending power, *BBC 5 Live Investigates* stated that these cuts had resulted in a sharp decrease in the response times of many stations claiming that “*Figures suggested four out of five brigades had seen worsening average response times between 2009/10 and 2014/15*” (**BBC News, 2016**) Therefore it is crucially important that, while LFRS looks to progress in its community safety work, it does not compromise the effectiveness of its operational performance.

Recommendations

There are a few ways through which I believe LFRS could significantly improve its community fire safety work. LFRS may wish to explore the possibility of these following suggestions.

- LFRS should firstly look to emulate the above mentioned efforts of other fire services that are succeeding in their own community fire safety. London Fire Brigade, Bedfordshire FRS and the ones highlighted in Sir Ken Knight’s review provide good examples of this.

- Places of religious worship such as churches, mosques, synagogues and gurdwaras are places which have great potential for community fire safety promotion. LFRS could inquire to see if they would be allowed to provide media such as leaflets on fire safety to the congregations of these places. Additionally they could ask to give informative talks on fire safety after which people can be encouraged to have home fire safety checks.
- Another, perhaps more ambitious approach, would be initiating collaborations with companies or brands with a presence in the Leicestershire area. This would involve proposing the concept of promoting fire safety aside their advertising campaigns. An example of such a company might be Jaguar/Land Rover due to the fact that they have a pre-existing incentive for the public to think of them as safety-conscious – something that a partnership with an FRS would no doubt invoke.

(996 words)

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