

By: Ann Millington
To: SEFIP Board – 3 October 2012
Subject: RESEARCH INTO HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN ACCIDENTAL
DWELLING FIRES
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

Kent Fire & Rescue Service is undertaking research into how people behave when faced with a fire in their home. This work, which will be incorporated into the South East CFOA Prevention workstream this year, is already generating benefits and will have an enormous impact on the Fire & Rescue Service by helping to inform future operations, call handling and community safety work. The SEFIP Board received an update on this project in April, following which SE CFOs agreed that their Services would participate in the research to enable a wider data set to be used. Kent will continue to lead on this research as part of the SE Prevention workstream.

CONCLUSION

Members are requested to:

1. Note the approach to research being undertaken; and
2. Note the opportunity to jointly fund future research through the Knowledge Transfer Partnership

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. Kent Fire & Rescue Service is undertaking innovative research into how people behave when faced with a fire in their home. The approach being taken and the initial findings were shared with the SEFIP Board in April. SE CFOs agreed that their Services would participate in the research to enable a wider data set to be used. The results of the research are being shared with other Services through the South East Community Safety (Prevention) CFOA Group and will help to inform strategy and delivery across all main areas of the Service.
2. Although the research is in its early stages, the validity of the approach has been demonstrated, and the results so far are already giving some important indications of and insights into people's behaviour and motivations. The initial findings are already informing and assisting service delivery in Kent and being shared with the Prevention Group.
3. The database which will be developed for the South East will provide a previously unavailable level of knowledge and insight into people's actions and motivations during all stages of their experience of a dwelling fire. The survey has been run in Kent for 18 months, and has identified some valuable issues that the Service was previously unaware of.
4. One planned outcome is for a piece of software that would sit over the top of the database. This will assist FRSs in understanding and reducing deaths and injuries, both in volume and severity. This will be achieved by using the information to target resources and messaging much more effectively, and design services products and advice based upon victims' experiences and expectations.
5. This research has the potential to establish a new direction and approach distinct from, but building on, prevention work to date. As such, this may help Fire & Rescue Services to maintain existing or seek additional funding by demonstrating that further reductions in deaths and injuries are achievable.
6. An opportunity exists to use Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) funding to undertake the research. KTPs are run by the UK government and provide a means for universities to work with organisations to transfer knowledge and facilitate the needs of the organisation.
7. The potential to enter into such a partnership with the University of Greenwich has already been explored and it is clear they have the expertise and resources available to undertake the research. The Fire Safety Engineering Group at the university is a world leading team headed by Professor Ed Galea. The university is prepared to accept the reduced overheads for winning a KTP grant.

8. To cover the work outlined above, a three year KTP is being pursued. Under this scheme, the funding from Fire & Rescue Services would be £26,850 per year for 3 years, a total of £80,550 over the three years. In addition the KTP would pay £51,926 per year, a total of £155,778 over three years. This approach was endorsed by the South East Chief Fire Officers and Chief Executives at their meeting on 17 September 2012 where the project was formally commissioned.
9. Further opportunities for research funding from the government and Europe will continue to be explored.

Next steps

10. It is proposed to hold a workshop with partners, to which representatives from the nine Fire & Rescue Services in the South East will be invited. The University of Greenwich will be asked to host an information and planning session to explain the work so far and discuss the project going forward.
11. The next step is to develop the survey and analysis tools. This will include the University of Greenwich undertaking an academic review of the work undertaken so far by Kent and developing an electronic version of the survey, as well as a new searchable database to hold survey results. This stage will also include the development of a detailed project plan for the KTP and identify key stages where research findings can be fed back to partners.
12. The next stage of the research is to implement the survey across the South East with progress reports provided to the South East prevention group. There is also the potential to offer the opportunity to CFOA to roll out the survey to other Fire & Rescue Services.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

13. The cost of the research to the Fire & Rescue Service is estimated to be £26,850 per annum. If this is shared across the South East this would equate to £2,983 per Service per year. This offers excellent value for money as directly funding the University of Greenwich to undertake this work outside of the KTP scheme would cost in excess of three times this amount. The research will, hopefully, be funded through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between KFRS and the University of Greenwich's Fire Safety Engineering Group. The project, therefore, offers a great opportunity to improve the sector's service provision and delivery, effective resource allocation and succession planning.

RECOMMENDATION

14. Members are requested to:
 - 14.1 Note the approach to research being undertaken; and
 - 14.2 Note the opportunity to jointly fund future research through the Knowledge Transfer Partnership