



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Community Safety Committee

EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH INTERVENTION: BENDIGO

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 31 October 2008

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the activity and effectiveness of the youth intervention programme Bendigo.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : John Buckley
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Tel : (0115) 967 0880

Email : john.buckley@notts-fire.gov.uk

**Media Enquiries
Contact :** Elisabeth Reeson
(0115) 967 5889 elisabeth.reeson@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Project Bendigo was introduced in August 2006 in response to the stated organisational aims of “reducing attacks on fire crews” and “reducing instances of arson”. In November 2006 the Department for Communities and Local Government set out the expectations for the Fire Service when dealing with children and young people. The “Strategy for Children and Young People 2006-2010” encompassed six main aims. They were:

- To engage actively with children and young people;
- To prevent and reduce fire crime and fire setting;
- To divert children and young people from crime and anti-social behaviour;
- To educate children and young people in fire safety skills and responsible citizenship;
- To ensure that staff are effective and professional; and
- To identify and disseminate good practice.

Bendigo is considered to satisfy all of the aims.

1.2 An evaluation of the pilot took place over the period August 2006 to August 2007. The findings of this evaluation were as follows:

- A reduction in operational risks to firefighters;
- An increased understanding amongst the students of the consequences of fire crime and anti-social behaviour;
- An improvement in community areas where the young people reside;
- A reduction in offending/anti-social behaviour rates amongst the young people involved in the project.

1.3 As well as these organisational aims, softer outcomes were achieved, such as:

- An increase in confidence, better discipline and team work;
- 45% of participants returned to school education, 14% into college education and 6% into employment.

1.4 The pilot evaluation concluded: “it is important that as an organisation Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service sustain its work with young people as part of the Government’s agenda in working with Children and Young People”.

2. REPORT

2.1 Bendigo is a programme which provides vulnerable young people with the opportunity to experience the role of a firefighter, showing them the difficult and demanding nature of the work, whilst affirming that Service personnel are approachable. The programme highlights the consequences of deliberate fire

setting and provides activities and information about the consequences of the illegal taking and/or driving of motor vehicles and of road traffic collisions.

- 2.2 Whilst the intention is to reduce the incidence of arson and attacks on crews, as well as reducing the criminal activities associated with illegal driving of motor vehicles, there are a number of additional benefits for those young people who take part in the programme. These include increased self confidence, a sense of achievement and a thorough understanding of safety issues which can be shared with members of their family and friends.
- 2.3 The first course commenced in August 2006 and the programme initially ran for one year. During this period a total of six courses involving 30 students took place. Of the 30 students that commenced the courses, 27 completed the course. At the end of the first full year the evaluation referred to in 1.2 was undertaken.
- 2.4 The programme recommenced in January 2008 in response to the positive outcomes of the trial project. The project has been re-written to clarify the focus upon the main aims of attacks on crews and deliberate fire setting behaviour. Extension of the programme into the county has been undertaken and is proving successful.
- 2.5 Referring agencies are required to fulfil a working agreement in order to place young people on the course. This incorporates the roles and responsibilities of both Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and the agency itself. Referrals for inclusion on the programme have been received from the Radford Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) for the Nottingham City area and from Ashfield School and "Entry to Employment" Team (E2E) (Newark) in the county.
- 2.6 In the current year, three courses have already been completed with a fourth course currently underway. All of the students enrolled on these courses have completed, or are expected to complete the full course. Engagement has been effective with the majority of the young people demonstrating an interest in the fire service and gaining a positive experience. Feedback contains comments such as:

"Her mother showed photographs of her completing Bendigo with the Fire Service and demonstrated emotional warmth when expressing how proud she was of her daughter for completing her time on the programme, commenting that she had really enjoyed her time on the course." (Report about a young person)

"(they) became more responsible" – Parent

"(they had) more confidence, better behaviour" – Parent

"the whole course has been amazing, I have learned so much" – Young Person

- 2.7 The next course which is due to start in November 2008 is scheduled to take place at Harworth fire station, which will allow the team to evaluate the practicality and sustainability of running the courses at retained as well as wholetime Stations.
- 2.8 Operational crews have been very supportive of the project and stations that have already assisted the team in running Bendigo are Central, Stockhill, Dunkirk, Ashfield and Newark.
- 2.9 To ensure continuity there is a core team of instructors which presently consists of one crew manager who is managing the programme and training up instructors, and one who is trained to deliver the programme both of whom are based in the Community Safety Research and Development Team, these are supported by two firefighters from the Risk Reduction Team.
- 2.10 Currently, the number of referrals from the city and the county is greater than the capacity of the Service. This is being addressed by the ongoing support for staff in pursuing development, and by increasing the number of firefighter roles dedicated to community safety activity.
- 2.11 Bendigo has had a very positive effect upon the young people who have participated. There has been a marked change in their behaviour and attitude towards operational crews and vice versa.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The use of Service staff within the community safety youth team will ensure that financial implications are contained within the existing budget. The Fire and Rescue Authority currently commits £18,000 to this valuable project.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix A.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) the Service is a statutory partner. It is expected that the Service works in partnership to reduce the number of incidents in this category.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications rising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A failure to effectively meet the Authority's responsibility under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) could attract criticism through external audit processes such as Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- 8.2 The effective engagement of young people is a proven mechanism for reducing the number of instances where firefighters face threatening behaviour. Failure to utilise this intervention activity could increase risks to crews.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members continue to support Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in providing youth intervention programmes such as Bendigo as part of its contribution towards the Fire and Rescue Service Strategy for Children and Young People to deliver effective reduction of fire risk and fire crime.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Appendix A

| Section | Manager | Date of Assessment | New or Existing |
|---|---|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Risk Reduction | Mary McEvoy | 30 September 2008 | Existing |
| Name of Report to be assessed | BENDIGO EVALUATION REPORT | | |
| 1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report. | To inform Members of the outcome of an evaluation of Project Bendigo. | | |
| 2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes? | It is intended that Members and managers will have an appreciation of the value of Project Bendigo | | |
| 3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report? | Members Brigade Managers Head of Community Safety Partners (referring agencies) responsible for vulnerable youth | | |
| 4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report? | Head of Community Safety | | |

5. Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

| <i>STRAND</i> | Y | N | <i>NEGATIVE IMPACT</i> | <i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Race | | X | | |
| Gender | | X | | |
| Disability | | X | | |
| Religion or Belief | | X | | |
| Sexuality | | X | | |
| Age | | x | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|---|----------|----------|
| 6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? | Y | N | 7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment? | Y | N |
| | | | | | x |

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Signed (completing person).....M McEvoy.....

Date ...30 September 2008.....