

Policing and Crime Bill

Emergency Services Collaboration: Background

Background

1. The Fire and Rescue Authority for an area may be the county council for that area or a statutory body with a membership of councillors nominated by local authorities for that area who oversee the policy and delivery of fire and rescue functions for that area. The FRA sets the strategic priorities and objectives for fire and rescue within the area as well as handling the budget.
2. There are currently 46 FRAs in England. They have a range of different governance models:
 - 6 stand-alone metropolitan fire authorities: for example, Greater Manchester, West Midlands;
 - 24 combined fire authorities, which are stand-alone authorities covering areas where there is more than one county and unitary council: for example, Durham and Darlington, Devon and Somerset;
 - 15 county fire authorities, where the service is provided by the county council: for example, Norfolk, Hertfordshire;
 - The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA): a functional body of the Greater London Assembly. Whilst it has responsibility in respect of decisions relating to fire provision, it does not, like other Metropolitan fire authorities, set the annual budget for fire - that is the responsibility of the Mayor of London.
3. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 replaced police authorities with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) – directly elected individual who are accountable to the public. There are 39 police areas in England, 37 of which have PCCs. There are separate arrangements for the City of London and metropolitan police areas.
4. PCCs are under a statutory duty to secure and maintain an efficient and effective police force. They determine strategic policing priorities in their force areas and appoint (and, if necessary, dismiss) the Chief Constable. PCCs work with the police to cut crime, give the public a voice at the highest level, hold forces to account and help build trust.
5. In England, excluding London, there are 30 PCC areas that have coterminous boundaries with FRAs and 7 which do not.
6. There are ten regional ambulance trusts which provide ambulance services in England, five of which are currently foundation trusts. Each foundation trust is governed by a council which represents the interests of the public, ambulance staff and partner organisations, and influences the strategic direction taken by the trust.

7. The profile of demand for all three emergency services is changing. While recorded crime has reduced – it has fallen by 36% (excluding fraud) since its peak in 2003/04 – demand on the police has not reduced in the same way. Incidents attended by fire and rescue services have been on a long term downward trend and have fallen by 42% over the last decade¹. Conversely, there is an increasing demand on the ambulance service. Total calls to the ambulance switchboard have increased by 10% from just over 8 million in 2011/12 to over 9 million in 2014/15 and emergency responses to the most urgent calls have increased by 25%².
8. Collaboration presents a real opportunity for emergency services to increase efficiency and effectiveness, maximise available resources, enhance local resilience and improve the service delivered to the public.

The Knight review

9. Sir Ken Knight's 2013 review of the efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England, '*Facing the Future*', highlighted that merging fire and rescue services with one or more of the other blue light services and/or sharing governance structures could result in considerable gains. Sir Ken stated that "if all authorities spending more than the average reduced their expenditure to the average, savings could amount to £196 million a year."
10. Collaboration and innovation that will deliver necessary efficiencies requires leaders to drive forward change. The Knight Review found that progress could be "hindered by local relationships" and concluded "economies of scale are likely to be missed in this way without greater leadership". Sir Ken stated that PCCs "could clarify accountability arrangements and ensure more direct visibility to the electorate" and he raised the prospect of PCCs taking on responsibility for the fire and rescue service.
11. In their 2014 report '*Police and Crime Commissioners: progress to date*', the Home Affairs Select Committee concluded that PCCs had provided greater clarity of leadership for policing in their area and were increasingly being recognised by the public for the strategic direction they are providing.
12. The Government believes that the sharp focus of directly accountable leadership can play a critical role in securing better commissioning and delivery of emergency services at a local level. PCCs up and down the country have shown the benefits of bringing fire and police services together at local level, including through shared back office services, combined buildings or vehicles, and joint response to incidents.

¹ Fire Statistics Monitor: England, April 2014 to March 2015, DCLG
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/456623/Fire_Statistics_Monitor_April_2014_to_March_2015_Updated260815.pdf 2003/04 – 2013/14

² Ambulance Services: England, 2014 to 2015, HSCIC

Examples of good collaboration

13. The Government has already invested over £81 million since 2013 to help drive blue light collaboration projects. There are examples across the country of collaboration delivering savings and improving outcomes for the public.

- Northamptonshire's Interoperability Programme is working towards bringing the police and fire services and, in the longer term, the NHS ambulance service ever closer together. Their achievements to date include joint delivery of training, fleet and logistics; co-location of premises; a fully integrated Prevention and Community Protection Team from police and fire; and a joint operations team which plans all operational activity across the three emergency services. They expect these collaboration projects to make the police savings of £21 million and the fire service £2 million, over four years.
- The emergency services across Surrey and Sussex are delivering a programme which includes a suite of projects to bring the contact and control functions closer together. One of these is intended to enable the longer term vision of a fully integrated joint contact and control centre for partners able to do so. The Multi-Agency Information Transfer (MAIT) project involves procurement and implementation of a 'hub' to transfer incident data between emergency partners, where more than one service is required at an incident, saving an estimated 7,500 operator hours per year. In Lincolnshire and a number of other areas, the fire service responds to emergencies jointly with the NHS ambulance service ('co-responding') to ensure patients receive treatment as soon as the emergency services arrive and transport them to hospital where necessary.
- In Hampshire, the police and fire and rescue services are developing a shared HQ, a strategic command centre, co-located stations and shared training facilities, delivering annual savings for both services of around £1 million.
- In Durham, Police Innovation Fund support is enabling the training of Tri-service Community Safety Responders acting as PCSOs, retained firefighters and community first responders (i.e. volunteer, on-call NHS ambulance personnel).
- Suffolk Police and Suffolk Fire Service have five shared fire and police stations, used by retained fire fighters and police Safer Neighbourhood Teams, and are looking to expand this further. They have a joint cadet scheme and plan to introduce a joint community safety unit.

14. Although there are many good local examples of joint working between the emergency services, the overall picture remains patchy and there is much more we can do to improve taxpayer value for money and the service to communities.

Consultation

15. In its manifesto, the Government made a commitment to "enable fire and police services to work more closely together and develop the role of our elected and accountable Police and Crime Commissioners".

16. The Home Office, Department for Communities and Local Government³ and the Department of Health jointly launched a public consultation on 11 September 2015, which sought views on how to implement a range of proposals to enable greater collaboration between the emergency services. The consultation ran for six weeks, ending on 23 October 2015. There were over 300 responses to the consultation.

17. The Government's response to the consultation was published⁴ on 26 January 2016. This set out legislative proposals to:

- introduce a high-level duty to collaborate on all three emergency services, to improve efficiency or effectiveness;
- enable Police and Crime Commissioners to take on the functions and duties of their local FRA, where a local case is made;
- further enable Police and Crime Commissioners to create a single employer for police and fire staff where they take on the responsibilities of their local FRA, and where a local case is made;
- in areas where a Police and Crime Commissioner has not become responsible for fire and rescue, enabling them to have representation on their local fire and rescue authority with voting rights, where the fire and rescue authority agrees; and
- abolish the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and give the Mayor of London direct responsibility for the fire and rescue service in London.

Home Office

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³ On 5 January 2016, the Prime Minister announced a Machinery of Government change transferring responsibility for fire and rescue policy from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Home Office.

⁴https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/495371/6.1722_HO_Enabling_Closer_Working_Between_the_Emergency_Services_Consult...pdf