Written evidence submitted by Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (PHP0130)

Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service: the fire service as a health asset

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) provides fire and rescue response across Greater Manchester’s 10 boroughs – Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan.

1. During the Health Committee’s recent enquiry into Public Health post-2013, Simon Stevens, CEO of NHS England, informed the committee that, “We are now spending more on obesity-related conditions in this country than we are on the police or fire service.”

2. Both Simon Stevens and Shirley Cramer, CEO of the Royal Society for Public Health, have acknowledged the huge potential for expanding the role of fire services to relieve the pressure on health and social care providers. This submission identifies just some of the ways Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service is already doing this.

3. GMFRS’ Community Risk Intervention (CRI) pilot was established in three of the city region’s 10 boroughs to help relieve the pressure on blue light and health and social care services. Three teams have responded to cardiac arrests and 27 other life-risk categories, as well as falls in the home on behalf of the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and concern for welfare calls on behalf of Greater Manchester Police (GMP). They have also carried out holistic home safety checks to identify and mitigate risks in the home; fitting a wide range of risk reduction equipment to improve quality of life and reduce demand for services. New Economy’s independent fiscal analysis found that for every pound spent on the CRI team by GMFRS, a total of £1.60 is directly saved by GMFRS, GMP and NWAS, and £7.67 is returned in social value.

4. Since the CRI pilot, all GMFRS firefighters now respond to cardiac arrests on behalf of the ambulance service and mobilise to 20% of all cardiac arrests in Greater Manchester.

5. The CRI pilot has also informed GMFRS’s expansion of its home safety visits. In the last six years, GMFRS has provided home safety advice to almost 360,000 homes. Safe and Well assessments now focus on health and crime prevention as well as fire safety. GMFRS is working with Public Health
England to use these visits to address the main drivers of winter deaths – falls, flu, cold and social isolation.

6. GMFRS’ Survival Academy strategy is an ambitious initiative with the British Heart Foundation (BHF) to equip as many people in the region as possible with skills in CPR and defibrillator use, creating communities of lifesavers ready to act at home, on the street or in work. Many GMFRS firefighters are already trained teachers of the BHF’s HeartStart and provide free courses at fire stations and schools. During last year’s European Restart a Heart Day GMFRS taught life-saving skills to over 3500 secondary school students in a single day.

7. With Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust GMFRS is delivering the mutual aims of reducing fire risk, and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities. Health professionals receive fire safety training from GMFRS experts which they use to educate and identify people at greater risk, referring these people on to us for a home visit. Reciprocally, GMFRS staff receive skills training from the Trust to offer basic health advice and refer people to appropriate services for further assessment.

8. In Bolton fire crews have focused on trying to keep babies safe by distributing cots and Moses baskets to vulnerable families. The project was launched in a bid to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, which is at its highest in the North West.

9. In Wigan firefighters have become part of the drive to change behaviours by becoming health champions. All 190 firefighters have been given specialist training in public health as part of the local council’s Making Health Everyone’s Business initiative.

10. GMFRS’ flagship tri-station at Irlam includes police, fire and ambulance crews and provides ground-breaking community fitness initiatives such as a climbing wall and caged soccer units.

11. In line with the wider Greater Manchester Strategy, GMFRS recognizes the link between joblessness and ill health. For some years GMFRS has used partnerships to create employment pathways that boost young people’s life chances:
   - Firefly and Fire Cadets offer alternative curriculum courses in partnership with local schools to integrate children back into
mainstream services, helping participants develop personal skills and pride in their communities whilst reducing antisocial behaviour.

- After leaving school, young people can continue their journey with GMFRS through opportunities such as the Prince’s Trust and volunteering – schemes which help develop the values, skills and qualifications (3000 in the last three years) necessary to gain employment.

- In 2012 GMFRS began a pilot with Salford City College and the National Apprentice Service, creating Community Safety Adviser (CSA) apprentices. In 2014 the fire service partnered with Manchester College to deliver a second scheme across a range of functions. Since 2013, GMFRS has provided numerous opportunities for those leaving the fire service’s youth engagement schemes including administrators, Community and Business Safety Advisers, contact centre staff and LGV fitters.

12. From responding to cardiac arrests, to preventing falls in the home, to improving fitness levels in the community - the opportunities for the fire service to be seen as a health asset are expansive.

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