

Strand title	Emergency Service Collaboration
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1. Aims and objectives

Introduction

The landscape of public services is shifting rapidly. Fiscal pressure and demographic variances are changing the pattern of demand and the 'old' models for delivering public services are no longer sufficient or sustainable. Recent reports have illustrated that there is a case for transformational change across the three emergency services at the local level, working closer together, reducing overlap and offering an improved service to the public. Collectively the services cover an area of approximately 2140 square miles and serve 2.7 million residents.

Recognising this, Surrey and Sussex Blue Light Chief Officers have agreed that they will work in partnership to transform the way the emergency services collaborate, using a phased approach that takes account of existing change programmes.

Each of the six services currently have significant change programmes underway. The Blue Light programme will not preclude or hinder this progress, but will seek to identify opportunities to reinforce - and build on - work streams already in train. This will allow the services to engage at different stages, dependant on the case being made for change and local interdependencies. As public services seek to better manage and reduce demand by developing more integrated responses to tackle the changing patterns of demand, the programme is starting to engage a wider range of partners (particularly those working in areas around troubled families, social care and mental health).

This is an ambitious programme of transformational change, which is still in the formative stages, focussing on aligning strategies and satisfying individual governance arrangements. Also, during this stage, shorter term projects are being progressed to start the cultural change process required to deliver the longer term vision.

This programme update builds upon the summary outline business case dated 9 October 2013 and considered by the SCC Cabinet on the 22 October 2013.

2. Case for change

Reports by Ellwood, T (2013) and Knight, K (2013) have identified that there is a case for change across the three emergency services, working closer together, reducing overlap and offering an improved service to the public. The emergency services currently operate effectively, but largely independently of each other. There is scope to transform the way the organisations work through greater collaboration in a number of areas. This does not indicate dissatisfaction with current outcomes, rather a recognition that there is much more that could be achieved through collaboration rather than separation.

The broader landscape within which emergency services operate is also changing and there are a number of issues – global, national and local which further strengthen the case for change¹.

The summary outline business case dated 9 October 2013 outlined the following options for consideration:

- Joint control and dispatch function across Surrey and Sussex Blue Light Services
 - Joint operational response and joint tasking for certain incident types
 - Joint Surrey Civil Contingencies Unit
 - Joint operational support functions
 - Joint prevention programme.
- a) **Current arrangements for control and dispatch:** There are currently 13 emergency control centres across the six emergency service organisations; all have separate technical systems and processes in place for managing emergency (999) and non-emergency (111 ambulance and 101 police) telephone contact. There is currently a manual / verbal ad hoc process for transferring information between the services. This creates a delay (average 4 minutes per data exchange) and does not facilitate a 'common operating picture' of the incident or joint understanding of risk.
- b) **Current arrangements for operational response:** Each Blue Light service responds to incidents in isolation of each other as systems are not joined up. For the incidents that require an operational response from more than one emergency service at the same time there are significant overlaps and duplication of effort. Although a small percentage of the overall demand for some services these incidents often occur during periods of peak activity and can have a high societal impact. The ICT elements of the contact, control and dispatch stream will allow us to progress and coordinate this type of work from the point of report. Examples include:
- Identification of persistent callers across the emergency services is difficult because of the different technology used and details recorded. This can tie up resources unnecessarily and does not address the needs of the persistent caller or other callers who may need an emergency service response. One specific caller contacted the emergency services over 2000 times in a six month period, with an estimated collective cost of more than £50k.
 - The demand on fire and rescue services is reducing significantly whilst it is increasing for ambulance services. The irreducible spare capacity within fire and rescue services could be utilised to support SECamb in meeting this demand and providing patient care to support the existing community first responder scheme.
- c) **Current arrangements for Civil Contingencies:** County Council, Borough and District Councils, the emergency services and other category 1 responders all maintain separate arrangements for discharging their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2005. Surrey and Sussex Police are currently progressing Lead Force arrangements which, once further progressed, may provide the opportunity for wider transformational change.
- d) **Current arrangements for operational support:** The emergency services all have requirements for the provision of support functions for their operational activity. There is currently little coordination of these functions between services and they are disparately located. The shared geography offers an opportunity to rationalise and remove duplication between these teams, thereby reducing costs and improving operations.
- e) **Current arrangements for prevention activity:** Community safety (prevention) activities and operational support functions are largely delivered independently by the Blue Light services, resulting in duplication of cost and effort. However, specific scoping of the opportunities in this area has yet to be completed due to capacity and time constraint issues.

3. Proposed new delivery models

The increased ambition of the programme and the inclusion of Sussex Blue Light services has slowed the pace as the team has sought to ensure wider partner agreement to the proposals. Progress has been made in developing proposals for delivery models in a number of the areas of work.

Joint contact, control and dispatch function:

- a) In the short term there is a plan to link existing command and control systems electronically to speed up information transfer and develop an improved 'common operating picture'. This will utilise the Multi-Agency Information Transfer (MAIT) system that has been piloted in Wales, reducing the average data transfer time to approximately 16 seconds.
- b) In the longer term there is a desire to develop a joint contact, control and dispatch function that incorporates co-located accommodation, with integrated ICT systems and multi-skilled police / fire operators for call handling and dispatch (with separate SECAmb operators working on the same ICT platform). This could be delivered within 5-7 years and will take account of existing change programmes.

There is the potential to include other agencies in this venture, such as health and social care partners, as well as complementary capabilities, such as coordination of CCTV functions.

Joint operational response:

- c) The organisations will move to establish systems to identify and manage the impact of persistent callers at point of contact between services and develop a longer term integrated solution in line with current ICT contract timelines.
- d) There is a rapidly evolving plan to implement a first responding scheme by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service across the county, where appropriately trained staff are able to support SECAmb and the public by providing potentially lifesaving early medical care. This will then be further enhanced by the provision of Emergency Care Support Worker (ECSW) qualified staff on fire engines in the longer term to improve the medical response at Fire Service incidents.

Joint Civil Contingencies Unit:

- e) The work to date has focussed on the Surrey position and will now move to the mapping of opportunities for collaborative working between LRFs and to continue with the longer term progress aligned with the Police LRF arrangements.

Joint operational support functions:

- f) The programme team is identifying resources to undertake work with partners to produce a paper scoping the costs for each function and time scales where opportunities exist. Where these arise, and with Chief Officer agreement, projects will be scoped to deliver operational support functions on a collaborative basis. Opportunities being explored further include:
 - Collaborative fleet and equipment management, including consumables such as bunkered fuel
 - Stores and supplies functions
 - Estates and facilities management
 - Joint learning and development (including Driver training)
 - Occupational Health and/or Health & Safety teams.

Joint prevention programme

- g) Develop a broader approach to collaboration on preventative (community safety) activity to include other PSTN strands, in particular those that involve the wider health services (including mental health), social care and the voluntary sector.

Other proposed new delivery models will be developed as the programme develops.

4. Changes required

All of these changes will require a certain level of organisational and cultural change to make them successful and this is reflected in the revised pace of the programme. Changes may include the need for partnering agreements, Memoranda of Understanding and other arrangements for joint governance. ICT and data compatibility and sharing have created issues for the programme; the development of national standards in these areas would allow suppliers to create products that support collaboration between public sector organisations.

Project delivery teams will be established for each area of work and the changes required will be considered as each proposal is developed.

5. Financial case / Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA)

From the work to date, it is apparent that there are issues in matching the data across the services involved in this work. Data analysis and finance workshops are being held to overcome these issues, supported by staff supplied through the PSTN. The differing levels of engagement as the programme has been extended has limited progress with the provision of data to enable service costs to be obtained for some services in some areas but the programme team is exploring options to resolve the issues and hope, in the short term, to be able to analyse data across the services more effectively and build the business cases. Any more detailed CBA will include societal benefits such as lives saved, harm / damage mitigated and improvements to service provision. It will also identify some areas where cashable savings are likely, such as joint operational support arrangements and joint use of premises. Initial work does indicate the broad scale of savings that may be generated by this work. The PSTN has provided resources to assist with this.

Joint contact, control and dispatch function: Current annual spend on emergency contact centres across the six services is estimated at £45m but it should be noted that the baseline will be reduced as a number of partners are already changing their contact, control and dispatch centre arrangements. These will deliver savings but the projects should be linked to avoid double counting of benefits and where possible to take advantage of economies of scale, joint working and purpose-built sites. The potential savings, if a 10% saving was achieved, would equate to approximately £4.5m calculated from the early baseline figures. This figure does not represent the totality or ambition of savings and will be explored further when the business case is developed. The full implementation of MAIT could release thousands of hours of operator time across the six Services contact centres. However, it is recognised that financial savings may not be realised whilst the contact centres remain separate.

Joint operational response: One persistent caller identified through a case study resulted in total costs of over £50k. Work is underway to develop a more detailed CBA, this will include societal benefits such as lives saved, harm / damage mitigated and improvements to service provision. It will also identify some areas where cashable savings are likely, such as joint operational support arrangements and joint use of premises.

Joint operational support functions; Joint prevention programme: As noted above, the programme team are identifying resource to undertake work with partners to produce a paper scoping the costs for each function and time scales where opportunities exist.

6. Implementation plan

The programme plan is still being developed as the projects are scoped, however early indications suggest the following timescales are achievable for the work streams:

- a) By April 2014, formulate a bid to support the Blue Light collaboration work for the DCLG Fire Transformation funding, in conjunction with Police Innovation fund.
- b) By April 2014, agree a broader approach to joint preventative activity with other PSTN strands.
- c) By June 2014, scope the opportunities and potential benefits of collaborative working on operational support functions.
- d) By September 2014, update SCC and the PSTN on progress with the programme, including CBA development.
- e) By October 2014, implement short term deliverables, such as MAIT, a First Responder scheme and management of persistent callers and evaluate their impact on service delivery.
- f) By March 2015, have completed more detailed scoping of longer term aspects, such as collocated Blue Light working including joint emergency contact, dispatch and control function from fewer sites and the integration of ICT contracts to address persistent caller issues.

ⁱ **Global strategic trends** - National evidence indicates that incident types may become more complex, particularly in relation to major climatic or security events, which require a more integrated emergency response. **National imperative** - Emergency services have been asked to consider how they could best collaborate with key strategic partners, with the Chancellor stating in the last spending round that the government intends to drive greater integration of local emergency services. **Population change** - Demographic change is predicted to result in an ageing and growing population locally, which will place additional and more complex demands upon the emergency services. There is therefore an opportunity to develop a collaborative approach to these issues. **Demand trends for services** - Demand for services is changing and each organisation aims to plan not just around demand, but also risk. Greater collaboration has the potential to enable a combined view to be taken of risks and demand profiles to provide the most appropriate Service. **Ease of contact** - Improved ease of contact with the Police through 101 appears to be generating new business. Following the introduction of 101, demand increased steadily for 12 to 18 months before levelling off at the higher level and no drop was seen elsewhere. SECAmb has experienced a consistent increase in demand for 999 services with the introduction of the NHS 111 Service. With greater public uptake of new technology and use of social media, the way 999 and non-emergency calls are processed and responded to across agencies will need to adjust. This will increase the reliance on integrated ICT. **Performance** - Performance for answering non-emergency calls is less resilient than emergency because 999 lines take priority, with staff taken from non-emergency calls to ensure 999 lines are sufficiently staffed.