

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

25 February 2011

Evaluation of LIFE Project

Report of the Chief Officer

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1. Summary

- 1.1 An evaluation of the Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) course was commissioned to establish the cost benefit of HFRS undertaking delivery of this activity.
- 1.2 Since its introduction the LIFE Project has been perceived as an established and well recognised Youth Engagement intervention programme. All parties involved agree it is beneficial in influencing young people's development and in preventing young people becoming involved in antisocial behaviour, including fire crime.
- 1.3 The total cost of LIFE courses for the year 2009/10 was £114,286. The contribution made by Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) was £23,700 leaving a shortfall in funding of £90,586.
- 1.4 CSPs are not in a position to provide the necessary financial commitment for the LIFE course to continue in its current format. In addition, consultation has indicated that CSPs will find it increasingly difficult to provide funding at the current level.
- 1.5 It is recognised that the fire service have a role in influencing young people's lives and the cessation of the course would be a loss. However, alternative approaches/interactions are available. These activities are delivered and administered at a local level.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee (PRSC) note the decision to cease delivery of the LIFE course from April 2011, and the rationale behind the decision.

3. Introduction and background

- 3.1 The LIFE project is a well established programme that fully complies with the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Children and Young People (CYP) strategy, supporting the 'prevent and deter' framework, and meets the five criteria of the Every Child Matters agenda. LIFE courses were first introduced in Hampshire in 2004. A total of 72 courses will have been provided by the end of 2010/11.
- 3.2 The stated purpose of the course is designed to change the attitude and behaviour of the young people by getting them to;
- Adopt a new set of values
 - Address the consequences of antisocial and fire setting behaviour
 - Work co-operatively with others
 - See the advantage of improving their own learning and performance
 - Gain self esteem and confidence
 - Communicate better
- 3.3 HFRS take the sole responsibility for delivering the LIFE course and provide all physical and human resources. The costs of the courses are made up as follows;
- 1 co-ordinator (Watch Manager [WM])
 - A core of 50 trained instructors
 - 1 dedicated appliance
 - Associated equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

4. Evaluation outcomes

- 4.1 HFRS have no formal ongoing appraisal of incidents of offending and reoffending following completion of the course; however, information from partner agencies suggests that the LIFE courses have achieved their objectives. As an isolated control measure it is difficult to ascertain how effective the course is in deterring antisocial behaviour and fire crime.
- 4.2 HFRS deliver the LIFE course which is part funded by Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). The shortfall in funding is currently provided by HFRS. The contribution from CSPs towards the cost of twelve LIFE Courses during 2009/10 was £23,700.

The total personnel costs incurred by HFRS for LIFE courses, during 2009/10 was £78,257. This includes:

WMA – £42,257 pa
Instructors overtime payments – £36,000 pa

Additional costs came to £35,989;

- IT Equipment – £1,085
- Instructor travel – £2,441
- Student travel – £5,741
- Catering – £6,336
- T-shirts for pass out – £1,057
- Stationery – £883
- Training materials – £9446 (one off payment)
- Videos – £9000 (no longer produced as part of the course)

The total cost to run 12 LIFE courses is £114,286 less the contribution from CSPs of £23,700 leaving a final amount of £90,546.

This means that the cost to HFRS for each LIFE course for 12 people is £7,545. This equates to £125 per person per day.

- 4.3 With the change to the annual leave service order it has become more difficult to use on duty personnel and it is envisaged that this will continue in the future, hence the instructor costs cannot be reduced and may well increase.
- 4.4 Due to the high ratio of instructors to students (1:2) the course is reliant upon the commitment of HFRS personnel. It is difficult to plan with certainty as voluntary work is not guaranteed. This could have a negative impact on the reputation of HFRS regarding our ability to deliver.
- 4.5 A number of instructors take annual leave from their primary contract with HFRS and undertake the instructional role which may be paid at a higher rate. This raises questions regarding worklife balance.

5. Supporting our aims and corporate objectives

- 5.1 The corporate objectives to which the LIFE programme contributes, are;
- People – reduce the number of people killed or injured by fires by 25% by 2012 (from 2008)
 - Property – reduce the number of fires started deliberately by 20% by 2012 (from 2008)
 - Community – help our partner organisations to achieve their aims

- 5.2 There is no evidence to support the claim that the course provides a reduction in the number of people killed or injured in fires.
- 5.3 With the majority of referrals being presented identifying anti-social behaviour (ASB) as the main reason, this clearly supports the community. However there are few that make reference to fire-setting although it is recognised that ASB can lead to fire-setting.

6. Risk analysis

- 6.1 The withdrawal from the LIFE course has the potential for the increase in ASB and incidents of arson.

7. Risk reduction control measures

- 7.1 It has been identified that there are alternative providers of youth intervention programmes, such as Dreamwall who provide a 14 day programme catering for 12 young people.
- 7.2 There are now a number of initiatives available on the Service Delivery Initiatives Register that have similar stated objectives to the LIFE course. These are managed and delivered locally at group and station level.

8. People Impact Assessment (PIA)

- 8.1 The existing PIA would be applicable.
- 8.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

9. Sustainability and environmental impact assessment

- 9.1 The delivery of the LIFE course required instructors to travel from across Hampshire to the delivery locations. Locally delivered initiatives will reduce this environmental impact.

10. Resource implications

- 10.1 Human resources

There would be substantial efficiency savings for the Service requiring the re-location of a WM(A). With the impact of the Efficient and Flexible Crewing taking effect, the availability of staff for this type of activity will become severely limited.

10.2 Physical resources

There would be an excess of youth engagement equipment that could be diverted to other corporate activities.

10.3 Financial implications

10.3.1 Dreamwall provide a 14-day course catering for 12 people at a cost of £14,000 per course. This equates to £83 per person per day compared to approximately £125 for the LIFE project.

10.3.2 By delivering youth intervention activities locally the cost of the WM Coordinator post can be saved. The physical resources for LIFE can be managed at a single station or group and shared across HFRS.

10.3.3 From April 2010 an administrator was allocated to the LIFE course for 3 days a week at a cost of £12,696 per annum. This would also be saved for locally managed and run initiatives.

11. Consultation

11.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Group Managers, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and referring agencies.

12. Conclusion

12.1 There is no doubt that the LIFE course has been seen as an effective tool in shaping the behaviour and attitudes of young people and there is some evidence that reoffending rates have been reduced. However the costs associated with delivering the LIFE course will become a more significant burden for HFRS as the funding for CSPs comes under more pressure.

12.2 Since the inception of Service Delivery and the Service Delivery Process Model, which includes a Risk Reduction Initiatives Register, groups and stations have been actively developing programmes to be delivered at a local level. This replaces the need for centralised control and coordination of risk reduction initiatives; these initiatives offer a significant reduction in financial implications for HFRS.