

## **Report of the Assistant Director - Prevention**

### **Young Firefighters Association**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To review the current position of the Young Firefighters Association (YFA) and propose a recommendation to alter the delivery model prior to recommencement following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.
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#### **Recommendation**

***It is recommended that the existing Young Firefighters Association (YFA) be replaced by the NFCC endorsed format UK Fire Cadets, with a branch based at Droitwich Fire Station.***

#### **Introduction and Background**

2. The Young Firefighters Association (YFA) has been running for 22 years in its various formats. The YFA is based at Droitwich Fire Station where the Service has provided accommodation for the branch in one of the terraced buildings adjacent to the drill yard.
3. The branch at Droitwich is run by a team of volunteer instructors including Wholetime and On-call staff and previous Young Firefighters.
4. All YFA activities were suspended in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic and they have not recommenced. This has provided a useful pause to review the Service youth engagement offer and how this contributes to our wider fire safety and prevention activities.

#### **Options for Future Delivery**

5. Three main options have been considered:
  - i. No changes are made and the YFA remains in its current format;
  - ii. The YFA is disbanded and the budget / resources allocated are reinvested into prevention related activities focused on young people / youth engagement;
  - iii. HWFRS moves from delivering the existing Young Firefighters Association (YFA) model, to the NFCC endorsed format UK Fire Cadets with a branch based at Droitwich Fire Station.

## **Option 1 – Continue with the YFA in its current format**

6. Youth engagement is led by the Prevention Department and the YFA links directly into the Station Commander for Prevention who oversees its smooth running. The YFA Constitution states the following as aims and objectives:
- (i) To recruit young people and allow them the opportunity of joining a uniformed youth organisation associated with a statutory agency.
  - (ii) To assist in the member's development, both mentally and physically while promoting self-discipline, social consciousness and community awareness.
  - (iii) To promote the Fire Service activities and increase awareness of community safety matters.
  - (iv) To foster a spirit of adventure and develop qualities for leadership, teambuilding and active participation amongst its members.
  - (v) Supporting the County's Strategy for Children and Young People, by building safer and stronger communities.

## **Support for the YFA**

7. Youth engagement carries with it clear rules and procedures. The services of a local Youth Development Agency (Young Solutions) have been employed over recent years to independently assess the efficacy of the structure and process utilised to facilitate YFA activities. These services are secured by an annual subscription to Young Solutions (This secures an organisational health check bi-annually and has allowed volunteers to access their eLearning website). It also delivers up-to-date training on aspects of Youth Work, including Safeguarding, Dealing with Challenging Behaviour and Recognising Signs of Abuse etc. Similarly, the lead instructors are invited to the Prevention department's Quarterly Safeguarding meetings where relevant and attend by exception. Prevention Managers attend these meetings and subsequently cascade information to relevant staff.
8. The audit process by both Worcestershire County Council and Young Solutions has shown the YFA to be managed in a safe and effective manner. All volunteer instructors have up-to-date Enhanced DBS checks and there is an instructor recruitment protocol in place.
9. The YFA is allocated a budget of £6,000 to maintain its function, managed by the Prevention Department. However, the true cost of hosting the YFA is greater when taking account of the cost of the appliance and its maintenance provided for the YFA to use and the time awarded for instructors to run the YFA.

## **Option 2 – The YFA is disbanded and the budget reinvested into prevention related activities focused on young people / youth engagement**

10. The £6,000 budget could be reallocated into the Prevention Department if a decision was taken to disband the YFA and not consider an alternative youth engagement model. In this scenario the funds could be used for specific targeting of activity linked specifically to identified risks. There would also be a reduction in costs within Fleet department and an existing reserve fire engine could be removed from the fleet. Additionally, a reasonable amount of Officer time and capacity would be released back into the Service, including within the prevention department and with volunteer members of staff being time off for existing YFA activities.

## **Option 3 – UK Fire Cadets – Considerations**

11. [UK Fire Cadets](#) operates in many Fire and Rescue Services and there are 200 units across the country. It is a NFCC sponsored organisation with similar aims and objectives to the YFA and is a programme affiliated to the Fire Standards Board. It is a nationally recognised inclusive and progressive uniformed youth organisation delivered through Fire and Rescue Services, which inspires and empowers young people to be the best they can be.
12. UK Fire Cadets Board meets regularly and sits within the Children and Young People Workstream of the NFCC. This collaborative working allows for benefits to children and young people and also a standard approach to the following:
  - a. Uniform
  - b. Award scheme with B-TEC accreditation
  - c. Branding
  - d. Event and activities
  - e. Website
  - f. Data-management system
  - g. Support and Guidance for services
  - h. Networking and development opportunities for Cadet Instructors and managers
13. UK Fire Cadets offers a wide range of services, free of charge, to NFCC affiliated UKFRS. Some of the services include:
  - (i) Access to a free IT software called FireCadet Manager, which can be used for HR functions of instructors and cadets, including; attendance, training, competency, fundraising and a secure communication with cadets and carers/adults.
  - (ii) Training materials, e.g. Youth Fireground Training Manual.
  - (iii) Service advice and support via regional Fire Cadet representatives.
  - (iv) Access to the knowledge and experience of a national group through an official forum.
  - (v) Contribution to the future of UKFRS youth engagement at annual conferences, consultations and joint working opportunities.

14. There is no cost to joining the UK Fire Cadets and the services they provide will ensure our young people are safe, developed and receiving the fullest experience.
15. A number of meetings have taken place over the last three months with key stakeholders across the Service including YFA Leads and Prevention Leads where the UK Fire Cadet Model was presented in detail. Following discussions, all parties agreed that the Service, instructors and young people would benefit from moving to the NFCC UK Fire Cadet delivery model.
16. A budget of £6000.00 per annum is currently allocated to the YFA, it is anticipated that this will be sufficient to enable successful transition to the UK Fire Cadets. This will be used to purchase new uniforms, allow the branch to improve and replace equipment and facilitate instructor training. This will be possible by utilising the current Prevention budget.
17. To ensure appropriate oversight and support, the Young Solutions organisation will be commissioned to independently assess the efficacy of the structure and process utilised to facilitate Fire Cadet activities.

### **UK Fire Cadets - Alignment to Service Strategies and the national picture**

18. The Service's Community Risk Management Plan 2021 - 2025 (CRMP page 13) includes a commitment to supporting the YFA as part of the Prevention workstream.
19. Should it be approved, the HWFRS branch of the UK Fire Cadets would also be required to promote Prevention activity and related messages, attending Station Open Days and other public events. Similarly, Fire Cadets would be encouraged to engage with their peer group and communicate Prevention messages. It is anticipated that Prevention will be at the centre of the activities UK Fire Cadets undertake, which is the main rationale for this initiative from the Fire Authority's perspective as it will help deliver one of our key statutory functions.
20. A gap analysis of the Prevention department's activity against the Fire Standards Board's new Prevention Fire Standard has recently been undertaken. The inclusion of a youth engagement initiative could be used as evidence of the Prevention department's key activities to close a number of the gaps such as '5. Optimise resources to proactively engage and educate the community it serves, working collaboratively with others as and when appropriate'.

### **Conclusion/Summary**

21. Youth engagement via the YFA has been a staple within the Service for the past 22 years providing the Service with the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of young people, who in turn can engage and influence their peers on matters relating to their safety and well-being.
22. Having a renewed youth engagement platform to support the Service's CRMP and Prevention Strategy, promoting prevention message and assisting in the delivery of Prevention activities, provides an opportunity for young people locally to develop and enjoy an immersive experience in a Fire and Rescue environment.

23. Moving to UK Fire Cadets will enable the group to take advantage of a nationally structured programme that is evolving and improving with current topics and lessons.
24. If the recommendation is approved, it is anticipated that the HWFRS Unit of the UK Fire Cadets would commence operating in September 2022. This will align with the start of a new academic year and will also allow sufficient time to implement any changes identified in the gap analysis.

### Corporate Considerations

<p><b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>The Service provides a £6K budget annually to cover YFA running costs and provides suitable accommodation for their base location (Marshall House at Training and Development Centre). It is anticipated that this will be sufficient to allow for the setup of the UK Fire Cadet Unit.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).</p>	<p>Youth engagement supports the Service's CRMP and Prevention Strategy by engaging with (and providing unique opportunities for) young people locally to develop and enjoy an immersive experience in a Fire and Rescue environment and in doing so assisting them to influence their peers. It also allows the Service to demonstrate inclusivity by recognising the diversity of our community and providing equality of access to our Prevention agenda.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>Working with young people does present an element of corporate risk; however, the branch is well supported and managed within the Prevention Department and has performed well in two recent (independent) audits. A Gap Analysis has been produced by Prevention Managers which will be completed prior to commencing any NFCC UK Fire Cadets meetings.</p>
<p><b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>A People Impact Assessment is required to be completed initially and annually in the Gap Analysis with assistance from the service EDI lead officer.</p>