Briefing Paper – Operation Braidwood

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>16/02/2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief Title</td>
<td>Operation Braidwood – Mutual Aid Support from Fire and Rescue Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepared by</td>
<td>Derek McCullough, EPRR Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presented to</td>
<td>Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>To provide an overview of the collaborative work undertaken between the Fire and Rescue Services and South Western Ambulance service, as part of the United Kingdom Covid 19 pandemic response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td>This paper is accepted as an accurate record of the achievements and effectiveness of the partnership working between Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust</td>
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| Executive Summary: | The partnership working between the 5 fire and rescue services, including Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, known as Operation Braidwood, has delivered many positives both in terms of the continuity of patient care during extreme pressures experienced by SWAST, service delivery protection, partnership working and new skills set developments that it is an opportunity that should be capitalised on for the future services to the Public |
1. Introduction

1.1 During the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust’s (SWAST) response to the initial wave of Covid19, in March 2020, it successfully introduced ‘dual crewing’ of a number of its ambulances, in partnership with Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire, Avon and Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Services. These ambulances were crewed by 1 Fire Fighter and a member of SWAST staff.

1.2 Following the passing of the first wave of Covid19 in the South West, this mutual aid was stood down in August 2020, having responded to over 6000 calls and significantly contributing to the continuity of patient care.

1.3 Since then United Kingdom experienced further waves of Covid19 infections and in November 2020, in response SWAST agreed with the 5 Fire and Rescue Services in the South West to reactivate this mutual aid, known as Operation Braidwood, to safeguard the Trust’s service delivery and to protect patient care in communities across the Trust area.

1.4 These dual crewed ambulances have made and continue to make a significant and positive impact in ensuring that during demand surges, every patient will get the care they need.

2. Background

2.1 SWAST continues to respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Resource Escalation Action Plan (REAP) level is currently at its highest level and has been for some months, as many English Ambulance Trusts are.

2.2 To maintain service delivery and ensure that the wider NHS is not overwhelmed, once lockdown restrictions were eased, consideration was been given to a number of mutual aid threads. Generally, this would be managed with cross boarder assistance from neighbouring NHS Ambulance Trusts.

2.3 However, as demand has significantly impacted all other NHS Ambulance Trust’s it was unlikely that mutual aid using this traditional model would be sustainable, SWAST approached its partner agencies, including Fire and Rescue services to request the provision of mutual aid, a request which was supported by the Local Resilience Forums / Strategic Co-ordination Groups.

2.4 The model adopted was for fire fighters with an Emergency Fire Appliance Drivers qualification to crew with a SWAST member of staff and undertake emergency driving and support skills to the SWAST member of staff, which was a unique model compared to other ambulance Trust that had sought fire and rescue or military assistance.
2.5 This project was a fantastic example of partnership working, as part of the Covid19 response and therefore SWAST and all FRS’s have taken the opportunity to display to patients and the wider Public, the supreme efforts that were being made to ensure they receive the care they need throughout this pandemic. FRS personnel have worn service issued non fire fighting uniform whilst on duty, in order to positively represent their own organisation.

3. On-boarding

3.1 During the last week of March 2020, like many other service providers, SWAST as was busy planning for business continuity, following the confirmation that the Covid 19 (C19) pandemic would be affecting the United Kingdom imminently.

3.2 SWAST linked with Imperial College London, to start providing data on the predicted impact of C19 and as a result developed a suite of contingencies, to sustain patient care against the increased demand, loss of its own staff and impact on the wider NHS health community as a whole

3.3 One of these contingencies was to link with partner agencies that had a skill set that could be used by SWAST and naturally the fire and rescue service met that need

3.4 It must be commended that within a two week period an agreement had been reached with each of the five fire and rescue services that are within SWAST’s footprint, including Gloucestershire Fire and rescue Service, which is testament to the forward thinking and partnership working between the 6 organisations and their nominated leads

3.5 Each FRS sought expressions of interest from its staff, to support ambulance driving and within GFRS, a total of 57 fire fighters have stepped up to support SWAST, equating to over 10% of the workforce

3.6 A concept of operations was agreed and several training centres were established in order to provide fire fighters with equipment and vehicle familiarisation to be able to safely operate and support SWAST staff

3.7 On 13th April 2020 the first shifts where fire fighters were working alongside SWAST staff commenced with GFRS going ‘live’ on 27th April
4. Training

4.1 In order for fire fighters to have safe systems of work, be effective in supporting the SWAST clinician and meet some essential criteria for all persons who are patient facing, a short training course was developed, which was then augmented once fire fighters arrived for shift, by SWAST Operational Commanders through vocational training.

4.2 As Operation Braidwood developed and in between C19 surges a more in depth training package was developed and all fire fighters were required to complete a skills passport (appendix 1).

5. Phases and tasking

5.1 During the initial phase fire fighters were crewed to Emergency Care Assistants and were tasked to low acuity patients, following triage, or to patients that had already been assessed by a health care clinician.

5.2 These resources would also have been tasked to immediate life threatening calls such a cardiac arrest, if they were the nearest resource, in order to provide immediate aid until advanced life support / critical care could arrive and continue care.

5.3 As demand increased and acuity of patients were increasing due to C19, a second phase was developed, supported by the skills passport, in order that fire fighters could crew with a Paramedic and be tasked to all categories of calls, which allowed for more integration of fire fighters into SWAST and for SWAST to be responsive to patient needs.

6. Activity – Table 1 shows the number of incidents attended by a SWAST / Fire Fighter dual crew during phase 1 (March – August 2020)
Table 2 shows the activity from November 2020 until 12$^{th}$ February 2022

Key:

Category 1 – Calls from people with life-threatening illnesses or injuries.
Category 2 – Emergency calls
Category 3 – Urgent calls
Category 4 – Less urgent calls
Category 5 – Locally agreed
ROSC – return of spontaneous circulation post cardiac arrest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rolling Total activity since 2nd Nov 2020</th>
<th>Fire &amp; Rescue Service Number of Shifts</th>
<th>Cat 1</th>
<th>Cat 2</th>
<th>Cat 3</th>
<th>Cat 4</th>
<th>Cat 5</th>
<th>Number of transfers</th>
<th>Total Number of calls</th>
<th>Number of hours actively engaged at incidents</th>
<th>Number of patients treated and discharged at scene</th>
<th>Number of Covid Patients</th>
<th>Number of patients transported to Nightingale Hospital</th>
<th>ROSC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>1476</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devon &amp; Somerset</td>
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<td>1519</td>
<td>5553</td>
<td>2289</td>
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<td>Gloucestershire</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>5581</td>
<td>1311</td>
<td>8212</td>
<td>605</td>
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<td>9686</td>
<td>1014</td>
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7. Benefits analysis

7.1 At the outset of this joint partnership working both SWAST and GFRS were operating in an emergency response mode to the threat of the pandemic. As such the foreseen benefit was maintenance of service and therefore delivery of patient care. However overtime there is now evidence of a number of quality benefits that have been delivered, that include;

- Improved patient experience – many positive plaudits received from patients and families of patients recognizing the care they have received and the partnership working
- GFRS & SWAST positive Public relations – high profile media both through television reports and social media
- Joint Training – increase in local GFRS and SWAST networking that has led to increase joint training
- Skills set – fire fighters returning to fire stations with new skills to share amongst crew on patient care and handling and trauma management. This is also reciprocated with ambulance staff having an increased knowledge of safe systems of work and increased awareness of home safety plans
- An increasing number of retained fire fighters that have changed their main career and have joined SWAST as Emergency Care Assistants which in turn helps enhance fire crew pooled skills
- GFRS continues to lead the cardiac care response scheme with a number of other FRS’s looking to adopt a similar scheme
- Improved understanding of the NHS ambulance service by fire fighters and how it links in to continued care once a casualty leaves scene as well as managing expectations
- Improved situation awareness at incidents where GFRS and SWAST are working together, helping embed the JESIP doctrine
8. Future legacy

8.1 With the current easing of C19 and the Government drive towards a new normal and living with C19, the continued agreement between the 5 Chief Fire Officers and SWAST Chief Executive Officer is due to end after Easter 2022.

8.2 Operation Braidwood has delivered so many positives both in terms of the continuity of patient care during extreme pressures experienced by SWAST, service delivery protection, partnership working and new skills set developments that it is an opportunity that should be capitalised on for the future.

8.3 This will ensure future organisational professional growth and resilience for both GFRS and SWAST and this paper recommends that the achievements of Operation Braidwood be recognised and plaudit and that key staff work on enhancing future collaboration and maximising the legacy that Operation Braidwood will leave once it closes.

9. Recognition

9.1 Through this paper SWAST would like to recognise and thank the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer, his management team and the fire fighters that stepped up to the challenge, for the unswerving support, professionalism and partnership working that SWAST has received, understanding the pressures that GFRS have experienced through C19 alongside the many other requests for support that the service received.

Derek McCullough - EPRR Manager