

Report to	Executive Panel
Report no	EP/2017/07/11
Date	17/07/17
Lead Officer	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Dawn Docx (01745 535254)
Subject	Funding the Community Assistance Team



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This paper is to update Members on the progress of the Community Assistance Team (CAT) pilot which seeks to assist people who have fallen but are not injured.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 To update Members on the progress of the Community Assistance Team (CAT) pilot which seeks to assist people who have fallen but are not injured. Members will also be asked to recommend to the FRA that, if necessary, the pilot is financially supported by providing up to £100,000 from reserves. This would be one off funding until the end of March 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3 Members are asked to support the project to the end of the financial year by agreeing to underpin the costs with £100,000 earmarked from general reserves.

BACKGROUND

- 4 In 2016 the Tri- service Collaboration Programme Board developed the concept of NWFRS responding on behalf of WAST to promptly assist people who had fallen but not sustained an injury. In addition to assisting people to get up, to be reassured and supported they are also offered a "Safe and Well" check which provides them with advice on security and fire safety.

- 5 The setting-up costs of the team that undertook this work were supported by a £100,000 grant sourced through a collaborative bid between NWFRS and Galw Gofal. The team itself was made up of existing FRS employees who were seconded from their existing roles and suitably trained to provide the service. They worked in shifts of two people to cover the period of 7am – 11pm, seven days a week, 365 days per year.
- 6 To cover this shift pattern seven people were seconded into the Community Assistance Team (CAT) which provided one team to cover the Denbighshire and Conwy area.
- 7 The evaluation of this project shows how this pilot was a resounding success with 375 people helped by CAT between 1st August 2016 and 31st March 2017. On 96% of occasions no further support was required from WAST and, most importantly, the response time from CAT was on average 26 minutes, which contrasts with an ambulance attendance time which can be up to 4 hours. This ensured that the person who had fallen received prompt help and that their condition did not deteriorate.

INFORMATION

- 8 The aim of the pilot was to prove the concept with the long term aim that this service should be provided by firefighters. It was recognised that due to national negotiations this was not the right time to transfer this work to firefighters and so it was decided to continue the scheme for one more year until the end of March 2018.
- 9 The project had been presented to the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) board who were eager to see this continue and encouraged a bid to be submitted under the “Caremore” scheme. This bid was developed with and monitored by senior WAST managers. Officers were reassured by WAST managers that this was a strong bid and it was submitted at the end of February 2017.
- 10 The timescales for assessing the bid were more extensive than had been indicated by WAST and in the meantime the secondment of the employees who had been part of the pilot had come to an end and they returned to their previous roles. Because of the delay in the bidding process and the strong desire not to have a gap in service provision the decision was made to recruit seven people to replace the original team. The intention was that when the grant bid was successful then more people would be recruited from a holding list to extend the project across the whole of North Wales.

- 11 Consequently a new CAT has been employed, on one year fixed term contracts, they have been trained and are currently providing the service primarily in Conwy and Denbighshire but also in the Wrexham and Flintshire areas.
- 12 Unfortunately at the end of June 2017 it was confirmed by WAST that the "Caremore" bid had not been successful. Confirmation of why it has been unsuccessful has not yet been provided. In light of the Welsh Government's desire to encourage cross sector working between Fire and Ambulance in Wales we are currently in dialogue with Welsh Government about this issue and looking for other sources of funding.
- 13 Given the uncertainty about external funding we will seek to fund this project from within the current budget. However should this not be possible it is recommended that the Fire and Rescue Authority underpin this project to the end of the financial year, when the fixed term contracts come to an end. The recommendation is that £100,000 is earmarked from the general reserve and used, if necessary, to fund the project until the end of March 2018.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	To facilitate the development of a better integrated fire and rescue service, which contributes to the wider health promotion agenda
Budget	The full employee cost (including oncosts) of a CAT of 7 members is £200,000 p.a. However only part year funding of £170,000 will be needed and £70,000 of that can be offset by holding vacant posts this year.
Legal	CAT is a non-statutory service for the Fire and Rescue Authority.
Staffing	If the recommendation is not approved 7 new employees will be at risk of redundancy.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	None identified.
Risks	By agreeing to underpin this pilot from general reserves the risk is that, if it is needed, it reduces the amount of reserves available to underpin the whole budget in future years.