

**BRIEFING NOTE: Walsall Health and Wellbeing Board**  
**September 2016**



Marmot Objectives



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**Benefits to the Board:**

**The key benefits to the Board:**

- WMFS have an established and embedded Prevention Based Activity programme that has matured over a number of years working on an evidence based approach to vulnerability. This experience would be beneficial to the Board to be drawn upon when planning key events and planning strategic priorities.
- The Fire Service would bring another dimension to the connections available to the Board adding another strategic perspective to health equalities.
- WMFS staff are key members of local Safeguarding Boards and as such are an important partner agency in helping to keep vulnerable people and families safe from harm.

<sup>1</sup> This is our formal MARMOT heading that has been agreed by Prof Sir Michael Marmot and University College London.

- WMFS have a particularly important and valuable role to play with regard to keeping the frail and elderly safe and protected in their home. (This is of particular importance when judged against the rising costs associated with the projected increase in the number of elderly people living in the community)
- As with other Public Sector organisations we are committed to the reduction in the calls to all service providers by targeting individuals linked to the 6 marmot objectives.
- WMFS are established in helping to prevent premature deaths through the consequence of ill health or health inequalities and poor living conditions. In over 80% of fire Deaths the person is known to have had some mental health issue, suffering from Dementia, drug or alcohol misuse.
- Our prevention based activities empower people to take personal responsibility to live independently and reduce or minimise their risk to themselves or community through lifestyle changes.
- To help identify gaps and improve access to services through interaction with children, young people and adults.
- In these difficult financial times our resources can be appropriately targeted or included within the strategic achievement of Health & Wellbeing and Local Authority objectives and outcomes.
- Help work towards reducing the number of deaths, especially seasonal deaths, within the home.
- Provide an evidence based approach which support all partnership agencies in achieving stated objectives and outcomes

**If you require further information please contact me as shown below.**

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### **Overview:**

West Midlands Fire Service has an embedded strategy and culture designed to reduce risk and promote healthier lifestyles within the Local Communities of the West Midlands. Our vision of 'Making West Midlands Safer, Healthier & Stronger' and our commitment to the 6 Marmot objectives linked to the 'wider determinants of health' also contribute to the achievement of our Partner and Local Authority Strategies and stated objectives and outcomes. West Midlands Fire Service is able to utilise its unique position of trust within the wider community to develop meaningful engagement at a local level. This is of particular value when working with disaffected young people, families and the frail elderly.

Our 'cross cutting' and innovative programmes have been formally endorsed by University College London, Health Equity Team (previously referred to as the 'Marmot Team') and is one of only 3 fire services nationally to have been recognised with "Marmot Partnership" status. The Marmot principles are not laid over our

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strategies but fully integrated within the everyday work and culture of WMFS and relate strongly to the aim of reducing inequalities and tackling the root 'cause of the causes' to reduce fires, fire deaths and arson. In November 2014 we are held a national conference where we showcased our wide range of programmes and work undertaken across the West Midlands. In his keynote address Professor Sir Michael stated how pleased was to be given the opportunity to publicly endorse our work.

### **Outcomes:**

WMFS are in a position to fully contribute to the work of the Health and Well Being Board across a wide range of areas, but the main overall aim for inclusion onto the Health and Wellbeing Board is our ability to provide a meaningful contribution to the aim of achieving a reduction in preventable ill health and early death; working in partnership to achieve a measurable improvement in health inequalities linked to improving the well-being of the most deprived and vulnerable communities within the local area. We are in a position to provide opportunities and resources which can add value towards the achievement of other agencies priorities, objectives and outcomes through the provision of neighbourhood based interactive and preventative activities; designed to empower local people to reduce risk taking behaviours and to improve their overall health and well-being through measurable behaviour change; to continually look at ways in which to communicate healthier lifestyles through role models and activities with all age groups cultures and ethnicity.

### **A 'snapshot' of some of the key areas of the MARMOT objectives that the fire Service contribute to are:**

**Making Children healthier** – Bloxwich Fire Cadets, the newest branch of young fire-fighter programmes in the brigade, was instigated by White Watch earlier in 2016. Working in partnership with Walsall College, the group selected its instructor team from among their public service students. Using local profiling from Early Help and Troubled Families boards, the group were able to identify specific wards in which poverty and deprivation had created a culture where lack of aspiration and inactivity persisted; the cadet group now gives a number of these young people positive engagement, teaches teamwork and practical physical skills for life through positive activity, championing West Midlands Fire Service as a key innovator in progressing life chances for children.



- **Making Neighbourhoods healthy** – Utilising our Vulnerable Person Officers to reduce harm and risk to the most vulnerable people in society. This is particularly useful when helping to ensure that frail elderly achieve their full potential in terms of health and well-being and remain living at home, safe from risk and harm. Our prevention based activities support healthier living, through activities like Living Well Feeling Safe initiatives,



Our Safe and Well visits and referrals, include a 1:1 detailed Home Safety assessment and is specifically aimed at the most vulnerable and high risk living in the community. Delivering home and fire safety advice designed to help keep the most vulnerable safe. Using the unique opportunity of engaging householders directly in their own home we signpost people to other appropriate services, using the MECC (Making Every Contact Count) approach. Making a significant difference to reducing the number of fires in the home and helping to keep people living independently in their own homes for longer.

Our strategy includes working with Young People to help keep them safe from harm, reduce alcohol and drug abuse and associated anti-social behaviour. This work can involve direct 1:1 mentoring and engagement or through a partnership overall strategic approach. For example, we are currently working with a range of partners to provide positive engagement and trying to create healthier mind-sets in young people on Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) – culminating in an overnight camp later in the summer where rule-setting, teamwork and the importance of their own emotional wellbeing in influencing their future behaviours.



- **Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing** – One of our key objectives is identifying those with mental health and dementia issues, reducing their risk and signposting to appropriate support partners. We are also taking an active part in Dementia Gateway Centres which involve engaging with carers and care providers to maintain independent living longer. Over 80% of fire deaths involve people with either mental health issues or Dementia.

- **Behavioural Change: Making life styles healthier** – All WMFS local Command staff, (including front line firefighters) are trained in MECC principles which improve our understanding and delivery of a healthy living agenda; again linking design and delivery to the 6 Marmot objectives and achievement of social justice for those people and neighbourhoods experiencing inequalities. We positively engage with a range of organisations helping to achieve partner overall objectives and measurable outcomes. For example working closely with the Drug and Alcohol Team(s) to identify the most vulnerable in society, all of which helps to reduce risk to those people and communities designated as being in the lowest social gradient. WMFS have an established track record of working successfully with those neighbourhoods who traditionally experience the worst health outcomes; and not surprisingly also record the highest number of dwelling fires, fire deaths and arson. These communities are often judged to be the most difficult group to engage and to achieve long term measurable behavioural change. WMFS believe their unique place in society can help them to provide a meaningful contribution to achieving improved health outcomes for all communities and partner agencies



**Case Examples:**

**Vulnerable People Officer (VPO)**



risk group where we positively target.

There are a number of VPO officers that work in Black Country North. Having undertaken a full week of intensive training that includes Child Protection, Adult Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health and Dementia they are able to engage positively with vulnerable and high risk clients. Partners understand that they are able to signpost to the relevant service and agencies refer clients to them where they provide a more detailed and comprehensive visit.

They interact and meet with a wide range of people. At the present time there is an increase in fire incidents with mental health or dementia suffers. The VPOs are trained to a very high standard and understand the particular problems that are presented and adjust the safety measures / information accordingly. Hoarders are a high

For example, one VPO has spent over 18 months engaging with a life-long hoarder, helping support the gradual clearance of living pathways through the property and becoming the key point of contact with other partner agencies to deliver their support for the lady's mental health and social care needs. This VPO has used great inter-personal skill combined with the integrity of the WMFS brand to develop a

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trusted relationship with this individual where all other agencies had failed to successfully engage. VPOs can also allocate specialist equipment to those who are bed bound or chair dependent and provide fire retardant bedding and fire retardant throws. Letter box protectors are also available for those at risk of arson and/or domestic violence. In order to ensure equity of service delivery some members of staff are trained in 'signing' and provide a much needed resource for a high risk vulnerable group.

### **Partnership Working to Combat Social Isolation**

Local statistics and demographics show that Aldridge has a higher number of older people living alone than any other station area in Walsall. Further comparing our Safe & Well and fire incident records with local data highlighted that older lone males were often unknown to any isolation-support services until such time as fires occurred. Watch Commander Carey from Aldridge station worked closely with Royal Voluntary Service, Walsall Council and UK Men's Sheds Association to help launch the 'Aldridge Shed' earlier this summer. He said, "We know that men of a certain age – older, retired and independent – are among those with whom we have a lot less contact as a fire service. If they live alone, they can be socially isolated and possibly at more risk in the home. The shed is designed to give them a safe, friendly and inclusive place to meet with a sense of purpose. Members will work on practical things, like woodwork. Similar groups have had a huge impact in helping people overcome often chronic loneliness". The Shed is growing week by week with practical support from crews, a number of the more-than-thirty participants have taken advantage of our Safe & Well checks and members have reported a huge improvement in their overall health and wellbeing.



### **Smoking Cessation**

Public Health Walsall's 'No Smoking Week' is supported by all stations and crews on an annual basis within our communities, to help encourage people to quit and so improve both their fire risk at home and their physical health. Last year, one station organised and hosted a full Smoking Cessation day, inviting the Public Health 'bus' on site and encouraging members of the public to undertake free health-checks whilst giving advice alongside health colleagues. During the rest of the year, highlighting the risks of smoking from both a health and fire safety perspective is a fully integrated element of our Safe and Well visit.

### **GP Engagement**

Our partnership team have worked very closely alongside colleagues from Public Health, Walsall Healthcare Trust and the CCG to promote the benefit of fire service involvement as preventative health asset. In recent weeks and months, officers have addressed Practice Nurse Forums and an audience of over 40 GPs by invite from partners, promoting the benefit of engagement with our Safe & Well services to their patients to help improve overall public health and reduce some of the strain on frontline services. Our work has been further locally endorsed by colleagues from Safeguarding and Social Care teams within these forums, helping secure WMFS as a crucial partner in driving forward collaborative efforts to embed the Marmot principles for the benefit of Walsall residents.

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