

Your Reference JSP/KN/00851-2015

Our Reference PO/GW

Contact [REDACTED]

Date 3rd September 2015

Mr. J.S. Pollard LI.B.Hons
Senior Coroner
H M Coroner - Manchester South
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG



GREATER MANCHESTER
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

County Fire Officer & Chief Executive
Peter O'Reilly

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Dear Mr Pollard,

**REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS – KENNETH GEORGE
BAILEY (25th March 2015, 05:51)**

I am writing in response to your Regulation 28 Report, following the inquest into the death of Mr Kenneth George Bailey of [REDACTED]

Before responding to the Report I would like to express and place on record Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Authority's deepest condolences to Mr Bailey's family and friends.

Set out below is the response to the concerns you have raised under Regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013. In the reply I have attempted to provide sufficient information to inform you of the work undertaken by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) to ensure that Mossley fire station achieves a sustainable crewing model that meets the needs of the community. The report is intended to provide information to assist you in understanding why Mossley Fire Station did not have a 'Crewed' fire appliance available to respond to a fire incident which occurred on the 25th March 2015, 05:51hrs at 19 Brooklands Close, Mossley, OL5 0NJ.

Background:

Mossley Fire Station has gone through a number of significant changes over the last few years as a consequence of falling demand for its services (Appendix 1) and the financial constraints placed on GMFRS through budgetary reductions. In response to the financial climate GMFRS has undertaken a number of restructures, changed the overall response model to reflect a significant reduction in fire related incidents (Appendix 2) and made changes to the duty systems to create a more efficient use of resources.



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The current duty system at Mossley, has been in place since November 2013, and is based on 10 staff comprising of 3 Officers and 7 Firefighters, working 10.5 hour days, 7 days per week. The night time fire cover for the Mossley area is provided primarily by Ashton, Stalybridge and Oldham fire stations to give fire cover that meets the published response standards (Appendix 3), as far as reasonably practicable. The response standards are based on our current risk modelling and up to the present date (including the incident on the 25th March 2015) we have achieved our set response standard times for all of the Primary Fires we have attended during the shift period that Mossley Station does not have a Crewed fire engine (i.e. the night shift) (Appendix 4).

The current response standards for Mossley's area are a mix of all risk categories but the majority of premises fall into category 3 (attendance less than 12 minutes) and risk category 4 (attendance less than 17 minutes). The response standards are published and have been consulted via our Corporate Plan 2012–2015. Response standards remain a Key Performance measure for GMFRS and as such are reviewed and published in our Integrated Risk Management Plan annually.

To meet our response standards GMFRS takes a holistic view to providing fire cover. As such all of our 40 other stations are considered in the fire cover planning process and where necessary 'closing in' or standby moves are made to ensure standards are met. In addition GMFRS has agreements with surrounding Fire Authorities to provide mutual assistance and reinforcement if required.

Although the response standards for Mossley can be met from other surrounding stations the Fire Authority has determined that it does not wish to close fire stations if at all possible, despite significant recent financial constraints and budgetary cuts. As such, in 2012 work commenced on looking at alternative crewing solutions that could provide 24 hour cover but at the same time were reflective of operational demands and the need for efficiencies.

Following research it was recommended that the way to provide future cover at Mossley was to develop a new duty system which provided wholetime fire cover through the day and 'on-call' or retained cover during the night and weekend periods. The model selected was based on a similar system which has been in place for a number of years at Marple fire station, which we describe as 'Nucleus crewing'

Recruitment Process for 'On-call'/retained cover:

On call or retained staff are required to meet the same exacting standards as their wholetime colleagues. As such our tests are based on national occupational standards relating to fitness, health, dexterity, vertigo, claustrophobia and academic attainment. Additionally to meet our response standards and thus support our risk modelling, potential candidates need to live within a four minute footprint of the fire station at which they will provide cover. This is based on the old standards of fire cover and designed to meet the previous statutory 'D' and 'C' risk response times of 20 minutes and 8-10 minutes respectively (Source: ODPM, The Fire and Rescue Service Retained Duty System, February 2005). Evidence has shown that a minimum of 12 people are required to provide cover to supplement whole time shift during the night and weekends.

The first 'on-call' recruitment process conducted specifically for Mossley was in early 2014. Of the 20 applicants only three achieved the standards; one of these was subsequently offered a full time contract by the police and withdrew from the process.

The second retained process was initiated by GMFRS following the death of Mr. Bailey. Local help and support was given by [REDACTED] who lived next door to Mr. Bailey, and was one of the rescuers. [REDACTED] also gathered support of local residents, utilising social media, and this helped to attract a much higher level of interest.

Initial interest was positive, with approximately 45 people attending an open evening taster session to acquire knowledge about the role of an 'on-call' firefighter. Positive local action was also provided to increase awareness of the standards required by the means of three taster sessions, which was open to all residents who were interested in applying.

Of the 45 initial expressions of interest, we received 30 applications, of which 15 people attended pretest assessments. Of those 15 attendees, 12 successfully passed elements of the National Firefighter Skills tests. The candidates who did not pass all of the tests were informed of the improvement required to fully satisfy the tests. The full entrance tests were programmed for the 27th of July 2015.

Eligibility checks for all applications (including those who did not attend testing), took place, however, only 6 of the 30 applicants currently met the attendance criteria of living within a four minute footprint of the station.

In parallel to the campaigns locally we have attempted to attract wholetime firefighters who currently work for GMFRS to provide 'on-call' cover. However, the commitment in terms of hours, the levels of pay and the current availability to undertake 'additional hours' at their own stations make 'on-call' cover a financially unattractive option. Having consulted with other Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) around the country, it is clear both nationally and locally that FRS's are finding the attraction, recruitment and retention of retained/on-call firefighters to be challenging.

In light of the struggles we have had to recruit sufficient staff that met the required criteria. GMFRS have recently reflected on the current campaign and an alternative solution has recently been considered and approved by the Fire Authority. This decision stems from the fact that despite our efforts and those of the Mossley community up until the 22nd of July 2015 we only had 3 viable candidates to put forward to undertake basic training, as 3 of the 6 applicants who met the attendance criteria, failed the physical elements of the National Firefighter Skills Test.

The Corporate Leadership Team have recently considered a revised proposal that will provide a solution to several of GMFRS stations (including Mossley) that demand alternative crewing solutions which satisfy the risks of the areas and maintain our published response standards.

Proposed way forward and timeframe for implementation:

A revised duty system based on wholetime staff was approved on the 23rd of July 2015. The revised crewing system will be based on 12 staff working a 24 hour self rostered duty system. This will provide a 12 hour day shift working from the station and within the community and 12 hours 'on-call' cover within a 4 minute attendance time to the station. This is the preferred option following the unsuccessful retained recruitment campaign.

A process has commenced to undertake internal and external recruitment for the roles. This includes approaching other Fire and Rescue Services and to explore opportunities for inter-

brigade transfers. In addition expressions of interest have been sought (22.7.15) for current 'on-call' staff at other locations to apply for the wholetime positions at Mossley Fire station.

It is expected that sufficient staff will be identified to undertake the new duty system by November 2015. This is significantly quicker than if we continue to try and recruit 'on-call' firefighters from the community with no assurances as to their ability to pass the required standards for the role, provide a base location within the 4 minutes or sustain the role long term due to the heavy commitment in terms of the hours of cover needed.

It remains the position of the Fire Authority that despite the continued financial constraints that GMFRS faces it will aim to maintain all of its current stations. In working to a model based on risk, with published response standards there is a recognition that the service can be provided in several ways. It is also recognised that the traditional 'on-call' or retained model is unsustainable in its current format and a solution based on wholetime staff provides a more resilient long term solution for Mossley.

If there are any aspects of this report that you feel are unclear or if you have further questions we would be pleased to either meet with you or provide a further written response.

Once again please allow me to express my deepest condolences to Mr Bailey's family. GMFRS are committed to protecting all our communities and providing a response based on the level of risk associated with the area. We will do this by providing a local and sustainable solution to how appliances are crewed and will continue to consult to ensure our communities and partners are fully informed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

County Fire Officer and Chief Executive