

PRESS RELEASE

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BLUE LIGHT PARTNERS BEGIN FORCED ENTRY TRIAL TO IMPROVE MEDICAL RESPONSE IN THE THAMES VALLEY

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) has joined its emergency service partners in the Thames Valley for a six month trial which aims to improve access to patients who are experiencing certain medical emergencies.

The trial began on Monday 3 April and involves the three fire and rescue services of the Thames Valley providing a forced entry function on behalf of South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) or Thames Valley Police (TVP), where there is a concern for the life of a patient in a premises and ambulance or police crews are unable to make entry.

This initiative and the associated trial aim to reduce the delay delivering medical care to patients, minimise the time ambulance crews are delayed at incidents of this nature and reduce overall cost to the public.

Police have traditionally provided a forced entry function for the ambulance service. However, due to breaking in equipment not being routinely carried, demands on resources and the methods used to gain entry, ambulance services can benefit from fire and rescue services assisting. Fire crews carry the right equipment and can make specialist access, for example, entry at height.

All requests for effecting entry will be made by SCAS or TVP, via control rooms which will channel the request through Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS), the shared emergency call handling centre for the three fire and rescue services.

SCAS or TVP personnel must always be at the scene before a request can be made to TVFCS.

The trial will be evaluated throughout the six month period for improvements and there will be further assessment should the partnership become a longer term arrangement.

Neil Carter, Group Manager at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, said: “We believe the trial will demonstrate that the speed of response and specialist skills firefighters have and can contribute to improve the service for those in need across the Thames Valley.

“Joining up our response with our blue light partners should help to ensure that there are fewer obstacles or delays preventing someone receiving the care they desperately need.”

Philip Astle, Chief Operating Officer at South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) said: “We are pleased to be working with the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue services to ensure we can gain access to patients as quickly as possible. Ambulance staff will make all attempts possible to gain access to a property prior to contacting the fire service. We would ask that any vulnerable members of the public have a key safe on their property and notify the emergency services of the code for this key safe. We are confident this pilot will be effective and benefit our speed of access to patients”.

Chief Inspector Scott Johnson from Thames Valley Police said, “This initiative is about providing the best possible response from the emergency services to patients needing urgent medical attention. It will reduce damage caused to properties, free up ambulance crew time as response times improve and most importantly may improve clinical outcomes for patients. This is joined up thinking across all three emergency services and underpins our common aim of keeping our communities safe”.

The three Thames Valley fire and rescue services are Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service.