

## Summer 2010 Update

If you're reading this then you're probably just like us, always curious about new ways of working. To discuss any of the contents raised in this Alexander Update, call us on 023 8022 5520 or email Grace at [grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com](mailto:grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com)



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# Beyond Efficiency to Transformation in Fire & Rescue Services

**How can leaders of Fire & Rescue Services continue to provide an ever widening remit of services whilst responding to the biggest reductions in funding since the 1980's?**

There are times when the size of the financial challenge we face is bigger than our efficiency savings alone can provide. Times when doing more efficiently the things we do now will not be enough. On these occasions we know we have to do something new; something bigger and more radical. If now is one of those times, we need to be very clear about the absolute size and scale of what we must achieve so that we know what "enough" is.

To know where the improvement will come from, we must be clear about why we are here and what it is that our communities and service users need and value most.

We need to fully understand these drivers and

the size and nature of the challenge ahead so that we can describe and communicate the reasons our organisations have to change – the burning platform. We must show people where to start and what the journey is going to look like – the blueprint for change.

The challenge is so big that it's beyond what we as leaders can change on our own. Our entire organisations need to understand it and get behind it. We need to communicate all the time so that we maintain a shared vision of our future; one that will sustain us through the tough decisions that we will need to take. We must make our organisation ready for change. We must understand and then build the capacity and capability to succeed. Only then can we mobilise to deliver.

When we think about transformation we often look to what we have done before. We think about new structures and infrastructures, shared management, shared services, outsourcing, new ICT. We tend to want to jump straight on the vehicle for delivery.

We should remind ourselves that it is easy to create these new structures without changing the thinking and behaviour we need to make the change sustainable.

The full menu will require change to the way people think about, design and provide services. We must mobilise all the intellectual assets across our organisations to create services that focus on prevention, reduce demand and provide only what our communities need and value. They must be right first time, every time. Fire and Rescue Services must look beyond efficiency to what our organisations have to do next.

**Beyond Efficiency to Transformation in Fire & Rescue Services** is a Thought Paper from Alexander for leaders of Fire & Rescue Services.

For your copy call us on 023 8022 5530 or email Grace at [grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com](mailto:grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com)

# Alexander brings innovative thinking to hillside & grass fires at SWFRS

Fire prevention through community liaison and education has for some time been part of the remit of Fire & Rescue Services. Whilst measuring effectiveness is sometimes difficult, it is seen as a worthwhile approach where it reduces injuries and saves lives. For South Wales Fire & Rescue Service (SWFRS) and the communities it serves prevention of the 7,000 mountain and grass fire incidents around the region is now a high priority.

During “spate condition periods” of March & April, injuries to fire fighters, heat exhaustion and the demands on the entire region’s fire fighting resource push the service to the limit. Estimated costs of attending “deliberate grass fires” are put at £7m per annum, but excludes costs of environmental damage, effects on local businesses and tourism and the risk to life posed by fires that encroach on property.

Following Chief Fire Officer Andy Marles’ introduction to the concepts and principles of Social Marketing at an Alexander conference, we were asked, in association with Dr Sue Peattie of Cardiff University, to support SWFRS in designing a new approach to prevention. The initial phase of the project involved development of an understanding based on data already held by SWFRS. Further research and analysis revealed two “hotspots” in the Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) area and from them insights on “peaks” of activity by month, week and day.

Although this revealed the WHEN and WHERE of deliberate grass fires, it did not reveal WHO the perpetrators might be and WHY they went about setting fires. For example, no prosecutions had been recorded. To build a profile of perpetrators and inform understanding of their motivations, a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups were designed and facilitated by SWFRS staff working in conjunction with consultants. Lessons from similar Social Marketing programmes led the team to take a broader view of stakeholder groups which now included presentations and discussions involving a wide range of community groups including Schools, Colleges, the Forestry Commission, Police,



Local Authorities, Youth organisations and the Community Safety Partnership. The outcome was a consensus on the profile of the fire setters: male, aged from 7 to 17 years, their motives boredom, thrill-seeking and peer group pressure. Importantly, it was also found that setting deliberate grass fires was seen as ‘innocent fun’ for teenagers by some parents whilst others claimed to be unaware or accepted they were turning a blind eye to the practice. Some admitted having been perpetrators in their youth.

**The SWFRS data combined with insights gained from the interviews enabled and informed the formulation of a strategic “social marketing mix” and design of an integrated set of interventions, including:**

- A series of events in the target area, designed by young people for young people
- Teenagers from a local community college developed a “brand” based on a logo “Bernie the sheep” and a strapline “Grass is green, Fire is mean”
- Creation of a “Bernie” Facebook site which “personalised” the issues and dangers and drew attention to the effects of deliberate grass fires on landscapes, people and animals for the large number of “friends” attracted to the site
- Innovative use of community business support to raise awareness and interest in the objectives and benefits in reducing the incidence of deliberate grass fires
- Visible joint patrols of police and FRS targeted on key areas at critical times to reinforce messages that attitudes towards deliberate grass fires needed to change and passive tolerance was not sustainable

A critical change to existing approaches came from research which revealed a need to inform and educate parents, a group not previously been seen as a target. A pilot initiative was launched on March 1st 2010 leading up to an intense period of diversionary activity for young people over the 2-week Easter Holiday period.

The principle objective was to reduce the number of deliberate grass fires in the target area by 15% over the two weeks of the Easter Holiday in comparison to a neighbouring “control” area with similar profile and level of deliberate grass fires. Factors such as weather, timing of the Easter Holidays were taken into consideration.

## RESULTS

Data collected over a six-week period comprised of two weeks prior to the Easter Holidays, two weeks of the holidays, and two after provided the following results:

- Easter Holiday – 30% reduction in deliberate grass fires
- 6-week period – 46% reduction in deliberate grass fires

These results have been independently corroborated and adjusted for a range of external factors and evidence significant changes in behaviour in the target area. Ongoing monitoring shows that, following cessation of youth diversionary activities, behavioural change has been sustained through May 2010. All of this points to the benefit of using a structured, methodical approach to problem analysis and getting to the “root causes” of social, behavioural issues.



# Wastebusters - Going Lean in Blue-Light Services

Could the experience of a Lean Systems approach in Policing bring benefits to Fire and Rescue Services?

A broader evaluation is taking place around the SWFRS “Deliberate Grass Fires” Social Marketing project and, at this stage, secondary objectives of improving internal working practices, increasing confidence and capability in SWFRS and creating greater cohesion and joint working with other organisations and community stakeholders have also been achieved.

There are many interventions and programmes in place across different agencies in South Wales and inside SWFRS to tackle this issue. However, they are not all working together and sharing data and insights. Some initiatives may even be counter-productive through sending mixed messages to the target audience. Consensus from the stakeholders’ interviews was that all parties should be working together on preventing fire setting, including parents, community, police, fire, education authority, local authority and young people.

For more information on this initiative and how a Social Marketing approach could benefit FRS and the communities we serve, email Grace at [grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com](mailto:grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com).

**The need for efficiency in the way we deliver services to our communities is not new. Efficiency has been a guiding principle for some time, but at a time when doing more, with more (resources) was possible. That era has come to an abrupt halt. Efficiency now means we must look to doing the same, but with less.**

Citizen-focused, Lean starts and ends with the customer’s needs and expectations in mind. It aims to eradicate wasteful activities at every step of the way by removing barriers to the smooth flow of work of any type. Significant reductions in both time and error are common. Whilst some initially questioned its suitability outside of its origins in manufacturing, a growing body of evidence points to its ability to deliver improvements by drastically reducing unnecessary bureaucracy in the way services are delivered.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) made a commitment to tackle the issue of unnecessary bureaucracy to free up capacity so officers and staff could concentrate on the things which would make a real difference to the communities they serve. GMP decided on Lean as it provides a broad spectrum of people in the Force with new skills and capacity to deliver sustainable improvements. GMP saw its ability to empower people to take ownership of process improvement and deliver measurable benefits.

GMP engaged Alexander to work with them to adopt and adapt Lean. Alexander helped GMP by creating a police specific approach to Lean that underpinned its Local Police transformation programme. GMP went on to build its own internal Lean capabilities and extend competence across three divisions through a ‘learn-by-doing’ approach.

Named Wastebusters, the initiative continues to deliver benefits at GMP. Examples such as the redesign and improvement of the fingerprinting process in custody saw print pass rates improve from 60% to 96%. The Lean version of the process resulted in a saving of 3,012 officer hours per year which GMP has invested back into frontline policing. Lean has helped them to initiate a change in culture that continues to underpin efficiency and productivity improvements in what has become a very challenging financial environment.

Would you like to know more about how Lean could help your organisation? Call us on 023 8022 5520 or email Grace at [grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com](mailto:grace.massey@alexander-ecc.com) for more information.



## Alexander People - what we believe

Alexander people are business people who are passionate about public services. We take what's good from the private sector and shape it to meet the demands and challenges of public service. So when we look at the world and see what's wrong, our instinct is not to complain about it, it's to do something about it. This means that, when we look at our own company, we don't just look at its performance as a business; we look at the difference we make to changing public services and society for the better.

The people who manage and deliver public services today face huge challenges. They deserve someone to think with and people who can help to do the things they haven't the capacity to do themselves.

That's why we **engage** and connect with the people at all levels in public services who face these challenges.

Then we help them **challenge** the way things are.

So that they can deliver real **change** for the better.

That's what we do: **Engage. Challenge. Change.**

There's a belief that without a profit motive, there isn't enough to drive public

## We work with...

Alexander works with the following Fire & Rescue Services:

- South Wales
- London Fire Brigade
- Staffordshire
- West Midlands
- Leicestershire
- Dorset
- Norfolk
- Essex
- Humberside
- Mid & West Wales
- Wiltshire
- Oxfordshire
- Bedfordshire

## Alexander People - what we do

### Knowing where to go and how to get there

- Strategic & organisational review and diagnosis
- Shared vision
- Transformation strategy
- Transformation blueprint
- Stakeholder engagement
- Change readiness

### Delivering customer value with less resources

- Lean Systems Thinking
- Service transformation, design and improvement
- Share services
- Function and service reviews
- Options appraisals and business case development

### Buying Solutions Framework

Alexander is a member of the CPC Consortium which enables current and new clients to procure Alexander's services with the assurance of best practice procurement, quality assurance and agreed best value pricing regimes

#### Framework ref:

RM662/L6 - Local Gov.  
RM662/L5 - Health.

### Enabling change to happen

- Programme and project management
- Change Management and benefits realisation
- Building capacity to change
- Skills and knowledge transfer

### Making change sustainable

- Leadership development
- Management development
- Continuous improvement strategy and culture
- Skills and knowledge transfer

## Alexander - contact us

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