

## **Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York**

**16 March 2012**

### **North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Major Incident Response Team (MIRT)**

#### **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update members of the Group on the work of the Major Incident Response Team (MIRT)

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1 The 1980s were deemed to be the “Decade of Disasters” with incidents such as the Lockerbie Air Crash, Zebrugge Ferry sinking, Kegsworth Air Crash, Kings Cross fire, the Marchioness sinking and the Hillsborough and Bradford Fires affecting the UK.
- 2.3 These major disasters resulted in the government commissioning a report on the effectiveness of the UK response to these emergencies, specifically reviewing the response of the Emergency Services and Local Authorities. The resultant Allan Report was published as a green paper in 1990 however it remained as a green paper and never became an act of law.
- 2.4 The report contained a number of recommendations stating that in essence the immediate response to emergencies involving the rescue of survivors and preservation of life functioned reasonably effectively. It did however highlight that there were no imbedded public sector services available to support anyone caught up in or affected by such traumatic events. The green paper recommended that Local Authorities establish teams of trained personnel to be available to work alongside the Emergency Services offering emotional and practical support and advice to members of the public at a time of potential vulnerability.
- 2.5 North Yorkshire County Council decided that the recommendations should be acted on and in 1991 the Major Incident Response Team (MIRT) was formed. When the City of York gained unitary status, MIRT became and remains a shared county and city service. Responding to changing responsibilities such as the Civil Contingencies Act and ever increasing professional and public expectations, the team has developed and evolved over the past twenty-one years. MIRT, the first such UK team to be formed is well respected and has gained recognition as a “Best Practice” service.

#### **3 The Team**

- 3.1 In order to provide a seamless 24 hour service staff have been recruited from the county council, city of York, districts, boroughs, health and voluntary sectors. The professional skills that members bring to the team range from social work, children’s services, mental health, crisis call (helpline experience)

and multi-skilled local authority, private and voluntary sector partners. The team undertake a rolling programme of training one day a month.

- 3.2 This commitment from employers to release staff, ensures that the service provision continues to be timely, current, relevant and of a high standard and meets NYLRF statutory obligations in major incidents providing a “humanitarian response” within the Civil Contingencies Act. The training develops skills which are transferable to the workplace and therefore enhance the internal resilience of partner organisations. The team also provides emergency response training for the boroughs and districts and is involved in the Police Bronze Commanders Training Programme.
- 3.3 The service is provided on 24 hour basis. Normally the team will be called by the NYCC, CYC or Harrogate Borough Council Emergency Duty Officer or directly by the Emergency Services – primarily the Police. The service can also be called by any of the local authorities but is not a public access service.
- 3.4 The team will be called to support either frontline response staff or members of the public if a traumatic incident has arisen. Although the title of the team is “Major Incident” we acknowledge that to individuals, families or small communities a life changing incident is to them major and therefore the team may be working to support one individual or a large number of people.
- 3.5 One of the strengths of MIRT is that as members are geographically located around the county, local knowledge provides an appropriate and timely local response to localised incidents yet retains the flexibility to mobilise the team to any part of the county as required. The management of Rest/Survivor/Family and Friends Centres is a key task now undertaken by the team for the county (excepting CYC) to ensure a consistent and professional response in any evacuation situation.

#### **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Group note the contents of the report.

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