



Fire and Rescue Services Association

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Tristan Ashby: Chief Executive Officer

Date: 19 March 2020

James Brokenshire MP
Minister of State (Minister for Security)
2 Marsham Street
London
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Dear Minister

Covid-19

I write on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) Executive to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of State (Minister for Security). I trust that we will have the opportunity to discuss Fire Service matters in general once the current national emergency has been resolved.

As the national picture continues to evolve at a pace regarding the impact and management of the Covid-19 virus, I wanted to raise two immediate points that require your attention. Firstly the issue of 'key-workers' and the facility for their children to continue to use local schools/nurseries. At present there is a lack of clarity over whether both parents need to be key workers to qualify for schooling. If this is the case it will be applicable to very few families when wider eligibility is needed during these difficult times.

Our members are predominately On-Call firefighters who provide an invaluable cost-effective emergency service to their local communities, it is therefore imperative that their children are eligible for schooling irrespective of whether their partner is also a key-worker. Not to afford this facility is likely to cause reduced availability of On-Call firefighters across the country, just at a time when they are needed most. I'm sure you have already been made aware of the ongoing recruitment and retention issues of On-Call firefighters, a failure to offer their children school places as individual key-workers will only add to the problem.

Secondly, we wish to make you aware that locally some Fire and Rescue Services are stopping their On-Call firefighters from continuing to respond to Co-responder calls. We understand that this may be partly at the request of the local ambulance trust. However, we believe that this is a mistake that will have a detrimental impact on life-saving opportunities.

While we support the local decision to scale back on non-emergency duties and limit engagement with the public, Co-responding is one area which has the potential to save more

lives than any other role in the Fire and Rescue Service. With the appropriate safety measures, performing the Co-responder role need not put a firefighter at a greater risk than is the case in normal circumstances.

I trust that these two issues will receive your urgent attention.

With kind regards and my best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T Ashby', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Tristan Ashby
Chief Executive Officer
Fire and Rescue Services Association