

Matt Wrack

General Secretary

Fire Brigades Union

Cc: NFCC & national employers

By email only.

25th March 2020

Dear Matt,

COVID-19 and the fire and rescue service response

Thank you for your letters of 20 and 23 March regarding the Fire and Rescue Service response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to put on record my thanks to all firefighters, emergency control operators and support staff for their work during this difficult time for the nation.

Alongside their blue light partners, Fire and Rescue Services in England are playing a vital role in supporting the wider national effort. The Government is working very constructively with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to ensure the capability and competence of the sector can be used effectively and without delay.

In your letter of 20 March, you ask specifically about coronavirus testing for fire service personnel. This is clearly an important issue for a range of critical workers. We are actively working with Public Health England, the Health and Safety Executive and NFCC on this issue and will update colleagues through the NFCC as soon as possible on the position.

In your letter of 23 March, you talk about how services will need to work in order to respond to the current challenges. The dynamic and evolving nature of the situation we face will require agility and flexibility. I am grateful for the leadership that the NFCC has already shown by agreeing a clear response structure, position statement and safeguarding the health and safety of the workforce. I will look to you to lead the Fire Brigades Union in working constructively and collaboratively to support the NFCC and national employers in responding rapidly to these changing pressures.

I can assure you that Government will continue to work with the sector to ensure that services get the support, equipment and resources they need. The Government has already announced an additional £1.6bn of funding for Local Authorities and

Standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities will receive a £5.9m share of this additional funding which is not ringfenced and will be paid on 3 April.

You are right to note that firefighters will want to do all they can for their communities at this time. I am heartened to hear about the many local examples of where firefighters and staff are stepping up to help and protect the most vulnerable in our communities. I want to personally thank fire service personnel and your members who are stepping up to the mark nationwide by volunteering to support their communities in partnership with their emergency service partners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James Brokenshire', written in a cursive style.

**RT HON JAMES BROKENSHERE MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR SECURITY**