

19 July 2010

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**Summary of Recommendations from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's report: *The Fire and Rescue Service Retained Duty System: A Review of the Recruitment and Retention Challenges.***

**1. Terminology**

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

The term '*retained duty system personnel*' should be adopted.

**2. Recognition and Publicity**

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

Fire and rescue services must take a strategic approach to raising public awareness of the role of the retained duty system (RDS) and to their recruitment process by:

i) basing strategy on requirements identified within fire and rescue services' Integrated Risk Management Plans;

ii) ring fencing sufficient funding in fire and rescue service recruitment budgets to ensure advertising and recruitment processes are properly supported;

iii) thinking more broadly about the methods available to fire and rescue services and regional management boards, and ensuring these are effectively matched to the target audience in order to raise public awareness and make recruitment practices more effective, for example by:

- the use of dedicated recruitment teams drawn from RDS personnel should be encouraged;
- using community safety initiatives to raise awareness;
- harnessing informal, peer-group recruitment.

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

The fire and rescue service needs to develop, as a matter of priority, national, regional and local partnerships with the business community (i.e. Confederation of British Industry, Federation of Small Businesses, Business in the Community and specific local employers).

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

Fire and rescue services must be proactive and strategic in seeking support and commitment from the local business community to the release of staff for RDS duties, for example by:

i) making links to local business through direct liaison or via local business community groups and employers' federations, and

ii) providing the business community with more detailed information on:

a) the role and importance of RDS staff;

b) the likely time commitment (based on an analysis of the workload of each retained station, including community safety work where appropriate), and

c) the benefits for them (e.g. staff training in first aid, management skills, NVQs, local recognition schemes).

#### RECOMMENDATION 5

Effective links with employers' organisations should be made at national level by the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to:

- i) raise the profile of the RDS by developing a communications strategy. For example, through advertising and recruitment literature and direct links with national employer representative bodies;
- ii) explore effective incentives (e.g. nationally sponsored awards and recognition schemes, tax incentives), and
- iii) obtain commitment from national and multi-national employers to supporting the RDS.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

ODPM should develop links with other Government departments to determine what measures can be taken to encourage support for the release of employees for the retained duty system. The Local Government Association should take similar steps with regard to local government employees.

#### RECOMMENDATION 7

ODPM should form effective working relationships with other Government departments responsible for sponsoring voluntary organisations in order to develop and share good practice.

#### RECOMMENDATION 8

Fire and rescue services should develop an advertising and recruitment strategy taking into account the differing demographic make up of the areas they serve, using where appropriate a variety of methods and media. Fire and rescue services should:

- i) set clear targets for the reduction of vacancies in their area based on the requirements for cover as identified in their Integrated Risk Management Plan;
- ii) analyse the demographic make up of the area surrounding each retained station to assess which type of campaign or mixture of campaigns might be most successful in each locality;
- iii) critically review campaigns on an ongoing basis to identify which methods have proved most effective, and
- iv) proactively share information on recruitment issues with other fire and rescue services, pooling examples of good practice.

#### RECOMMENDATION 9

Regional management boards should assess the benefits of regional advertising campaigns as a more cost-effective method of raising awareness.

#### RECOMMENDATION 10

ODPM should review the centrally produced RDS literature by Summer 2005 to assess:

- i) its effectiveness as a promotional and supportive tool;
- ii) whether it meets service needs in its existing format, and
- iii) whether it requires revision to reflect developments in the light of this report.

#### RECOMMENDATION 11

Fire and rescue services should ensure their recruitment strategies include effective methods for attracting and recruiting from within currently under-represented groups, for example by:

- i) use of role model examples in campaigns and advertising;
- ii) positive action measures.

#### RECOMMENDATION 12

There should be greater flexibility to appoint RDS staff to a wider range of roles including retained liaison and higher management posts.

#### RECOMMENDATION 13

The development of policies and procedures which directly affect RDS personnel must reflect the fire and rescue service core values as set out in the National Framework.

#### RECOMMENDATION 14

Fire and rescue services must take action to change their internal culture to ensure that the RDS is properly valued as part of the Integrated Risk Management Planning process by:

- i) ensuring future strategy and policy development, implementation and allocation of funding and resources take all duty systems into account;
- ii) encouraging RDS personnel to provide input into policy making;
- iii) ensuring local policies and procedures take account of their effect on RDS personnel, particularly on issues related to the provision of training and development.

#### RECOMMENDATION 15

At local, regional and national levels there should be appropriate recognition of the contribution and role of the RDS by:

- i) appointing a senior member of Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate as national champion for the RDS;
- ii) each regional management board appointing a champion;
- iii) each fire and rescue service appointing an officer from the retained duty system to act as its Retained Liaison Officer.

### **3. The Opportunity For The Retained Duty System To Contribute Across The Modernisation Agenda**

#### RECOMMENDATION 16

Fire and rescue services should include in their strategic planning the wider role for RDS personnel in areas such as co-response and community safety in addition to their intervention role.

#### RECOMMENDATION 17

At national level, policy development in these areas should fully take into account the implications for RDS personnel.

#### RECOMMENDATION 18

Fire and rescue services and regional management boards must ensure that RDS staff are aware of their role within New Dimension procedures and receive appropriate training and development.

#### RECOMMENDATION 19

All work towards integration of the RDS should acknowledge and promote the essential role of RDS personnel in community fire safety.

#### RECOMMENDATION 20

Policy and guidance on the development of Integrated Risk Management Plans and on community fire safety should promote a broader role for RDS in community safety in accordance with developing good practice.

#### RECOMMENDATION 21

Fire and rescue services should consider how to make better use of RDS staff in community fire safety work and develop a medium term plan to increase RDS involvement.

#### RECOMMENDATION 22

Fire and rescue services should audit existing community links through their RDS staff and seek to develop and expand these links to support both community fire safety and RDS recruitment (for example, by emphasising the wider role of RDS staff in their recruitment campaigns).

#### RECOMMENDATION 23

Fire and rescue services should consider establishing demonstration projects, combining the offer of a part time commitment with operational or non-operational roles and emphasising the community skills needed.

#### RECOMMENDATION 24

At local level, Integrated Risk Management Plans should include a plan to overcome recruitment and retention deficiencies, with an evaluation of the extent of the shortfall and the cost of alternatives. RDS personnel should be involved in the planning process.

#### RECOMMENDATION 25

Fire and rescue services must ensure as part of their Integrated Risk Management Planning process that full use is made of the retained duty system in line with central guidance.

### **4. Integration**

#### RECOMMENDATION 26

Policy makers at all levels within fire and rescue services to address the needs of all employees as policies are developed.

#### RECOMMENDATION 27

Fire and rescue services must ensure they are impact assessing their policies and procedures. Where policies are being developed at regional level, regional management boards must undertake this role. The local and regional diversity strategies will help in meeting these requirements. Each fire and rescue service and regional management board must ensure the agreed actions flowing from the impact assessments are carried out within their areas and that progress is formally reviewed every six months.

#### RECOMMENDATION 28

Restrictive practices should be removed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of resources, for example by:

- i) Introducing flexible crewing;
- ii) risk assessing mobilising standards;
- iii) trialling first response arrangements;
- iv) considering options to replace the traditional 'one pump retained fire station' to allow for a wider range of flexible response.

#### RECOMMENDATION 29

Training and development providers must:

- i) analyse Integrated Personal Development System demands on time and availability of RDS personnel;
- ii) ensure that resources are provided to meet the competency requirements of RDS personnel, and
- iii) ensure, wherever possible, that training and development can be delivered remotely, locally or via e-learning to support fire and rescue service staff (including those employed on the retained duty system) for whom residential training and development is inappropriate or difficult to achieve.

### **5. Recruitment and Retention**

#### RECOMMENDATION 30

Fire and rescue services should, as part of their Integrated Risk Management Planning process, consider the differing needs of their communities, taking account of the duty system, or combination of duty systems, that would most effectively serve the different areas for which they are responsible. In making this assessment they should consider the options open to them to attract and retain staff, including utilising different remuneration and commitment models.

#### RECOMMENDATION 31

The Point of Entry Selection Tests Steering Group should ensure that the new selection process sets appropriate, fair, measurable criteria for the assessment of candidates for all of the operational service.

#### RECOMMENDATION 32

Fire and rescue services must ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act 2003; they should take into account the medical and occupational evidence published by ODPM, the guidance for service managers on human resources issues published by the Disability Rights Commission, and the Commission's code of practice on employment and occupation.

#### RECOMMENDATION 33

Every recruit should be issued with a comprehensive information pack setting out the requirements of the service and the support available. All staff should have access to details of their terms and conditions.

#### RECOMMENDATION 34

Under Integrated Risk Management Plans, fire and rescue services should give specific consideration to the benefits of varying response times in order to widen the recruitment catchment area for RDS stations to keep appliances available and fire stations open, thus ensuring better overall emergency cover provision and response times for rural areas.

Consideration should also be given to the benefits of the temporary siting of fire appliances near to the location of personnel.

#### RECOMMENDATION 35

Fire and rescue services need to review their current contractual provisions for RDS staff and consider introducing more flexible arrangements to encourage a wider pool of applicants, by:

- i) trialling alternative remuneration systems;
- ii) encouraging those who can provide RDS cover of 120 hours a week to do so.

#### RECOMMENDATION 36

Key stakeholders should undertake further research into the effects of the introduction of the 120-hour provision on service delivery.

#### RECOMMENDATION 37

There should be an examination of the effect on recruitment and retention of a range of time commitment requirements (e.g. availability options for day/night/weekend cover, from 120 hours downwards) and job role options (such as community fire safety and co-response).

#### RECOMMENDATION 38

Further detailed examination is required of the alternative remuneration arrangements that have been adopted, or are being trialled, to tackle recruitment and retention problems.

#### RECOMMENDATION 39

The development of new pension provisions should recognise the principle that the RDS is one of a range of duty systems and that RDS staff should therefore have pension rights commensurate with those for staff employed on other duty systems.

#### RECOMMENDATION 40

A stakeholder group should commence work as soon as practicable on developing the components for a retained duty system toolkit of guidance, advice and a mechanism for sharing good practice.

#### RECOMMENDATION 41

Policies developed at national, regional and local levels must include comprehensive impact assessments for all staff. This should include race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability as well as working arrangements (e.g. part-time, RDS, day-crewing).

#### RECOMMENDATION 42

Stakeholder groups should be appointed to ensure that the RRT recommendations are progressed within the fire and rescue service in order to deliver real change.

#### RECOMMENDATION 43

Elected members and principle officers must demonstrate their understanding of the role and importance of the retained duty system, giving clear leadership to the service to ensure full integration. This could be achieved by:

- i) providing a supportive and enabling environment which recognises the special status of a group of people who are at least as much 'volunteers' as they are employees;
- ii) maximising the potential contribution that can be made by those on this system and mainstream this at local and national levels;
- iii) identifying and sharing existing good practice.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 44**

ODPM, working with stakeholders, should develop a programme of research aimed at providing an evidential base to support the formulation of policies and procedures regarding the retained duty system.

### **7. Other Issues**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 45**

In the light of its survey findings, due early 2005, ODPM should hold further discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions to assess the impact of the Jobseekers' Allowance on recruitment and retention.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 46**

ODPM should monitor the Key Worker Living programme and review, by Summer 2005, the effectiveness of the scheme and whether participation in future programmes of this nature should be recommended.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 47**

The findings from the research being conducted by ODPM into primary employment of RDS staff should be used to inform debate with regard to the potential loss of the opt-out provision, including at Ministerial and EU level.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 48**

ODPM to continue liaising with the Department for Transport, to review the draft regulations transposing the Road Transport Directive into UK legislation to ascertain the implications for the RDS and provide advice to the Practitioners' Forum on this issue in early 2005.

### **8. Financial implications**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 49**

Fire and rescue services should use the opportunity of Integrated Risk Management Plans to create new targets for availability of appliances to maximise the benefits of differing conditions of service for firefighters, based on attendance time to defined risk areas. Against these new targets, fire and rescue services should measure the availability of all appliances throughout the daily and calendar cycles. Where shortfalls in availability exist, options for addressing them are costed separately from new initiatives such as complying with working hours, part time workers regulations or the Integrated Personal Development System.

### **9. Communication**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 50**

Stakeholders and fire and rescue services should develop national, regional and local communications strategies to support the delivery of change.

### **10. Implementation**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 51**

The Practitioners' Forum should examine the most effective means of addressing the recommendations of the RRT report by:

- i) establishing a long-term Implementation Team in order to ensure that the recommendations are progressed and real change is achieved;
- ii) clearly identifying the role and responsibility of stakeholders, including RDS personnel;

- iii) inviting the Business and Community Safety Forum to participate in the delivery of these recommendations;
- iv) ensuring engagement with appropriate public and voluntary sector organisations;
- v) developing a national Implementation Action Plan, with measurable targets and attributable responsibilities for delivery.