

Report of the Area Commander (Operations)

11. Progress of the Retained Duty System (On-Call) Implementation Plan

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Policy and Resources Committee with a report on the progress and delivery of the third and final year of the Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan.
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Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the progress of the Retained Duty System (On-Call) Implementation Plan is noted by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Introduction and Background

2. A dedicated team was established to review the Retained Duty System (RDS, also known as on-call staff), management and working practices in 2008. The Service has a dedicated Retained Duty System (RDS) on-call unit at every one of its 27 locations and RDS staff make up over half of all employed operational staff. In 2008, the review team carried out an extensive investigation, including the availability of RDS staff and appliances, work-life balance, resilience, recruitment, training, personnel development and management practices.
3. The team highlighted a number of key issues including how the basis for the existing RDS service at that time was solely reliant on “traditional” communities and lifestyles which did not always fit with the working practices and lifestyles of modern society. There was also a strong desire to ensure the RDS staff continued to be fully embraced by the Service as valued and highly trained professional Firefighters.
4. A subsequent RDS Implementation Plan was produced which consisted of 24 objectives to be discharged over three years. The Plan was based upon the evidence provided in the review and developed in consultation with Officers, RDS staff and representative bodies. The aim of this plan was to begin a transformation in the way RDS staff work and operate and lay the foundations for the future.
5. The Review and Implementation Plan were considered by the Authority on 25 June 2010 where it was agreed that progress against the three year Implementation Plan would be reported back to the Authority at the conclusion of each phase. The Policy & Resources Committee has considered progress of

this on an annual basis on behalf of the Authority, with this being the third and final report.

Delivery of Years One and Two Objectives

6. The majority of the change needed within the RDS implementation plan has already been reported back to the Committee following years one and two. However, it is worth noting that key elements such as the Electronic Availability System, known as Gartan, new contracts, a new management policy and working practices, alongside a revised recruitment strategy have already led to transformational change within the RDS sector and an improved service to our communities.

Delivery of Year Three Objectives

7. Year three commenced in April 2012, and consisted of three final objectives (numbered 23, 24 & 25 in the original plan), detailed later in Appendix 1.
8. The first objective in year three (objective 23) proposed the consideration of providing a fixed salary scheme for RDS staff rather than the current model of an annual retaining fee and then payment per hour for all work or calls undertaken. Evidence considered from another neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) who have undertaken this has demonstrated that this is not a cost-effective or beneficial option to pursue in the longer term and did not necessarily deliver the proposed advantages. Fixed salary schemes that offer a minimum annual salary for RDS staff in another FRS have in some cases cost nearly twice the salary amount per person, without delivering the proportional additional benefits to the organisation.
9. The second objective in year three (objective 24) was aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of RDS staff. The introduction within the Human Resources (HR) department of a dedicated Recruitment Officer, primarily dealing with RDS staff at this time, has proven extremely successful and in conjunction with local managers has produced improved levels of recruitment in some areas. This has been supported by a new recruitment plan that concentrates on increasing the applications by innovative new initiatives alongside exploring ways of attracting candidates from under represented groups. An RDS Recruitment Working Group has also been formed which includes members of staff and managers from RDS stations which provides a sounding board for ideas and collates information that can be used to continually improve the process.
10. The final objective of year three (objective 25) was to review the Implementation Plan as whole. This review has identified that a number of key elements which have been introduced are proving to be extremely beneficial to the Service (outlined in section 6 above).
11. Other successes worthy of note which continue to benefit and improve the RDS within the Service include the additional training time made available to RDS staff and the introduction of dedicated RDS Support staff. These Officers not only support the RDS stations with administration, training and recruitment, but also work directly with newly appointed firefighters in their development stages

to underpin their knowledge and mentor them through their development programme.

Conclusion/Summary

12. Year three of the Implementation Plan has been successful, with all of the objectives examined and two of the three objectives completed.
13. This now brings the Implementation Plan to a close and as a result the Service has a very different Retained Duty System than three years ago. The RDS is now better structured, managed and supported from all departments within the Service which has resulted in an improved and more professional delivery of our core functions.
14. It is also worthy of note that the Service continues to engage on RDS related matters at a regional and national level. Much of the work within our RDS review and subsequent Implementation Plan is viewed by many others in the Fire and Rescue Services as innovative. Hereford & Worcester is leading nationally in this area and has hosted many sessions with other Fire and Rescue Services to share our experiences across the UK.

Corporate Considerations

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| Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues) | <p>The proposal for a 'front-loaded' salary scheme for RDS staff has been deferred / will no longer be pursued to due financial constraints.</p> <p>Following a restructure in the HR Department a Recruitment Officer now specifically deals with RDS recruitment.</p> <p>Additional training time has been made available to the RDS and the introduction of RDS Support Officers and is part of the mainstream budget</p> |
| Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications). | <p>Improved monitoring and quality of RDS appliance availability</p> |
| Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores). | <p>Improved levels of Firefighter safety through better management systems, training and recruitment.</p> |

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| Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter) | Implementation Plan developed in consultation with Officers, RDS staff and representative bodies |
| Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?) | Improved recruitment targeted at under represented groups |

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan Progress Report

Background papers

Fire and Rescue Authority Agenda Papers and Minutes – 25 June 2010

Policy & Resources Committee Agenda Papers and Minutes – 7 September 2011 and 5 September 2012

Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan

Contact Officer

Jon Pryce, Area Commander
(01905 368237)

Email: jpryce@hwfire.org.uk

Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan Progress Report

The following table outlines progress in delivering Year Three objectives of the RDS Implementation Plan.

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| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce an Electronic Availability System to record availability of RDS appliances and personnel across the Service, also capable of providing a range of management and reports and linking directly to a Finance module. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been completed and the system implementation project now closed down. • The Availability system went live on Nov 29th 2010 and has provided a greater range of flexibility for the RDS in forecasting their weekly availability. • Fire Control now have a real time, accurate availability forecast of appliances across the Service which means that they are able to mobilise the nearest available appliance at all times to respond to incidents and therefore has improved the Service to the Community. • Managers at all levels now have a suite of reports that can be generated to assist in improving performance and ultimately the Service that we provide to the communities of Hereford and Worcester. • The finance aspect of the system went live on the 1st April 2011 and has been welcomed across the Service. • It provides accurate reports directly to the finance department which ensures timely, accurate payments to staff. • It also now provides Finance department and Service Delivery with accurate information of levels of spending in every area of RDS work, which can now be used in future budget allocations. |
| 2 | <p>a) To put in place a banded system for availability to replace the existing cover types. The banded ranges of cover to be linked to a suitable contract profile for individual staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <p>b) To further explore the opportunity to offer pro-rata payments for availability based on 120 hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not implemented as above, as an alternative system was developed and implemented in liaison with RBs following consultation. |
| 3 | <p>To provide a range of contracted hours, from within existing resources, to RDS Managers per month to enable them to undertake key management tasks relating to their Station.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the administration tasks expected from the RDS Managers has been undertaken and five hours per week has been agreed as a suitable number of hours, with additional hours available as required on approval. • This has been implemented and monitored by the new Gartan RDS Payroll system which allows for smarter allocation and forecasting of future RDS Budgets. |
| 4 | <p>To provide Clusters and Districts with a package of hours from within existing resources to support both unplanned work activity and for planned activity such as recruitment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area of work has not been implemented yet at this time due to budgetary constraints, however, budgetary issues do not prevent essential activities from being undertaken. |
| 5 | <p>7.3 To review and consult regarding the '8 hour' rule, prior to the start of a shift, being placed on Wholetime/RDS personnel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been reviewed and a new policy now allows these staff to be more flexible with their hours of RDS availability and assist in ensuring RDS appliance availability in those locations where they provide RDS cover. |

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| 6 | <p>7.4 To further analyse the strong community links forged by the RDS and consider removing from all RDS stations the requirement to undertake workloads created by Community Safety to allow for more time to be spent on training and performing the intervention role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This objective is complete. Following a restructure to the Community Safety Department, specific roles have been created to assist in removing this area of workload from RDS stations. • All areas of CFS work in RDS station areas is now coordinated centrally from HQ with dedicated staff reviewing the need for and where appropriate undertaking this work. • RDS staff may undertake in a voluntary capacity any community engagement activities they choose to support. |
| 7 | <p>That a link is established and maintained between HR and Marketing/Media to identify key timing opportunities for raising RDS awareness through media management, advertising and marketing of the RDS to maximise recruitment potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This link is established and the two departments have strategies in place to coordinate recruitment in line with the four initiatives undertaken each year by the Service. • This has subsequently been modified due to the marketing media resources being reduced or removed due to budgetary reductions. However, the principles and learning from this objective are still applied. |
| 8 | <p>To appoint RDS recruitment champions from within the RDS to support recruitment and to act as mentors to potential applicants and to support RDS awareness sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of staff, both Wholetime and Retained, have been appointed as Recruitment champions across the Service. • These staff are used to attend recruitment awareness sessions across the Service to inform potential new applicants as to the requirements of the FF role map and the expectations of the RDS. • This has proved a success as this provides potential recruits with the necessary insight into the Service from existing serving staff. |
| 9 | <p>A suitable level of budget from within the existing resources is identified and allocated for RDS recruitment to provide a range of recruitment resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This objective is still in progress, but a grant achieved from CLG through the Positive Action Committee is in place to assist in this area at this time. • Suitable resources are secured through SMB for recruitment as appropriate. |
| 10 | <p>To monitor success rates of Psychometric Testing in the National Firefighter Selection Tests (NFFST) process and to provide suitable levels of support in regards to numeracy and literacy through partnership with local Adult Literacy providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The monitoring of Psychometric tests is a continual ongoing process, but the results have already been used by the Service to alter the current process and remove part of the written requirements. This has proved a success and assisted in more applicants being successful. • With regard to numeracy and literacy support, a pilot was undertaken with Herefordshire College who provided support to candidates across the two counties. • This proved to be difficult and the College experienced issues in facilitating these events. • As a result, potential candidates are now 'signposted' to colleges in both counties and are invited to attend courses at these locations should they feel the need. • This process is being monitored |
| 11 | <p>To conduct a full equality and diversity impact assessment of the results of NFFST to establish whether NFFST supports diversity targets and RDS recruitment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has taken place and is a continual process monitored by HR and the Positive Action Committee and the results used to inform recruitment processes. |
| 12 | <p>To work with HR to develop a Policy to ensure that all Service leavers have access to a properly conducted and evidenced exit interview .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A policy for Exit interviews has been completed and all leavers are invited to undertake an exit interview with an appropriate manager. |

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| 13 | <p>To create flexible options to deliver a comprehensive range of training to ensure safety of all RDS staff by providing an average additional 1-hour for training per week and up to eight training days per year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget for this has been agreed and this objective has been delivered since April. • In just the short time it has been in use, there has already been an increase in the percentages of competency across the RDS locations. • Up to eight additional days have been agreed for this financial year with a view to explore increasing this to the eight days in coming years, dependent on the forthcoming expected budget constraints. |
| 14 | <p>To consider the removal of the requirement for successful completion of Paper 1 (Fire Safety) of the IFE examination for RDS staff, at Watch Manager level, to reflect their intervention role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been removed and the RDS promotion process has been reviewed. |
| 15 | <p>To review the structure, initially within West District to provide additional managerial supervision and support directly to RDS Stations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of West District was reviewed during 2009/10 and alterations were made to employ RDS technicians and RDS support Watch Commanders. • The above posts and structure have proved to be successful and have subsequently been duplicated in other Districts as appropriate. |
| 16 | <p>To create, through a structural review, the post of a Service RDS Manager to ensure future needs and demands on the RDS are managed effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This post was implemented following this review and there is now a lead RDS officer in H&WFRS. |
| 17 | <p>To create and maintain a database of employers from within the RDS which is reviewed annually</p> <p>Held over from this year. This will form part of the recruitment strategy and come online when all HR Connect training is complete within the RDS.</p> |
| 18 | <p>To provide regular contact with potential RDS employers, via the local manager, throughout the recruitment process. This contact will aim to create a partnership arrangement between the local manager, RDS employer and applicant.</p> <p>As above</p> |
| 19 | <p>To continue to work towards the challenging diversity targets to ensure that both BME and Females are attracted to the RDS.</p> <p>This work still continues as part of the RDS recruitment campaigns per year.</p> |
| 20 | <p>To liaise with STDC and the Approved Centre to provide support, feedback and assistance in relation to the shared objectives detailed below forming part of the training review.</p> <p>Complete</p> |
| 21a | <p><i>To explore the potential for creating opportunities for the STDC to deliver training locally within the Districts to support the RDS with suitable resources and staff.</i></p> <p>Complete</p> |
| 21b | <p><i>To review the core skills module, and subsequent training modules, to identify what content can be delivered locally within the District structure to reduce the initial impact on RDS applicants.</i></p> <p>Complete</p> |
| 21c | <p><i>(Subject to the outcomes of a SS review of the NVQ process.)</i></p> <p><i>Explore options for additional support to both candidates and assessors in the RDS to reduce the numbers of Firefighters in development to a more manageable number.</i></p> <p>Complete due to the removal of the NVQ system.</p> |
| 21d | <p><i>To review the role of the ADC process in selecting, assessing and training RDS Supervisory Managers to ensure a safe level of operational response and appropriate supervisory managerial skills.</i></p> <p>Complete due to the change in the RDS promotion process and the removal of the ADC element</p> |
| 21e | <p><i>To conduct a skills-gap analysis to identify training requirements for Supervisory Managers to fulfil the requirement of the role map and to maintain competence whilst filling any potential skills gaps.</i></p> <p>Complete due to the development of the SICC course and Vector assessment.</p> |

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| 21f | <i>To develop a structured approach to ensure that all interested RDS staff are made aware of the career progression process. Districts should be encouraged to take "ownership", provide initial awareness and the Service to facilitate a series of weekend seminars covering all aspects of the process.</i> Complete due to awareness sessions undertaken prior to promotion processes |
| 21g | <i>To support succession planning within RDS units and consider the introduction of temporary development posts.</i> Complete, development positions available at all RDS stations |
| 21h | <i>To provide a more flexible and RDS friendly method of delivering the Supervisory Managers Programme</i> Part completed, full range of days offered including weekends but further work to provide flexibility being considered. |
| 21i | <i>To review the frequency rates of the IDR on an annual basis to ensure that they accurately reflect competency standards and risk based training.</i> Complete due to the introduction of the CTR programme |
| 21j | <i>The Service to adopt a transparent method of assessing Acquired Prior Learning (APL) and Acquired Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) for staff undertaking development, recognising skills, experience and knowledge.</i> Complete, APL now fully considered. |
| 22 | To explore options to provide or develop additional levels of resilience and consistent levels of officer support Complete, joint project undertaken with DC West District and recommendations made with regard to the previous restructure. |
| 23 | To consider further exploration of a "front loaded" salary based scheme or similar in future years if recruitment initiatives are successful. This objective will no longer be pursued at this time due to the current financial climate that the Fire and Rescue Service nationally is experiencing. Evidence also suggests these schemes are not cost-effective or beneficial in the longer term and do not maintain their initial improvements in contracted cover. |
| 24 | To create a SPI to provide clear guidance and structure to the recruitment process for all staff and managers which will be reviewed and updated at regular intervals. A clear Recruitment Plan has been implemented on an individual, station by station basis, identifying targeted recruitment and providing dedicated support and media solutions. This Plan is directly supported by the introduction of a dedicated Recruitment Officer by HR department, with feedback provided by a working group formed from RDS stations. |
| 25 | To undertake a full review of the Implementation Plan This work has identified that measures introduced during the course of the implementation plan has proved to be extremely beneficial to both the RDS itself and the Service as a whole. Typical examples are the Electronic Availability System, a structured Management Policy, dedicated RDS support as well as major improvements to RDS Recruitment and Training Delivery. |