



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

14 JUNE 2019

UPDATE ON RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM [RDS]

REPORT OF MEMBER CHAMPION - RDS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to give members an update and insight into the RDS currently operating within County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service [CDDFRS].

BACKGROUND

2. The RDS model comprises of a team of firefighters [FF] and operational supervisory managers for each designated fire appliance. RDS appliances are not normally crewed by personnel present on a station as per whole-time [W/T] personnel. RDS FF will have a pager and respond to calls when required from within the local community. They also regularly train together each week, test operational equipment, conduct station administrative duties and conduct pro-active community safety work in their areas.
3. An RDS FF is trained to the same standard as a W/T FF and will generally have the same range of risk critical competencies for example breathing apparatus, tactical firefighting, working at height, working on/ near water and road traffic collision extrication training.
4. The criteria to become an RDS FF are the same for a W/T FF with the addition of being able to respond into the station within 5 minutes.
5. An RDS FF is paid a retaining fee based on the average number of hours of cover they give each week and an hourly rate when responding or conducting routine duties. They are also expected to attend a regular weekly training night on station and courses as appropriate to maintain their skills competence.
6. Currently within the Service we have 15 appliances primary crewed by RDS FF from a total of 26 appliances.

CURRENT POSITION

7. Recruitment and retention of RDS personnel is an area to note as the original model for RDS; which is part of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service [Grey Book] Terms and Conditions; does not always reflect current modern lifestyles. For example, in the past it was far more common for someone to live and work within a small geographical area and therefore be well suited to the requirements of the RDS. Today it is more likely that a person needs to commute a longer distance to work and therefore may struggle to give RDS cover during the working week. This has been reflected in current availability trends with some RDS appliances having lower day

time availability. Furthermore, people require more flexibility to accommodate modern lifestyles which can conflict with the number of hours cover they can commit to each week.

8. As RDS FFs have the same skills set as a W/T FF, the Service has been able to use RDS to W/T transfers to ensure that staffing levels are maintained across the Service. This has also benefitted RDS personnel who have had a more clearly defined route into the fire and rescue service as a primary profession.
9. The investment the Service has made in relation to hosting cadet schemes, specifically on stations where an RDS appliance is based, has had the benefit of providing an employment route for those cadets into the RDS which has already occurred on several occasions. In addition, former cadets will be able to bring a range of skills and training gained straight into the RDS adding great value to the station.
10. The Human Resources Team within the Service have been proactively working with District teams, with the help of the Communications Team, to offer support and assistance in relation to the recruitment of RDS personnel including the running of positive action days and pre-selection “taster” sessions to help generate interest in becoming an RDS FF.
11. The Service has promoted the current national recruitment campaign which has helped to raise the profile of RDS FF in the community and saved the need for in-house development of a separate set of resources. An example of the national publicity material is included below. These and similar graphics have helped the Service in social media campaigns aimed at recruiting RDS FF.



12. The Service is committed to ensure that RDS stations are modernised and provided with high quality resources and facilities to help promote a good working environment and to demonstrate the importance of these teams within the Service. This will also help to promote RDS FF retention and encourage future recruitment. For example, Crook Fire Station was replaced by a new purpose-built community fire station, Barnard Castle newly built fire station accommodating not just fire but police, ambulance and mountain rescue, and Stanhope which has had significant modernisation to the existing building and been further enhanced by the building of a major extension.
13. Innovation has been a key element to support the RDS model and a good example of this is the deployment of the region's first Community Safety Responders [CSRs]. CSRs work for Durham Constabulary as PCSOs, CDDFRS as RDS FF and as first responders for the North East Ambulance Service. This has enabled CSRs to be readily accessible to local people and highly visible as they go about their daily community safety activities incorporating elements from all three blue light services and have provided a quality service for citizens in the Weardale area. In addition, this has enabled recruitment of RDS FF to Stanhope Fire Station who may not have been able to be employed there under a more traditional model.
14. The Service maintains close contact with the RDS personnel via regular liaison meetings where specific issues related to the RDS model can be addressed. The District Management Teams also keep regular touch and provide support to their respective RDS personnel.

NEXT STEPS

15. Looking forward, further work to trial different staffing models/ contracts and improved local conditions of service as well as driving forward modernisation of the RDS model on a national level will continue to ensure that the RDS within CDDFRS can be fit for purpose into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Members are requested to:
 - a) **note** the content of this report.

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