

SERVING FIREFIGHTERS



SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Recruitment & Retention of Retained Firefighters

A survey of Serving RDS Staff

Introduction

This spring, the RFU published an online survey on the subject of the Recruitment and Retention of Retained¹ Firefighters and its knock-on effect on the availability of Retained appliances in the UK. The survey was specifically aimed at serving Retained personnel whose day to day frontline experiences provide an essential contribution to the debate.

The main reason for the RFU to embark on the survey was the fact that in spite of a number of well attended conferences, seminars and other gatherings as numerous national and local reports published, nothing appeared to happen in terms of follow up action plans or innovation at local or national level.

Whilst the RFU Executive has its own view as to the nature and depth of the ongoing problems with Recruitment and Retention of Retained staff and the knock-on effect this has on appliance availability, it is important to obtain the views of the members serving on the frontline, who directly experience managerial practices and communication skills that all too often create issues which contribute to low morale and the associated problems of retaining and recruiting suitable staff.

Our original intention was for this survey to substantiate our fears that in some services the impression was that the Retained component of the fire service is still being left to deteriorate without any acts of investment.

Appliance availability should never be allowed to be seen as an insurmountable problem until all possible measures to resolve the issues are put in place and exhausted. The obligation to commence such a piece of work clearly rests with the individual FRA and for it to evidence the fact that they have done so.

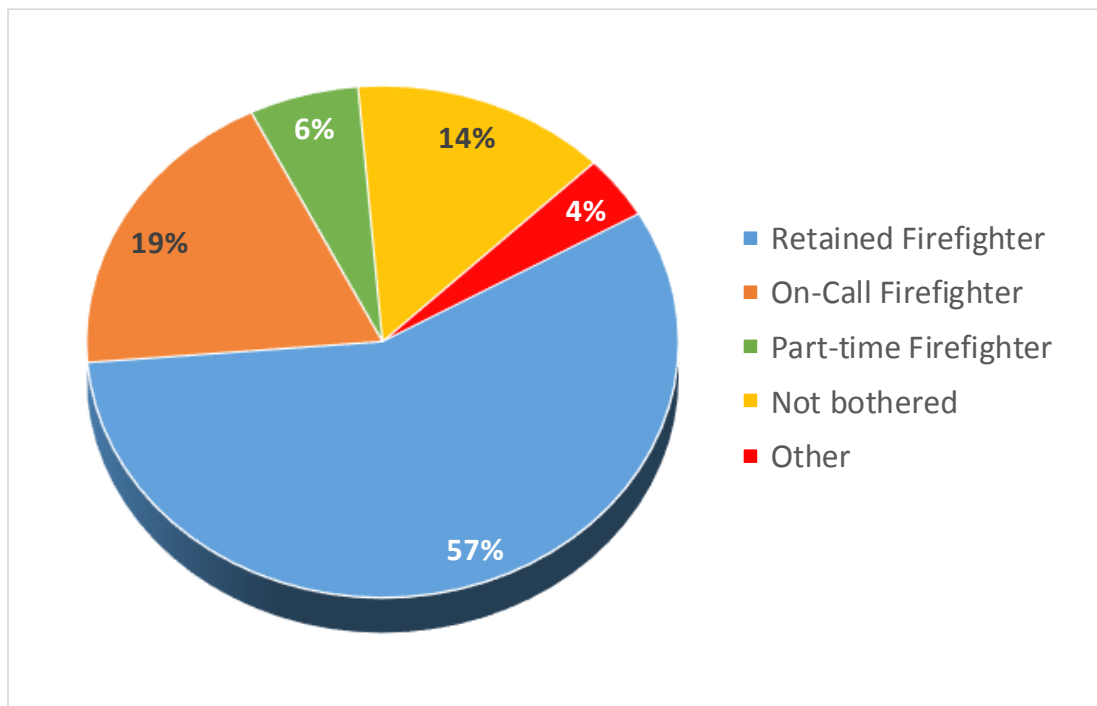
John Barton

National General Secretary

¹ For the purposes of this report references to 'Retained' will be used to encapsulate a Retained, On-Call and Community Firefighter

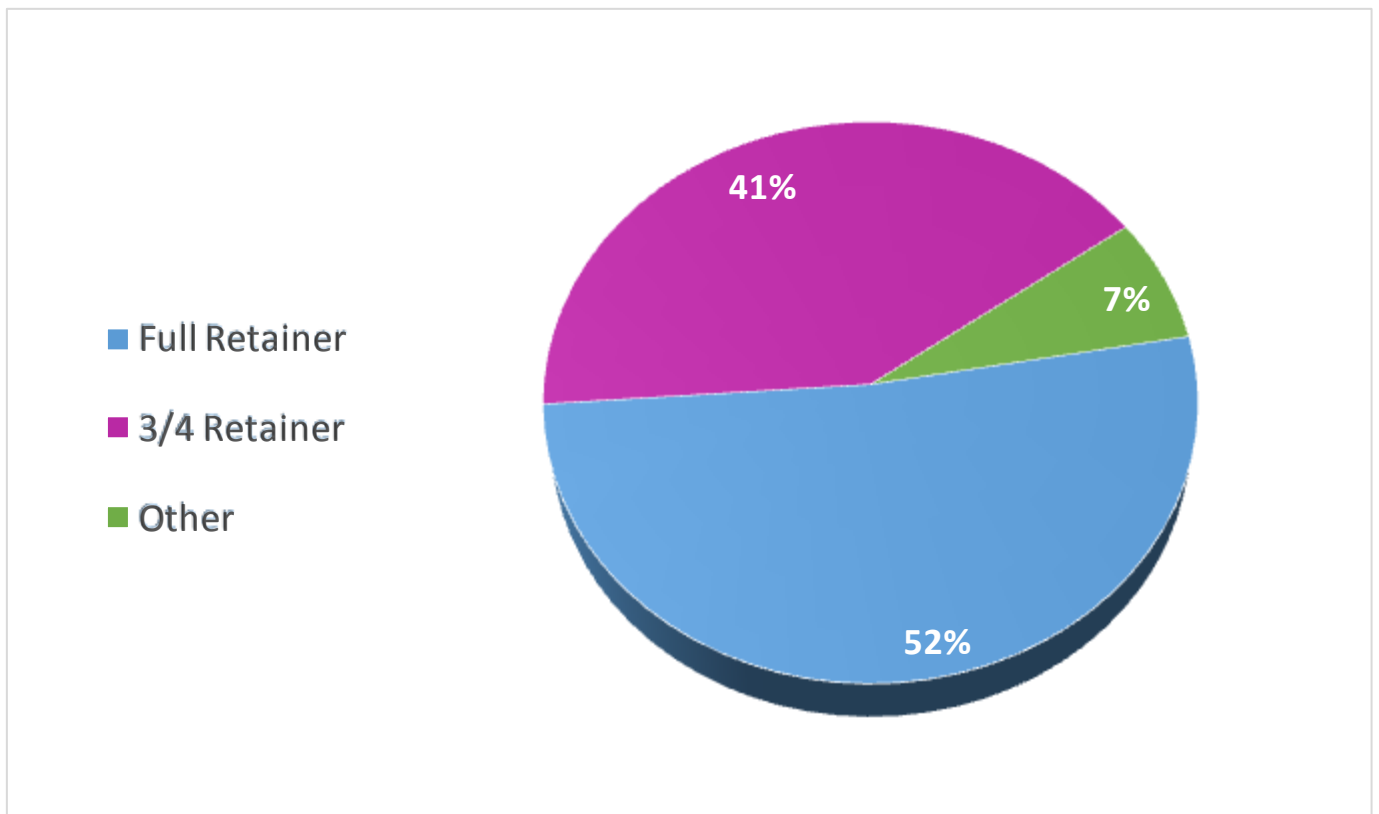
Question 1 - Which terminology do you prefer as a job title?

We wanted to open the survey with the question relating to status, how do operational personnel working the Retained Duty System (RDS) prefer to be addressed? Over recent years sections of the FRS believed it was appropriate to change the title of 'Retained Firefighters', without specifically asking this group of workers for their thoughts. Interestingly enough over half (57%) of those who responded still prefer the title 'Retained Firefighter', notwithstanding the fact that 'On-Call' better describes the way they are employed.



Question 2 - What is your current retainer fee?

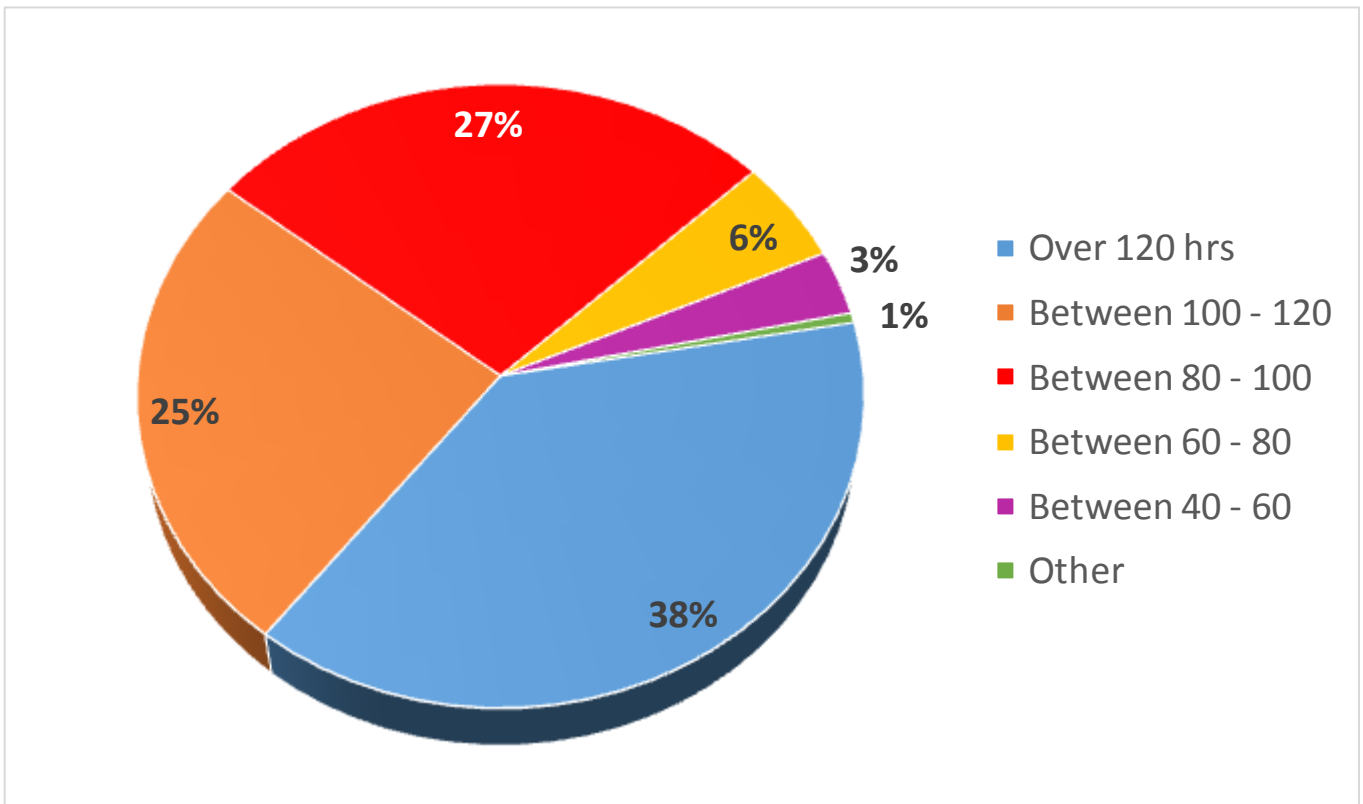
With the introduction of the Working Time Directive in 1998 and the social change whereby fewer people now work in the same areas where they also provide fire cover, we expected to see a lower level of full retaining fees being paid by local FRS. This proved to be the case with just over half of respondents (52%) earning a full retainer.



Question 3 - On average how many hours availability do you provide per week?

Following on from the previous question regarding retainer Fees, we assumed that more serving personnel would be providing fewer hours of availability per week to reflect the 41% on three-quarter retainer fees. What was very surprising was that 38% claimed that they provided **over 120 hours** availability per week. Assuming FRS monitor the level of cover their employees provide it is surprising that such availability from individuals is accepted and not queried.

However, as later results will show, it is likely that such individual availability is provided through necessity due to low crewing levels and pressure to maintain appliance availability.

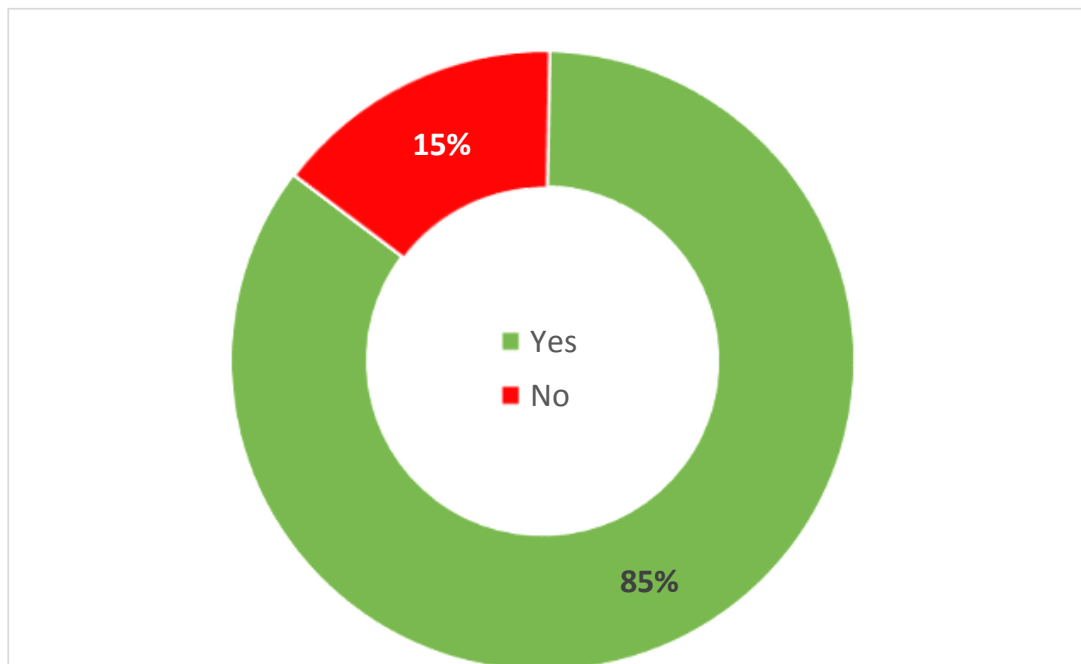


Question 4 - Over the last 12 months has your station suffered with appliance availability problems?

The question of appliance availability confirmed that the vast majority of those who responded had suffered over the last 12 months. Those that responded who had not experienced problems were from a mixed number of Services with the notable exception of Lincolnshire who made up just over 12% of the 'No' responses.

The response demonstrates a continuing problem with appliance availability that simply is not going to go away unless radical action is taken at a local level. In our view too many Services continue to bury their heads in the sand, trotting out the same old excuses that they have tried everything to recruit Retained staff but that it is not possible anymore.

The question remains, who is going to be brave enough to admit that there has been a lack of focus on Retained staff locally and come up with a 'SMART' strategy to overcome the problem?



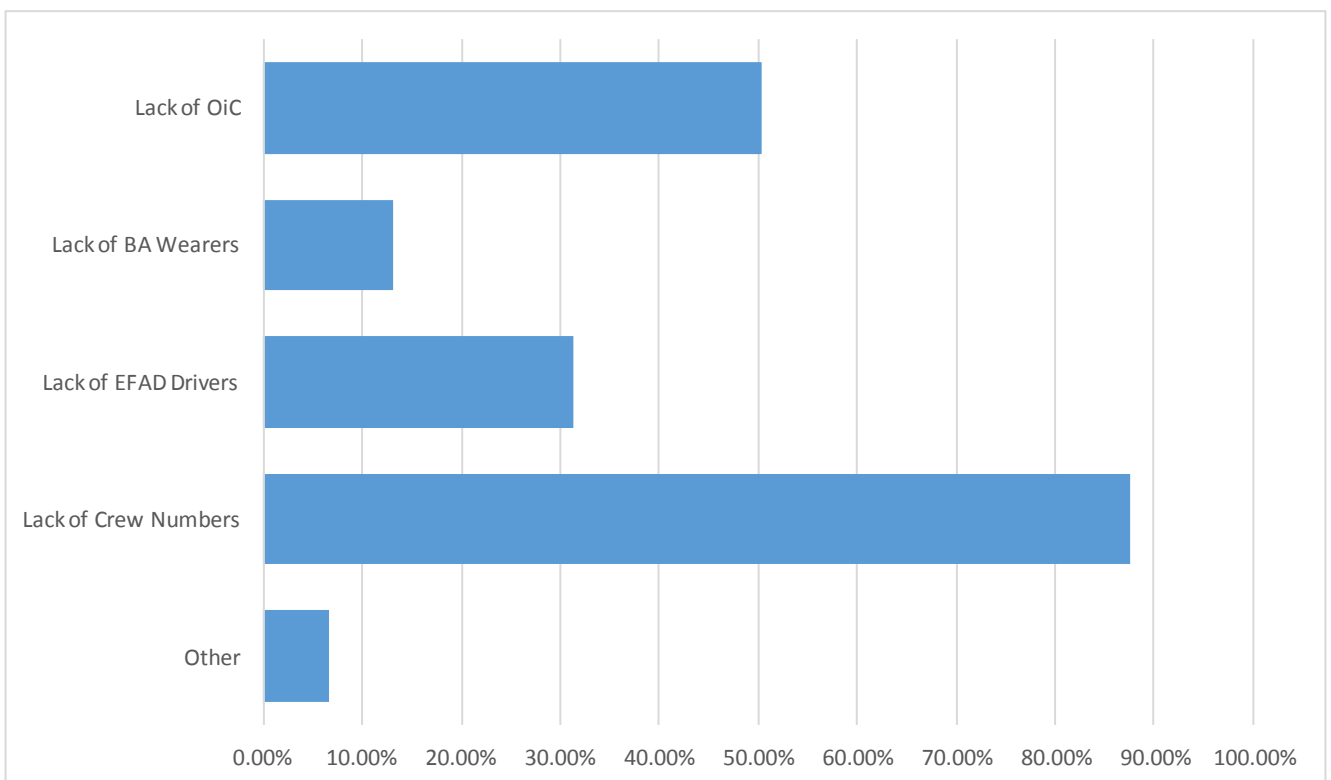
Question 5 - What are the main reasons for your appliance being unavailable? (tick all that apply)

Moving on to what the most likely causes of Retained appliances being unavailable are, responders could choose all that applied to their local fire station. Almost 90% stated that a lack of crew numbers was the problem locally. However, more interesting was that 50% claimed a lack of an Officer in Charge (OiC) was the problem. This bears out our anecdotal evidence that due to the pressures and workload placed on OiCs by Services, fewer and fewer people are willing to take on the role of OiC.

Our belief is that it is not just the OiC role that has become less attractive, firefighters are becoming less willing to apply for Crew Manager roles for the same reason.

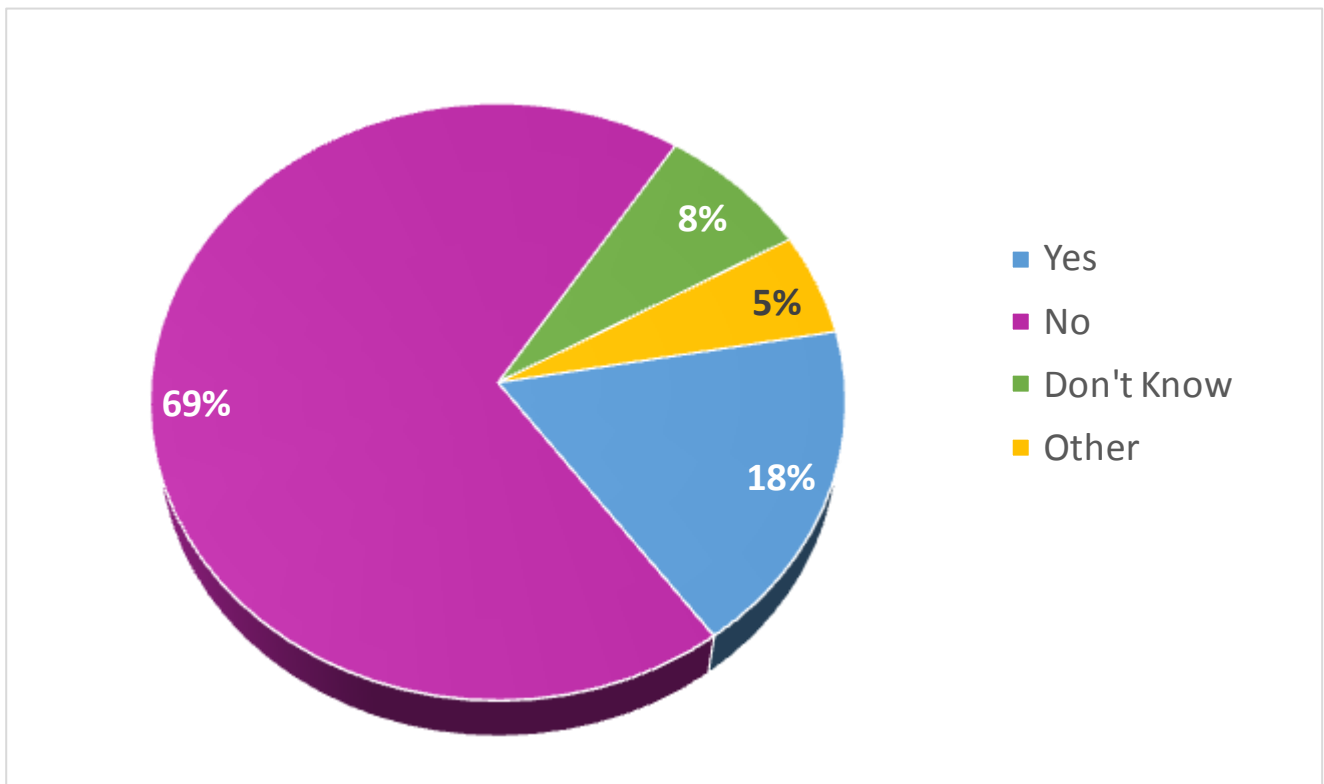
Another problem with a lack of available Crew/Watch Managers is that promotion is often being given to applicants who do not necessarily provide the best cover. The large number of Wholetime staff who are now junior officers on Retained stations has increased significantly over the last 10 years. While their experience is welcomed to a station the limits on their availability is unlikely to be of great use in terms of being the OiC of an appliance.

Services need to look at the availability of their junior officers and the level of workload being placed on those in post so that the position becomes more attractive than is currently the case.



Question 6 – In your opinion is your Fire Service doing enough to overcome the availability issues at your station?

Unsurprisingly only 18% of those surveyed believed that their FRS were doing enough to overcome the availability issues at their station. If the majority of Retained personnel have the perception that their superiors can't be bothered if an emergency appliance is on the run or not the question is why should they?



Question 7 - In your opinion what needs to be done (and by whom) to improve appliance availability at your station?

There were hundreds of written responses to this particular question, of which a selection is contained in Annex A for your reference.

To broadly summarise within two paragraphs it is clear that more needs to be achieved at local level. New practices are being implemented that hinder rather than assist appliance availability. For example, not being able to respond when on leave, lengthy and complicated recruitment processes and increasing minimum rider levels.

Retained recruitment and retention is the problem that nobody seems to want to resolve, local FRS blame a lack of direction from central government, DCLG expects local solutions to come from the ground and in the meantime the problem grows further.

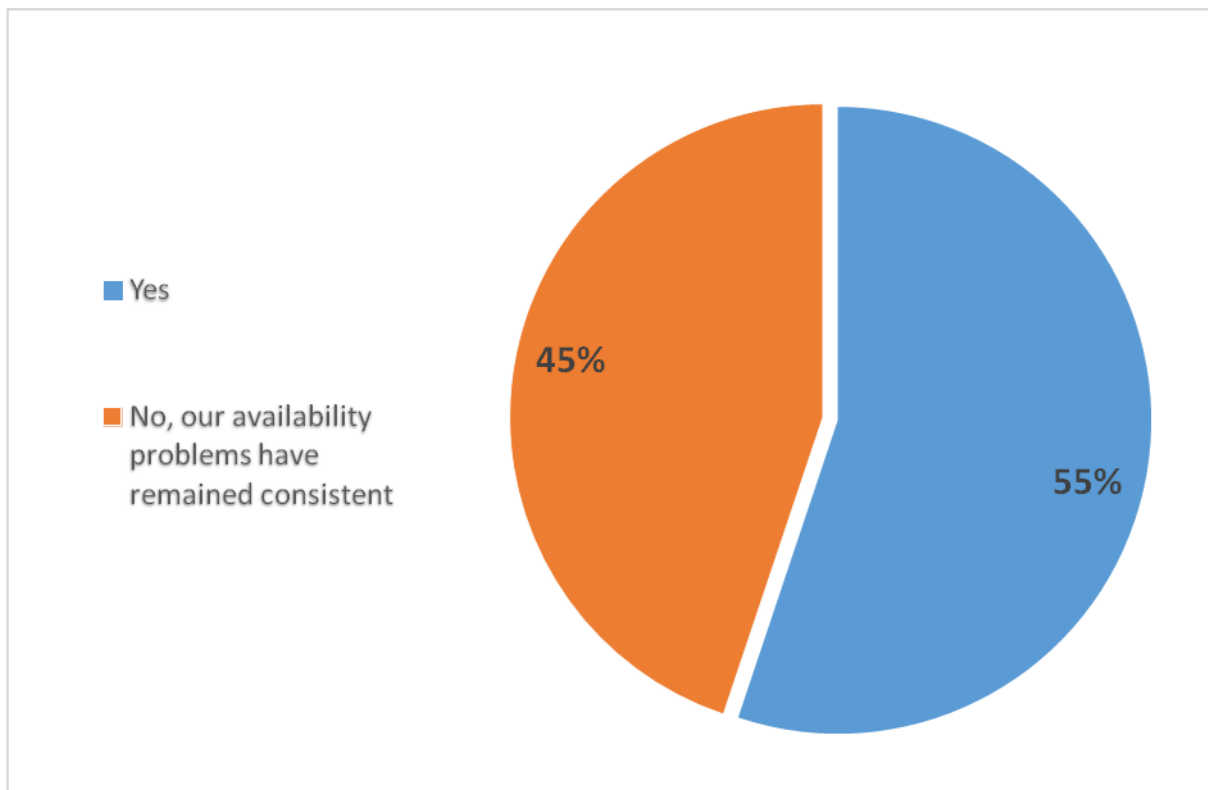
In our opinion management at service level have the opportunity to have the greatest positive impact on improving Retained appliance availability. Every policy (new and old) needs to be tailored to suit the needs of Retained staff, just because something has always been done in a certain way to suit the needs of Wholetime staff doesn't mean it has to be this way for all staff. Service managers need to start thinking outside of the box and be more Retained friendly; they also need to start to listen more to those who do the job rather than being of the opinion that because they have a higher profile in the service that they know best.

Question 8 - Has the appliance availability at your station worsened over the last 12 months?

The following graph demonstrates a lack of activity to ‘stop the rot’ in terms of appliance availability. We believe that most Services that suffer with availability problems have chosen to believe improving availability by recruiting Retained staff is now an impossibility. A mindset that has led to inaction causing the problem to escalate. To prove this point we have seen a number of FRS who now state that their local aim is to achieve 90% availability of Retained appliances, not what you might call an overly ambitious target that will rally everyone into bouts of optimism.

If Retained staff witness such a defeatist attitude by their superiors it is not hard to see why morale in the service is so low.

Service management need to be challenged on a regular basis to identify exactly what initiatives are currently in place to overcome the recruitment problem, without any scrutiny it is impossible to analyse what activities work and what do not.

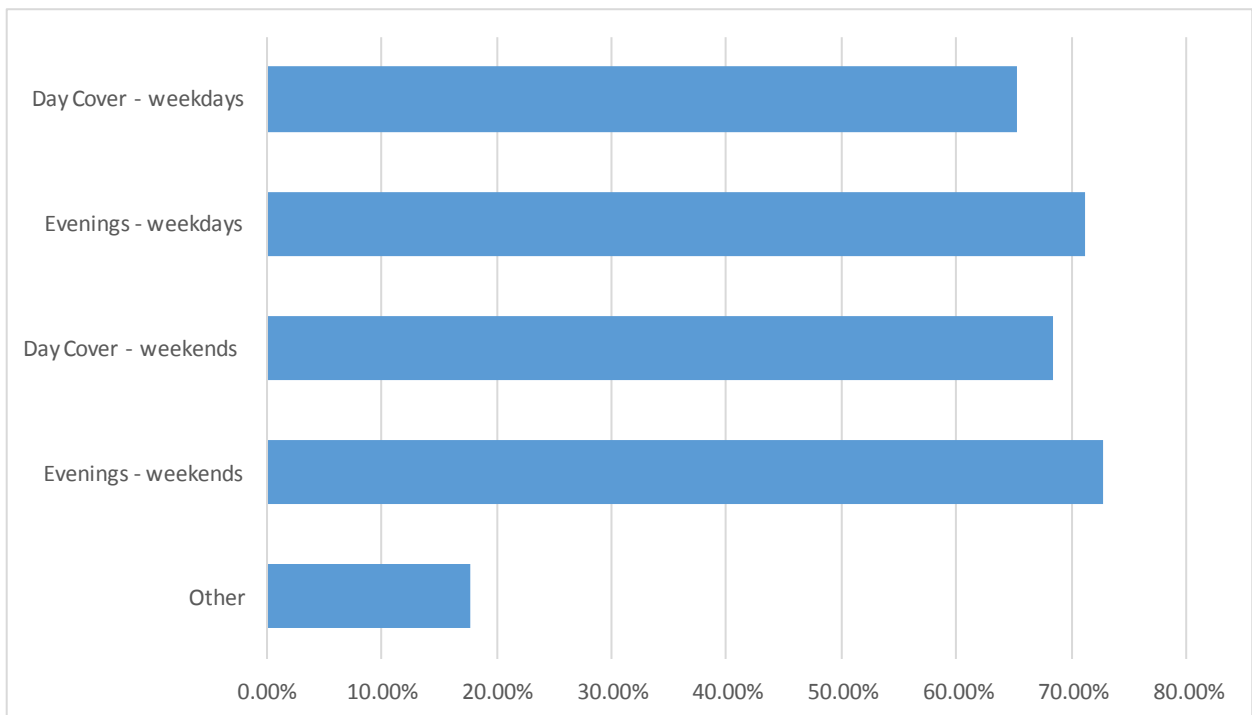


Question 9 - What type of cover do you provide? (tick all that apply)

One of the few surprises from the survey was the responses to the type of cover firefighters provide. While we would expect day cover during the working week to be the lowest due to appliance availability during this time being poor in general, it was only 7% behind evening weekends which topped the poll.

This would suggest that either day cover during the working week is improving (unlikely, based on the responses to previous questions) or more likely, that cover at other times of the week are also deteriorating.

While day cover during the working week has been an issue due to firefighters working outside of their communities, if availability problems are being experienced at evenings and weekends it would suggest to us that the management of availability is not as robust as it could be.



Question 10 - Is your station currently at its full establishment of personnel?

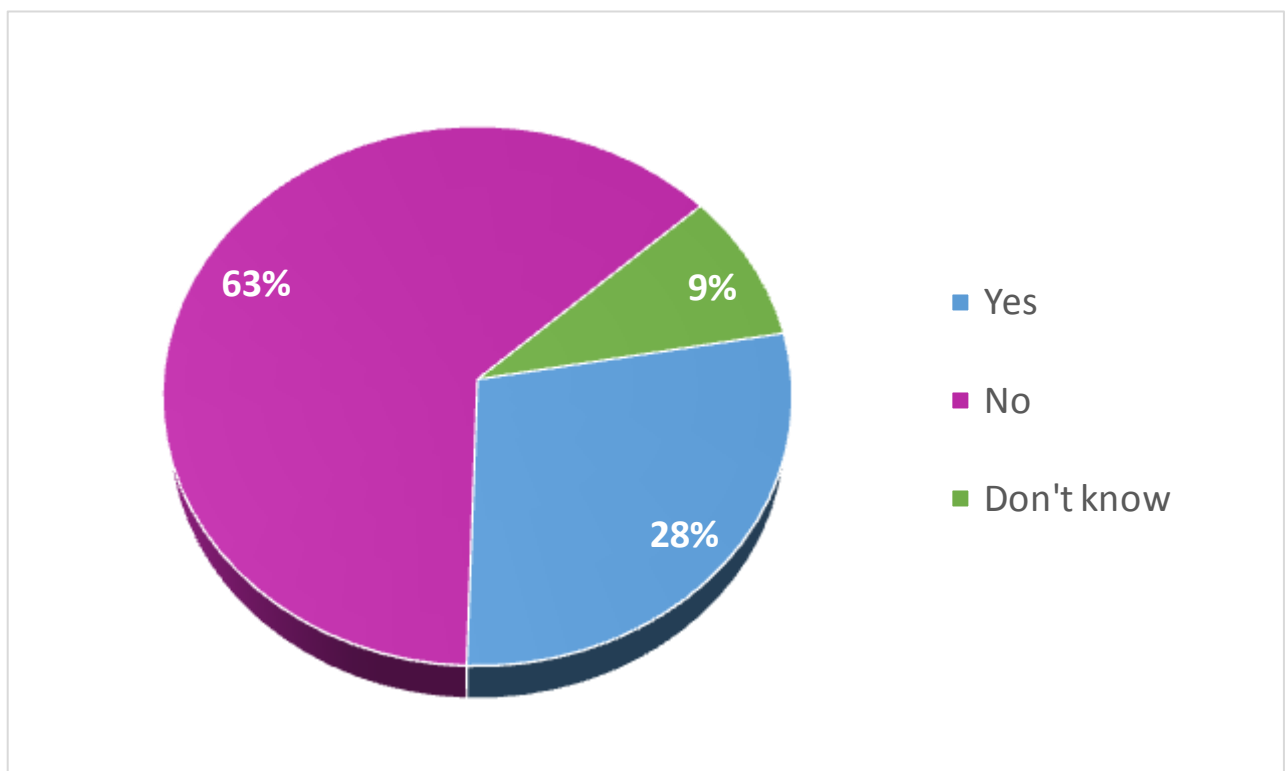
Establishment levels at Retained stations seem to have an air of mystery about them. In past years, before the impact of the Working Time Regulations (WTR) and the sixth edition of the 'Grey Book', it was understood that a one-pump station would use an establishment of 12 personnel while a two-pump station would increase to 20.

Over the last ten years or so there has been an expectation that the number of hours personnel made themselves available would be reduced to more family friendly levels. It is therefore a reasonable expectation that if personnel were providing fewer hours of availability that establishment levels needed to rise to 'fill the void'. However, our anecdotal evidence and the responses to this particular question would appear that the opposite was true.

We are aware of some FRS where the establishment level for a one-pump station is 10 with all personnel providing 120 hours (or less) availability per week. Obviously the knock-on effect of such a policy is poor appliance availability.

It is incomprehensible to us why any FRS would refuse to recruit on a Retained station which suffers with availability problems simply because the authorised establishment level has been reached, yet we know this to be the case.

This again demonstrates where the organisation creates barriers to improved appliance availability rather than breaking them down.



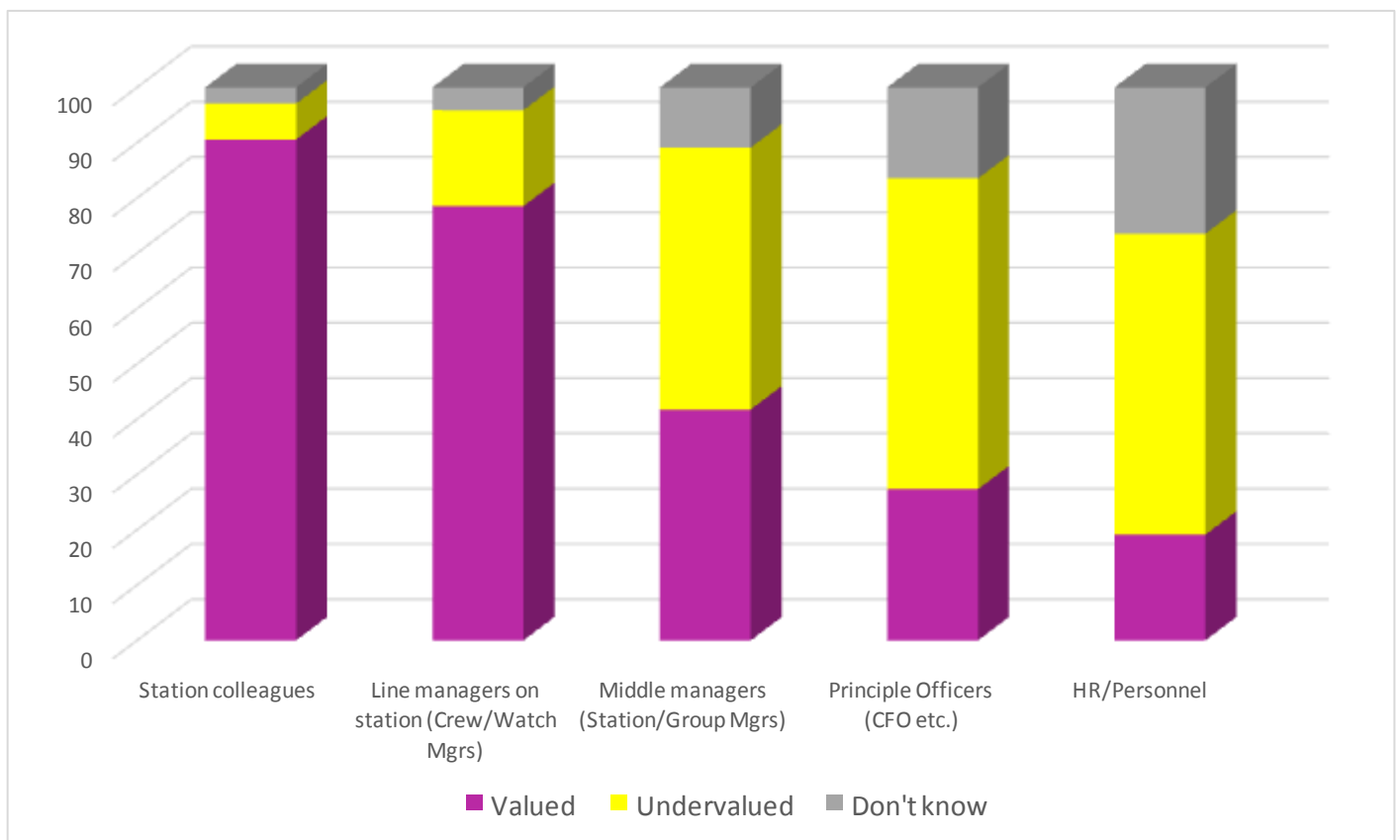
Question 11 - As a member of the Fire Service how do you feel you are treated by:

There is nothing new in the connection between a happy, productive workforce and how they are perceived by their employers. The graph below provides a clear trend in terms of how 'valued' staff feel by their peers compared to their managers further up the chain of command.

The viability of Retained Duty System is fundamentally the transferability of 'goodwill', Retained firefighters by their nature will accommodate the needs of the station to their detriment so long as it is reciprocal when the individuals need arises. Unfortunately we are witnessing all too often Service management using the 'stick' approach without a 'carrot' in sight.

Retained firefighters will only take this for so long before removing their goodwill and taking a more rigid work to rule approach.

It is our view that the ethos of Service management needs an overhaul to gain the respect of its Retained staff and for the goodwill to come back to the benefit of all concerned.



Question 12 - Relating to your role in the Fire Service has any of the following changed over the last 12 months?

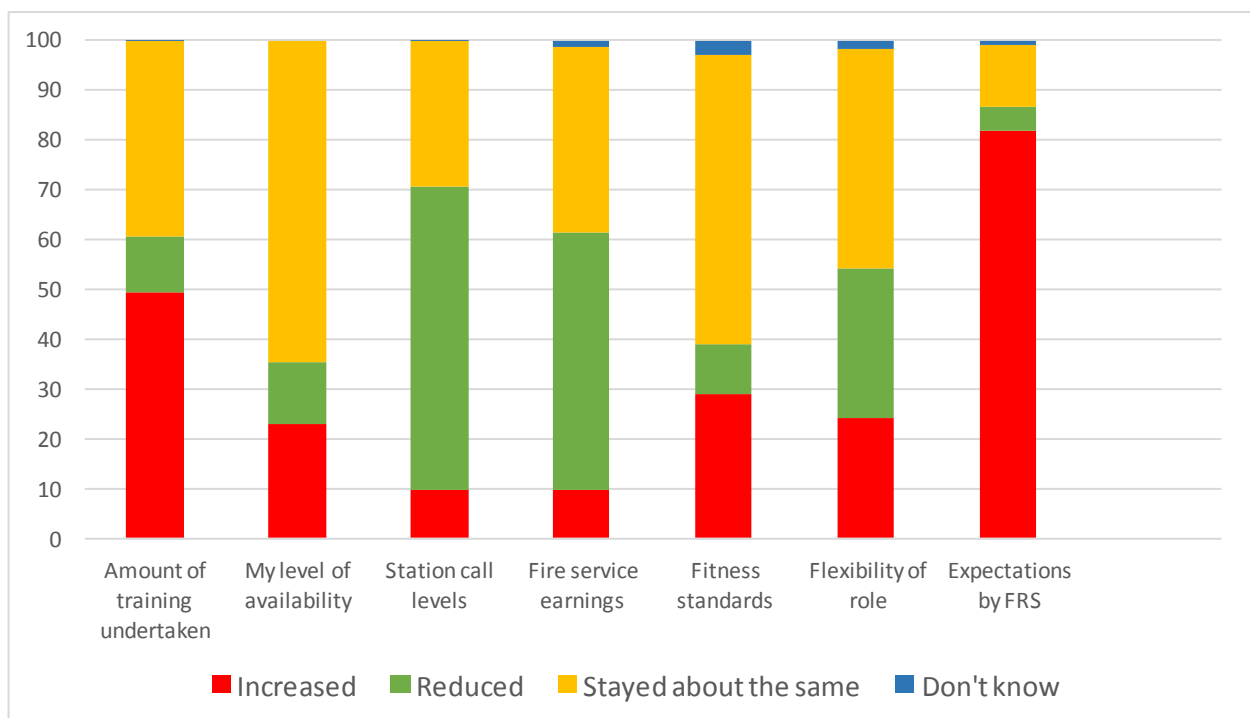
Keeping on the subject of the need for goodwill and Retained friendly policies, the chart below demonstrates that while station call levels and in turn, earnings have reduced, the expectations by the FRS has significantly increased.

We have heard on numerous occasions that FRS are claiming that the Retained role has changed due to the part-time workers legislation, using this as a means of expecting more from its Retained staff.

This is of course complete nonsense. The Retained Duty System is a unique working environment due to the need to be on-call for large parts of the week confined within a 4-5 minute radius of the local fire station.

By its very nature the employee has to demonstrate a level of flexibility alien to any other worker. To then increase the expectations on these individuals while reducing their earnings will ultimately lead them to question their future role in the service.

Our view is that attitudes toward Retained staff has to change, if improvement to Recruitment and Retention is to be achieved.

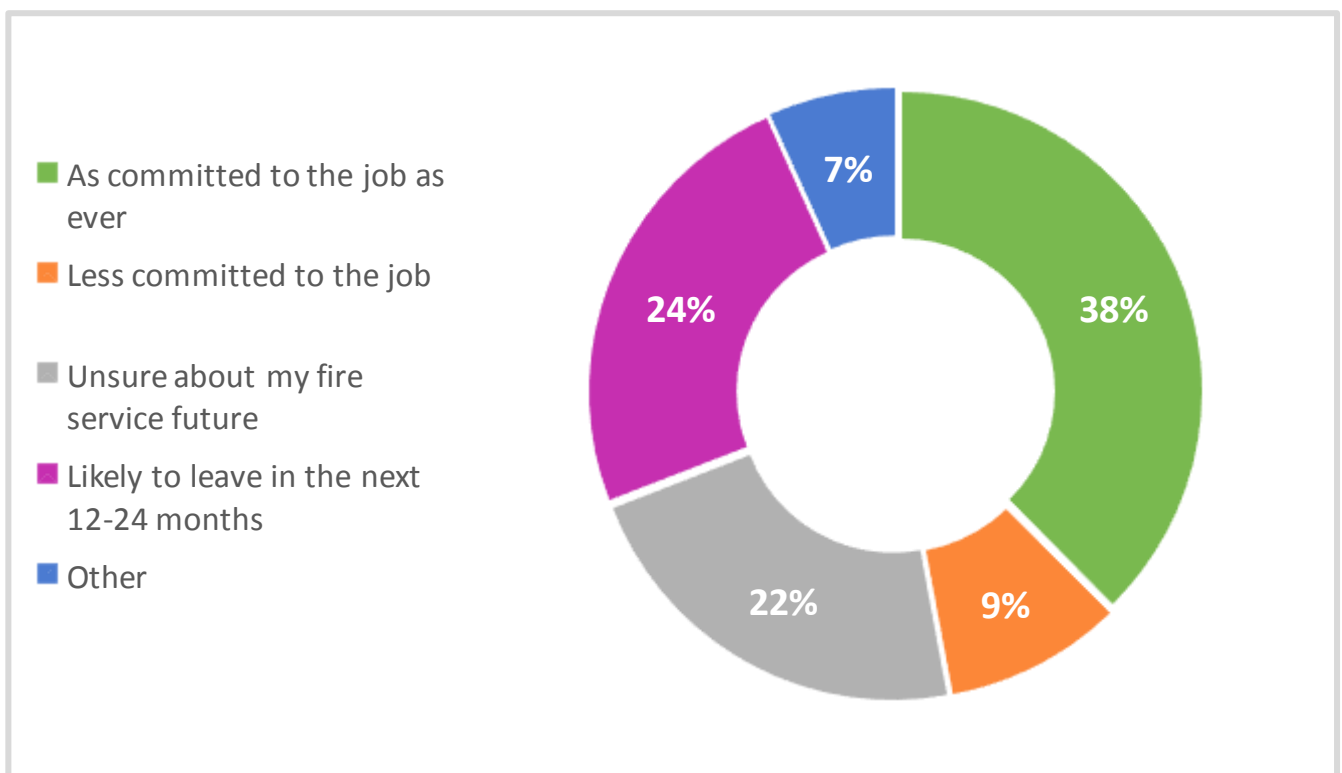


Question 13 - How do you view your future with the FRS?

The results contained in this graph are indicative of the previous responses where by staff feel undervalued, with unrealistic expectations placed upon them by the Service.

The responses by those who are committed to the job as ever, were from a mixture of FRS providing a variety of hours so it is not clear why their commitment is greater than almost two-thirds of respondents.

The results should also be a real concern to all FRS, for if they truly believe the recruitment of Retained staff is a massive challenge it will become even harder if our survey is a fair reflection of just how many are either unsure about their fire service future or are looking to leave within the next 12-24 months (46% combined).



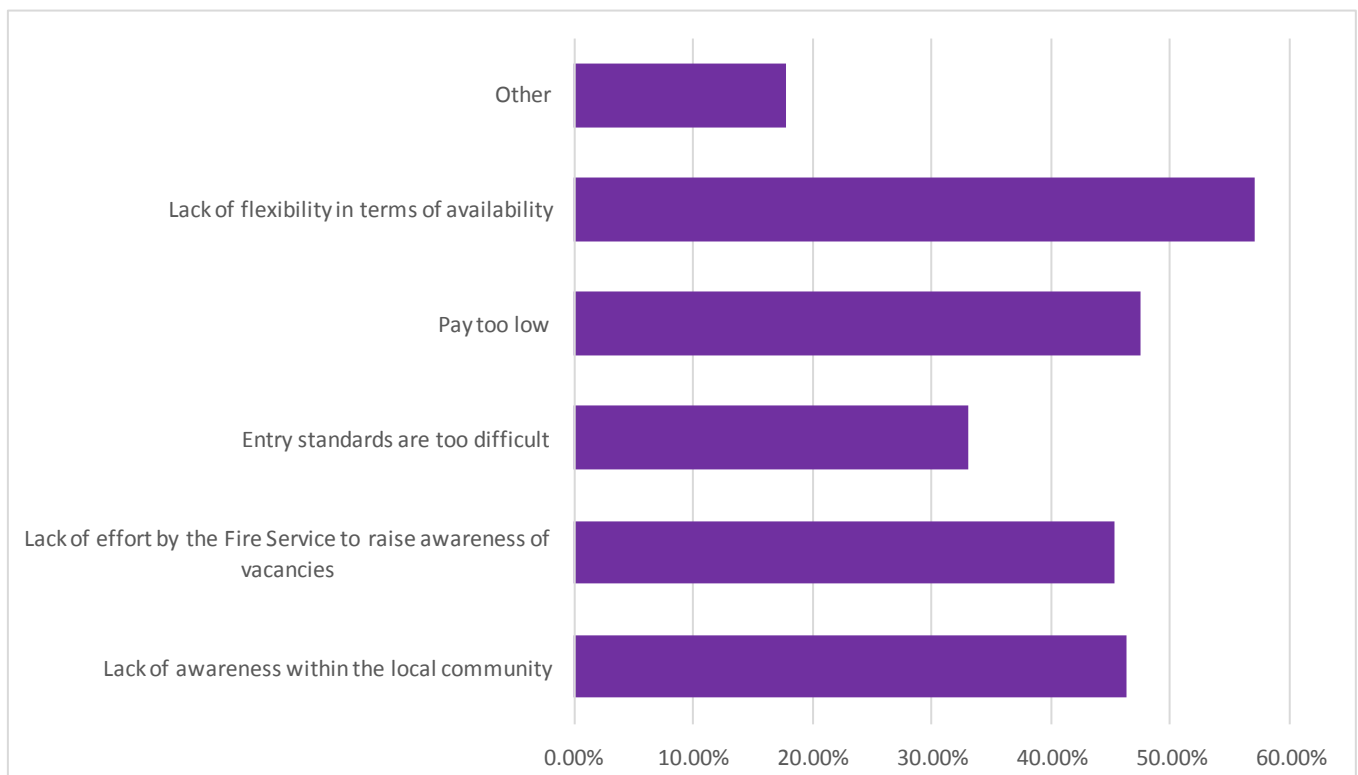
Question 14 - Regarding recruitment and retention of On-Call/Retained staff, what do you think the main barriers are?

To confirm our view that flexibility is an issue, our next set of results put a lack of flexibility as being the main barrier, which tops the list with over half of the responses.

There still remains a lack of awareness in local communities both of the existence of the local fire station being crewed by Retained Firefighters and station vacancies. If eligible residents aren't aware of the vacancies at their local fire station they won't apply! More needs to be done to interact with the public and 'sell' the role of a Retained firefighter to members of the local community.

A number of responders also used the comments box (under 'Other') to raise their concerns over the time it takes to recruit new staff. In some instances it still take 18 months from the application stage to riding an appliance. It is no wonder so many lose interest after their initial enthusiasm.

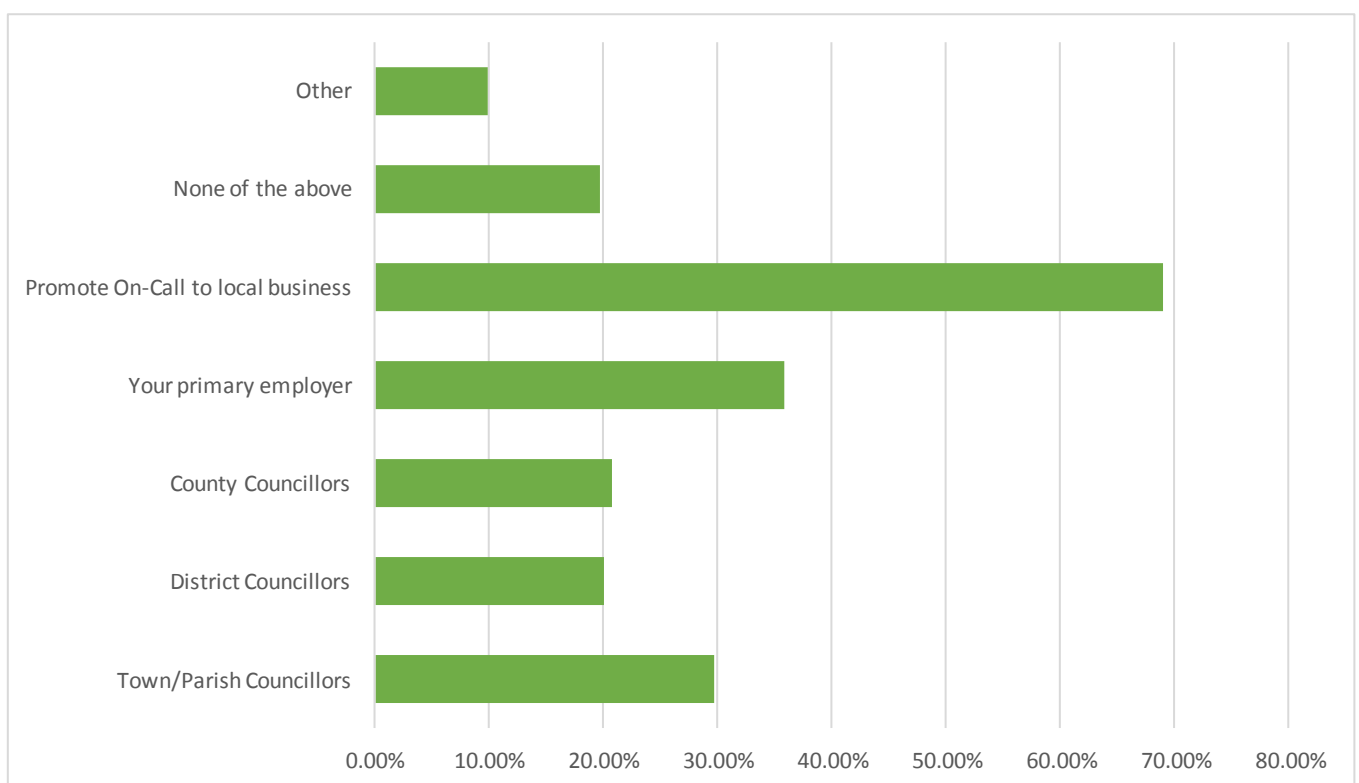
Recruitment processes need to be speeded up, recruitment initiatives need to be devised to engage the public and entry standards need to be realistic, Retained friendly and proportionate to the local risk.



Question 15 - Do you think that partnerships with any of these local groups would help overcome problems with recruitment and retention?

When posing the question regarding forging partnerships to aid recruitment the clear winner was local businesses. The response to 'None of the above' was similar to that for County/District councillors which suggests that there is not a huge amount of confidence that local elected members have the answer, especially as they don't appear to even realise that there is a problem.

If we all broadly agree that improved, regular communication with local businesses will go some way to aid recruitment and retention why are FRS not doing something about it?

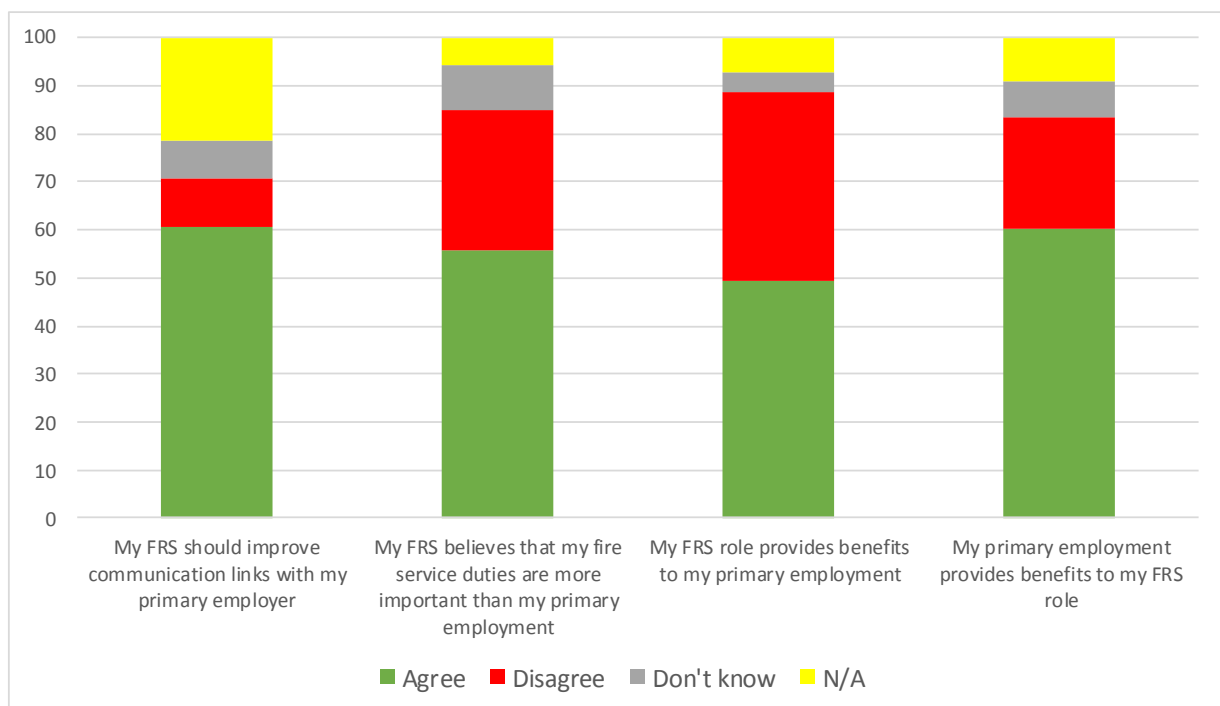


Question 16 - Looking at your primary employment, what are your views on the following?

Continuing with the primary employers’ theme, we then asked what transferable benefits are there between employers and the FRS. Consistent with the previous question, almost two-thirds said that their local FRS should improve communication links with their primary employer. We believe this would be higher, recognising that in some cases Firefighters do not wish their employers to know too much about their fire service duties for fear of being questioned over how much time is spent away from the workplace.

The two most notable responses were that over half of responders were of the view that their FRS believed that their primary employment was secondary in importance compared to their fire service role. This concurs with the responses to question 11 which stated that 81% believed the expectations from the service had increased.

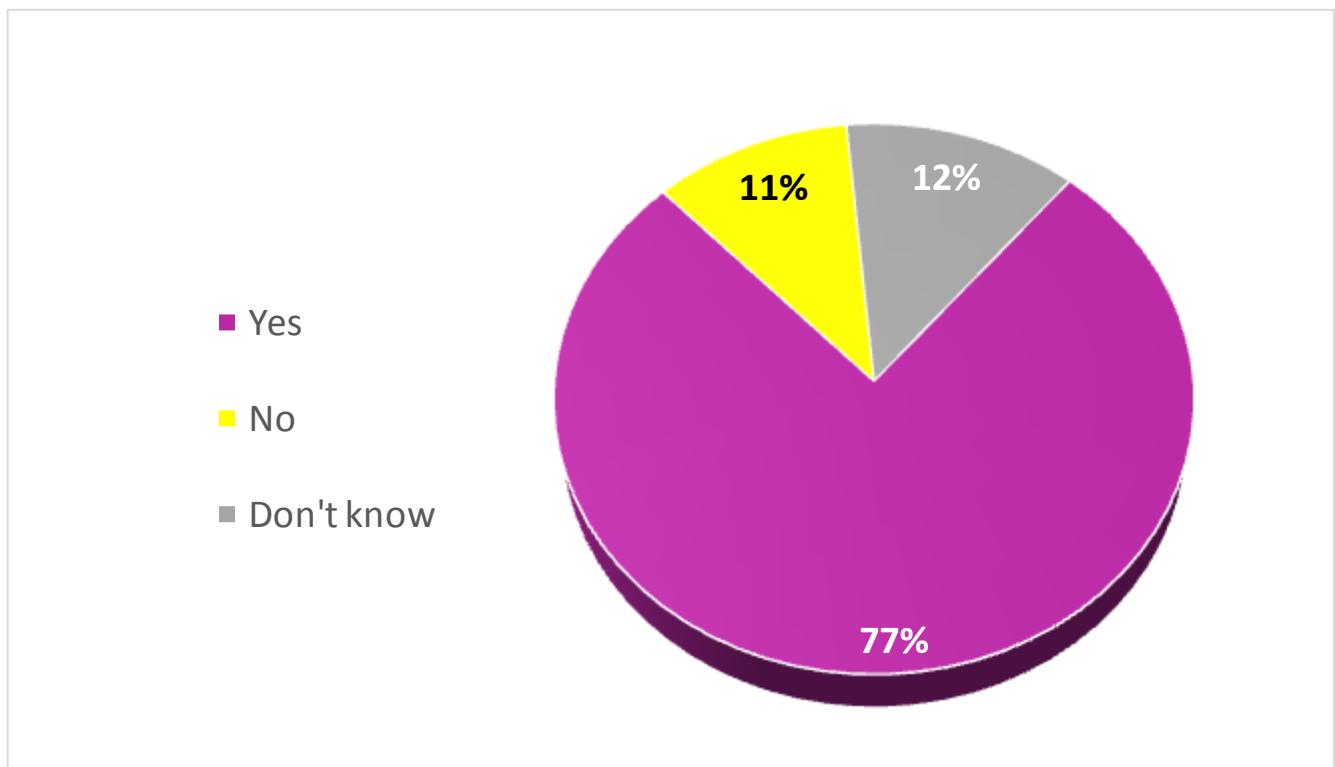
Another surprise was that almost 40% didn’t think that their FRS role was of any benefit to their primary employment, yet just over 60% thought that their primary employment bought benefits to their FRS role.



Question 17 - Fire calls are reducing due to many factors, are you agreeable to have a wider community emergency role, i.e. helping the old and the vulnerable at risk in their home etc.?

When posing the question over whether their operational role could be broadened to include such things as helping the old and vulnerable etc. the response was positive with 77% agreeing to take on other duties.

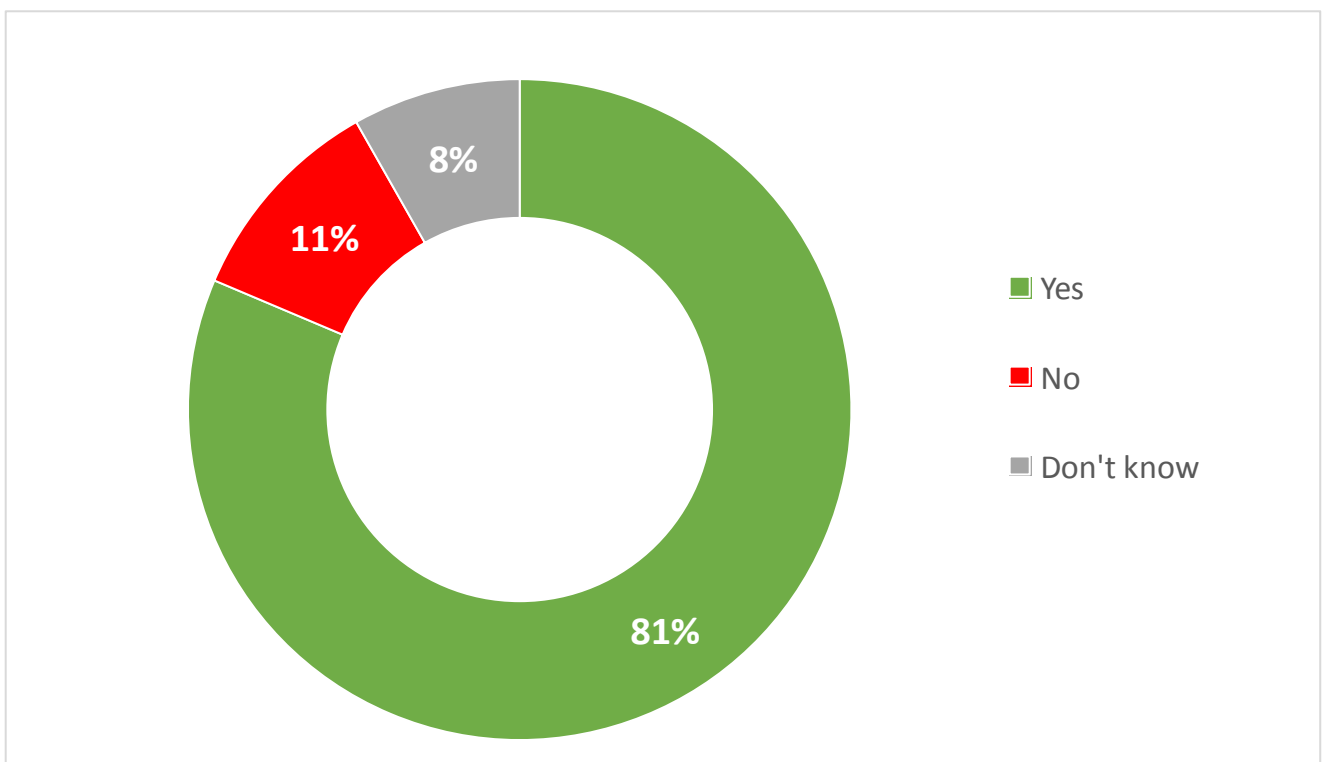
The employees working the RDS have always had a 'can do' attitude, viewing their role less like a job and more like a moral responsibility. We believe that it would aid recruitment and retention if the role of a firefighter was broader to include additional areas of protection; this would go some way to fill the void of reduced call levels.



Question 18 - Should Co-Responding be a core skill but properly funded from other sources rather than by the FRS?

We have already seen the expansion of Co-Responding schemes across the country which has been of great benefit to local communities, Ambulance Trusts and the firefighters who have taken part in the schemes.

It is therefore not surprising that 81% of replies agreed that Co-Responding should be a core skill and properly funded. A joint fire/medical role is common throughout Europe and North America and we believe that such a role should be considered as part of the Retained Firefighters commitment in the UK.



Summary

The RFU does not wish to be seen solely as a critical commentator; we actively encourage and will support where possible measures which promote the interests of a duty system that with some welcome innovation and consideration would function much better than it clearly does now. Not only for those who serve within it but also the communities that it serves.

During a debate on Future Reserves 2020 in the HoC on 8th November 2012 The Secretary of State Philip Hammond MP made the following point regarding the creation of the Army Reserve.

“If we are going to make this process work, we must draw out the benefits for employers, in the general management and personal skills that reserve service will bring to their work force, and given the specific vocational training that the Army can give to reservists”

It would not be difficult at all to see the similarities between On-Call firefighters and Armed Forces Reservists in the context of reducing full-time posts at a time when activity on full time stations is reducing year on year and the strengthening of the role of On-Call accordingly will require renewed focus on this duty system.

In terms of recruitment and retention the method in which the RDS is operated can no longer be seen as a two party arrangement, between the employer and employee, when it clearly isn't.

We believe the key is to consider:

- 1) A closer relationship with and an improved understanding of the needs of the primary employer so as to remove any barriers to releasing staff
- 2) Greater Involvement of elected members and MP's at a local level to publicise and endorse this flexible duty system and those who work within it.
- 3) An 'Open for Business' attitude from FRS to any local employer who releases a member of staff for duty including a better understanding of the duties and commitment expected of both the retained firefighter and the primary employer when agreeing to release their employee for duty.
- 4) Improved use of social media to promote and inform on the merits and benefits of becoming an On-Call firefighter

Notwithstanding the doctrine of localism there is a need for challenge from the centre, effectively a reasonable level of expectation that services and elected members will reflect on the many reports on this duty system and recognise that they must put in place steps to address the long standing issue of appliance availability.

Annex A

Written responses to Question 7

- *Pay retained a salary on hours of availability.*
- *Service policy on this matter is proving to be successful in addressing the issue.*
- *The staff on station put out notices to the local area advertising an open evening and got a good response. We have had 5 to 6 persons looking to join. The standards need to be looked at so people that would make good fire fighters but not chief officers can be taken on.*
- *The service needs to advertise better and attract a balance of people who work shifts and people who work days to ensure not only day time cover but evenings, weekends and bank holidays.*
- *I personally believe that the Rota system is one of the major issues affecting the service. As all appliances allow for six riders, the service only allows five riders at any one time. If they allow for more people to be on call, allowing for individuals main employment, then I believe that there would not be so many pumps crew deficient or off the run.
I think the service needs to rethink its tactics as far as manning the appliances and this can only be done from the top.*
- *More trained OIC's three is not enough for the retained duty system, more shift workers.*
- *Management seem very reluctant to put people forward for EFAD it all seems to come down to cost.*
- *Recruit more firefighters, but the application process and current fitness levels are putting people off applying.*
- *More communication and collaboration between JO's for availability.*
- *Recruit based on better criteria than present.
Do not let manager ego get in the way of recruitment.
Crew appliances with three - at least for minor events and make-ups.*
- *Visibility of crewing levels needs to be available to all personnel at all times to effect efficient utilisation of crewing cover; however, this will only become available when brigade and local management realise that the mantra of "just work your contract hours" does not provide sufficient flexibility and work/life balance to reflect the level of commitment given by Retained Firefighters.*
 - *In addition, additional crew members need to be recruited for the gentrifying workforce.*
- *We should have been allowed to recruit more staff when changes occurred that impacted on availability. We were prevented from doing so by a quota of "person units" per station that was set by management and at one point actually reduced. A fully retained person was one unit and a three quarter retained person was three quarters of a unit. Our quota for a two-pump and responder station was down to 18 units. Staff were promised an easier life and no more hassle if they dropped their hours from fully retained to three quarter in order to free up units. Four fully retained staff had to drop their hours for every new fully retained new member. 25 years ago we had 20 staff. We still have 20 staff.
The changes that affected pump availability are numerous and are listed below. Each one made it a bit harder to crew the pumps.*

- *Dropping the full retainer from 168 hours to 120.*
- *Extra mandatory training away from stations.*
- *Minimum rider numbers rising from two to three and then four.*
- *Having to have a junior officer on every appliance.*
- *35 days paid leave and not being able to respond while on leave.*
- *Rappel availability system that fails to notify On Leave members when an appliance goes off the run so that they could come off leave and be available.*
- *Rappel availability system that fails to display who is available and when, and lets members book off duty by mobile phone without members realising the consequences 10 minutes after they go off duty.*
- *Rappel availability system that fails to recognise who is in each phased alerting team and allows members to book off duty who are essential for a response. The others left on duty not being on call in that team that week?*
- *Co/ Responder Duties without extra staff.*
- *Medicals off station.*
- *Employers not thanked or rewarded for releasing staff.*
- *Long delays in getting medicals after periods of sickness or injury.*
- *A lengthy and complicated recruitment process.*
- *A big drop in moral from the pressures of the workload and pay cuts from the Rank to Role process for doing more work for less money.*
- *Not sacking members who join giving day cover and then change employers' months later and no longer give day cover.*
- *The strain on employers who have to let staff go for more and more training courses.*
- *The strain on families when annual leave from the main job is used up for training courses leaving nothing for a family holiday.*
- *Not being permitted to be on call at nights or evenings while on a training course during the days.*
- *Home fire safety checks too far away from station to remain on call.*
- *Bank Crewing. Pumps may be available when they leave but the safety margin is reduced and pumps go off the run.*
- *Covering strikes and as above.*
- *Harassment from managers to restrict and control our social life and our main jobs to remain on call.*
- *No extra reward for members who can give more than 120 hours cover per week and therefore very valuable scarce people.*
 - *The employers need to be getting something for releasing staff for fire service duties. More staff should have been permitted to compensate for the changes above. The recruitment process should not cost the applicant too much time and money and should all be done in one or at most two stages, not taking six months to discover that they are claustrophobic or colour blind.*

- *More should be done to inform employers what will be expected from them. More training should be done at home stations and members remain on call for emergencies.
Home safety checks should be done by civilians.*
- *Better recruitment*
- *Revisit the rostering systems.*
- *Higher staffing levels to allow crew flexibility
Tailor training to improve practical skills
Reduce unnecessary admin to release fire-fighters for training
Better liaison with local business to release personnel
Make job more attractive to more people*
- *More local campaigns. Go out to businesses and sell the benefits of having workers in the fire service, i.e. free first aid health and safety training, increased awareness of fire and other related issues. Have a higher profile of those retained leaving work for shouts. Thank businesses and individuals. If there are W/T personnel over at w/t stations out post them.*
- *Firefighters are reluctant to take on extra responsibilities as the fire service is reluctant to pay them for the extra time needed to carry out the extra responsibilities. Very little additional training is given to help firefighters who might want to act up.*
- *More preparing for future than reacting by managers*
- *More incentive to give day premium cover*
- *All crew should be EFAD drivers - some are allowed to opt out but never being trained this places undue pressure on the few drivers that are trained and affects our social life as you can never touch a drop of alcohol.*

JOs should be allowed to drive, this increases our numbers immediately as they used to be allowed to drive.

More day time cover should be recruited and those only offering evenings and weekends should be reduced as day time cover crew can normally cover evenings too.

- *Community engagement with local employers, job share contracts for day/night availability, tax incentives for employers and on call staff to enlist*
- *This is a recruitment issue, retention is not the problem as most remain in service for a number of years. The local demographics dictate that availability, particularly during the day will be difficult. Our main target audience would be parents at home during the day. DFRS are visiting local businesses, but they are mostly small and unable to release staff. The recruitment process could be improved to ensure that all those interested parties are responded to and dealt with quickly and efficiently.*
- *To manage resources more efficiently using Whole-time Fire-fighters to crew appliances i.e. run with four and leave two to make up crew for second appliance. This is only for Whole-time/ Retained Stations.*
- *Weak and inadequate management at divisional/group level over a long period has created this problem. Another factor was the removal of local recruitment i.e. recruitment by station personnel. Recruitment was centralised in the name of equality/discrimination but failed. This is partially resolved now by the OIC now being part of the recruitment process. And yes, probationary firefighters would turn up on station without the OIC knowing beforehand.*

- *More staff appointed. Much quicker and more available EFAD course (presently about 10 months delay between theory and blue-light practical training).*
- *The establishment on retained stations need to be increase to allow for time off due to annual leave and free time from duty.*
- *Put the Retained at the same level as the TA. More funding and national campaign.*
- *FRS's needs to recognize and do more to recruit and retain RDS staff, too much is focused on them being to WT standard, when there is clear barrier into WT?*
- *HR needs to make sure when members of RDS stations are put on temporary contracts that their shifts do not overlap, as it can take 2 members away from station.*
- *Increase pay to make job seem more attractive, incentives for employers to release crew members. More tolerance from senior managers on work /home life. Acknowledge the fact we do what we can when we can realise the fact that rostering can never work unless you have a lot of personal.*
- *Recruit available people during the day.*
- *New recruits trained in BA earlier within their development.*
- *More drivers on days.*
- *Offer a better financial incentive to recruit and retain personnel.*
- *More problem with being available from work during the day.*
- *Needs more advertising and make it easier to apply to become a retained firefighter. So they can get through their medical and physical tests sooner.*
- *A more flexible approach, each station and its crew are different and have different needs to keep appliances on the run. Rather than using a banding system and fitting people into a band regardless. They should challenge each station to manage it themselves with an agreed target. Then pay individuals on a percentage basis each month based on the amount of cover given. They could also perhaps pay a higher rate for times when it's harder to get crews i.e. daytime to encourage people to be available.*
- *Awareness on a national level of what the retained fire service does and how important we are to the wellbeing of the public. Should be government lead, maybe shown on TV and in local newspapers.*
- *Better pay more flexible time off.*
- *Make the job more appealing. Stop asking for unrealistic commitment for initial course (requires four weeks off main employment!!!).*
- *Scrap ' Contracted Hours ' and Rostered crewing. It's only since these came into action that availability has been effected. Something the senior management need to acknowledge isn't working!*
- *If we were on an hourly rate then we wouldn't need secondary jobs so more people would be available but without the working time directive so we could cover long duration periods.*
- *Recruitment is being held back because of budget cuts, this policy needs to be reversed. There is only a short term financial gain to be had by trying to make a reduced number of personnel keep appliances on the run. This will soon be followed by a 'reverse snowball' effect e.g. as people leave the burden on those remaining will increase so more will leave etc. etc.*

- *Pay staff for the hours of cover they give, so it is worthwhile being around even if the calls don't come in. This way crews would be on the run more.*
- *Recruit people on contracts for the hours you need to keep appliances on the run and maintain a disciplined approach so they stick to it.*
- *The Government needs to be more proactive in supporting local FRA's to highlight what we do and to provide national funding support like they are currently doing with the TA at the moment with recruitment. The public and more importantly local employers are just not aware of what we do and what little they can do to support their communities by employing or providing a member of staff to the local fire station. The funds are just not there to allow current firefighters to get out in to the community to promote what we do. The local FRS are rewarded for incentives they have achieved so I don't see why this model cannot be included as there is such a national shortage of firefighters and is a national problem.*
- *This is a recruitment and retention issue. Recruits must be drawn from all the community.*
 - *I find too many would be recruits in the 30 something age group put off by a perceived idea of a military style training complete with beatings; which in some cases appears to still exist. I was informed by one trainer on a recent course that he was going to another station that afternoon "to scare some new recruits".*
- *More recruitment.*
- *We have full time firefighter wanting to become retained at our station so no training needed but recruitment is on hold.*
- *Recruit more RDS personnel or retain the ones that we have.*
- *Better and timelier recruiting. Improved terms and conditions for those that provide weekday cover. More flexible contracts.*
- *Increase turn out time so that a larger pool can be recruited, Speed up the recruit training once on station, it should not take over a year to get on the run as a BA wearer.*
- *Ensure that they employ people that can give the required cover. Ensure the recruits fully understand the commitment it take to be an RDS fire fighter.*
- *More incentives and less pressure from management.*
- *Every crew member should be able to drive and be BA team leader.*
- *I have six wholetime/RDS dual contract personnel. Four are on one watch, two on another. Of the four, three are managers so every time green are on duty I lose three managers. I think the way forward would be for people to have their secondary contract as part of their first.*
- *More money to be available from DFRS.*
- *More support or fast tracking development firefighters in order to achieve ff three, four & five much quicker.*
- *We cannot, the system we now work the max is 60 hours a week minimum is 40, all new recruits only want to do 40, and the old guys now want to join in on this now that there are no shouts, average of 200 shouts down to 50 a year.*
- *Increase awareness, talk to employers, advertise, more frequent recruitment sessions/drives.*

Lobby governments to increase profile of RDS.

- *Pay retained staff better and pay extra for skill levels i.e. drivers, OiC, in-water trained staff.*
- *As we are all employed by HFRS, at HQ some staff have difficulty being released by their Line managers to give availability to the appliance. Surely this should be priority.*
- *Replace staff that have left!*
- *There needs to be more recruitment for the retained. Currently we only have one recruitment intake a year, so if people fail the tests then they have to wait a year to re try and by this point they have lost interest.*
- *Allow less on-call hours. Only through the day or night etc.*
- *Organisation needs to take responsibility here and stop playing with the heart strings of their staff, it surely cannot be the responsibility of watch managers on RDS units to staff the pumps, W/T staff do not have these pressures.*
- *Better recruitment program.
Better incentives to join.
Quicker recruitment period.
More local input into recruitment.
More support for companies to release on-call.*
- *More advertising.*
- *A big increase in retaining fee.*
- *Recruitment and stop the amount of jumping through hoops to constantly prove competency the pressures of running the station.*
- *Possibility of central government compensating employers who allow their staff to respond to emergencies whilst at work.*
- *Pay more for the retainer.*
- *Manning levels have never been large enough to cover required crew numbers and yet when recruiting the numbers always are lower than that needed. Thereby reducing the overall station numbers that puts stress on current crew.*
- *Improve moral by using us.
Improve moral by stopping phased alerting on a quiet one pump station.*
- *There are a number of factors:*
- *WT issues are affecting RDS cover. This includes morale over pensions and rota patterns of WT JO's.*
- *No performance management system to manage availability.*
- *Day cover can be a problem due to lack of crew.*
- *Some FRSs have a pool resource to backfill for occasional crew deficiencies. This would be useful.*
- *Everyone on station doing a fair share of hours including weekend cover.*
- *Lack of higher level officer representation for On Call sector with someone who has directly worked and therefore understands RDS issues and opportunities.*
- *A lot of our crew works outside the town area.*

- *Better Pay.
More recruit courses.
Lower the Bleep test to 8.6.
More information for recruits instead of leaving Station staff to explain how it works, what pay they will get etc.*
- *Better recruiting by the fire and rescue service.*
- *More has to be done to get people in to do the job and it shouldn't take a year in half before you get on the run it's not good enough.*
- *The service takes too long to get people in the door it took our last person a year from start till he was on the run not good enough also not enough being done to get people in the door.*
- *It's difficult because a few of the retained boys are self-employed and have to work out of the town so that's why we short staffed during the day.*
- *Recruitment should be done at a higher level but we get left to do it ourselves which is not easy when we already do two jobs with extra training expected as well.*
- *Far better working with Station Managers. My service has taken a crew manager from my station in the day to make up numbers in another causing ours to go off the run.*
- *Improved retaining pay for "difficult hours".*
- *Recruitment and retention needs to be addressed by the Senior Management.*
- *Improve pay and conditions. Decrease 'created' extra admin by area/group commanders which has little if any relevance for retained AND whole time staff. Proper remuneration for co-responders and ambulance service to provide MORE crews.*
- *They appear to be shutting the door after the horse has bolted. Far too little has been done and far too late. We predicted this would happen after changing to the new system. We have lost a lot of good fire fighters some would have stayed if the service had listen to what they had been requesting.
They need to start looking at how the crews are being deployed and the level of skill on that crew. I have no doubt it's just a question of time before a crew member is seriously injured or killed due to the lack of experience of the riders.*
- *HR do not reply to any applications so when they go missing the applicant doesn't know so we are already letting them down before they join.
We have employed whole time personnel in the retained but they do not bring with them the commitment to the job that the retained have.
Watch managers have little or no man management skills and as such do not know how to monitor and motivate.
Ditto station managers who leave it up to the watch manager to run their station.
The old hands need to be challenged as to their availability.*
- *Our officers have ignored all the problems causing appliance availability problems for many years and even reduced the cap on the number of staff we could have on station.
Problems were, work going out of towns, increased minimum rider numbers, more training away from station, HFSC's, Medicals away from Station, Rappel system, telling staff to cut the hours they cover, bank crewing, Co/Responders, paid holidays, and plenty more.
They should have permitted us to have more staff rather than panic at the last*

minute. Combine that with making the entry test much harder and we are in a mess. What a surprise!

- *Smaller, more specific contracts to encourage more people to do it. Current 24; E&WE or Day contracts are too constrictive. 4 days on/ 4 days off with less skills delivered i.e. only ECO; only stabilisation & glass management could keep pump available.*
- *Recruitment recently been undertaken. The pay structure. New recruits just come in are having a shock when they find out what they actually earn for the time & commitment they give!*
- *Recruitment & trying to hang on to existing crew. Quicker system for those that seek to progress up a rank.*
- *More drivers and junior officers.*
- *Our Station struggles to recruit given that the current minimum standard contract is 90 hours per week and this is a huge commitment and puts most potential new recruits off. We understand that PPE & training is expensive but maybe the FRS could consider relaxing this requirement and having more personnel with some crew members on reduced contracts, if necessary.*

We also experience difficulties with Wholetime-Retained staff occupying 3/4 rate (90 hours per week) spaces but only providing 72 hours or less (sometimes 45 hours per week) availability due to rest periods and the Working Time Directive. If Wholetime staff are also permitted to ride retained, could they not be paid according to their availability and not occupy a space that exceeds the cover they provide?

The issues surrounding appliance availability at our Station causes a great deal of friction and we have recently lost personnel due to the appliance being off-the-run a lot and crew members losing interest in the job due to the lack of 'shouts'.

We often have a crew but one OIC so one last suggestion would be for ECFRS to place riding officers at our Station during working hours to help improve appliance availability.

- *Managers do not seem interested in tackling recruitment issues and are not bothered if this appliance goes off the run, they have a system in place where they have identified so called key stations that must be kept on the run where they employ personnel on overtime, and the rest of us get no such support and are left to fend for ourselves. The crew feel that no one in management cares if we are on the run or off.*
- *The recruitment freeze needs to be lifted and better pay to keep people in town.*
- *Increase number of appliances - consider one appliance and one land rover to allow some turn-out on minimum crewing - this would be enough for 80% of shouts; additional appliance would allow additional recruiting. Minimum 80 hrs/week requirement plus at least all of Saturday or Sunday has contributed to poor retention.*
- *More investment in operational side rather than community safety within the wider council.*
- *The station at where I'm based is been under pressure for approximately two years now, it will closing on completion of a new station being built and merging with another on-call station three-four miles away. We are under staffed do to suspension and long term sickness also non availability. The senior management keep on dragging their heels on recruitment because of the merger of the two stations.*

- *More engagement with local community and businesses, relaxation in response times.*
- *A procedure for running Gartan (an availability system) with set out ground rules and increase morale of the work force*
- *RDS is very good value for money versus WDS and for that reason they should recruit bringing up the establishment numbers, as Ken Knights report points out RDS is the future of the Fire Service in the UK.*
- *Give you an incentive to keep pumps on the run by senior management.*
- *More flexibility in who they try to recruit (we are a small rural station) reduction in the length of the basic three week training course. Possibly some on station training first as a "taster".*
- *We have a number of Whole time fire fighters who also work the retained duty system at our station, and they are all our crew managers on 50 hour contracts so when they go off call the pump goes off the run I feel this needs to be overcome by management.*

When we do have recruitment campaigns they are carried out by the wrong people, they should be carried out by us as we know the type of people who would be suited to being a retained fire fighter as it is a very time consuming and hard job.

- *Recruit the right persons giving the cover required. A more proactive approach by management to recruit from businesses on limited hours contracts particularly day cover.*
- *More Publicity Nationally and Locally by Government, to encourage people to become on-call Fire Fighters. Increase the number of Fire Fighters per station but reduce the hours for each FF needed to be On-Call and adjust pay.*
- *It's too hard for possible new recruits to get in. We need to recruit people who are available at the time when they are needed and let the one's go who are not giving the cover.*
- *Recruitment is needed, to cover days and weekends.*
- *A salary needs to be put in place so firefighters that are currently serving know what they will be earning from month to month and all people thinking about joining will know what they will be earning. In the last couple of years call outs have dropped massively this has led to a large number of retained firefighters questioning is the job worth the very little money they are now taking home each month and makes the decision to leave a lot easier for those considering to leave.*
- *Recruit and train more firefighters.
No limit to numbers on stations.
Mix three quarter and 100% contracts.
More firefighters easier to share cover out and secure time off.*
- *Target local employers rather than recruiting unemployed, poorly qualified, unmotivated people. Also reward local employers who provide retained crew - not necessarily a financial award but there must be something the county council can do. An employer needs some benefit to losing staff on a random basis for the benefit of the fire service. The trouble is no one from the fire service asks people who actually know and are in the situation, an officer should be assigned for each district to talk to retained crews and their employers.*
- *Government legislation to help and make more people available.*

- *Businesses to get help and more legislation to help Employees to make themselves available.*
- *Better reward to those Fire fighters making themselves available for weekends.*
- *Better reward all around.*
- *Far too much demand on our time for training which makes pumps off more.*
- *Training is very important but needs to be made possible to attend at suitable times.*
- *The brigade in general needs to do more i.e. better remuneration for the amount of hours retained personnel put in.*
- *Night cover is not a problem, day cover is a nightmare, I think the fire service need to realise most employers will not let their staff leave by day. Maybe an extra payment for day cover or some incentive to give day cover.*
- *More recruitment and advertising.*
- *Need to take away the flexibility and give people guaranteed hours of work. Use spare people to sit on fire stations.*
- *When employing, make it part of the contract that if they say they will give cover during the day that they keep to this and not suddenly change their availability as soon as they join and stop taking retained from their home station to cover another station putting pressure on the remaining crew members.*
- *Retained needs the current system to be:*
- *More flexible- in terms of hours offered by people, maybe look at pro set hours e.g. 40 , 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 120 hours in which your paid to, then you get a monthly/ yearly extra pay if you have gone over this which would represent the hours worked on average, this would open to more people e.g. woman- parents- could give day cover, people who just work in the area, and people who just live in area e.g. weekends.- this need to be done by management senior level.*
- *Transfers e.g. people from retained background needs to be easier to transfer across, I have looked into moving, which is near to a retained station (in a different county) and within the times etc., but have got told I have to undergo all the sections a tests again and training even if am company etc. (though I am a firefighter for four years.)- This need to be done nationally.*
- *Target business to explain the ins and outs of on call firefighters- local and national TV ads- so people understand the difference between wholetime and on call firefighters.*
- *Turn out times needs to be relaxed/ flexible, as most stations have tried to recruit within the area, which is limited etc., and you get people which apply but are out of the time zone by two minutes,- get turned away, though their cover would keep the appliance available.- (in which some stations are in rural areas, two minutes I think is not that big a deal, as it get an appliance to where it needs to go, and can still be the 1st pump there).*
- *Use retained and wholetime firefighters on overtime to get appliance on the run, e.g. if a retained station as 10 people on call- use people who want to go and cover at another retained station (at hourly rate).*
- *INTRO of co- responding which keeps an appliance/ station busy even if there is no shouts etc.*
Overall I think the retained duty system need to be reset and re-done, to meet and

come up to date of the 21st century life- NOT STILL BE IN THE 20TH CENTRY. (by that I mean people 21st century life - does not fit the retained duty system.

- *The online test is a great put off to some, these online tests really do not indicate if the individual has what it takes.*
- *Selection of officers is still as it used to be. What I mean by this is simply if you happen to be favoured or best pals with the W/M you will be privileged to a type of grooming in prep for promotion. At present ALL the officers at my station are part cover ONLY! and we have eight officers yet frequently pumps are made unavailable due to lack of officer cover!
A system called RAPEL was introduced whereby personnel must log available or unavailable however this is used as a tool for disciplinary action and potential reduction of pay from full to part cover if availability falls below 120 hours.*
- *We need a comprehensive blue-sky re-evaluation of rural service delivery that looks afresh at both W/T and Retained duty systems for areas where elements of hybridisation (whether in working practices or contractually) might compliment one-another. Nothing should be considered "off the table" in terms of service delivery remodelling and in how it can provide the flexibilities required to deal with the increasingly challenging demographic and economic realities we face.*
- *We are limited to a particular number of units on our one pump station, with different amounts of cover being equal to a certain number of units, we have several guys on 54 hour contracts but these contracts are worth the same number of units as someone on 72 hour contract (and I think but am not sure that the next contract level up is also worth the same).
 - *The long and short of it is that we have the maximum number of 'units' we can but this is not enough to maintain cover. If we were allowed to recruit a couple more guys then we would be able to maintain cover.**
- *Staff progression takes too long to do (regarding folders), no incentives for Ff to move in to OiC role as difference between pay is only 40% and current RDS Ff's not willing to rank up for so little.*
- *We have been down to one pump on many occasions due to OiC cover I have my ADC but won't put me for ICS at present????*
- *More focus and resource on recruitment, retention and public education about the RDS.*
- *We need more drivers by watch or station manager*
- *Ensure Crew recruited (either new to the service or transferred) keep to their promise of availability. Lack of HR backbone.*
- *Pay more wages.*
- *Less restriction on whole time crews doing retained on days off.*
- *There needs to be a more proactive approach to officer cover, it is presently a 3 day course at a central training venue to enable a Ff to 'act up'. We can AWAP in but this proves difficult and it is a sporadic approach.
We currently have 15 crew for a 2 pump station, with a further 3 undergoing training. The training itself causes problems as it involves recruits to use up virtually a full years' worth of holiday leave from their primary employers. There needs to be a much more flexible approach from our training section to make it easier for primary employers to not be so concerned about their staff wanting to become RDS firefighters.*

- *More CM's to take truck out. More Ff recruited to fill gaps in crewing. New contract has no flexibility and this has led to colleagues leaving.*
- *Employ more personnel, make the dual contract workers be on-call more often instead of 63 hours (that's if they do that).*
- *Need more proactive recruitment. Make process simpler. Have shorter lead time to initial course.*
- *Forget about the Lincolnshire Crewing System and recruit personnel from within their own community. General public are unaware of the existence of retained personnel and that the opportunities are there for them to take part.*
- *More support, training and input to those showing an interest in acting up as an OiC. Maybe even introduce some sort of incentive to those willing to take on the role of OiC.*
- *They need to engage more with the public at a very local level. Go to the local businesses of which there are many in this and the surrounding villages and explain the benefits to employers and staff. This would also attract more skilled people into the job. Encourage RDS to go through the incident command course, make station managers visit their stations more than once a quarter and really find out about their existing staff and how they can be brought on.*
- *The service needs to revisit the wage structure & put in a place a part time salary to encourage personnel to continue. As the hours you commit to for the salary in return is just not good enough at the moment to retain staff. Staffordshire have put in place a part time salary and it has solved there staffing issues 100%*
- *Reduce the availability requirement back to 100hrs for 100% concentrate on training retained drivers rather than the wholetime who usually have one dedicated driver*
- *Make it realistic or at least attractive in terms of pay and conditions.*
- *We suffer on the weekends, although we do have crew who signed up to give weekend cover but they do not fulfil this.*
- *More recruitment*
- *Replace people that have left (three), draw up contracts for new recruits that join, and state clearly what cover they are going to give, and explain what happens if they change what they put (availability of pump) and the affect it has, issues for management, and defiantly HR need to sort their act out.*
- *Management need to listen to us , the RDS firefighters and work with us, we all want the trucks on the run surely , WFRS seem to give officers projects to carry out in relation to RDS who know nothing or very little about how RDS works classic is I was RDS once , yeah right 25yrs ago times move on , they implement new working patterns and then wonder why more trucks are off the run , if they talk to RDS Ffs we could work together to solve this issue , managers need to manage surely , if a Ff doesn't do his contracted hours why do they pay him week in week out , if 50hr contract barely does 10hrs never turns up for drill its crazy and bad for morale.*
- *I think that the brigade needs to be more flexible on station numbers, allowing an increased establishment on station would at times ease the problem. Our station is unfortunate that several people's jobs have changed since they joined taking them out of town for the whole working day, they still manage to provide cover for their contracted hours but leave the appliance either crew deficient or off the run on most weekday mornings.*

- *Recruitment drive and possibly open days with demonstrations and stop some people having most weekends off*
- *More positive action regarding the "ongoing recruitment process". Targeting of local Employees, explaining the pride/benefits of having a retained fire-fighter on their workforce. Station Officer visiting or inviting to a open day, on this subject.*
- *The new contracts we were forced to have need to be scrapped, go back to the old system but come down harder on the abusers of the system (mainly wholetime retained) in my opinion.*
- *Scrap rota rider boards.
Increase number of Level 1 OICs.
Challenge staff not routinely providing hours/ not responding when showing available.*
- *Allow us to recruit more staff. We have recently gained two new firefighters, which is great, but three have just retired!! That's minus one.*
- *There is a need for the management to monitor and act on personnel who are not giving the cover that they are required to give.*

WDS personnel on RDS contracts should give the required day time cover to keep the appliances on the run. This should be written in to their RDS contract.

I feel the introduction of selective paging will be detriment to the RDS service. Personnel will complete the hours that are required of them and then book off call.

- *Not much can be done as there is not much shift work in the area anymore and very little businesses allow workers to turn-out during work time.*
- *Recruit Recruit Recruit!*
- *We need manager that do proper recruitment drive. Employ the right people and make them do what they are pay for also listen to the RDS and not just bring policy in this also needs the unions to treat us as equals and not sell us down the river.*
- *Government to give tax breaks for employers who allow RDS personnel to respond from work.
Government to give RDS same status as Territorial Army so that they can be released from their work to attend training courses without having to use annual leave.
County council and upper management need to accept that some stations need for more than 12 personnel to keep 1 RDS pump on the run.*
- *It is becoming more difficult for people to join and in rural areas people are not prepared to give the commitment expected by brigades especially when there are not many calls to keep them interested.*
- *The service need to recruit more staff. Lack of calls and reducing means ever reducing pay. Lack of pay means more leave and a heavier burden falls on fewer staff to keep appliance on the run...more leave and so it goes on.*
- *Longer drill night so more training can be carried out*
- *Changing attitudes and policies to allow on call to go whole time. Advertising that you can only go WT with a length of on call experience would bring people to the doors and appreciate the job we do. To make the job more appetizing to the public.*
- *We need day cover personnel & probably the only way we can do that is to employ more retained firefighters, what has happened is boys have gone from 100% cover*

down to 75% because they could not cover 120hrs, they only cover 90hrs now so we are struggling.

- *Speed up selection process, be more professional-- don't lose recruits paperwork in the system*
- *We are PAYG there needs to be a day premium rate regardless of calls to give more money to those providing day cover.*
- *Sort out OiC availability.*
- *The service needs to Move into the 21st century and use modern best practice from other services, i.e. a recruitment strategy that they finance properly, retained support officers etc.*
- *Need more recruitment drives. The retained staff could be asked to appear at public local events and be paid to be there for a few hours to promote the fire service and recruit new members. More advertising is required generally, in local & national media the army is doing a far better job at recruiting reserves, perhaps the fire service could copy some of the tactics they are using. Also the fire service needs to be more lenient on retained staff and need to understand that they have more important full time jobs to go to and families to support.*
- *Train more drivers and speed up development.*
- *On call hours not family friendly and people leave.*
- *NYFRS have a policy of Wholetime good RDS bad. Instead of listening to our views they are moving a whole time appliance to our Station permanently.*
- *There are so many wholetime/retained doing it just for the money and give below hours contracted to.*

WM who is also wholetime/retained needs to get a grip.

- *We have an operational pool that when needed or is requested can plug the gaps*
- *Over recent years there has been no active recruiting done by FRS. Only locally. This should have been addressed many years ago so as to have continuity and not to leave a gap in crewing numbers.*
- *Better training as new recruits are being sent to Staffordshire for BA training and coming back still not competent. The problem is different procedures for the two brigades and a lack of training available to learn Warwickshire procedures*
- *Make OICs available to cover short falls when they're in offices on station*
- *Wages do not match time on call no flexibility with training*
- *Increase the pay -- £110 retainer for 240hrs on call a fortnight ---works out at 46p an hour utter crap!!*
- *Retained duty system that does not mean fire will lose money.*
- *More targeted recruitment with better hours, pay, and not so forceful on training, example: being forced to attend up to 20 sessions at wholetime stations outside of the normal drill sessions. Make the job more appealing, better pay structure, more flexibility on hours of cover.*
- *Recruitment has to be made attractive, money is poor. Development folders are a nightmare and are scaring new recruits off.*
- *More firefighters.*

- *More local advertising. Local radio announcements. Mail shots.*
- *Get rid of the red tape regarding employing retained Ffs. Support the companies that release their staff. A thank-you once in a while to the companies that release their staff would go down well. Shorten the process for getting Ffs from interview to job placement after initial training.*
- *Appliance availability problems are down to existing staff not fulfilling their contracted hours.*
- *Quicker entrance and course times by senior staff.*
- *The brigade need to relax the recruitment process i.e. all the test you need to complete.*
- *Crisis management regards end of life firefighter someone who gives good cover then retires is not replaced until he leaves would be more sensible to recruit for his replacement before.*
- *It is much better now as the establishment has gone from ten to twelve but that has just happened in the last month we were running with eight at one point.*
- *Try to keep the ones we had.*
- *Give stations the number of personnel it needs to staff all appliances.*
- *Pay crew members to man stations throughout day*
- *We've just moved from 120 hour contracts down to 80 hour standard pattern contract with stipulation that you have to provide a certain number of 'Core' hours at the weekend the problem is most of us that provide cover over the weekend give the same cover so there are certain times across the weekend when the truck isn't available, the senior management team should have looked at everyone's standard pattern and realised that it wasn't going to work.*
- *As a ex WM of 6 months now, I am of the opinion that a system close to the WDS was looked at, I feel that a rota system would be in essence a fairer and more balanced way to distribute the work load and each member would know in advance their commitment to the station, at the present its much ad-hoc. The retained in this day and age is equal in virtually every aspect except for "shift patterns".*
- *More recruitment.*
- *Recruitment off the right people giving cover where it is required.*
- **RECRUITMENT!**
- *It is very difficult to maintain availability due to work availability in the area, we do exceedingly well to cover as much as we do.*
 - *This cannot be helped because our crew have to go where the work is as the fire service does not pay enough to make people stay around. Most of us lose money when we go on a call but as we are a dedicated station we acknowledge the fact that this happens, but I don't think our office have a clue regarding the commitment we give.*
- *Station establishment needs to increase, to compensate for the reduction of hourly contracts now available to personnel, ie.63 hrs. 84hrs, where 84 hrs contracts used to be part cover is now full.*
- *Offer a financial package to RDS firefighters. If you make becoming a RDS firefighter attractive then retention and recruitment will easier. I think there should be a salary scheme that rewards commitment rather than just incident attendance. Government*

and local councils should take a lead by offering financial incentives to organisations/companies to release their staff (reduction in business rates).

- *Bring back recruitment to the local stations reduce the very slow HR teams involvements.*
- *Recruit more people.*
- *shorter lead times from first enquiry to getting on the course for new applicants.*
- *National campaign promoting part time firefighters as a real job. Better support to allow suitable candidates to pass entry standards (FRS).*
- *Change of attitude from station and senior management as station is run by whole time who have transferred to retained duties.*
- *Nothing can be done it's too late. We are being closed down this year and the top management want the station to fail.*
- *All crew members should be EFAD trained as per our wholetime colleagues.*
- *Make the recruitment process quicker.*
- *More recruitment but a better salary needs to be in place to attract people in. Times have changed people no longer live and work near their stations and the service needs to be more flexible. On call firefighters are still a very cheap option compared to whole time but more needs to be done in order to make the sacrifice of nearly always being on call worthwhile. Some while ago Cornwall FRS did a lot of work around a salary based system, all who saw it liked it but the service found it too expensive. Now shortfalls of crew are the norm across the service and money is wasted calling in crews who do not turn out, then the next nearest is required wasting response time.*
- *to have a more relaxed policy on booking on and off as available and to increase the number of personnel on station instead of force you to be available for too many hours.*
- *The training available to those who request it.*
- *Have more crews, but on shorter contracts, so personnel can have time off without being on call most of the time.*
- *less restrictions on the local station crew being involved.*
- *There needs to be a radical change to incentives for providing hours-There needs to be a change in how long FF have to wait before taking an EFAD course-There needs to be a change in recognising WHEN a BA wearer is competent.*
- *We require as many daytime crew as possible so recruitment has to change. We need to advertise more and make people aware of what we do and the service we provide. I also believe that the payment structure has to be changed. It's all right recruiting new staff but you have to be able to keep staff. People will go elsewhere for better pay, so In My opinion I think a salary based pay system should be introduced. Having something like this in place will then in turn help the availability of the appliance. Fixed rate/fixed availability.*
- *HR recruitment and lack of Ff's courses. Can take up to 6 months for a candidate to reach station after initial assessment/interview.*
- *The station watch manager needs to be trusted to recruit in his /her station ground, the service then needs to make the process smarter so that new potential recruits are not waiting for courses for up to one year!! , by this time the new recruits loose interest and leave { B/4 they have started } also they don't ALL want to become*

whole time fire fighters , they are just happy being no more than a retained fire fighter in their community.

- *Training courses using all main job holidays.*
- *More people need to be trained and more courses available for driving.*
- *Currently in the process of changing over to Lincolnshire Crewing System and not actively recruiting new RDS personnel. We currently have 12 personnel, with only 3 giving full cover. When the Lincolnshire Crewing goes live the establishment will be: 1 Watch Manger, 2 Crew Mangers and 8 Fire-fighters. We have two-pumps, Co-responder car, Technical Rescue van with boat and animal rescue and SWRT capabilities. I can see more people leaving when the station goes onto the new crewing system.*
- *When someone shows an interest in becoming a retained Firefighter, more needs to be done to speed up their medical, training.*
- *Try to increase crewing levels to reduce hours of on call i.e. from 120 to. 90.*
- *Increase the retaining fee.*
- *As stated in previous question for drivers things appear to be moving forward however there are many people who would like to further their career and learn more detailed aspects of the job for e.g. line rescue, such courses and being able to remain competent in areas is very difficult bearing in mind we on have a 2 hour drill night which is all too often taken up with monthly checks.*
- *More drivers (all) but most important EFAD. Enhance pay for day time hours / employ whole time during day hours. Make training more available, poor management of training timings last minute notice etc.*
- *More flexible working and ability to work between different stations in different areas where you live and work and where both have retained stations.*
- *Forward planning of roles required.*
- *Recruit more people and not restrict the recruitment if candidates can only give night and weekend cover they will not get a job.*
- *The service needs to know people have other things to do and they do this to serve the community however they still want to enjoy their time off from their full time job.*
- *More recruitment and shorter recruitment process. Recruit people who are suitable for the needs of our station.*
- *More support to build the skill of individuals within the station so they can therefore take on an OIC role.*
- *Performance related pay based on the number of times personnel turnout or attend the station in response to a call and not solely based on availability.*
- *At my station it seems that every annual review results in cutting staff contracts to 75%. This is always done with the probability of then being able to recruit extra staff. It used to be that each retained station was allowed ten units of 100%. Over the past few years HR have failed to recruit and my station now operates with eleven members amounting to 8.75 units. However we have been told by our station commander that a limit of eleven members has been decided regardless of contracts.*
 - *I realize it is hard to recruit in this day and age given the commitment and amount of training required (two hours per week), but I think better advertising (local papers etc.) would be a better option that the one SFRS operates at the moment, which is only accessed through 'myjobscotland' website with no*

advertising.

It seems that they are cutting the retained contracts but failing to replace with additional manpower, and expect the appliance to be on the run the same amount of time as previous.

- *More flexible hrs and understanding that it's a part time job paying part time money that does not pay the bills! Or pay more so that it does.*
- *We need 6 - 10 in the recruitment drive.*
- *Day cover Mon - Friday between 8am & 6pm loads of crew available at night*
- *The job needs to be more appealing not be so strict with annual leave and booking off.*
- *A review of the pay and hours we are on call.*
- *Recruit day cover from available resources and greatly improve moral.*
- *Raise awareness in the local community that their fire station is a retained station. Approach local employers regarding recruitment. Make OFRS aware that 2 weeks back to back for a basic course is too long. Pay retained staff for working 'additional' hours to keep a pump available.*
- *Recruitment is started once we are woefully under manned, not when someone leaves or before they retire. This puts enormous pressure on those left to make themselves available.*
- *More personnel and investment into station which is closing in December.*
- *OIC selection based on daily availability - most JO's are in work during the daytime.*
- *Need for continuous recruitment not just periodical. Similarly recruitment should be done locally at each station (or at least the initial contact).*
- *A trial of selective alerting was kept and a number of people left. They need to overcome budgetary issues another way.*
- *the speed of the recruiting is so slow new guys lose patience with it and then don't bother no more this has all ways been the way from start 2 getting on the run this is 12-18 months that's why the pump is off the run at times.*
- *Improve infrastructure. Not enough pagers, we rely on others phoning and often mobiles do not work here.*
- *I really don't know, employers no longer have enough staff to let RFF go on call, and it's a problem that has been going on for years, fixed hours I believe are not the answer.*
- *Better recruitment policies and training.*
- *Community engagement to select the best people for the role. An alternative method of payment. T's and A's no longer reward people for their commitment.*
- *Speed up the process of training LGV drivers. Change the way personnel are paid to promote availability, improve pay (even just by reducing the tax levied).*
- *Make the part time more attractive as in wages as no one wants to work or be available for calls for next to nothing despite loving to job they do.*
 - *Simplify the training for JOs and FFs in development. At the moment it takes 3-5 years to finish FF development and another 2-3 (at least) to act up as a JO, at least in my Brigade.*

- *Simplify the initial training and recruitment. Now it's anything up to 18 months before you are a qualified BA wearer and can make a positive impact on the station cover. And often after that 18 or so months your personal situation has changed and you can't give the cover you've initially declared, or it's not needed at the station any more.*
- *Start co-responding with the Ambulance Service - this will*
 - *Attract more people to the Service*
 - *Keep us busier (as a low number of call-outs is one of the things that put people off)*
 - *I'm not sure how we will be able to justify what we do and how we do it, unless we make ourselves busier and more in-tuned with actual needs of our communities - responding with the Ambulance Service is a natural choice, unfortunately resisted by the Brigade so far (our Brigade has something around 15.000 call outs per year, the Ambulance Service - 1.500 a DAY..)*
 - *Pay RDS staff more for extra (i.e. outside our contracted hours) cover we provide so people are more inclined to fill in the gaps.*
- *Raise the profile of the job nationally, supported by local recruitment initiatives.*
- *More money needs to be put into RDS service, so we can retain people. And give them set hours to cover stations.*
- *There has been a number of recruitment drives. But where we live it is very difficult. Also the amount of training that is required and to fit in is difficult with employers. Most are small businesses so to release them for the length of time is hard, also for the trainees to use a full year holiday entitlement.*
- *Bigger incentives for week day cover.*
- *Situation improving, fast-tracked a couple of trainees through training, however that in itself raises further issues of fairness etc.*
- *Enhance and increase current recruitment strategies.*
- *More primary employers to be given incentives to release personnel.*
- *Improved wage structure- government help with housing/mortgage rates (key worker to the area) increased flexibility would gain more interest to the role- honest approach regarding recruitment (scrap the "part-time' wording, it's insulting) integrate RDS employees with local councils regarding tradesman work, would improve day cover- place operationally trained office based staff at stations needing day cover.*
- *We need a major recruitment drive at our station & despite my very best efforts as a fire fighter nothing is being done about it. The fire service or the powers that be just do not seem bothered.*
 - *It's almost as if they want to keep it under wraps that we are off the run probably 70% of the time. As a result morale is at a very low point, especially with myself.*
- *Remove tight restrictions on distances retained fire-fighters can live from Fire Station. A one mile maximum is strictly enforced. Allow for a slightly longer turnout time from*

the time of call time to allow people who live outside the one mile limit to attend the fire station.

- *District managers should organise open days, poster campaign, etc. and be more pro-active in respect of reaching people in the community.*
- *Recruitment - SYFR have not recruited for over 7 years for RDS staff, previous to that one course was undertaken with approx. 14 fire fighters for 7 RDS pumps then no recruitment 6 years prior to that course. There is now one course planned for this year.*
 - *In the last 15 years SYFR has recruited approx. 38 fire fighters and the majority of these have left the service some time ago. SYFR has utilised whole time dual contract fire fighters to work at RDS stations to try and up RDS staffing but this has had little or no impact on keeping up appliance availability (you need 4 fire fighters, one from each watch to provide the same cover as 1 RDS fire fighter).*
- *Train more FF to run in charge of the appliance. Develop a succession plan to replace FF, CM and WM as they reach an age where they may retire.*
- *More encouragement.
Boost morale.
Relax call challenging.
To come from higher management.*
- *To be able to find work nearer to the station so that the station could be manned better during the day.*
- *All crew members should be drivers, as per wholetime colleagues.*
- *Over reliance on Regular/Retained staff with priority given to the regular pumps leaving retained pump unavailable.*
- *Prior to recent years the Retained appliance was available 24/7. This was entirely down to the:*
 - *hard work and authority of the Retained Sub Officer*
 - *engendered good will of the retained fire fighters*
 - *flexibility allowed by the brigade which "bonded" the team.*
 - *The above has been completely removed by the actions of the current Brigade management who have for the last 5 years done nothing more than sling mud downwards, where the Retained Staff are considered to be at the bottom of the pile.*
 - *It appears that they have been doing this from a somewhat less than considered position. They have no concept of Reward and Recognition.*
 - *It is often overlooked that the Retained Personnel are successful individuals in their own right with a proud work ethic and an ability to strongly deliver.*
 - *As a result of this, the Brigade fails to harness the power of the workforce which could (in my opinion with the right management), deliver much more for drastically less money.*
 - *The problem is that the Brigade is directed by ex-Firefighters who are not very good at management.*
 - *Training this management and giving them the tools to apply discipline through Reward and Recognition (and the removal of such Reward where*

necessary) would lead to higher efficiency, better retention and more successful recruitment.

- *They need to invest in more RDS staff.*
 - *To have stronger position by senior management in allowing on call members to book off duty which in turn compromise the appliance.*
 - *Organise an OIC course for those who want to do it.*
 - *More coordinated publicity.*
 - *Recruit more people.*
 - *Make Whole Time / Retained personnel do more than 50 hours a week otherwise they are of little use.*
 - *Pay extra money for hours given outside your contract meaning people get rewarded for doing extra time.*
 - *Need to be more flexible with regards to local whole time firefighters who would give a small amount of valuable cover but will not as they do not want to be contracted.*
 - *Flexible working to fit into people's lives. We still run a rigid system of 100% commitment at all times during your cover period, which offers no flexibility for family, friends or social. I.e. having to take a day's holiday to go to the pub on a Sat night with friends, as if you drink you will be off call until the Sun morning. Need to take as holiday. Lower hours, or paid by the hour that you can offer cover. May require more people, but retention would improve.*
 - *Get the service behind advertising & getting out to employers to help with crewing issues.*
 - *Allow us to self-roster on the weekends. It seems, they want everyone on call on the weekends, allowing no flexibility. Suffocating us in the long run, and then potentially losing firefighters, due to the persistent pressure.*
 - *The service needs to put more emphasis into recruiting new fire fighters and then once recruited in to running courses such as BA to get them fully trained, our station is waiting around a year to get onto BA courses and we have a ongoing shortage of level 1 commanders.*
 - *Ensure whole time firefighters on retained duty aren't all on the same watch.*
 - *Take on those prepared to give the cover.*
 - *In my FRS you have to be "safe to ride" to take a pump out as a fire fighter, even though they send a flexi duty officer anyway. If there is no officer about any fire fighter should be able to take a pump out. Also there are a lot of recruits leave because of the sheer amount of paper work, IE PDR Pro, and Learn Pro.*
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