

RDS Strategic Review Project **Work Group Two Report**

Team Manager-

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Work Group Members-

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1. Areas of investigation for Work Group 2

This report documents the analytical work of Work Group 2 on the Retained Duty System project (RDS) and makes recommendations on how these can be implemented in order to better support the objectives of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The areas of work identified by the project board for work team 2 are outlined below:

The work group were tasked with the research activities associated with the following aspects

- 1.1 To review and provide solutions that improve the monitoring and effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and administration procedures. Develop recommendations for a tracking system through the Human Resources Department RDS recruitment, selection and appointment processes.
- 1.2 To gauge the impact of the New Firefighter Selection Tests (NFST) procedures and make recommendations for solutions to improve the likely success of applicants through the process.
- 1.3 To devise interim measures necessary to support and mentor applicants through the NFST procedures about to be implemented, until such policy recommendations from this Working Group are devised, agreed by the Project Board and implemented at some future stage.
- 1.4 To review and explore recommended improvements or alternatives to the Retained Management System (RMS) that improve the availability of RDS personnel and appliance availability for audit record purposes.

1.5 To explore with outside consultants the feasibility of adopting or developing electronic systems that are ‘real-time and interactive’

1.6 To gauge any likely budget implications for HFRS

2. Outline Deliverables (Products)

2.1 To devise and provide efficient department solutions which improve the monitoring and effectiveness of procedures, and tracking systems through the Human Resources Department for RDS recruitment, selection and appointment processes.

2.2 To gauge the impact of the New Firefighter Selection Test procedures and make recommendations for improving the likely success of applicants through the process

2.3 To gauge any likely financial implications for HFRS.

2.4. To deliver financial impact projections mapped against the existing arrangements.

3. Analysis Work Undertaken

3.1. Impact of the New Firefighter Selection Tests (NFST) on retained applicants

HFRS has over 700 Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel, who provide fire cover for large sections of Hampshire. This represents approx. 50% of our operational workforce.

The current turnover of staff is indicated in the table below:

Period/Year	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Units Establishment	616	624	630	649	628
Units Strength (Actual)	567	556	578.5	576	599.5
Head Count	688	673	704	707	738
Starters in Year	82	58	90	72	102
Leavers in Year	64	86	68	78	57
How many W/T - RDS	58	61	92	113	139

At present separate arrangements exist to recruit, select and appoint personnel on this duty system. The arrangements are fairly straightforward and involve the completion of a basic application form, acceptance of the individuals home/work base to the relevant retained station, a basic maths test, an interview with the Station Support Officer and Retained Watch Manager (OIC) and completion of a medical assessment. If successful candidates are offered a place on a trainees course to complete module A, then placed on a development programme to achieve competence in the role of a firefighter.

With the introduction of the New Firefighter Selection Tests and the premise that 'a firefighter is a firefighter' future arrangements for the recruitment of both Wholetime Duty System (WDS) and Retained Duty System (RDS) need to be consistent and harmonised.

The selection tests have been developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) over a period of years and released to all Fire and Rescue Services in September 2006. Ownership of the 'tools' and quality control aspects are the current responsibility of the National Assessment Unit based at the Fire Service College. HFRS, in conjunction with other Services, has been participating in the consultation process and providing details of our WDS recruitment and selection outcomes using these new tools. Opportunities to influence changes to the application form and the processes have been utilised both via the National Assessment Forum and by our direct involvement in the South East regional working group. HFRS will continue to take any opportunities to influence the development and adjustment of these tools to accommodate the needs of applicants and minimise the impact on RDS recruitment activities for the Service.

3.1.2. Details of the New Firefighter Selection Tests

The New Firefighter Selection Tests are very different from many of the tests currently in use by Fire and Rescue Services across the country. The new arrangements are:

- a. Application form includes requirement for evidence under 6 Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs) from the Firefighter (FF) role map. The content has to be assessed against nationally agreed criteria and a minimum pass mark achieved.
- b. Psychometric Tests – consist of 3 ability tests and an Occupational Questionnaire. Minimum pass marks must be achieved.
- c. Practical Tests – a range of practical tests. These tests require significant test kit and may only be completed at the Training Centre.
- d. Interview – PQA based interview with accredited interview panel.
- e. Medical – same as existing process and WDS arrangements.

As many Fire and Rescue Services were in a similar position as ourselves and had not implemented these arrangements for the recruitment of RDS employees it was difficult to initially determine the likely impact on our recruitment activities. We used our own evidence for RDS candidates applying for WDS via the new selection tools, similar data from other Services in the region and other data obtained from Services further afield. (Please see Table 1).

Points for consideration included:

Recent discussions at national and regional level have raised the issue of concern regarding the application form, in particular the drop out rate, especially on question 1 'Commitment to Diversity' and how it would affect recruitment of retained personnel.

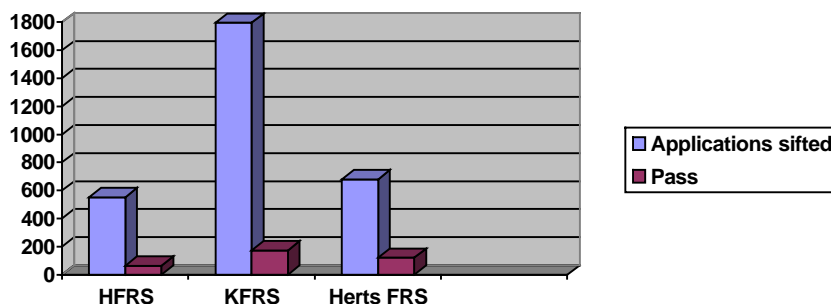
It was clear from these discussions that the average pass rate for the application form stage of the tests was very low, figures between 10 – 18.5%, giving an average of 13.5%. Staffordshire was extraordinarily high in comparison to other Services with a 30% pass rate. After discussion with Staffordshire we were unable to identify the reason for this pass rate, as they were not undertaking any additional action to support candidates through the process. We therefore concluded that this was an exception, rather than the rule.

Evidence has shown that those Services that have sent application forms out to prospective candidates have received extraordinarily low returns. Indicating that the application form does act as a de-selector. The costs of sending out the application form, excluding print costs, is 84 pence. If we use the Kent volumes then this would result in a loss of £1140.72 for the applications issued, but not returned.

Table 1- Summary of Results from NEST

Fire Service	Applications Sent	Applications Sifted	Pass	%
Hampshire	None*	551	66	12
Kent	3152	1794	174	10
East Sussex	405	36	3	8
Hertfordshire		682	122	18
Staffordshire		562	168	30
Surrey	1967	1035	192	18.5

** Note: HFRS are running a web-based recruitment campaign for WDS and do not send out any applications.*



Kent Fire and Rescue Service also noticed that of the 386 applicants in the 18 – 20 age group, only 16 passed. This equates to a 4.15% pass rate. This is noted as the application form has changed from previous formats. Rather than requesting a CV and a set level of academic qualifications, the new application form is designed to address the candidates’ life skills. This may be difficult to address at a young age.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service has been recruiting retained personnel alongside wholtime personnel, using the same selection tools, for a couple of years now. It is interesting to compare the results of previous recruitment campaigns alongside the new NFST process.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service are the only Service to utilise the New Firefighter Selection Tests in its entirety for the recruitment of retained duty system personnel. This was completed alongside their current wholtime recruitment campaign. Of the 405 applications sent out only 36 were returned (9%). Of these only 3 were successful at this stage (8%).

(Please refer to Table 2).

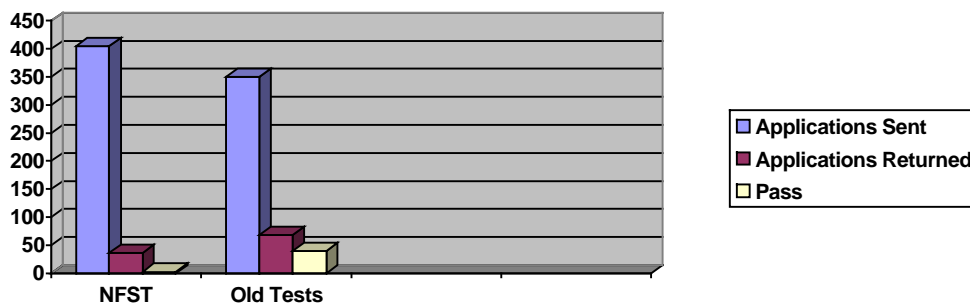
Table 2- East Sussex Experience

Fire Service	Applications Sent	Applications Returned	Pass	%
New Firefighter Selection Tests	405	36	3	8
Non – Standard Selection Tests	350	68	40	59

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service adopted the NFST process in August 2006 for both wholetime and retained personnel. Of the 682 wholetime applicants, 122 (18.5%) were successful at the application form stage. Of the 19 retained applicants 2 (10.5%) were successful at application stage. Both these figures fall in line with the statistics laid out in table 1 (10 – 18.5%). Hertfordshire Retained Support Officers indicated that the application form was too long and too difficult in particular the question relating to Diversity.

The following is a graphical summary of this information and the contrast between results from the previous RDS selection methods and the NFST.

Table 3 - Old Versus New methods of selection



It was important that the team assess each element of the NFST and the likely impact on RDS recruitment, the following section summarises the views held, based on the limited information available.

Application form - Evidence so far has shown that only 1 in 10 applicants will be successful at this stage. Whilst acceptable for Wholetime applicants as we normally wish to reduce the initial ‘pool’ of candidates, the reverse is true for RDS applicants as suitable proximity to the retained station is the limiting factor. Due to the difficulty already being experienced in recruiting RDS employees in some areas then this would be unsustainable.

Factors for consideration:

- Size and perceived complexity of the application form
- Lack of understanding of PQAs resulting in poor evidence
- Order for completing this aspect of the process

Psychometric Tests - Evidence so far has shown 1 in 5/6 will be successful at this stage. Again acceptable for Wholetime applicants, but unacceptable for RDS.

Factors for consideration:

- Familiarisation of candidates with psychometric tests
- Ability levels of candidates attracted to the role
- Lack of understanding of PQAs and the changing role of a Firefighter

Practical Tests - The success rate for this stage is quite high, 85%.

Factors for consideration:

- Candidates Fitness levels
- Approach to physical testing, over cautious and /or nerves
- Preparation prior to testing

Interview - The success rate is quite high.

3.1.3 Controlled Sample

From the evidence above there does appear to be sufficient cause for concern in relation to two particular aspects the application form and the psychometric tests. The working group felt that the best way forward would be to undertake a 'controlled study' initially with regard to the application form, since this prevents candidates from undertaking any of the other testing aspects if the order of testing is followed, as set out in the national guidance document. They wished to ascertain whether there would be any discernible differences if candidates received some 'mentoring' or guidance prior to the completion of the application form.

Permission was sought from and granted by the project board to undertake a 'controlled sample/survey' for this aspect.

A significant amount of development work was required prior to undertaking this exercise in producing a presentation and useful guidance that would not cross the boundaries between mentoring and coaching. The latter would provide an unfair advantage to a particular group of candidates over others and could be viewed as discriminatory.

The survey would be based around completion of the current WDS firefighter application form.* In order for the research to be objective the study group would comprise of a variety of factors and would need to be taken from as wide a range as possible.

**It should be noted that whilst this research was being undertaken the National Assessment Unit did agree to amend several areas of the application form. A revised form is expected by the end of April 2007.*

The objective was to evaluate whether there would be a significant difference between a group of applicants that received selective guidance on what was required for a successful application form and a group of applicants with no knowledge of the process.

Initial contact was made with 40 people, all with an interest in joining the Fire and Rescue Service either retained or wholetime. 20 were currently employed as retained

firefighters with HFRS (Group A); the other 20 had expressed an interest in joining the fire service either as retained firefighters or through positive action events (Group B).

Each group was then further divided into 2 groups of 10 (A1 - A2 and B1-B2). Group A1 and B1 would receive guidance (mentoring) with regard to completion of a successful application form. Group A2 and B2 would receive no guidance. (Please see Table 4).

Table 4 – Summary of participants in the ‘Controlled Exercise’

Group	Group Name	No. Contacted	No. Attended
Current RDS firefighters – Unsuccessful at 2006 campaign	A1	10	7
Current RDS firefighters – not attended recruitment campaign	A2	10	10
Non RDS firefighters – interested in joining fire service	B1	10	8
Non RDS firefighters – interested in joining fire service	B2	10	5
TOTAL		40	30

The factors considered in identifying the groups:

- A1 – This group are part of our current RDS workforce and have recently completed an application form in order to become wholetime firefighters, but were unsuccessful at the application stage
- A2 – This group are also members of our RDS workforce. These personnel have an interest in becoming wholetime firefighters but as yet have not made an application
- Group B1 and B2 are members of the public that have either expressed an interest in joining the fire service through local and national positive action events, or are currently on a waiting list for retained stations.
- National guidance from the DCLG would suggest that all members of group B will be required to use the New Firefighter Selection Test process when a vacancy does arise.

The group consisted of a diverse range of candidates - Ages, Genders and Ethnicity.

Table 5 – Breakdown of ‘CONTROLLED SAMPLE’ candidates by

Age/Gender/Ethnicity

Age Range	No.
18 - 25	7
26 - 35	19
36 – 45	3
46 - 55	1

Gender	No.
Male	26
Female	4

Ethnicity	No.	Ethnicity
White	26	White
BME	4	BME

Following the guidance session both groups were brought together and given an application form to complete.

3.1.4 Guidance For Mentoring

Each candidate was presented with:

- A copy of the National Firefighter Personal Qualities and Attributes
- A copy of the draft National Firefighter Selection Test application form
- Handout of PowerPoint presentation.

The guidance session consisted of a PowerPoint presentation followed by a question and answer session on each PQA and was facilitated by the Station Manager (HR).

3.1.5 Findings From The ‘Controlled Sample/Survey’

Appendix A provides details of the results for each of the PQA questions.

In producing the documentation to use, as part of this exercise information was sought from East Sussex and Oxfordshire on the procedure they follow to mentor candidates. The project leader concluded that the information that was available did not meet the requirements and following our exercise has now shared the package we produced with other Services in our regional group.

3.1.6 Conclusions from the ‘Controlled Sample’

The work group therefore concluded that there were significant benefits in providing support to applicants in advance of them completing the application form.

The impact on recruiting RDS employees would be significant irrespective of the mentoring process.

The order of selection tools would need to be amended to enable support to be given by an HR team member who was familiar with the processes.

3.1.7 Options Available

Following the study on the implications of the New Firefighter Selection Tests on Retained Duty System Personnel within HFRS and in the United Kingdom outline the following options for consideration.

1. Implement the ‘toolkit’ for RDS recruitment without any changes or support as per the process for WDS applicants and review after 12 months.

2. Reorder the use of selection tools.

When the new application form is released in April 2007, HFRS should use the PQA section at a later stage of the selection process for RDS applicants to enable candidates to receive advice and guidance on how to complete it prior to actual completion. It can be seen from the evidence that the application form is a deterrent to possible candidates wishing to become firefighters. Section one of the application, personal details, could still be utilised at the beginning of the process. This would get the candidate 'through the door' without the possibility of scaring them off with section 2. They could then be asked to complete this section after taking the psychometric tests.

Note: This option has been given approval by the National Assessment Unit.

3. Disregard the PQA questions.

Is there a need to repeat the PQA process? The interview stage of the process is also PQA based and is, in some ways a repeat of the application form questions. The difference being that the interviewer has the ability to probe the candidate to obtain the information. This would mean that there would be a difference in the selection process for RDS/WDS applicants.

4. Use the PQA/Interview questions jointly.

This would mean that the candidate undertook the whole selection process, but the score from the application would not 'bar' the candidate from further progression. If the results from the interview did not endorse an initial low score of the PQA from the application form then candidates should be given a pass mark through both elements.

5. Don't implement the revised NFST procedures for RDS personnel.

3.1.8 Recommendations

Project Group recommend option 2.

The question of who should provide this support was considered in great detail and appears as a separate item later in the report as item 3.4 Mentoring

The Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service model was considered as a further option. This service undertook a consultation process with all its RDS employees, including the completion of a survey, around the specific areas of training and support. Clearly this links to the work being undertaken by both Work Group 2 and 3 in the HFRS RDS project team.

Recognising that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to either of these problems Shropshire has developed a Retained Support Officer role. Eight positions have been

created, all are to be filled by existing RDS employees. There specific remit covers recruiting, training, CFS but most of all support for RDS employees.

Recognising the need to provide support to all RDS employees within HFRS for recruiting future applicants; advice and guidance re: Assessment and Development Centres; future transferability options; training and general support to the OIC, the group did feel that there was merit in this option and it has been developed in more detail as part of the work completed by group 3.

3.2 Recruitment Tracking System

When the DCLG released the revised FFST it also released a database called FAMS, that would track the progress of any applicant through the selection process, generate letters, and link to an optical reader to produce and mark the Psychometric tests. Regrettably this 'piece of kit' did not work from Day 1 for any Service and the National Assessment Unit commissioned an IT consultant in November 2006 to 'mend the product.' At the last forum meeting the group were advised that FAMS was beyond repair and that an interim program was in development as a short term solution and a business case and specification for an alternative database (long term option) was being developed. This product would be available in September 2007. HFRS have offered themselves to 'test' this kit prior to general release.

In the interim the HR Management Information team had previously developed an ACCESS database for WDS recruitment tracking. This has been in use since 2005. The team have made a significant number of amendments for the RDS process to facilitate the reporting requirements requested by Group Managers; increase the flexibility to enable the re-ordering of tests (if approved); maintain waiting lists for candidates living in proximity to an RDS station, but which has no current vacancies; enable read only access to Group Managers and Station Support administrators.

There have incorporated various live 'flags and prompts' and incorporated a colour coding system to make it a user friendly and beneficial tool.

A full demonstration can be arranged if required.

3.2.1 How the database will work

There are potentially two options for applicants:

If they turn up on station they could be given an expression of interest form or directed to the website for the RDS application form. Either the expression of interest information or application form details should then be logged on the system. This facility could be available to stations or maintained centrally in HR (as per current practice).

When entering a new applicant the database will automatically assign a number to that applicant. Applicants information is entered, name, date of birth, NI number etc, including the retained station they have applied for. This part of the process should be completed upon receipt of each new application. It is planned the database will also have a field where a date can be entered which would relate to the date the expression of interest was given/sent out to the applicant, ideally the same day as when the information is entered. Unfortunately we have no way of capturing the date the application form is downloaded via the website. However, the date the application is received will be logged. Having this field will allow us to monitor how long people are taking to return the sheet to us, and if in fact they do at all.

The following step is to enter any information regarding how the application is progressing. The only information needed to retrieve a record is either the application number, or the surname of the applicant. Entering either of these will bring back the information entered in the initial screen, although if surname is used it is possible more than one entry will be returned so the correct one (based on NI number should be chosen). This part of the database will monitor the rest of the process including dates the application was sent to the GM and how long it has taken to be returned. It will allow applicants to be kept on file if there is currently no vacancy and discard them if not. It will also allow the logging of the testing results and service medical outcomes that have been undertaken.

Various types of report will be available through the database including but not limited to:

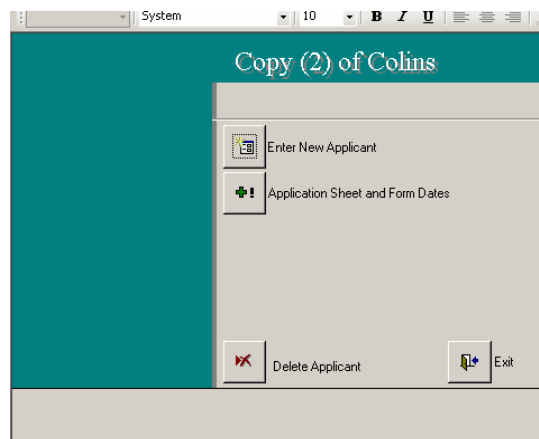
- Date reporting, to see where any delays are occurring;
- Address lists, for mailing purposes;
- Testing Results.

These reports will be based on the applicants NI number, making sure the correct applicants are targeted in the report. Having the facility for reporting will also enable us to identify where any pinch points are, for example the arranging of medicals or where group manager intervention is needed, thus allowing appropriate action to be taken to try and rectify this in future.

Due to changes and finalisation of the way the recruitment process will be handled the database has had to undergo some changes, as such, it is planned for all the work to be finished to a testing stage by the end of May 2007.

The preliminary screenshots below show:

1. The main introduction screen;
2. The new applicant entry screen;
3. The applicant amendment screen.



ID N.I. Number
Title Forenames Initials
Surname
Station Application Sheet Sent
Group

Application Sheet Returned	<input type="text" value="30/01/2007"/>	Timetracking
Application Sheet to GM	<input type="text" value="03/02/2007"/>	Days: 4 / 4
Application Sheet back from GM	<input type="text" value="15/02/2007"/>	Days: 12 / 16

Vacancy? If no vacancy keep on file?

Application Form Sent	<input type="text" value="17/02/2007"/>	Days: 2 / 18
Application Form Returned	<input type="text" value="06/03/2007"/>	Days: 17 / 35

Controls

Consideration:

Possible cost implications for the number of ACCESS users (Awaiting response from IS)

3.3 Retained Management System (RMS)

Need some spill around current paper based arrangements - LH

The work group contacted a number of external companies that were offering a potential electronic application to replace the RMS system. Whilst the Humberside Model has now been taken up by a company called Sopht Logic, the team felt it was advisable to look at a series of options. In undertaking this research it contacted a number of other FRS's to establish what systems they had in place.

- spoken to R Taylor in Humberside who developed their 'availability 'system. They did not provide a mobile phone to all RDS personnel, but have put a mobile phone at each station for personnel that do not own one, such personnel then have to drive to station to send a text on their availability.
- Attended Verwood Station in Dorset to review their internet based option. Again PC's are available on station to enable employees without this facility at home to update their availability record.
- Demonstrations given on external supplier systems by
 - Asset Co Data Solutions (Leicester)
 - Sophtlogic (Ipswich)
 - FSI-UK Gartan Technologies Ltd. (Ireland)
 - PageOne Communications Ltd. (Middlesex)
 - Fortek Computers Ltd. – Rappell (Gosport)
 - Firewatch - Info Graphic (Scotland)*

* A demonstration of this system was given to S Rowlett at Royal Berkshire. A formal summary of the pro's and con's of this system has not been provided, but the work group understands It offers a holistic solution .

The following is a summary of each of these products investigated together with a brief report for each :

3.3.1 Asset Co Data Solutions (Leicester)

PTW attended a presentation on 7/2/07 in Leicester involving a demonstration of several elements of their integrated systems covering Retained pay & Retained cover management. The retained pay module, whilst doing the job, was not as integrated or as comprehensive as our current new system constructed in SAP. Given that the output had to interface with a payroll system, it seemed to provide only total pay information to staff on their payslips (unlike ours which gives a claim by claim breakdown).

The Retained Cover module was very good although usability where data was being entered directly into the system was a little cumbersome with dialogue boxes to enter

specific times and dates etc. . It accomplished most, if not all the requirements we have been investigating in the RDS working group, providing such facilities as:

- Texting entry of/amendments to cover from mobile phones, with both confirmation texts returned to sender and warning messages if the change being made will take the pump off the run, and a facility to text another person (e.g. OIC) informing them if this occurs.
- The application can be interfaced with SAP to bring up each station's staff list for manual entries to be made on station.
- A time line constantly indicates real time on the screen and prevents retrospective changes to cover history.
- Variety of Reports can be run on individuals' cover etc.
- Fairly intuitive user interface so training requirement should not be too intensive or demanding. It appears very similar to the current RMS sheets with names listed vertically on the left and coloured horizontal bars indicating periods of absence etc. in 15 minute segments (the screen view is scaleable from 15 minute segments to a whole day per segment)

PTW has received a brief copy of the systems specifications which are available to view if required.

Asset Co have indicated they would be pleased to come and give a presentation here at HQ if it would assist.

3.3.2 Sophtlogic (Ipswich)

Susan Templeton and PTW attended a demonstration of the Sophtlogic system at the Lodge Hill Centre in West Sussex on 13/2/07.

The system was very similar to the Asset Co application but I felt it had a better Graphical User Interface (GUI) making it easier to use on station. Also, the reporting aspects had been more comprehensively thought through from a Fire Service perspective. The time slots on the Availability system were only graduated down to 30 minute segments, this may need to be looked at if this is considered too large a period. A combination of our views are listed below:

- Came away positive about package particularly reporting, adaptability for HFRS, ease of use, development opportunities.
- A time line constantly indicates real time on the screen and prevents retrospective changes to cover history. (can be done by selected staff only)
- GUI straight forward in use so training requirement should not be too intensive or demanding.
- Remote access via mobile and shortly employees own PC at home if required.
- Reporting was varied and appeared easy to action and to extract variations required.
- Updates quickly and will inform employee whether they will put pump off run by their lack of availability (being developed).

- Enables employee work patterns to be looked at which will fit with WTR and with little adaptation (which Sophtlogic say they are progressing) could be adapted to meet WTR needs coming out of the WTR group work.
- There are levels of reporting from employee level to organisational.
- Has a mini personal data sheet which Sophtlogic are looking to interface with the FRS's core HR database.
- Availability of employees at Station, Group and Service can be seen as a today and tomorrow basis.
- Sophtlogic are working on including Turnouts and Attendances within package.
- Audit trails seem good.
- Can check availability to contracted cover/hours and as above I think can easily be developed to include WTR recording and monitoring for all RDS employees work (FRS and otherwise).
- Can export to Excel for further analysis if required

3.3.3 FSI-UK Gartan Technologies Ltd. (Ireland)

This again is a similar system reviewed by Colin Sutherland which appears very crisp and clean on the screen. We are unsure at present whether it will prevent retrospective changes to availability at this point. A presentation on CD is available if required. Colin's review is as follows:

The retained management system provided by Gartan Technologies is made up of five basic features. They are: Non-availability booking, control room access, logs, reporting and user access.

Non-availability Recording

This is the part of the application where users will enter the times when they are not available to be on call. It is done by selecting their station and the appropriate date, then clicking on the start time and dragging along to the finish time and then selecting a reason from the drop down that appears. The day is broken down into 30 minute segments. If this is a regular absence, due to normal work commitments, then a pattern can be applied, for example Monday to Friday 9-5. Underneath the times at the top of each station is a number which relates to the crewing levels for that particular time. If someone entering their non-availability causes the station to fall below pre-set levels then this will change to red, allowing them to see they are causing the pump to come off the run.

Control Room Access

The control room are provided with real time crewing levels through the system. It will list all stations and the crewing levels by selecting a specific date, to allow some forward planning. The view can be broken down into 1, 2, 6 or 12 hour periods. Again when the station is under crewed the number will change to red allowing it to be easily spotted. If a user moves his mouse over a red field then it will list the numbers of fire fighters etc and show where the shortage is, missing an OIC for example.

Logging

This is a simple feature that lets an administrator see more detailed information about non-availability bookings. It shows them the dates to and from along with the reason, who it was booked by and on what date. Reporting appears to be available for any period that is selected.

Reporting

Built into the application are at least four reports: available staffing levels which appears to be similar to the live access control has available to them; employees available which list the station and the employees that are free to work; hours available and not available which show a sum of the total hours they are free and not free to work.

User Access

Built into the application there are five levels of users access provided, although it does state that custom levels can be setup.

- Level 1 – Fire fighter: edit your own record only
- Level 2 – Station Manager: edit all users in your station
- Level 3 – Group Manager: edit a selection of stations
- Level 4 – Edit all stations
- Level 5 – Super admin: edit all stations and create new users.

New Features

Since the CD was produced Gartan have added new features into the FSiUK model, these include SMS texting based facility and a real time Crewing Level Map showing the current availability of each station.

Other Features

The application is also able to provide other features. There is a retained payroll module which will not be as good as the SAP one we currently use, and a rota management one, although that is geared more towards wholetime staff.

3.3.4 PageOne Communications Ltd. (Middlesex)

This system was demonstrated at HFRS HQ on 13-2-07 to Shaun Rowlatt, Colin Sutherland and PTW . It was felt to be a good communications package but we all thought it was unlikely to be of any value to us as it did not provide the required functionality in its present form.

Lisa Cornwell (PageOne) said there was a new system, shortly to become available, which she would investigate on our behalf and come back to us with any further information.

3.3.5 Fortek Computers Ltd. – Rappell (Gosport)

A PDF document is available to view for this system if required
This system has been reviewed by Colin Sutherland as follows:

Allows recording and monitoring of current and future retained availability

- Updates can be made via the web
- A pre-defined roster
- Real time updates for individual crew members via telephone line

If a station availability falls below required crewing level RAPPEL can inform named personnel when changes to resource levels happen.

RAPPEL incorporates a GD92 interface which allows it to communicate resource information into a suitably configured command and control system, and to send crew information to the station printer during a turnout.

Performance reports delivered through Crystal Reports which are built into the application.

Usage

Personal telephone numbers are configured against crew members. Calls are made to pre-defined numbers to indicate the availability of crew members. The firefighter dials one number to indicate his availability and the dials another to indicate his unavailability. The server identifies the number with the use of CLI (Call Line Identity), and then can ascertain which firefighter has made the call. As the server can capture the CLI information without answering the call there is no charge made to the firefighter. RAPPEL can then confirm the new status by either using a ring back method (as long as the firefighter does not answer there is no charge incurred here either) or via an SMS.

The server can be configured to calculate the availability of appliances based on manpower levels, and fire fighter skills, such as driver. RAPPEL can use these rules to determine if there are sufficient personnel available, if not it can SMS the office in charge, or other nominated personnel, and inform them appropriately. It will also send a message via GD92 to the command and control system indicating the status of the appliance or station.

Status Displays

The RAPPEL system can provide the following information:

- Current Resource Status
- Current Station Status
- Future Crew Availability
- Future Resource Availability
- Future Station Availability
- Daily Resource Summary
- Modem Status

More information on these can be found on page 8 of the Fortek pack.

Configuration

RAPPEL is fully configurable using the following features:

- Configure Crew
- Configure Crew Status
- Configure Crew Skills
- Configure Invalid Skill Combinations
- Configure Crew Ranks
- Configure Stations
- Configure Station Availability
- Configure Divisions
- Configure Resources
- Configure Resource Status

More information on these can be found on page 9 & 10 of the Fortek pack.

Requirements

RAPPEL needs the following products in order to operate which will incur an additional cost:

- Oracle 9 or Microsoft SQL Server 2000 (or higher)
- Minimum of 4 GSM modems
- Database/Web server – these can be hosted on the same server running Microsoft Server 2003 IIS V.6
- A network infrastructure that allows users access to the RAPPEL web application from suitable locations

Known Restrictions

Each telephone number must be unique to each person, mobiles are most commonly used however work and home may be used as well, but only one person per number.

3.3.6 Cost of text messages

The work group have been undertaking some research in relation to using text messaging to book on/off duty.

A typical text message costs 12 pence per text.

However, they have found a ‘bulk supplier’ that provides a discount for more than 500,000 texts per annum. On this number the cost per text is 4.4 pence

Many of the systems reviewed rely on text messaging facilities, which of course immediately raises the question who will pay for this. As a guide only if all RDS employees booked in/out on average twice per day

Based on 700 employees = 2800 texts per day
X 365 days per year

= 1,022,000 texts per annum

= £45,000 per annum.

An assumption has been made that all RDS employees have a mobile phone and would be willing to use for the RMS replacement system. If they did not then alternative arrangements, such as phones on station could be considered as could the continuation of current arrangements e.g. drive to station to use facilities. It would not be compatible to have part of the crew on a paper based system and the other on text as there needs to be a link to both sources of information to issue the ‘crewing’ messages.

At present the cost of going to and from the station to book availability is at nil cost to the Service as all costs are borne by the individual.

3.3.7 Options to consider in relation to Text:

- RDS employees pay for all text messages and their own phone
- Drive to station to use station phone or pc
- The service pays a monthly contribution towards this facility and the provision of their own phone
- The service pays for all text messages
- The service pays for all text messages and provides all RDS employees with phones
- PC option at home or on station

Once a system has been selected then consideration as to the ‘physical kit’ provided to RDS employees would be a further consideration. Additional costings would be a requirement at this time.

3.3.8 Recommendations:

The work group would recommend that

- A Formal specification is developed and costs acquired for the models deemed suitable.

- Regional collaboration on the acquisition of a product/ needs to be consistent for the RCC implementation

3.4 Mentoring

3.4.1 Overview of current position

Although the use of mentors will initially look at potential RDS applicants, it is likely that there will be a need to mentor existing RDS firefighters as well.

- Potential RDS Applicants

As we have seen with Wholetime recruitment in 2005 and 2006 there is around a 1 in 10 success rate from applications to offers of employment. Without a mentoring scheme in place, it is very unlikely that our RDS stations will be able maintain establishment figures due to a high drop out rate.

- RDS to WDS Transferees

A process for existing RDS firefighters who wish to transfer to the Wholetime Duty System will shortly be in place. As there is currently limited knowledge in the RDS workplace around PQA's and Core Values, mentoring will become a valuable tool in this area.

- Applicants for Promotion

As previously mentioned there is limited knowledge in the RDS workplace around PQA's and Core Values. This will be a barrier to RDS personnel wishing to take an ADC to move roles in the RDS workplace, and possibly even transfer from RDS to WDS. So again, mentoring will become a valuable tool in this area.

3.4.2 Mentors

Ideally we should look to provide a minimum of one mentor per operational group.

The initial suggestion was that members of the existing Retained Duty System Awareness Team (RDSAT) could be trained to become mentors for potential applicants.

The longer term issue of transferring between duty systems was taken in to account by the group and in the short term, until selection processes are the same, this will be an additional requirement to support existing RDS employees in familiarising them with the criteria/ process to transfer.

Due to the level of commitment and training required to carry out the role of a mentor, caution should be used in using the RDSAT as is.

While the RDSAT have a sound knowledge of the Retained Duty System, this does not mean that they have any knowledge of PQA's, Core Values or the new NFST.

If the recommendation to use the PQA element of the application form is accepted then this will mean that all RDS candidates will need to come to SHQ to undertake both the psychometric and practical tests. This will give the opportunity to utilise the expertise of experienced HR members to deliver the briefing to applicants on completing the application form.

Longer term we would envisage this becoming part of the Group Support Officers role (link to Work Group 3).

Any material developed would need to be available on our website to WDS applicants as well to ensure that we are providing the same guidance information to all applicants.

A lecture pack for use on station could also be developed.

Where possible mentors should also be outside of mentee's managerial chain, watch or section.

Mentoring Session would consist of:

- Overview of process
- Introduction to application form
- Explanation of PQA's
- Examples, good and bad
- Q and A session

3.4.3 Recommendations:

- Formal lecture pack is developed for use by HR to candidates/release on web to WDS candidates
- Future usage of Group Support Officers as mentors
- RDSAT is only used for the purposes recruited e.g. attendance at Fetes/Fairs, etc.

3.4.4 Training for Group Support Officers to undertake Mentoring Duties

However the mentors are selected, it would be valuable for them to attend the Water 4 Fish course, to get a better knowledge of this part of the process (Interview).

It would also be worth considering allowing mentors to submit there own application form under the NFST, and then go through all the stages, again to gain greater knowledge of the process.

CIPD offer a 1 day Mentoring in the Workplace course, although further information will be required, this may be worth considering.

Networking Women in the Fire Service also provide mentoring courses.

3.4.5 Trial

With the addition of an RDS section at St Mary's Fire Station on the horizon, it may be worth using this an opportunity to develop a mentoring process.

3.4.6 Existing RDSAT Personnel

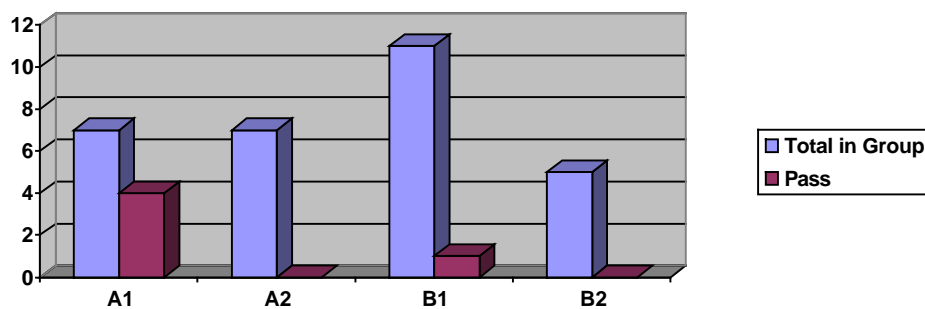
Operational Group	RDS Recruitment Team Member
Basingstoke	Mike Saunders (01)
East Hants	None
Fareham	Nigel Mottished (38 / 54) Dave Sheppard (18 / 21)
New Forest North	Steve Evans (46 / 54)
New Forest South	Denise Knight (49 / 32) Chas McGill (58)
Portsmouth	Dave Sheppard (21 / 18)
Rushmoor	None
Southampton	Nigel Mottished (54 / 38) Steve Evans (54 / 46)
Test Valley	Chris Andrews (32) Paul Francis (32) Denise Knight (32 / 49)
Winchester	None
Not Attached	Nayna Parmar Ingrid Leonard Daniel Reeve Andy Marsh

The table above shows that if the existing RDS Awareness Team.

**RESULTS FROM ‘CONTROLLED SAMPLE’ EXERCISE FOR RDS
RECRUITMENT**

Table 1 – Results for each group that participated in the exercise

Group	Total in Group	Pass	%
A1	7	4	57
A2	7	0	0
B1	11	1	9
B2	5	0	0



Results for each of the PQA questions that form part of the application form

Question 1 – PQA Working with people of different backgrounds, ages, or gender

“Please describe a situation where you have interacted with people who are different from you in terms of background, age or gender”

This question identifies the PQA ‘Commitment to Diversity and Integrity’. Candidates must achieve a minimum score of 2 or above to proceed further at this stage. Although the overall pass is above 50% the results indicates that there is a vast difference between the 2 groups.

This question, as evidenced in this study has been the most significant de-selector in the wholetime selection process, in particular the 18-20 age group. (KFRS Statistics)

Question 1	Pass	%	Mentored Pass	%	Unmentored Pass	%
	16/30	53	14/15	73	1/15	0.5

Question 2 – Building working relationships and working as a supportive team member
“Please describe a situation where you have had to work closely with others as part of a team”

This question identifies the PQA ‘Working with Others’

This question was well understood by both groups with 26 of the candidates achieving a score of 2 and above

Question 2	Pass	%	Mentored Pass	%	Unmentored Pass	%
	26/30	87	14/15	93	11/15	73

Question 3 - Taking steps to improve my skills and learn new things

“Please describe a situation where you have taken steps to improve your skills and / or learn new things”

This question identifies the PQA ‘Commitment to Development’

Again a well answered question from most of the candidates. No significant difference between either group

Question 3	Pass	%	Mentored Pass	%	Unmentored Pass	%
	27/30	90	14/15	93	13/15	87

Question 4 - Staying calm, confident and in control during difficult or stressful situations
“Please describe a situation where you have had to remain calm and controlled in a stressful situation”

This question identifies the PQA ‘confidence and Resilience’

A slight decrease in the standard from the Unmentored group on this question, although interesting to notice a full pass rate from the mentored group

Question 4	Pass	%	Mentored Pass	%	Unmentored Pass	%
	24/30	80	15/15	100	9/15	60

Question 5 - Completing an activity on my own according to guidelines

“Please describe a situation where you have had to work on your own in accordance with guidelines”

This question identifies the PQA ‘commitment to Excellence’

Half of the unmentored candidates were unsuccessful on this question
 :

Question 5	Pass	%	Mentored Pass	%	Unmentored Pass	%
	21/30	70	13/15	87	8/15	53

Question 6 - Being open to change and actively supporting it

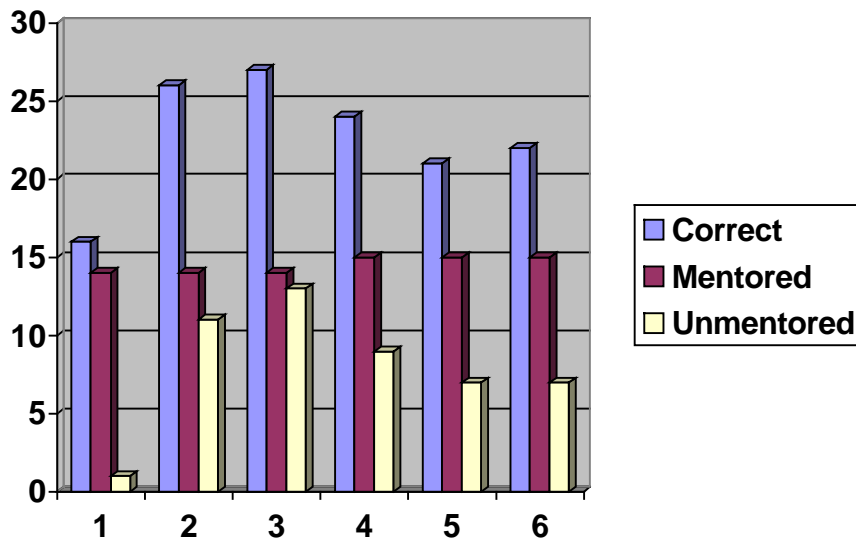
“Please describe a situation where you have had to change the way you do something following a change imposed by someone in authority”

This question identifies the PQA ‘Openness to Change’

Another full pass from the mentored group. This question received the second lowest score from the unmentored group.

Question 6	Pass	%	Mentored Pass	%	Unmentored Pass	%
	22/30	73	15/15	100	7/15	47

Table 6 – Difference in results between mentored and unmentored candidates



Considerations:

The Hawthorne Effect – this was considered when collating results.

‘What they do depends on what their personal goals are, how they understand the task requested, whether they want to please the experimenter and/or whether they see this task as impinging on other interests and goals they hold, what they think the experimenter really wants’ (Source. Wikipedia)

Candidates may have been ‘led’ by comments made during the presentation. To ensure that a fair process was adopted an independent observer attended the guidance session.

Candidates were also given feedback on their results and also given the opportunity to make comment on the process. Comments received from group A were unanimous in that following the mentoring session they were much clearer regarding the requirements of the form.

Time constraints were also taken into consideration, in particular for Group B. They were presented with an application form and asked to complete in a 3 hour period.

Although they were aware of the intentions of the research, completion of an application form, under normal conditions candidates would complete this in their own time and in familiar surroundings.