

Circular number	67-2006	Date issued	03 November 2006
This circular is	For information	No response required	
This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	The Government response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's report on the Fire and Rescue Service gave a commitment to produce a report on the key findings emerging from a Retained Duty System workshop held in September 2006		

Retained Duty System:

(i) Report of the September 2006 Workshop

(ii) Study of Local Employers

Issued by:

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Addressed to:

The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer

Please forward to:

Head of Human Resources
Retained Duty System Champions/Liaison Officers

Summary

This circular reports on the outcome of the two day Retained Duty System workshop held in Leicester in September 2006. It also announces the commencement of research into the primary employers of Retained Duty System personnel.

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Report of the September 2006 Workshop

1.0 Introduction

1.1 In 2004 a Fire and Rescue Service stakeholder group, the Retained Review Team, examined the long-standing recruitment and retention challenges facing the Retained Duty System (RDS). The Review Team's conclusions were endorsed by Ministers, the Practitioners' Forum and the Business and Community Safety Forum and a detailed report of the findings was published in February 2005.

1.2 Since the publication of the report a number of local projects have been developed across the Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government is working with other key stakeholders to capture emerging good practice and gain a better understanding of how it can work with the Service to enable delivery against the report's recommendations. In support of that aim, and to provide further national profile to RDS issues, the Department, in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officers' Association, ran a two-day workshop in September 2006 for RDS champions and practitioners.

2.0 Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- discuss the recruitment and retention challenges facing the Retained Duty System and explore potential solutions
- assess progress achieved across the Fire and Rescue Service since the publication of the Retained Review Team's report
- share good practice and
- identify appropriate mechanisms to facilitate good practice sharing.

2.1 The workshop was attended by over 120 delegates from 56 Fire and Rescue Services across the UK.

2.2 The Department commissioned a report from the workshop's facilitators (Opinion Research Services) on the key issues which came out of the discussions. Their report, which has been approved by Ministers, is annexed to this circular.

3.0 Way Forward

3.1 It is evident from the workshop that the Fire and Rescue Services have implemented some innovative local projects. It is important that good communication links are developed across the Service in order to share experiences and, where possible, to avoid re-inventing solutions. DCLG encourages Fire and Rescue Services to use its web-based HR RecruitmentToolkit Discussion Forum (which can be found at <http://www.frstoolkit.communities.gov.uk/>) to facilitate good practice sharing.

4.0 Study of Local Employers

4.1 RDS Employers Study – Research Project

In May 2006 the Department published a report on the findings of a survey it had undertaken profiling the primary employment status of RDS firefighters. While this research has proved to be a very useful source of information about the employment

status of RDS firefighters, not as much is known about their primary employers. In particular, what prompts them to release their staff for RDS duties and what benefits they gain from employing RDS firefighters.

- 4.2** The Department is therefore commissioning research to answer these questions and help the Fire and Rescue Service to have a better understanding of what does or could encourage and motivate businesses to release their staff for RDS duties. The research will also seek to establish the reasons why some employers are reluctant to release staff for RDS duties.
- 4.3** The results from this research will provide information which the Service and key stakeholders will find useful in developing their plans for attracting further support within the business community for the RDS; as well as providing guidance which Fire and Rescue Service can use in assessing and improving their existing strategies for engagement with employers who currently release RDS staff.. The results of the research should also help in determining the kind of support and recognition local employers would want to receive from the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 4.4** All Fire and Rescue Services employing RDS firefighters will shortly be invited to contribute to the study by supplying a list of employers in their area who currently release staff for RDS duties, and employers who have previously released staff but no longer do so. A small number of Fire and Rescue Services will also be invited to help with piloting the questionnaire which the researchers will be sending out to local businesses.
- 4.5** Further details about the project, with a request for volunteers for the pilot work, will be issued shortly.

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Fire and Resilience Directorate