

PAY 2007

The current pay and conditions agreement that was implemented in 2003 is due to expire on the 30th June 2007, see Employers Circular EMP/4/07 attached.

At a recent meeting with Representatives from the National Employers the RFU was asked to put forward our views on the arrangements that should be put in place from July this year.

The RFU's membership of the reformed National Joint Council gives us the opportunity to represent the views of RDS personnel at the body that determines your pay and conditions.

Following discussions at a meeting of RFU Executive Officers the RFU has submitted the attached letter to the National Employers for discussion as part of the 2007 Pay Review. In this letter we have outlined solutions to the many issues that link RDS pay, provision of cover, recruitment and retention.

We shall be pursuing these issues at the NJC negotiations on the new pay arrangements, and will keep members informed.

Views on the Current RDS Pay Arrangements (Following the June 2003 Agreement):

- Income dropped for many RDS personnel due to the pay changes 4 years ago.
- That agreement effectively penalised RDS officer roles due to reductions in response fees.
- It is a widely held view that EU legislation provided for parity of the hourly rate, but cost savings were then sought in RDS pay in order to balance this out.
- "Safeguarding" largely didn't work.
- Income has also dropped for many due to new call management arrangements.
- Some have maintained/increased income on CFS, Co-responding, Training and Admin, but this is not universally the case across the UK fire and rescue service. For example, some RDS are carrying out CFS on a reduced hourly rate while colleagues on other duty systems in the same F&RS receive higher NJC rates. In other FRS's there is an expectation that RDS will undertake CFS duties unpaid due to "budget constraints".
- The Retaining Fee no longer seems to be an incentive for providing cover – see also notes below on the 120 hour week.
- There is great dissatisfaction at the rank to role outcomes, which will increase further when the 3-year safeguarding ends. This will largely hit key leaders on the RDS,

especially in the inappropriately named Watch Manager role, to which many RDS OIC's have been assimilated.

- Shortfalls in day cover are still the major issue in many fire and rescue services, and insufficient attention is being paid to alternative rewards that could alleviate this situation.
- Recruitment shortfalls remain a major outstanding problem due to the delays in implementing the recommendations of the Review of Recruitment and Retention that was published in a report in February 2005.
- Similarly, there were opportunities in the recommendations of the 2005 Report to overcome a high annual turnover of RDS personnel.
- New "Salary" schemes are fraught in their introduction unless backed by a significant increase in additional funding. Salary schemes for RDS cannot be effective if they are implemented on the basis of a cost neutral effect on the budget. Failure to provide adequate incentives for the RDS requires far more costly alternatives and sufficient funding is available through effective application of the IRMP process.
- The 120 hours "full" cover introduction is causing problems:
 - Establishment levels have not been adjusted to allow for the reduced availability – effectively this could require on some stations an additional 4.8 personnel to bring an establishment of 12 RDS personnel up to the previous complement for 168 hour full cover.
 - No establishment adjustments have been made for the introduction of paid leave for RDS, which requires an additional one post.
 - There is a need to bring in more flexible cover arrangements, other than 120 hours or 90 hours. This includes a requirement for day cover only or other systems to particularly encourage recruits with caring responsibilities.
 - It needs to be recognised there can be a major clash of expectations if longer serving RDS personnel who are prepared to provide substantial periods of cover are to serve alongside newer recruits who have different work/life balance priorities. This can especially lead to conflicting views on the fairness of incentives which are too rigid in their current form.
 - More challenges are likely if there are further changes by the EU to the Working Time Directive, and these are not being addressed.
 - There are many anomalies creeping in where personnel on other duty systems have taken on RDS duties.

Examples:

- A Service where shift duty personnel, who do RDS duties, only undertake 1 drill night a month, but are paid a response fee if a call happens on drill night, despite not being needed as the duty crew has already left the station.
- Another Service where shift duty personnel undertaking RDS duties have to have 12 hours rest before and after wholtime duties which leaves barely 60 hours a week for RDS duties – yet they are paid the same retaining fee as RDS doing 120 hours.

- Any attempt to reform availability cover arrangements, especially to accommodate new recruits, will result in a large number of serving RDS personnel being alienated because of their potential loss of income and/or the introduction of more stringent monitoring and sanctions. Many personnel constantly have to juggle their conflicting primary employment, domestic and RDS obligations. At times this means they are struggling to provide the level of cover for which they were originally recruited, or economic necessity, including reduced RDS earnings, has forced them to pursue alternative employment and earnings capability instead of standing by for possible RDS calls which are fewer in frequency and for which the rewards are inadequate.

The next Pay Round

- Is expected to produce a blanket percentage increase. This will fail to deal with the more fundamental changes that are needed to the rewards and incentives for a cost-effective retained duty system.
- There may well be industrial action, with false promises to RDS as in the past, despite the majority of personnel continuing to provide cover in their local communities.
- The outcome of this pay round is unlikely to provide opportunities for real changes in RDS pay which puts right the failings in the past.

RFU Policy

- We accept change in RDS pay is a longer-term goal.
- We note that LGE policy is committed to “*pay and rewards that promote equality, flexibility, affordability and productivity*”. The retained duty system is flexible, affordable and productive, but the personnel working the system are not treated equally. The next pay round provides the opportunity to remedy this situation.
- We recognise pay/work/life balance is important to those already in the Service and those we are trying to recruit to fill the current shortfall.
- We believe a review of RDS incentives should be undertaken as part of the fresh recruitment and retention initiatives in the Retained Review. The key recommendations in the 2005 Report of the Retained Duty System Review, still not yet implemented, are:

Recommendation 35

Fire and rescue services need to review their current contractual provisions for RDS staff and consider introducing more flexible arrangements to encourage a wider pool of applicants, by:

- i) trialling alternative remuneration systems;
- ii) encouraging those who can provide RDS cover of 120 hours a week to do so.

Recommendation 36

Key stakeholders should undertake further research into the effects of the introduction of the 120-hour provision on service delivery.

Recommendation 37

There should be an examination of the effect on recruitment and retention of a range of time commitment requirements (e.g. availability options for day/night/weekend

cover, from 120 hours downwards) and job role options (e.g. CFS and co-response)

Recommendation 38

Further detailed examination is required of the alternative remuneration arrangements that have been adopted, or are being trialled, to tackle recruitment and retention problems.

- There are also a number of other recommendations in the Review that would provide increased incentives for RDS personnel, including Recommendation 12, 16, 18, 24, 25, 28, 30, and 34. Implementation of these recommendations would help to provide the balance because migration between duty systems has largely been one-way to the RDS duty system.
- We would also add to the above:
 - There needs to be an examination of the benefits of providing incentives for day cover.
 - Incentives for RDS personnel to undertake roles above firefighter are inadequate.
 - There are a number of anomalies, for example a firefighter on the competent rate who acts up to cover a higher role where this is nobody available in that role for that call can receive more pay than a higher role in development.
 - There should be a study of the link between improved incentives for the availability of RDS personnel and improved day cover and appliance availability.
 - Another anomaly that disadvantaged RDS personnel was created when personnel on other duty systems had two days added to their annual leave to compensate for the previous two extra statutory leave days. This resulted for RDS personnel in the loss of two days when double time was paid.
 - RDS should have parity with personnel on other duty systems in respect of bank holiday payments/time off. There is an opportunity here to review these arrangements alongside the Government's current proposals for increasing the holiday entitlement and paid time off for public holiday working, taking account of the fact the low retaining fee provides little incentive to remain on call during public holidays on the off-chance there might be a call.
 - CPD payments should be at full rate (not a minimum of 25%), as for wholetime, in recognition that RDS provide 120 hours cover, an equal contribution to community safety and many undertake more calls, CFS, etc.
 - There should be more opportunities/flexibility through IRMP's, which has the capacity to fund all of the other changes that are necessary.

A review of RDS pay and conditions is overdue, especially as many of the recent changes have been an ad hoc reaction to changes in various equality laws affecting so called "part-time" workers. We believe the National Employers have an opportunity here to carry out a fundamental review of incentives for personnel on the Retained Duty System that would lead to improved recruitment, especially from under-represented groups, as well as recognising the unique contribution of existing personnel to the safety of their local communities.