

Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring April to June 2013

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides information regarding the ongoing performance and management of the Retained Duty System (RDS) in Shropshire.

2 Recommendations

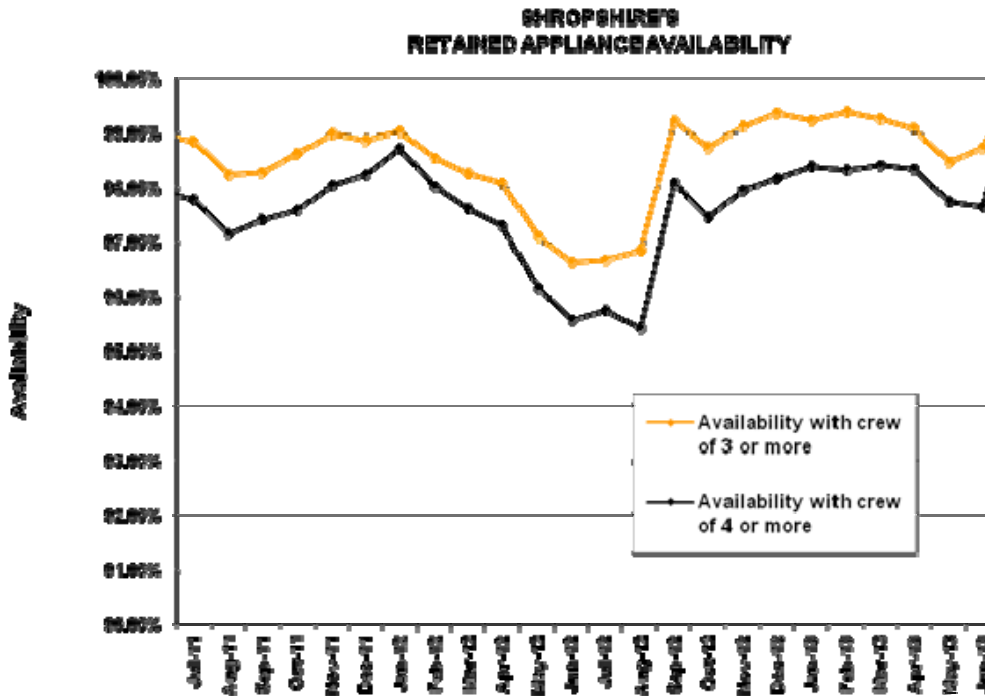
The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has 23 fire stations, 19 of which are solely crewed by RDS staff, and a further 3 stations have both a wholetime and RDS complement. Only Telford Central Fire Station is solely crewed by wholetime firefighters.

Overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at over 98% (see Graph 1 overleaf). This shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes two based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 18 are available for 98% to 100% of the time, which is an outstanding level of performance. The Fire Authority's target is, however, always for 100% availability for all of its fire engines.

Night-time cover is particularly good, with almost 100% availability between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.00 am across all stations. The exception to this is an occasional shortfall with the 'second' fire engine at Oswestry, which, whilst not ideal, is tolerated, as the remaining 'primary' fire engine remains available 100% of the time during these hours.



Graph 1 – Retained Duty System Crew Availability

4 Improving Performance

Graph 1 reveals a gradual upward trend in availability during 2013. The sudden upward movement in availability since August 2012 is a result of the manner in which the second Oswestry appliance is recorded. This is explained at the appendix to this report. The upward trend in availability has continued since October 2012. To improve performance the Service is focusing attention on those fire engines / stations that are currently providing reduced availability. An outline of the factors affecting availability and the actions to improve performance is provided below.

5 Factors Influencing Availability

In recent years it has become increasingly challenging to ensure that all 23 fire appliances crewed by RDS personnel are available '24 / 7'. There have been a number of legal, economic and societal changes in recent years that have affected the RDS and these have been summarised in previous reports.

6 Background Station Specific Performance

There are currently four fire stations, whose performance over the past 12 months falls below the mean of 98% to 100%, achieved by the remaining stations. An analysis of performance is provided at the appendix to this report. Ludlow has now been removed from this group, as a result of recent improved performance.

7 Recruitment Campaign

Ongoing analysis of overall RDS availability has identified those stations with insufficient staff that need to be targeted for recruitment.

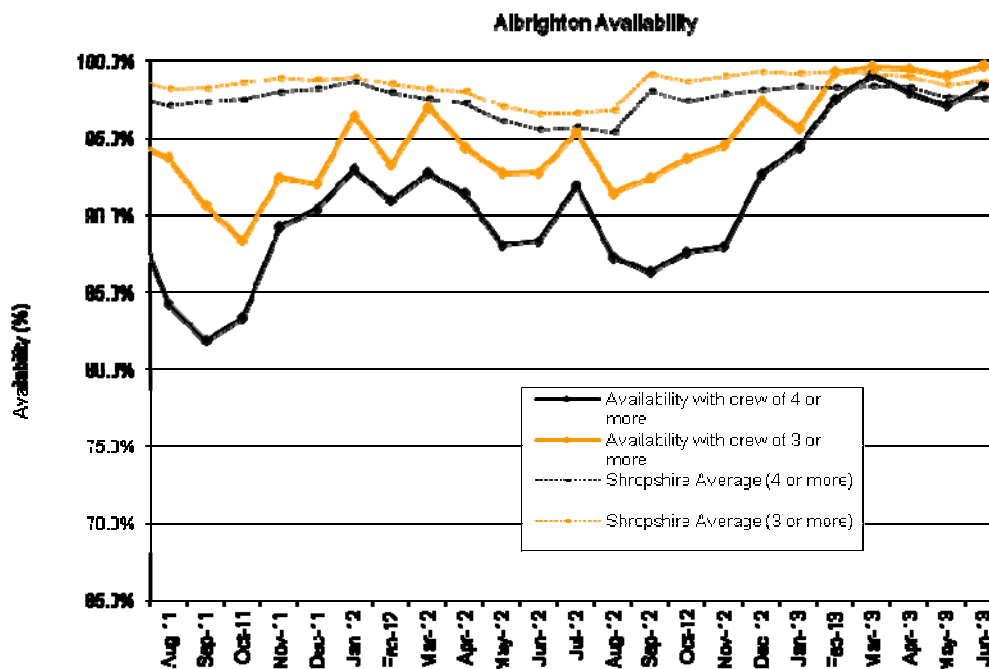
Over the last twelve months the Service has run a successful campaign, which has provided sixteen new recruits for those stations identified as a priority because of reduced staffing.

The latest RDS recruits course commenced on 17 June 2013 with ten candidates, three of whom will be based at priority stations. Officers are currently working towards establishing a full course in October, with five delegates already nominated.

All aspects of the recruitment campaign, including the SFRS decision to venture into social networking as a method of engagement, have been hugely successful. Similar recruitment tactics will, therefore, be utilised in the future.

By taking advantage of connections with local authority stakeholders in South Shropshire, the Service now also communicates RDS requirements via the Shropshire Association of Local Councils' newsletter.

Graph 2 below, which shows the improved availability at Albrighton, is a clear indication of the success of the recent strategy. Similar improvements have been achieved in Cleobury Mortimer, as shown in the appendix to this report.



Graph 2 – Albrighton Availability since Recruitment

Albrighton

Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>14 units (see NB below) (11.75 available)</p> <p>Historically it has been extremely difficult to recruit in the Albrighton area, with daytime cover the key problem.</p>	<p>Lack of an Officer in Charge has led to the station being off the run for periods but this has largely been resolved with the introduction of a new Officer in Charge and an additional Crew Manager.</p>	<p>A recruitment campaign, focussing on providing daytime cover, was undertaken. Area Command are researching a half-cover rates contract.</p> <p>One new recruit went on the run in February and one further recruit completed his training in June and is now available for operational calls.</p> <p>A recruit on the current course will be available for calls at the end of September 2013.</p>
<p>The introduction of an electronic availability system has also helped. Future plans for a bespoke system will enhance this aspect considerably by supporting greater management controls and staff flexibility.</p>		

8 Retained Support Officer (RSO) Cover – Quarter 4

Table 1 shows those fire stations that have required the highest level of support (for reasons detailed earlier in this report) during 2012/13 and the first quarter of 2013/14. These six stations accounted for **85.4%** of all RSO cover during 2012/13 and **86.5%** of available RSO hours during the first quarter of 2013/14. The deployment of RSOs has improved performance at all stations with availability issues.

Stations	2012/13	2013/14				Total
	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Albrighton	472					
Cleobury Mortimer	565.25	208.75				
Ludlow	419.7	29.25				
Market Drayton	240.75	59.5				
Minsterley	371.5	113.5				
Much Wenlock	194.75	136				
Oswestry 16 (P4)	532.75	135.5				
Totals	2796.7	682.5				
Total RSO hours	3275.95	788.75				

Table 1 – Retained Support Officer Cover

9 Flexible Cover

The Service has instigated work to develop an option for cover outside the current full and three-quarter cover levels that operate at present. The intention is to provide more flexibility for people, who are available in areas where the Service struggles to provide cover at certain times. This proposal has been put to the Representative Bodies and officers will continue to consult with them as the project progresses (see appendix, reference Baschurch Station profile below).

Further investigation has been conducted in relation to the procurement of a bespoke Retained availability system, which will assist in the monitoring and management of RDS activities across the Service. The potential benefits to the Service appear to be considerable.

A progress report will be provided to the Committee in due course.

10 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

12 Initial Impact Assessment

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

13 Appendix

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

14 Background Papers

A quarterly RDS performance review summary is presented to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee. Previous reports can be accessed via the following link:

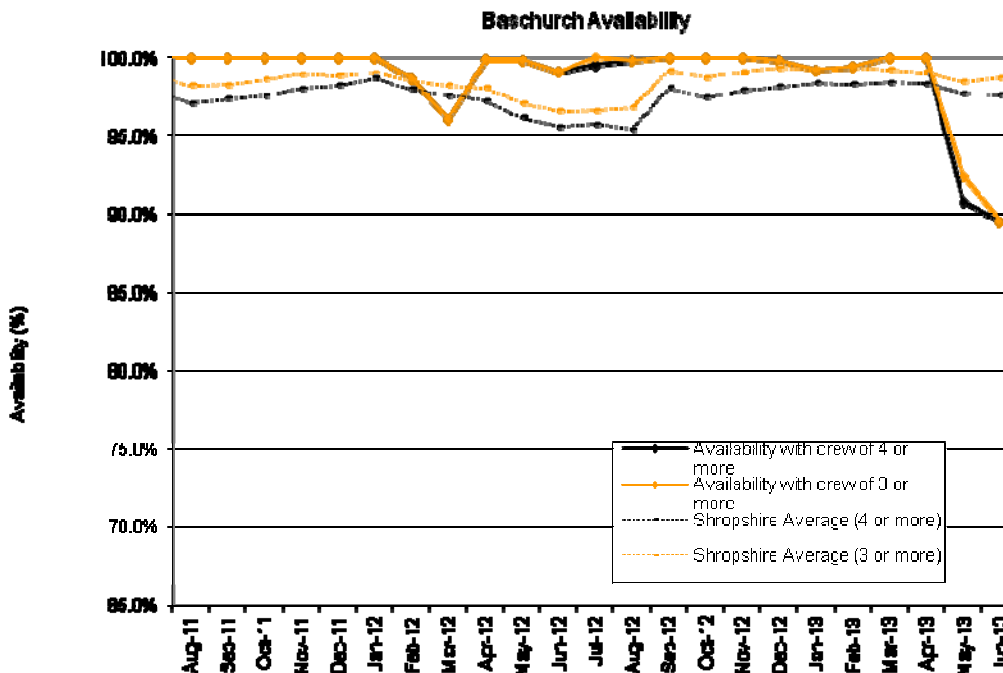
<https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings/Audit-and-Performance-Management>

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability: Analysis

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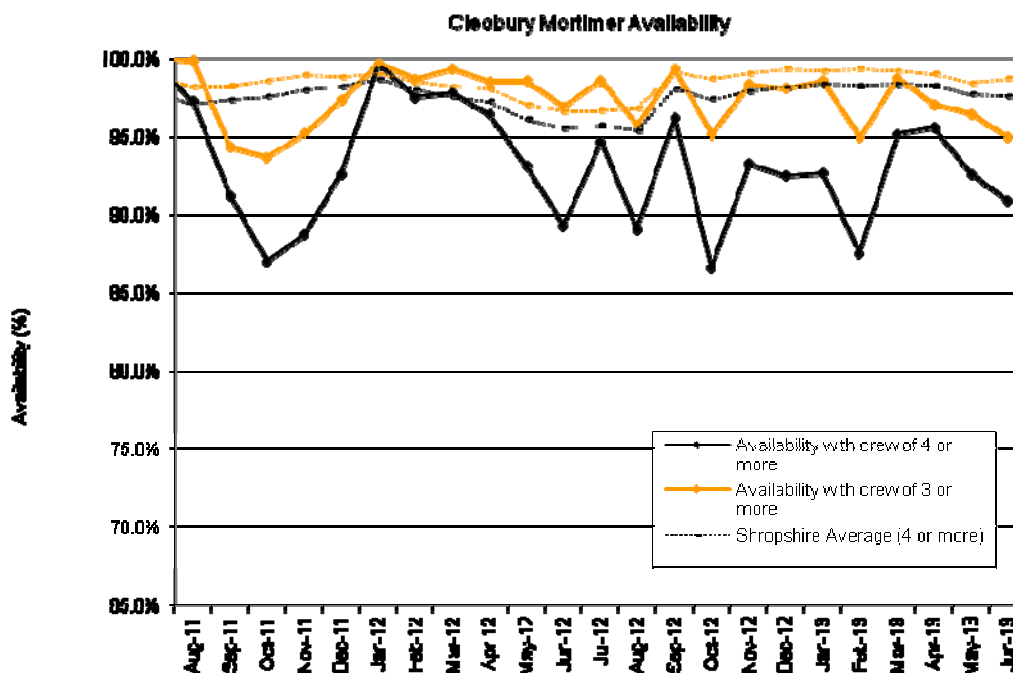
One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

Baschurch Fire Station



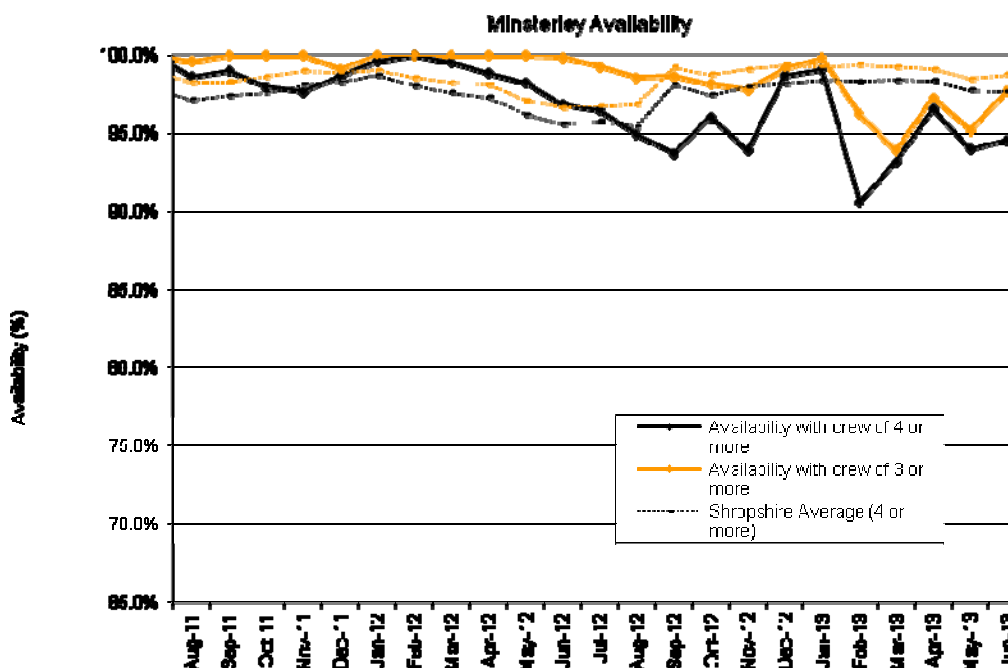
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 12.25 units are currently on station.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>Long-term sickness and unpaid leave have impacted on Baschurch availability.</p>	<p>Two recruits completed training in June and are now available for operational calls. The improvement in availability will be seen during the second quarter report in November.</p> <p>Pending developments in RDS availability systems and research into alternative fixed contracts, a trial involving an individual providing daytime cover only is underway.</p>

Cleobury Mortimer Fire Station



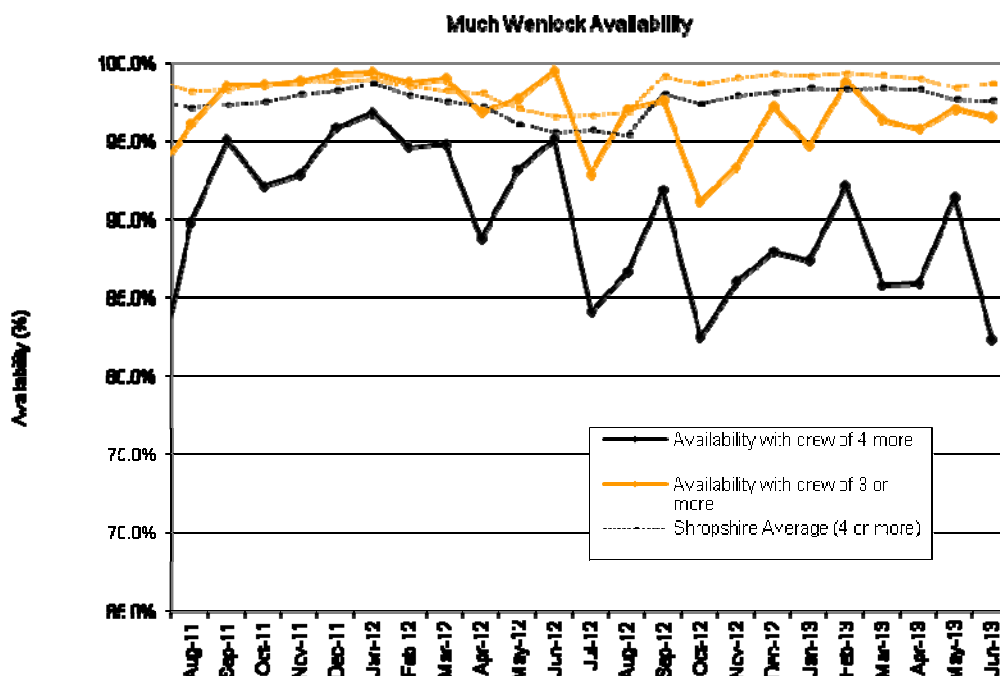
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10 units are currently on station.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>Difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area</p>	<p>Two recruits completed training in February 2013 and are now available for operational calls.</p> <p>An ongoing recruitment campaign has focussed on providing additional daytime cover. Area Command are researching half cover rates contract. One candidate is scheduled to attend the course commencing October 2013, although a supervisory officer retirement is imminent.</p>

Minsterley Fire Station



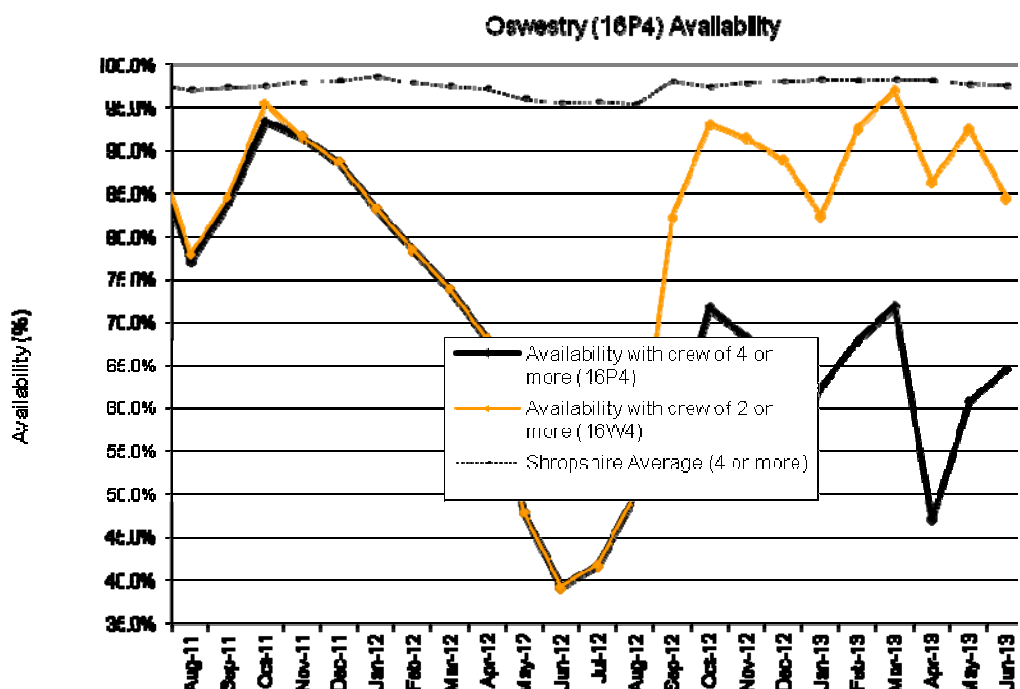
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 15 units are budgeted for, only 10.25 units are currently on station.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>During 2012 and early 2013 there have been several retirements and resignations.</p> <p>Reduction in employment opportunities in the area has resulted in personnel relocating.</p>	<p>Two new recruits completed training in February 2013 and are now available for operational incidents.</p> <p>One further recruit completed training in June and is now available for operational calls.</p> <p>Ongoing recruitment and one candidate due to undertake Job Related Tests.</p>

Much Wenlock Fire Station



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 7.25 units are currently on station.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>It is difficult to recruit from the local population, because of the high number working outside Much Wenlock.</p>	<p>One new recruit commenced training but failed to complete the course. A focussed recruitment drive commenced in January 2013 with a local home and business leaflet drop, poster campaign and two open days in March and April</p> <p>One recruit currently training and will be available for operational calls in early October.</p> <p>Area Command is currently researching half cover rates contract with a view to potential week day cover only.</p>
<p>Much Wenlock must be commended for the cover they provide, given current staffing.</p>		

Oswestry Fire Station



As of September 2012 Oswestry’s second appliance report shows availability with crew of 4 or more (WrT 16P4 & WC 16W4) and availability with crew of 2 or more (WC 16W4). The upward trend in the bold black line up to October was promising, with an 18% improvement, where the vehicle has been available as a second major pumping appliance, but this trend failed to continue due to a short-term injury in December. With a recent recruit being placed on the run and two candidates currently in training rapid improvement is anticipated and the potential to level at around 80%% within the next six to nine months. The yellow line shows that the vehicle is available as a water carrier (which is its secondary function) and this has dropped slightly since the last report.

Station profile	Reason for Availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 15.5 units are currently on station.</p> <p>This is Oswestry’s second appliance, which has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.</p>	<p>The first pump at Oswestry currently has 100% availability.</p> <p>Second pump availability recently increased to 72% after a period below 40% due to five retirements / resignations and long-term sickness absence.</p> <p>Availability reduced during March but has now improved once again up to nearly 65%</p>	<p>One recruit has now passed the BA course (in April) and was available for operational incidents from 2 May (NB improvement during April/May). One further recruit is currently in training and will be available for operational calls by the first week in October.</p>