

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

EFFICIENCIES - ANALYSIS OF NOTABLE PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides information concerning an analysis of notable practice case studies from other Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), as compiled by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). Also, to seek Members' guidance on which of the case studies they feel warrant further examination in the interest of identifying additional efficiency savings to fund Service improvements.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) Note and confirm the findings of the analysis to date;
- b) Agree the proposals as to which case studies require further exploration; and
- c) Agree that the method of analysis conducted in this case is suitable for use with further examples of notable practice.

3 Background

Fire and Rescue Service Circular 14-2006 issued guidance to FRAs on the completion of Annual Efficiency Statements (AESs) and provided a template for such submissions. In addition, the Circular advised that many FRAs had expressed a desire to know what other authorities were doing to increase efficiency and that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now DCLG) had joined forces with the CFOA and the LGA to compile examples of notable practice from across the Service. Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority's (SWFAs) Chief Fire Officer represents CFOA on the working group, which is known as the Improvement Planning Implementation Group (IPIG).



In conjunction with the above mentioned Circular, IPIG issued the second batch of case studies from across the Service, which was deemed to represent notable practice in the areas of 'staffing and human resources issues from sickness and ill-health retirement to training and equality and diversity'. The guidance makes it clear that:

- Case studies are of projects that are only starting to be implemented;
- They have yet to be proven to work in practice;
- Some represent opportunities only available in specific circumstances and thus are not available to all FRAs; and, therefore,
- They cannot be described as 'best' or 'good' practice at this stage.

The guidance does, however, provide an opportunity for the Fire Authority to consider the varying approaches being adopted by other FRAs in order to maximise their own continuing drive to force out efficiencies. This report provides an analysis of the notable practice guidance to enable Members to determine on which, if any, of the case studies they require further information with regard to transferability to this Fire Authority.

4 Case Studies

The notable practice case studies fall under a number of headings and a brief summary of their relevance to this Fire Authority is provided below.

Efficiency Case Studies in Sickness Management

Case studies from:

- Cumbria
- Kent and Medway
- Greater Manchester
- West Yorkshire

The main theme of these case studies is that implementing a robust policy is effective in reducing sickness absence and contributing to a reduction in the number of ill-health retirements. This Fire Authority has had such a policy since 2002, which includes return to work meetings, sickness absence and monthly monitoring meetings. Managers are involved from strategic to supervisory level.

There are no new suggestions within the case studies which would warrant further research or development.

Managing Ill-Health Retirement

Case studies from:

- Cumbria
- West Yorkshire

Both case studies refer to the implementation of redeployment policies leading to the redeployment of staff and subsequent reduction in the number of ill-health retirements. This Fire Authority has implemented redeployment practices and completed the first successful redeployment in 2006.



Performance Case Studies in Sickness Management

Case study from:

- Lancashire

The electronic 'trigger' element to the process, which notifies when an individual has had too much sickness absence will be worth exploring when officers implement an electronic human resources information system. Otherwise, the processes described are similar to those already operated within this Fire Authority.

Performance Case Studies in Training

Case studies from:

- Norfolk Member Training
- Northumberland Member Training
- Hampshire Member Training

The authorities concerned list some interesting practice in relation to Member Training. As we have recently commenced an annual process of determination of Member development needs, it may be useful to revisit such case studies when the first annual cycle is complete.

- Essex Health and Safety Training (Working Safely)
- Essex Health and Safety Training (Manual Handling)

Supervising and Managing Safely courses along with Manual Handling are currently being addressed internally and form part of our internal training calendar for 2007. There is, therefore, nothing that we can take from the case study.

- Hereford & Worcester Health and Safety Training

Whilst this is listed as being a case study in relation to Health and Safety, it is in fact supervisory management training. This work has been part of the West Midlands Regional Management Board (RMB) Workforce Development stream, of which one of our staff is a key part. We are, therefore, already party to this arrangement and it is largely built around this Fire Authority's existing provision, which was used as the model.

- Humberside Retained Staff Training

This case study is interesting in relation to provision of National Vocational Qualifications to Retained firefighters but is in its early trial stages. Officers can review the situation again, when they have validated the trial.

- West Midlands Middle Management Training

This work is also part of the West Midlands RMB Workforce Development stream, of which one of our staff is a key part. Regional progress in adopting elements of this is scheduled for 2007.

Equality and Diversity

Case study from:

- Derbyshire Disabled Recruitment



Many of the activities undertaken within this study have been to implement professional 'best practice', which we already operate within this Fire Authority. There are no figures in support of the case study to show whether or not it has had a positive effect. We already hold the disability 'two ticks' symbol and have done for several years. Whilst we have not achieved the levels of disability employment we would like, this case study does not provide any new ideas to support future progress. It also appears to have been resource-intensive for Derbyshire and would therefore be difficult to replicate in this Fire Authority.

- London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority Black and Minority Ethnic Recruitment
- London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority Recruiting Women

Both case studies are variations of the same framework. Again there are no figures supplied to indicate whether they have had a positive impact on recruitment levels. Whilst again we do not have resources to replicate their Positive Action Team, some of the principles could be transferred and may be helpful in defining a positive action programme.

- Merseyside Hard to Reach Groups

This study considers the use of advocates to access hard to reach groups. This Fire Authority has just appointed two temporary advocates to access hard to reach groups within the County.

- South Yorkshire Religious Awareness
- West Yorkshire Promoting Cultural Change

Both case studies talk about education and one refers to the use of theatre training. This Fire Authority participated in a countywide diversity theatre training programme from 2003 to 2005. Officers are currently working with the group, which ran that programme to identify other potential avenues for shared working.

The Promoting Cultural Change project involved education of staff and included things such as the Race Equality Scheme and the production of diversity education material. Again, this Fire Authority operates the management practices illustrated and in 2004 produced a 'Cultural Awareness' booklet issued to all staff, which was quickly purchased by several other Fire Authorities across the country.

5 Next Steps

Examination of the case studies provided by IPIG has identified that in most cases this Fire Authority has previously tackled the issues concerned. The Authority's continuing need to force out efficiencies in order to fund improved service delivery, however, means that there is no room for complacency and that any opportunity to learn from notable practice must be explored fully. It is, therefore, recommended that officers be tasked with carrying out further consideration of the case studies in the following areas:

- The case study submitted by West Midlands with regard to the development of middle management training;
- The case study submitted by London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority with regard to the development of a positive action programme; and



- The case study submitted by Humberside with regard to Retained Duty System staff training, in particular National Vocational Qualification provision.

6 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report

7 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority:

14 June 2006, Report 10, Efficiencies – Analysis of Notable Practice Guidance

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Business Continuity Planning		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Capacity	*	Legal	
Civil Contingencies Act		Member Involvement	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	National Framework	
Equality and Fairness	*	Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	*
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	

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