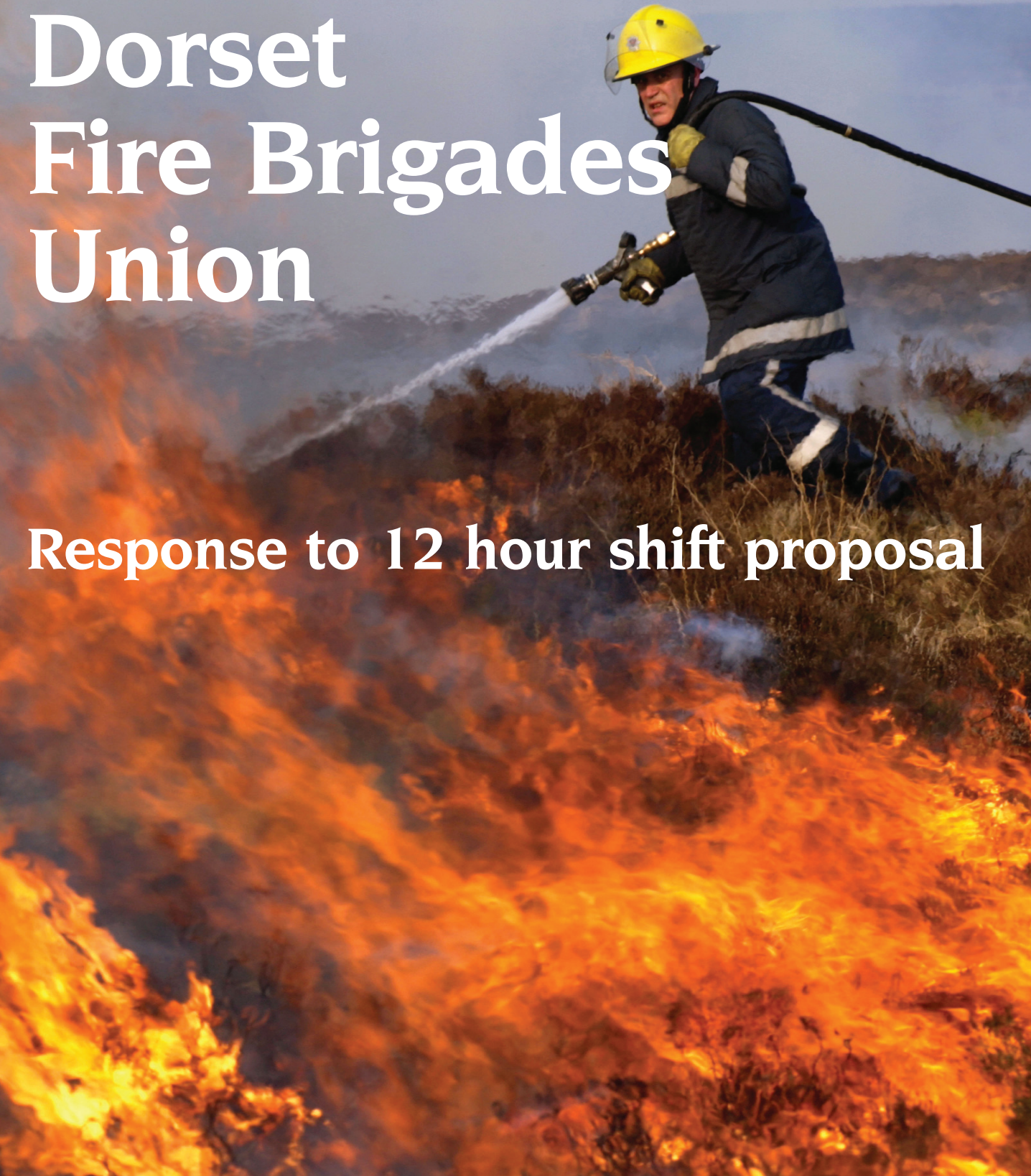


The Fire Brigades Union



Dorset Fire Brigades Union

Response to 12 hour shift proposal





Firefighters and Control staff have a right to dignity at work, they have a right to a family life outside of and separate from work and they have a right to have their views heard and acted upon by their employers, especially when they speak with one voice. The shift patterns and duty systems that we work to are vital in ensuring that we can balance our family responsibilities with our work commitments and must be designed to give maximum fire cover and safety to the public that we serve. It is against this background that the Fire Brigades Union has carefully considered the proposals for change put forward by Dorset Fire and Rescue Authority.

Having done so we do not accept that these proposals meet either of the key considerations set out above and we set out the reasons why within this document.

The purpose of The Fire Brigades Union is clear, to represent, collectively, the best interests of our members and we will continue to do just that. However we will not accept change for change sake. No one who has seen the recent dispute in South Yorkshire can underestimate the importance of this issue to our Members or the determination of the FBU in fighting for them. The question in that dispute was one of imposition and I want to make clear that imposition is as unacceptable to the FBU in Dorset as it was to the FBU in South Yorkshire. The Fire Brigades Union has agreed a joint protocol for negotiations which allows managers to table proposals and accepts the Union's right to represent our members. We all expect this to be followed in this instance.

The Fire Brigades Union is ready to negotiate, in line with nationally agreed procedures on behalf of our Members and this document sets out our initial response to the proposals in question. We will represent the interests of our members robustly and will ensure that they are fully involved in the process.

The Fire Brigades Union is ready for serious negotiations with Dorset Fire and Rescue Authority in regard to this vital issue and we will ensure that our Members and their best interests are at the centre of how we will continue.

Tam McFarlane

Executive Council Member South West FBU.

Introduction

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) represents approximately 45,000 members covering all ranks and duty systems in the fire & rescue service including approximately 4,000 officers, 11,000 firefighters working the retained duty system and 1,500 firefighters (control). This represents over 85% of all uniformed operational personnel currently serving in the fire & rescue services. The FBU welcomes the opportunity to respond formally to the proposals for shift changes put forward by the Authority.

Background

The Audit Commission



In December 2008 the Audit Commission published its report "Rising to the Challenge" in which Dorset FRA were publicly named as an Authority that had made zero efficiency savings per Wholtime firefighter along with Warwickshire and Northumberland. What the Audit Commission did not report was the number of differing duty systems already being worked by Dorset firefighters:

- Wholtime Shift (2 days, 2 nights, 3 Rota)
- Day Crewed
- Flexible Duty System
- Day Staffed duty system
- RDS
- RDS pilot duty system at Dorchester

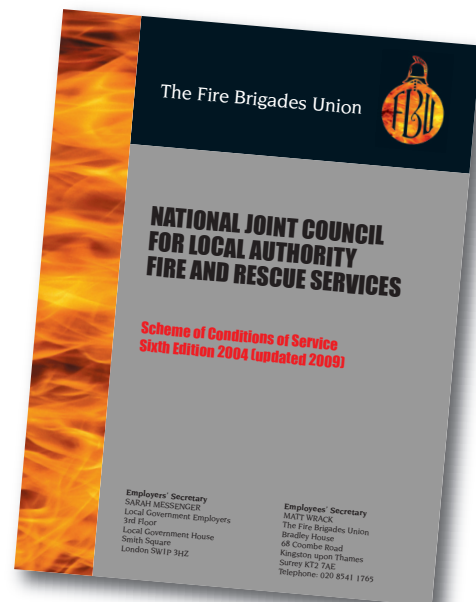
Of the 6 FRA in the South West only Cornwall has made changes to the shift timings. The other 4 have not made any changes to the duty system for shift crewed fire stations.

Grey Book

The sixth edition of the National Joint Council Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book) was agreed in 2004. Regarding changes to duty systems it states:

All working arrangements will operate on the basis that employees will undertake the duties appropriate to their role and be deployed to meet the requirements of the fire and rescue authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan. This may include a requirement to work at different locations. Full-time and part-time employees on any duty system are free to undertake retained duties where appropriate.

2. The conditions of service of part-time employees will be the same as those of full-time employees (pro-rata where appropriate) unless otherwise stated.



3. Duty systems will need to meet the requirements of the fire and rescue authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan. Any proposed system should be discussed with the recognised trade unions and be based on the following principles:

- (1) Basic working hours should average forty-two per week (inclusive of three hours of meal breaks in every twenty-four hours) for full-time employees. Hours of duty should be pro-rata for part-time employees.
- (2) There should be at least two periods of twenty-four hours free from duty each week.
- (3) It should comply with relevant United Kingdom and European law, including the Working Time Regulations 1998, and Health, Safety and Welfare at Work legislation.
- (4) It should have regard to the special circumstances of individual employees and be family friendly.

Dorset Fire and Rescue Authority Community Safety Plan

On page 16 of the Dorset FRA CSP states:

"Review our emergency response cover arrangements

We will revise our community risk profiles using new software which provides more sophisticated predictive analysis to target resources and assess risk more effectively.

We will then undertake review of all our emergency cover arrangements (including reviewing our working arrangements at fire stations to find more flexible and efficient ways of making the best use of our staff) based on this enhanced view of the risks to our community."

The Proposals

Dorset's FRA Proposals

The authority has commissioned a private company called Workplace Systems plc to investigate an alternative duty system for Dorset. A look at Workplace Systems website states that client references are available from the following FRS

Bedfordshire & Luton F&RS

Cambridgeshire F&RS

Cleveland Fire Brigade

Derbyshire F&RS

Greater Manchester F&RS

Lincolnshire F&RS

London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

Mid & West Wales F&RS

North Wales F&RS

South Yorkshire F&RS

Strathclyde F&RS

West Midlands F&RS

West Sussex F&RS

Wiltshire F&RS

Whilst the above list is impressive the reality behind this is somewhat different from the sales pitch provided by the company.

London, South Yorkshire, West Midlands have all experienced industrial disputes as a result of their proposals whilst Wiltshire have not made any changes to the duty systems as a result of the work carried out by Workplace Systems plc.

At a time of increased pressure on public sector finances Workplace Systems has benefitted from the Fire and Rescue Service across the UK. The Fire Brigades Union are concerned that "savings" proposed and implemented are not real savings, i.e. they will not save the Authority one penny but will give the impression that the Authority have saved money at the expense of an increase in workload of staff that are the most important part of Dorset Fire and Rescue Service.

The DCFO has made presentations, one to the ECRG and one to managers about the future of shifts in Dorset. He has written to the FBU Brigade Secretary, Karen Adams on numerous occasions during 2009 regarding changes to shifts these include: In various letters, emails and presentations he states that The Fire Brigades Union have yet to make proposals to the authority. It is not the role of The Fire Brigades Union to make proposals that would have a negative impact on the Conditions of Service of our members.

The Workplace Systems proposals were formally tabled by the Authority on the 11th January 2010 to the Fire



Brigades Union. The 21 page document proposals are:

1. Rostered shifts should be 12 hours long
2. Duty periods should be a combination of days and nights and commence at 1000 and 2200
3. Duties should follow a pattern of 2 days, 2 nights and four complete periods of 24 hours free from duty.
4. The terms and conditions of those staff conditioned to the Grey Book should be maintained.

The report then continues:

The Recommendations should also be supported by these changes:

- A one hour physical fitness training session should be provided on each night duty shift.
- The work activity, taking of breaks and rest shall be in accordance with a revised service policy on work routines at shift system stations.
- Suitable and sufficient time to be ring fenced for operational skills training in each day.
- A strategy for the transition between the current duty system to the proposed duty system should be developed.

The report produced for DFRA by Workplace Systems raises more questions than it answers in its detail and in particular the data used. A brief commentary on each section will be combined with questions that require answering to enable the reader to fully understand the rationale for the proposed changes.

Background

The report states that greater investment has been made in the Fire and Rescue Service as whole but also says that this has not been the same in all authorities. Dorset FRA had one of the lowest grant settlements in the UK and this is not in dispute, however the Audit Commission report "Rising to the Challenge" is unrealistic in its expectations for smaller FRAs such as Dorset.

However the record of Dorset FRA is inconsistent with the criticism levelled by the Audit Commission.

Dorset's IRMP 2007-2012, was sent individually to each member of staff along with a covering letter personally addressed to each staff member and signed by the CFO. The first paragraph had this to say:

"Over the last few weeks I have been very pleased to share the results we achieved in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2006/07. Within the assessment of actual service delivery, we were the only English Fire and Rescue Service to achieve the top score in both parts of the assessment. The results for

the whole year are currently being analysed, but early indications are that we remain one of the top performing and most cost effective fire and rescue services in England."

Introduction

This section introduces the concept of reducing working time as a Health and Safety measure. Whilst the FBU has previously sought and continues to seek improvements in Health and Safety we believe that to use this argument in this way is wrong for several reasons:

- Shift Station firefighters are not the only group of people working "long hours". Fire Control works the same shifts and yet there are no proposals for Fire Control.
- RDS employees have primary employment and can be called in for emergency incidents over night and therefore can work for longer periods than 15 hours.
- Dorset also employs wholtime firefighters on secondary RDS contracts and the accumulation of hours worked over a week are far in excess of working time directives.

The FBU would like to re-iterate the view that once again the matching of resources to risk can only be carried out after the risk profiling of the Authorities area has been completed, not before.

Why Change?

Whilst Workplace Systems state their starting point of applicable legislation and "best practice" sets the tone of the proposals, how many other FRS have fully implemented Workplace Systems proposals previously? And what are they using as "best practice"?

Fig 1 Call profile for shift based stations 2006 – 2008: To use only three years data, we believe is insufficient, particularly when there were significant changes within DFRS, Hamworthy ceasing to be a shift station, Poole moved to a temporary station pending the opening of the new Fire Station.

Any move to the proposed shifts and shifts times will mean:

- A 45% increase for operational incidents on the day shift (using the figures supplied)
- 100% of Community Fire Safety completed on day shift
- 100% Practical training being completed on the day shift

The increase in operational incidents will cancel out the extra capacity for Home Fire Risk Assessments, negating the increase in "capacity".

On page 8 of the report it states, "The two areas that the current shift lengths seem to adversely affect are:" The report then lists 3 items!

- Health and Safety
- Service Performance
- Achieving IRMP targets

Health and Safety

The report uses quotes from various research documents as well as quoting the HSE position on the employers legal duty to manage risks from fatigue. Whilst DFRS are proposing managing the risks for this group of workers it is failing to manage the risk from fatigue from other groups of workers in the service.

Where is the evidence to back up the impact on Health and Safety? We have had academic studies quoted but what evidence does DFRS have to show that:

- That there are more accidents suffered by shift firefighters on or just after a 15 hour night shift in Dorset and nationally?
- How many driving accidents have been shown to be caused by driver fatigue as a result of 15 hour night shift both in Dorset and nationally?
- What is the ratio of accidents on day shifts compared to night shift?
- What evidence has been compiled that 15 hour night shifts have increased instances of sickness within DFRS?
- Is there a difference between the sickness/absence levels from other workers on a 15 hour night shift compared to shift station firefighters?

The concept of firefighters working continuously for the 15 hour night shift is a flawed concept for several reasons. There is a period of "stand down" time built into the work routines on the night shift. This is currently between 0000 and 0645 hours. Crews are obviously routinely disturbed due to emergency calls between these times but on extended incidents there is a policy within Dorset FRS for relief crews to be called to the incident every 4 to 5 hours. So whilst it is possible for a firefighter working this system to be working throughout the whole of the 15 hour night shift it is unlikely.

There will be a negative effect of a 12 hour day on the health and safety of staff. The expectation is that all community safety and training will be done on days. The statistics show that the majority of operational calls will happen on days. This will mean, therefore, very busy days which could be extended by a fire call at the end of the shift and a possible 1 hour commute. The Authority will be putting its staff at risk by increasing the day shift to 12 hours which in effect could be 14 hours. Whilst we cannot argue that a reduction in the night shift can only be better for members it has to be balanced against the increase in day shift and the adverse health and safety affect this will have on our members. This has been raised by a significant number of Fire Brigades Union members

who have to commute and feel their health and safety will be compromised on 4 shifts. They do not consider a 15 hour night to be a risk due to 6.45 hours stand down time.

Another contradiction in the services commitment to increasing health and safety of firefighters is the reduction of "free from duty time" for firefighters working a dual contract wholetime/retained system. Previously a firefighter having finished a wholetime shift could not "book on" as a RDS firefighter until 9 hours rest had elapsed. This has now been reduced to 3hours.

The report quotes from the "Effects of sleep deprivation on firefighters and EMS responders" study. This report primarily studies shift lengths of over 15 hours although attempts are made to pluck out small sections of the report in order to back up the proposals currently on the table.

The HSE research quoted states that the first 8 or 9 hours in a shift the accident risk is constant but after 12 hours the risk doubles and after 16 hours the risk trebles. So the proposals would mean that the authority is proposing double the risk of accidents for all firefighters on all shift stations on all shifts. Firefighters are happy working the 9 – 15 shifts because there has never been a clamour to change these shifts. Indeed the opposite is true, where proposals have been put forward the message from the "most important asset" in the fire service has been to retain the 9 – 15 shifts.

The Authority supports the "Cycle to work" scheme. This initiative is supported by the FBU and a significant number of employees working the current shift system do cycle to and from work. A change in the shift times will reduce the number due to the risks associated from cycling in the dark. Whilst the roads and streets are less busy with pedestrians and road users, our staff have an increased risk due to people being under the effects of drink and drugs and in winter the conditions of the road due to the adverse weather.

Similarly the frequency of public transport is much reduced around 10pm and the report produced does not address this issue.

Further contradictions involve the removal of Physical Training from the work routines. The FRA supports the Firefit program which seeks to increase the fitness of firefighters which in turn improves sickness levels and increases the health and safety of firefighters.

Service Performance:

Readiness matched to demand, currently the provision of response resources (firefighters) is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. This is maintained by a number of differing duty systems as outlined earlier. It makes very little sense, unless there is an ulterior motive to reduce crewing at certain times of the day, to use this as an argument for change. Currently readiness is matched to demand.

Achieving IRMP targets

The Authorities IRMP and its aims are set out in the Community Safety Plan and The Fire Brigades Union response has been submitted. We must re-iterate the contradiction contained within the CSP and the current proposals on shift changes:

"We will revise our community risk profiles using new software which provides more sophisticated predictive analysis to target resources and assess risk more effectively. We will then undertake review of all our emergency cover arrangements (including reviewing our working arrangements at fire stations to find more flexible and efficient ways of making the best use of our staff) based on this enhanced view of the risks to our community"

Both the CFO and the DCFO have given verbal assurances that if the proposed changes are accepted then there will be no future changes to ways of working for shift based firefighters. Clearly the statement in the CSP contradicts this and in addition why are these proposals being put forward at this time?

Work routines that provide more hours to the community

The FRA are proposing an increase in "capacity" that equates to an increase of 45900 hours productivity. The FBU has put forward proposals that would realise 45900 hours of increased productivity. However, there are a number of questions that need answering by the authority:

- When, exactly will the opportune time to enter homes and offices be during the night duty evenings?
- What "core activity" work will be completed between 2230 and 0200?
- Do DFRA expect firefighters to be sufficiently rested and alert to take part in technical lectures after midnight?
- Are DFRA planning to introduce work for the sake of work to be completed in an attempt to justify the changes? i.e. equipment cleaning
- In the vast amount of research carried out in the preparation of this report has any conclusions been reached on the human bodies ability to retain information during lecture type training between the hours of 0000 and 0230?

Is it family friendly?

The report acknowledges the difficulties in quantifying family friendly as every family is different.

In the CSP one of the aims is to increase the number of women firefighters to 26 by 2013.

Loss of PT on days will have an adverse affect on female firefighters (especially with babies, currently have two) who will not get the opportunity to do 2 PT sessions – strength training on days. If staff take up the opportunity to work a combination of 4 12 hours shifts eg 4 days they will not have any PT sessions programmed in which will be very detrimental to females

Single parent families and firefighters with caring responsibilities will be severely penalised as a result of these proposals.

Less opportunity for child contact on days

External childcare arrangements for periods of over 9 hours are limited at best and non existent at worst.

An increase in day shift will have a financial implication on single parent families and carers. Whilst the argument could be used that the night shift is shortened this childcare or other care tends to be carried out by family members. Currently childcare or care would not be available throughout the night so the length of the night is irrelevant.

The current proposal for 12 hour shifts will seriously affect family and social life for 4 nights a week oppsed to only 2 on the current shift system.

A web search of child care providers for Dorset has been unable to find registered childcare after 1900.

The current economic situation within local authorities could see some local authority affordable provision reduced making it even harder for parents to find child care even on the current shift system.

The Workplace document acknowledges that this system is not family friendly.

Surveys carried out by the Fire Brigades Union women members have shown that over 96% of women working the 2-2-3 9-15 shifts support working this pattern and shifts lengths.

Returning after 10 or even later could disturb the whole family.

Flexible working

The arguments put forward for the equalisation of the 2 shifts being more equitable for staff who could potentially be penalised for taking a day shift off instead of a night shift are fundamentally flawed unless the service has data for the number of complaints over the last 5 years on this matter.

The Fire Brigades Union would want to see the evidence of the problem that a move to 12 hour shifts would fix.

The entire section contains words like "may", "might" and "could". Where is the evidence for the need for such a "flexible" system?

Conclusion

It is the view of the Fire Brigades Union that the proposals are based on two drivers:

1. The Audit Commission report "Rising to the Challenge". In which Dorset FRA were named as a FRA that had not achieved any savings as a result of shift changes.
2. A need to increase "productivity" to service the needs of the community.

The Fire Brigades Union has completed meetings with all shift based firefighters and comments received are published in appendix "A".

Whilst we support, indeed we coined the phrase "Safer Firefighters Safer Communities" we believe that the proposals will have a negative impact on both these objectives.

The current shift timings have been in place for over 30 years and firefighters like the flexibility of combining family life with work life on the 9 – 15.

The initial consultation with FBU members working the shift system in Dorset showed 100% opposition to 12 hour shifts and the start and finish times.

Many assumptions have been made by the writers of the report, many of which have not been based on evidence collated by the service, for example:
"Opportunity to minimise the periods in which community safety visits and events can be conducted during evening periods may be greatly enhanced by a shift change outside the hours of 1700 and 2100 hours"

The majority working people will arrive home, prepare and eat a meal between the hours of 1700 and 1900 hours which makes the current shift change over ideal.

The Fire Brigades Union whilst rejecting these proposals are willing, in the spirit of good industrial relations, to discuss the options open to the authority.

Appendix – Crew Responses

My main concern if we moved to a 12 hour shift starting at 1000hrs is that the bulk of the calls would be caught by the day shift.(Fig 1 on page 7 Call profile for shift based stations including false alarms;2006-2008). And to make matters worse the bulk of the calls would be at a time when firefighters are between 7 and 10 hours into their shift. Surely to quote from page 8 of their own document this would 'impact on health, safety and welfare' but also adversely affect 'service performance and readiness matched to demand; and achieving IRMP targets by using resources efficiently'. At present those peak call times correspond with a change of shift with fresh, fit and alert firefighters. Is that not good!!!?

In the conclusion on page 18 it states there is an increase in capacity of 12%. Most of that 12% increase is at a time of day when the body clock is trying to slow down. It also states that 'research evidence suggests that fatigue increases the likelihood of accidents or near misses' Can't argue with that, so why decrease stand down time from 2400 – 0630 (61/2hours) to 0200 – 0600 (4 hours)

My response to the shift change mirrors exactly what the FBU proposes. The capacity is available in our current working hours so see no reason for the start and end times to change or periods of which we work i.e. 12 and 12. The FBU proposals are in my mind acceptable and reasonable and I am happy for the FBU to forward my response. Not family friendly due to the loss of 2 evenings a week?

- More fatigued after long days?
- Disturbance to family routine due to the lateness arriving back home at night?
- Evening child care issues outside normal working times 09:00-17:00 ?
- Return home at night those who cycle always in the dark putting you at higher risk of being injured?
- Why is Dorset wanting to change shift as 40 other brigades have not done so and have no intention too?
- Better cover at Christchurch at 18:00 due to day crew riding 126R and the night crew riding 326R

Here are my reasons why the proposals of the shift change are unacceptable to me.

Currently I see my family, and son (who is 5) everyday for a good amount of time. I get home after day shifts and spend time with him before he goes to bed.

On a 12 hr day I would not see him at all each evening, and probably not my wife either, as they would both be in bed by the time I got home , which would not be much before 2300 hrs.

I cycle to work on most occasions, and do not feel it would be safe for me to be riding after 2200 hrs

home at night, after a long 12 hr day, or to come into work in the evening for 2200hrs, where as for most of the year currently I can cycle home, and into work in the daylight.

I wish to stay on the current shift system as it is more family friendly than the proposed twelve hour shift pattern. I therefore request no change to the start and end time of our work routine. I would rather change work routines around the current nine and fifteen to achieve efficiency savings.

My wife has to work part time which is based around my shift pattern. Her employers are happy for her to do this and have, so far, been very accommodating in this respect. This involves the crossing and passing on of child care between us on a daily basis (with the children being 4 and 2 years old). With the proposed shift pattern change to 10am - 10pm this would be impossible to manage due to the awkward timings. Her current employers have said that they would not be able to accommodate this change of times. As with most ideal households I would love for my wife not to have to work and be able to look after the children full time. With the current financial climate, as with most families, we are unable to live this ideal and both have to work to pay the mortgage. With this in mind I find it impossible to believe that there are not others employees in the same situation who find these proposed hours acceptable.

At the moment, I am able to make best use of my evenings (after days), accepting that two are already taken up with the current shift pattern. The proposed shift pattern will seek to occupy two more evenings that could be best utilised with my family.

At the moment I am able to cycle to work on all shifts day and night in reasonable safety. The proposed shift patterns indicate that I will be cycling at 10pm at night. I believe that this would encourage more car usage from me and others for personal safety. This does not fit in at all with the services standpoint on being carbon friendly.

Fitness is another area that concerns me with the proposals. The management point of view when it comes to fitness seems to be very near sighted and personally find it very disappointing. Recently there has been a massive launch of Fire Fit (of which I am co-organiser). The scheme seeks to actively promote fitness to young children via the Fire Service. How can we possibly do this if the proposals seek, in no uncertain terms, to undermine the provision of fitness time for service personnel? Having been involved in large property fires in my career, knowing the demands placed on us during initial fire fighting duties, I feel that my fitness and the fact that I am able to keep this up in service time has helped me perform in these incidents. Unless the Senior management know any different I feel that personal fitness is key to the job and should be not reduced but possibly increased. This is a duty of care to the workforce that the service needs to consider.

With shifts finishing at 2200hrs on a day shift, this would mean not getting home until 2300hrs at the earliest. At present I am able to enjoy some time in the evening with my family. I believe that the change would compromise the service values of commitment to family friendliness.

I also believe the review seeks to do away with the allotted time for PT on days. As a service I think it is imperative to keep the slots available for this activity as I believe that being physically fit is paramount to safer firefighters. With the proposed change in shift I would find it increasingly difficult to find time at home to carry out any form of training.

The shift review also suggests that the shift times mean more time with the family. Although this would mean the firefighter would see their child in the morning and be able to take them to school they would in fact lose out on the 'quality time' spent with their child(ren) in the evenings.

I, as many, live a distance from work, more specifically North Dorset (based on watch at Stn 24). With shifts finishing at 2200hrs on a day shift, this would mean not getting home until 2300 hrs at the earliest. At present I am able to enjoy some time in the evening with my family. I believe that the change would compromise the service values of commitment to family friendliness.

I believe that the 10am till 10pm proposal will put more strain and stress on individuals who live further away from their place of work. Add on at the start and finish of each day for travelling and that would make for a very long day with the potential for tiredness at the end of the day. Driver fatigue could be a major issue here.

As a watch manager, and having to prepare quality lecture/training in the evening, I believe that the time able to be spent training practically will be reduced on nights. If we are to target the community more during days then is there going to be more drill time available to counteract this problem?

The new proposals seek to limit available time for PT on days, and place it at a ridiculous time on the morning of a night shift. Recently there has been a massive launch of Fire Fit (of which I am Watch Manager of the watch that organises it). The scheme seeks to actively promote fitness to young children via the Fire Service. How can we possibly do this if the proposals seek, in no uncertain terms, to undermine the provision of fitness time for service personnel. With proposed changes to the shift system, personnel may find it more difficult to maintain fitness in their own time as many are only able to do this in service allocated time. A study carried out at Moreton in the Marsh (Fire Service College), post strike, suggested that as the demands placed upon an individual during an incident can be extreme, that PT should indeed be increased. We are role models and people see us as fit, strong, capable individuals who 'leap off the fire

engine' ready to do our bit. I believe that the proposed shift review will undermine our capacity to maintain our fitness.

Having read through the Shift Review document I would like to add my comments on the proposal's. I would like to add that I'm totally against the changes for the following reasons,

1. Most importantly if the times changed then it would cost me more money in child care and in the current climate this would put stress and pressure on the income of the household.
2. No thought has been taken to all the good work crews do at the local schools on there station ground. A lot of schools want us there by 09:30hrs to start educational visits.(No good if we have to change shift at 10:00!)
3. As one of the team who has to travel a distance to my work place it would mean travelling into work during hours of darkness nearly all year round.
4. It would ruin four nights of the week so giving less time to be able to DO things with the family. At least when I get home on the current shift days I am able to see my family and do things
5. No time to do any drills on nights – who would want people making noise after 10:30pm at night.
6. With the shift times at the moment crews on days and nights are able to get out and do affective Community Fire Safety.
7. Why change when things work it seems crazy to do when most Fire & Rescue services haven't changed. It seems if the Government say jump we do!!!

My opinion is that the shift system we currently have works for the crews and there families but also provides a excellent service to the community. The proposal is too much change and would not be welcome by the majority of the work force,

Being new to DFRS and to the FBU I feel a little uneasy about voicing my opinions about the new shift pattern that's on the horizon as so much of my application was based on acceptance of change.

As for the proposed 12-12hr shift proposal, I am afraid that regardless of it being 10till10 or 7till7 I cant see any positives but only negatives from my point of view.

I have to travel 1hr 30mins in to work and the same time to get home so for me this would mean a 15 hr working day. With only 9 hours to sleep, spend time with my family, service my personal kit, eat and take care of personal hygiene. For me I feel that I will not

get to see my family for the 4 days I am working and as I have a fairly young family I find this a little unacceptable from a service who is so vocal about valuing its employees?

I also have issues with regards to the safety of travelling to and from work after a 12hr shift? Even on days when we may not be so busy it still takes it out of you so on a busy day I feel that it would really affect my alertness whilst driving especially on such a repetitive journey. It is not an option for me to move closer so this would be my biggest concern because the only safe way for me to complete a tour would be to stay over for the whole 4 day shift. I currently stay over between night shifts and see losing a day as acceptable as I am very lucky to be in the job but losing 4 complete days is a bit of an ask?

It does cause me problems in other areas such as child care but above are my main concerns.

I feel I am living up to the "service values" by being open to the benefits of changes and improvements being made within reason, but wonder if the service is doing the same with regard to "we value our people" if the 12-12 system is as unpopular as it seems.

After reading through the above document I would like to state my opposition to the change the current shift system on the grounds of family friendly and safer firefighters.

The example given for family friendly is very specific on who it is aimed at i.e. people with children of school age. I currently do not fall into this category and enjoy the current system because it allows me to spend six out of every eight nights with my wife and the ability to take part in regular activities within the community. Adding an extra three hours onto the day shift will greatly reduce this 'productive' time with family and provide me with little in the way of 'usable' time before I begin a night shift. Even when I begin to start a family the proposed shift will not be as family friendly until my future child comes of school age leaving me with difficulties in child care for up to five years.

In respect of safer firefighters, I personally feel that increasing the day shift from 9 hours to 12 hours will increase the chances for mistakes/fatigue to occur (especially for those of us who have long travel times to and from place of work, effectively making our work day up to 14 possible 15 hours).

I know the current system produces a night shift of 15 hours but within those hours a time of rest is incorporated to relieve the effects of fatigue. It concerns me that in the report by 'work place solutions' they chose to gather their information on 'effects of sleep deprivation on firefighters' from a document based on American firefighters, which to my knowledge work 24 hour shifts a considerable time longer than the current Dorset shift pattern.

With a young family myself I cannot see how a move to 12 hour shifts can be classed as family friendly. My

current child care arrangements fit perfectly with my current working pattern and any change would have a detrimental effect on my home life.

Currently I cycle to work everyday and the current start and finish times have a limited effect on my safety as throughout the year I am normally cycling in daylight conditions. With the proposed changes I would be cycling in the dark on far more occasions which obviously could have an effect on my safety. The service is fully supportive of greener transport methods and actively encourages employees to take part in the cycle to work scheme but these proposed changes will put employees at greater risk.

The removal of PT on day shifts is an issue I feel very strongly against and due to the nature of a firefighters role I believe the service should be supporting physical exercise instead of removing it.

Having had a chat as a watch concerning the shift review we have come up with similar arguments/suggestions to those already forwarded to you by blue/white watches at Christchurch.

However, it is our opinion that the main thrust of the argument should be based around the negative aspects of working a 12 hour day and a 12 hour night shift with reduced rest periods and PT sessions as opposed to an argument that focuses primarily on the shift times (be it 10-10 or 7-7).

12 HOUR DAY SHIFTS ARE TOO LONG

Firefighters will be travelling home having been at work for 12 hours or more, 4 times per shift as opposed to two at present.

There will be a psychological mental effect of personnel slowing down to pace themselves for a 12 hour day and will achieve less.

Under equal opportunities a 12 hour shift will prove to be a barrier to women joining the fire service.

Looking at the proposed work routine I consider that the training period between 12 and 0200 would be entirely ineffective and difficult to manage as people's body clocks are not receptive to learning at that time.

If the service did enforce 12 hour shifts then this watch considers 10 to 10 as the most preferred option then 9 to 9 and possibly 8 to 8, but not 7 to 7.

I am emailing you with my objections to the possible introduction of 12 hour shifts by senior management in the near future. I feel that these shifts are unsociable and having to do a 12 hour day shift is a draconian measure. The justification for bringing in a new shift pattern as a benefit for the workforce is totally wrong. The suggested start and finish time of 10am to 10pm now means that 4 evenings are taken out of the week as opposed to just 2 shifts at the moment. Personnel would possibly go off duty at 22hrs only to have a fire call at 2155hrs and be

possibly on a protracted fire call and not return home till after midnight and then return back to duty that same morning to do another 12 hour day shift where is the welfare with this system.

To alter current start and finish times just to do more risk reduction is no justification what so ever and to totally inconvenience the vast majority of the workforce.

Here are just a few reasons why would be opposed to the new shift system:

My evenings on day shifts would be completely unsociable when getting home at 2245 at the earliest and what with a baby on the way I feel that this would cause problems.

Travel times would also be effected for living in Southampton would mean leaving to get to work in the morning rush hour traffic. This would also effect my fuel consumption.

During my break between my nights I tend to stay in Bournemouth. With a change to a 12 hour break, I would be more prone to go back to Southampton which again would cost more, be an impact on the environment and I would be more prone to drive when tired.

I hope that these reason will help with our objections to the proposed changes.

I am emailing you today to express my grave concern at my employers wish to change my current shift times to 12 hour shifts. I would like to make my union aware that this shift pattern would be highly disruptive for myself for the following reasons;

1. I often choose to cycle to work, and 12 hour shifts would mean having to cycle more often when it is dark, endangering my own personal safety.
2. I do not believe that forcing people to work a 12 hour day shift would improve productivity, as most wholtime stations are crewed 24/7 regardless of the start/finish times anyway.
3. working 12 hour shifts would not only mean a large disruption to 4 instead of two of my evenings, it would also mean getting in much later after a day shift, time I would normally support my wife during her university degree.
4. I currently do not have children but am hoping too in the near future, when they are very young I will have to rely on my young wife to care for my child for 12 hours of the day just because my employer feel they have to change the shift pattern. When my child is at school they will go to bed early, meaning I won't see them for 2 days at a time.

It gravely concerns me that my employer who is currently seeking their 'investor in people' status to

be reinstated is completely ignoring the thoughts and concerns of their own staff, simply undermining their opinions by referring to the suggested shift change as a simple 'Lifestyle Change'.

With the present shift I am able to see my wife and children everyday for a good amount of quality family time, being able to see them when I get home after a day shift before they go to bed helping my wife with their bed time routine. A 12 hour day shift would not permit me to do this and would take away this essential input into my family's life.

I, as many, live quite a distance from place of work and with the proposed 1000hrs to 2200hrs day shift would mean a very long day shift, which I believe would not be very productive, and I would not get home until 2300hrs, this would put more strain and stress on myself and my family.

I believe the review seeks to take away the allotted PT on days. As a service I think it is imperative to keep this activity in place as being fit is paramount to safer firefighters. The proposed change in shift would make it extremely difficult to find time at home to carry out any form of training. As a firefit instructor and cadet instructor, I spend a lot of time promoting the importance of fitness within the fire service and if the hours of physical PT were reduced/removed I would find this very hard and embarrassing to promote this to these young children/people.

I fully understand and support that the service needs to modernise but truly believe that the shift change proposals are not done for the right reasons and would compromise the service values of commitment to valuing employees and family friendliness.

12 hour shifts:

There is a fundamental disparity (or flaw) in making the shifts of equal length due to the facility of being able to "take rest periods every night between midnight and 0700" Scheme of Conditions of Service Sixth Edition 2004 (updated 2009). **THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE "SALARIED HOURS WORKED" PAY PACKAGE FOR FIREFIGHTERS**

A 12 hour day shift:

1. **FATIGUE** - Given the above contractual facility (the length of night shifts should be discounted because of the ability to take rest periods). Conversely, to increase the length of the day shift to a 12 hour shift would mean an individual would suffer an increased level of fatigue. "A study published on-line by the journal Health Affairs (1) indicates that hospital nurses working shifts of 12.5 hours or more are three times more likely to make an error than nurses working shorter shifts" (1.) Rogers AE, Hwang W-T, Scott LD, et al. The working hours of hospital staff nurses and patient safety. Health Affairs July/August 2004. DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.23.4.202. This extract will

undoubtedly carry for firefighters and managers during a proposed 12 hour day shift and would further impact upon the female firefighters when looking after a younger family. In the case of primary carer for a young family, more accommodating shifts or work may be sought (possibly affecting the percentage of female firefighters employed by DFRS).

2. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS** – regular public transport links are supported between 0705 and 1855 beyond which they are reduced to anything between 1 hour (1955), 3 hour (next service 2253) or no service at all (between 2253 and 0705) Wilts and Dorset's Bus Company Timetable X3. Given that there is a need to travel by public transport when undertaking out duties we would expect shift times to be configured within these parameters (i.e less than 12 hours) or alternative transport provided. Female employees have also expressed a fear to their personal safety if travelling late at night on public transport (i.e. after 1900hrs)
3. **CYCLING TO WORK** – At present employees can choose whether to cycle to work during daylight hours on most shifts. Under the proposed shift change, at least one leg of the journey would HAVE to be undertaken in darkness. This would increase the risk of injury or accident to the employee. Furthermore an individual may therefore be deterred from cycling to work altogether, and given the proposed reduction in fitness training during shifts this would have a direct impact on their ability to pass fitness tests with obvious health and welfare implications. Secondly if the proposed finish time of 2200 hrs is upheld there will be considerable interruption to the family unit where an employee arrives home at 2300-2330 hours only to start showering and bathing, possibly disturbing others with schooling or child-care commitments. Debra Rolfe of CTC "Cyclists are healthier and take 10% less sick days". Changes to the length of shift should allow for personnel the choice to be able to cycle to work in a safe environment (i.e. during daylight hours).

Proposed shift times:

1. **COMMUTING TO WORK** - Commuting to work during the period 2200 hrs to 2359 hrs increases the risk of death or serious injury to the male car driver (77.4%) whereas commuting during the period of 1500 - 1859 hrs carries a much smaller risk (58.4%) http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/1428/1/Sandy_Nighttime_accidents_Full_Report.pdf

2. **SUPPORT OF OUTSIDE YOUTH GROUPS / SPORTING ACTIVITIES** - The change in shift times will impact upon established commitments to outside activities. There will need to be a long lead time for notice to be given to allow for other volunteers to be found or for paid fees (bowling teams etc,) to be spent. Some of these fees / commitments will have been made for the remainder of 2010.
3. **CHILD-CARE AND FAMILY COMMITMENTS** - As above (especially if the partner / wife / husband has to look for alternative employment - if this is the case the service would need to be sympathetic to transfer requests and flexible working applications. For example, one member of the watch would not have any contact with his partner for the duration of the tour should 12 hour shifts from 1000 to 2200 hrs be adopted, this could have a catastrophic effect if it means they have to change career paths and to have to retrain).
4. **CHURCH / RELIGIOUS GROUPS / SOCIAL ACTIVITIES** - As above. In the case of theatre visits a 2200 hrs shift change would decrease the opportunities for visits by 25% impacting on an individuals social life.

- A 12 hour day would be dangerous as fatigue would set into everyone.
- A 12 hour night would be dangerous for similar reasons.
- Sickness would increase due to working more and resting less, resulting in a reduced immune system.
- 1000-2200 is unrealistic start and finish as it takes me out of sync with my family.
- Unable to rest during my day off as I have children to take care of and this would add to my fatigue at work.
- Will not get home until midnight.
- With young children this will mean 6 hours sleep before returning to work.
- Will make it 15-16 hour shifts with commute.
- I will have to drive for 1.5 hours after working for 12 hours (not including overtime) 4 times per tour.
- Will lose all social interaction for the whole tour.
- Will not be able to care for elderly parents during the day shift
- Day will be 14 hours including commute.
- Anti-social, as I will not be able to socialise. i.e sports clubs.

- Will not be able to go out with friends after day shifts, especially when a day shift is a Friday or Saturday.
- Finishing at 2200 means I will not get home until midnight and will be travelling whilst very tired as to get to work for 1000, I would leave at 0700 due to traffic. This means I will be on the go from 0700 until midnight (17 hours) and that does not include if I get an overtime shout or detached duty.
- The new shift times will not be family friendly for me.
- Currently able to integrate with society as the shift times fit in well with other work routines.
- Current shift times have worked exceptionally well for myself and family for the last 20 years.
- I do not except any of the arguments which suggest the shift changes are for the benefit of the staff.
- My family routine with all its commitments (sporting and social) are based around our current shift times. A 12 hour day from 1000-2200 would have the worst impact possible on this and would leave me failing my children.
- I firmly believe the new proposal of shift times would make the workforce significantly less productive due to increased fatigue levels and motivation.

The 10pm finish times on days means that we have no family or social time once we return home, which for some of us travel time can be up to an hour. Although I appreciate we do decide where we live. That would be 4 out of 8 evenings which would be affected by this.

The new proposals would mean doubling the amount of drill nights we miss for those doing wholetime retained duties, because even starting at 10pm for a night shift we'd be unable to attend retained drill that evening.

Starting at 10am means we'd realistically be unable to attend schools for fire safety talks until late morning.

There is no actual financial saving in changing.

There was a quote recently saying that 99.9 % of the public are satisfied with the Fire Service, then why are management forcing us to change. Is this more government led?

The very title of the document (Changing shift lengths) does not imply an open minded review, but a method of approving and rubber stamping a decision.

This is reinforced by the background information which says the document is to "Validate" moving to twelve hour shifts.

The word efficiencies takes a prominent role in the document and is mentioned in both the first 2 paragraphs. Such primacy of a motive implies that this is the main consideration.



The introduction claims the document explores the benefits for individuals and the organisation it is not apparent to me where the benefits for individuals have been explored.

The document makes an unsupported claim that the organisations most important resource is its staff, yet there has been no mention of there needs outside of the organisational context or involvement in the document.

The graph of peak calls does not support the proposed change in any way. In fact if you wished to use the graph effectively we should be looking at a 1500 - 1600 finish of a day that started at 0700 - 0800.

It is quoted that risk to crews rises after 8 to 9 hours on duty. If this is the case why double the number of shifts in a rota that go over this amount and reduce night time rest periods.

Under the proposed change crews would be most fatigued at the end of a day shift when the peak of calls would occur.

Extra hours quoted as being available as non-cashable savings are large figures for individual personnel. When operational crews perform HSRC they are not individuals but work as a normal crew of 5 reducing dramatically the actual perceived improvement.

1000 start restricts schools prevention work in the morning, what core activity can be completed in the half hour at 1630?

Training and development is the most crucial preventative factor in our safety, it should not be carried out at the times when we are most fatigued.

For all the time, effort and money invested in this document it actually produces no savings at all. Non cashable savings might look good when trying to sell it to people but when our budget is falling and money is tight real savings are needed and not spending on reports that are poorly produced and concluded to merely rubber stamp decisions already made.

The justification for being family friendly is poorly evidenced. The proposal produces 2 hours more family time, but only if your child goes to bed as late as 2100. The example is so poorly produced that it is not averaged over an 8 week cycle including working weekends, so does not come close to accurately reflecting a real family.

There is no justification or evidence to support an improvement in flexible working. The claim that it evens out stand-in arrangements seems very desperate.

The document goes as far as to say that it would not recommend keeping 9 and 15 hour shifts and changing the times, when it was not asked to study this in any way and is by its own admission only a validation of something totally different.

The report strikes me as a poor value document as it contains very few specific facts about how we work in Dorset. The claims of workforces changing their hours across our area should have supporting evidence.

Although there is less traffic 2200 is also quite simply a bad time for our workforce to be travelling. When many cycle and run to work and the service has actively encouraged the cycle to work scheme, it seems ill managed to now discourage this practice by sending them home when it is darker and colder for much of the year.

> I would not see my children for four nights in a row

> I would not be able to take part in evening sports clubs

> with travel time times I will be working four 14 hour shifts

36 staff currently serve joint wholtime and retained duties within the county. If the change proposed were to be initiated then all 36 would be able to attend just 50% of drill nights instead of 75% as the 2200 shift change obviously borders drill nights. This maybe of little interest to those bringing the change, however it would bring a reduction in effective training and interaction for those staff on their retained stations. A total loss of 1080 training hours or a reduction of 33% for those individuals.

Obviously there are those managers who would think this could be a cashable saving, but it is these 36 staff who are helping to hold the RDS stations together. 20 of them have a managerial responsibility on their retained station. Reducing the training and supervision that is done by these staff by 30% would have a significant impact on their teams competence levels and effectiveness.

This link to the shift review is for 36 staff that serve in Dorset, there are a further 25 staff who perform duties across two Fire Services. If the other employers adopted the same change the result would be even greater.

Only two years worth of figures for the call profile for shift stations are given, 2006-2008, and the difference between 0900-1000 and between 1800-2200 are both very marginal, how changing the start times will make any significant benefit from minimising the disruptive periods arising from operational fire calls.

The context of the report on the effects of sleep deprivation on Firefighters should be clarified on shifts of 15 hours and under. As for managing fatigue, there appears to be no direct evidence from managers or firefighters in DFRS, that crews are suffering from fatigue in the last 3 hours of a night shift, and how by equally reducing the shift length and amount of stand-down time that there can be any improvement in this

With reference to the graph on child contact time, it illustrates that a school child goes to bed at 2100,

when most young school children are heading for bed at 1900.

Anyone with a journey to work of one hour, will have four equal working days of 14 hours, and will regularly have an hours drive after a 12 hour night shift with a reduced stand-down time, which will have an effect on fatigue and health. Also less staff will cycle to work when the shift finishes at 2200, which will have a detrimental effect on their well-being and fitness as well as their carbon footprint.

Working four evenings out of eight, instead of two out of eight, will have an effect on the lifestyle we lead outside of the fire service.

The current economic climate should not have an influence on the shift pattern we work, and we should not be compared to other industries where job security is no longer certain.

As a watch we all feel that this proposed shift change would have a detrimental effect on all of us. The proposed shift is not family friendly at all, some of the watch who have children and partners that work would have to ask their partners to give up work with the financial implications that that would entail. Those that could stay employed would lose out on quality time with young ones ,time that cannot be bought.

Whilst the fire data was taken from Dorset the assumptions about fatigue were general.

The proposed shift takes away time on the night shift that we already use for Community Fire Safety, how is this good practice? Also drill will have to take up more of the day shift so even less time in the Community.

I can only say that I am appalled at the idea of changing the current shift pattern, this system has been in place for an extremely long time. It is recognised by all whom are employed on it as being the best and most suited to the needs of Fire fighters and the public that we serve. To change it merely to satisfy the needs of the audit commission (whose goals are very likely to change in May this year) would be an act of stupidity, and as such it should be ignored by our Fire Authority.

I do not find them family friendly and believe there will be further undue stress placed on over tired drivers for part of the shift.

Furthermore why fix a system that isn't broke especially when the existing system can be altered to suit.

I feel that the current system is more family-friendly than the proposed change to 12 hour shifts. I have 2 small children who I, at present, get the luxury of spending "positive hours" with. The proposed change to 12 hour shifts would prevent me from seeing them, whilst they are awake, for nearly 24 hours on 2 days in a row.

My family is very important to me and that is my main

grievance against the introduction of 12 hour shifts, whether it be 10 till 10, 9 till 9, 8 till 8 etc.

I just wanted to express through you how strongly I feel about the proposed change to 12 hour shifts. As a single father with two children the new system would cause huge disruption to my access of them, that I now enjoy. As a self proclaimed "family friendly" service I do not believe that the brigade is looking at this with the welfare of its employees in mind which again the Brigade is so eager to promote that it values.



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