

Flexible-rostering Duty System Trial within Fire Control

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides a summary of the Flexible-rostering Duty System trial, which has been undertaken in Fire Control since January 2018 and also makes a recommendation about the future shift system to be used in Shropshire's Fire Control.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the summary report and the analysis of datasets provided as part of the trial; and
- b) Approve the recommendation for the Flexible Rostering Duty System to be progressed to a collective agreement with the Fire Brigades Union, Executive Council, to enable implementation.

3 Background

In 2017, following analysis of existing shift patterns within Fire Control, the Service commenced a trial of a Self-rostering duty system. The aim of this trial was to explore the benefits of Self-rostering, in terms of increased efficiency and resilience, as individuals would roster on to duty in a flexible manner.

From the figures produced during this trial (Appendix A) and through consultation with individuals, it was apparent that individuals who work in Fire Control had no desire to work a Self-rostered duty system and this caused issues in terms of sickness absence and an increase in the number of shifts operated with only 2 staff, instead of the optimum number of 3 (1 x Supervisory Officer and 2 x Control Operators).

There were also 6 occasions when the Service only had one member of Fire Control available, which contributed to emergency operations having to be transferred to Hereford and Worcester on 5 occasions.

Following consultation with staff in Fire Control and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), it was agreed that a Flexible-rostering Duty System would be trialled from January 2018. This would involve individuals being assigned to a colour watch to provide consistency and stability for individuals, however, when occasions were identified when 4 members of staff were on duty, a nominated individual would roster off and accrue hours to pay back at a later date when crewing deficiencies were presented, enabling the Service to maintain optimum crewing levels. This would involve rostering on-duty across the 4 colour watches and business rules were put in place, and outlined within a draft Collective Agreement, to provide guidance and consistency when applying process.

The trial has been monitored throughout the 2018 calendar period through quarterly shift implementation meetings. This approach provided opportunity to compare the performance of the Flexible-rostering duty system against the Self-rostering trial and also the historical 2:2:4 duty system, which was the previous crewing model implemented within Fire Control.

4 Outcomes and comparisons from Flexible Rostering trial

When comparing the figures across the three crewing systems (the figures reported for the 2:2:4 System are an average of the three years prior to the Self-Rostering Trial), it is evident that Flexible-rostering has proved effective in terms of delivery and efficiency of shifts and the quarterly figures are comparable or better in all areas monitored. These being:

The total number of bank hours owing at the end of the year

The figure for Flexible-rostering was 298.5 hours compared to 308 hours with Self-rostering. When looking at this comparison, it is worth noting that due to lower sickness absence with Flexible-rostering, the opportunity for individuals to pay back hours was significantly reduced, so this figure should not be viewed in isolation. The concept of banked hours is not relevant to 2:2:4.

The total number of days lost due to sickness absence

The figure for Flexible-rostering at the end of 2018 was 103 days compared to 308 for Self-rostering and 237 for 2:2:4. This is a significant improvement which should be celebrated.

The total number of shifts operated with 4 staff

The Flexible-rostering end of year figure was 22 shifts compared with 4 for Self-rostering and 69 for 2:2:4. Although the figure for Flexible-rostering is higher than that of Self-rostering, it should be noted that rostering off was stopped part way through Q4, but it still contributed to 10 occasions out of the 22 recorded. The rationale for not rostering-off in Q4 was due to the number of banked hours being accrued up to Q4 being enough to provide resilience for the remainder of the year. It should also be noted that the fourth person was not working in the Control environment, but was aligned to IRMP2 work activity such as C&C database, officer rotas, appliance availability reports and shadowing of a new staff member.

The total number of shifts operated with three staff

Flexible-rostering provided 655 occasions compared to 508 for Self-rostering and 591 for 2:2:4. This is a significant improvement in achieving optimum crewing and can be linked to the improvement in sickness absence and flexibility of staff undertaking shifts to pay back banked hours.

The total number of shifts operated with two staff

There were 50 occasions, during the Flexible-Rostering trial, compared to 208 for Self-rostering and 68 for 2:2:4. This is again a significant improvement over Self-rostering and can be attributed to improved sickness absence. When analysing the data, 30 out of the 50 occasions during 2018 occurred in Q4 and is a direct correlation with sickness absence. Further work needs to be undertaken to identify opportunities to enhance the resilience for covering periods of sickness, which would be deemed as unplanned short-term absence.

The number of occasions when only one member of staff was available for duty

There were no instances during the Flexible-rostering trial, compared to 6 occasions during Self-rostering and 0.6 (3-year average) for 2:2:4. This should be viewed as a success as this meant that Fire Control has been in a position to operate without recourse to Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (inclusive of Resilience State) for every shift throughout 2018.

The number of occasions where no Mobilising Officer was available

Flexible-rostering witnessed 2 occasions compared with 4 for Self-rostering and 5 for 2:2:4. This again is an improvement over the 2 previous models and on the 2 occasions during 2018, arrangements were put in place to enable Control operations to remain in Shropshire.

The number of occasions that emergency operations were transferred to Hereford and Worcester Fire Control

There were no occasions during 2018, compared to 5 occasions during Self-rostering and 0.3 (3 year average) for 2:2:4. This is an improvement on Self-rostering and demonstrates the effectiveness of the Flexible-rostering model.

5 Conclusion and recommendation

Having analysed the available data it is evident that Flexible-rostering is an efficient and effective system and is an improvement in all areas in comparison to both the Self-rostering and 2:2:4 systems.

Officers therefore ask Members to consider approving a recommendation for the Service to adopt Flexible-rostering as the permanent duty system within Fire Control into the future.

If approved, the learning from the trial will be used to further improve the efficiency, effectiveness and resilience of the trial model, to ensure the most appropriate use is made of banked hours, focussing on work streams that add most value to the Service. This will be done in consultation with staff and the Representative Bodies through the development of the Collective Agreement.

There is very strong support for the Flexible-rostering system amongst Fire Control staff. However, for the Collective Agreement to be signed off, this would also need the support of the FBU's National Executive Council. The Service remains hopeful that even if sign-off is not initially given for the Collective Agreement, the FBU will explain their reasons for this and these can then form the basis of further local negotiations, ultimately securing acceptance. If that were the case, the system would continue to be run through whilst the negotiations were ongoing.

6 Capacity

There are no capacity impacts arising from this report as the duty system will be embedded as normal business and managed accordingly.

7 Collaboration / Partnership Working

The Service has ensured that Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service are aware of the trial and will also share information from the 12 month trial. Further collaboration will be explored with Fire Control as part of the Strategic Alliance.

8 Community Safety

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

9 Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

10 Equality Impact Assessment

An e-EQIA has been completed.

11 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

12 Health and Safety

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

13 Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

14 ICT

There are no impacts on ICT as current systems will continue to be utilised to maintain the duty system, inclusive of FireServiceRota.

15 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report, however it will be essential to ensure that the terms and conditions of any Collective Agreement adequately address all foreseeable risks and statutory duties placed upon the Fire Authority and will require review by the Authority's legal advisors.

16 Public Value / Service Delivery

To ensure that an effective, efficient and resilient duty system is implemented within Fire Control to support:

Strategic Aim 1 - To be there when you need us in an emergency with a professional and well-equipped team

Strategic Aim 3 - To reduce the number of fire related deaths and serious injuries

Strategic Aim 4 -To deliver a fire and rescue Service, which provides value for money for our community now and into the future

17 Reputation

The duty system seeks to enhance efficiency and resilience of crewing within the Fire control environment, therefore supporting organisational effectiveness and reputation.

18 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

19 Training

There are no training impacts arising from this report.

20 Appendix

Fire Control Rostering Statistics

21 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Appendix to report on
Flexible-rostering Duty System Trial within Fire Control
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
13 February 2019

Performance Indicator	2-2-4					2-2-4					2-2-4					Self Rostering					Flexible Rostering				
	No. of occasions during Q1 2014	No. of occasions during Q2 2014	No. of occasions during Q3 2014	No. of occasions during Q4 2014	Totals	No. of occasions during Q1 2015	No. of occasions during Q2 2015	No. of occasions during Q3 2015	No. of occasions during Q4 2015	Totals	No. of occasions during Q1 2016	No. of occasions during Q2 2016	No. of occasions during Q3 2016	No. of occasions during Q4 2016	Totals	No. of occasions during Q1 2017	No. of occasions during Q2 2017	No. of occasions during Q3 2017	No. of occasions during Q4 2017	Totals	No. of occasions during Q1 2018	No. of occasions during Q2 2018	No. of occasions during Q3 2018	No. of occasions during Q4 2018	Totals
The total number of initial shift selections of 32 shifts (or pro rata)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17/17	18/18	18/18	18/18		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The total number of Bank Hours worked	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	700	870	900	986	3456	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The total number of Bank/Resilience Hours remaining at the end of each quarter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	229 (B)	306 (B)	479 (B)	308 (B)	1322	577 (R)	734.5 (R)	613.5 (R)	298.5 (R)	1925
The total number of days lost to sickness absence (D/N)	42	76	81	68	267	63	45	29	89	226	76	26	31	86	219	105	83	77	43	308	37	16	16	34	103
The total number of shifts operated with four staff	52	10	3	12	77	18	28	2	12	60	34	22	4	9	69	2	2	0	0	4	4	0	8	10	22
The total number of shifts operated with three staff	126	172	173	157	628	131	147	174	150	602	137	142	149	117	545	93	140	125	150	508	169	177	165	144	655
The total number of shifts operated with two staff	2	0	8	15	25	21	9	8	22	60	11	18	31	58	118	78	40	57	33	208	5	5	10	30	50
The number of occasions when only one member of staff was available for duty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	6	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
The number of occasions when no members of staff were available for duty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The number of occasions where no Mobilising Officer was available	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	2	6	10	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	1	0	4	0	1	0	1	2
The number of occasions that Emergency Operations were transferred to HWFRS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0