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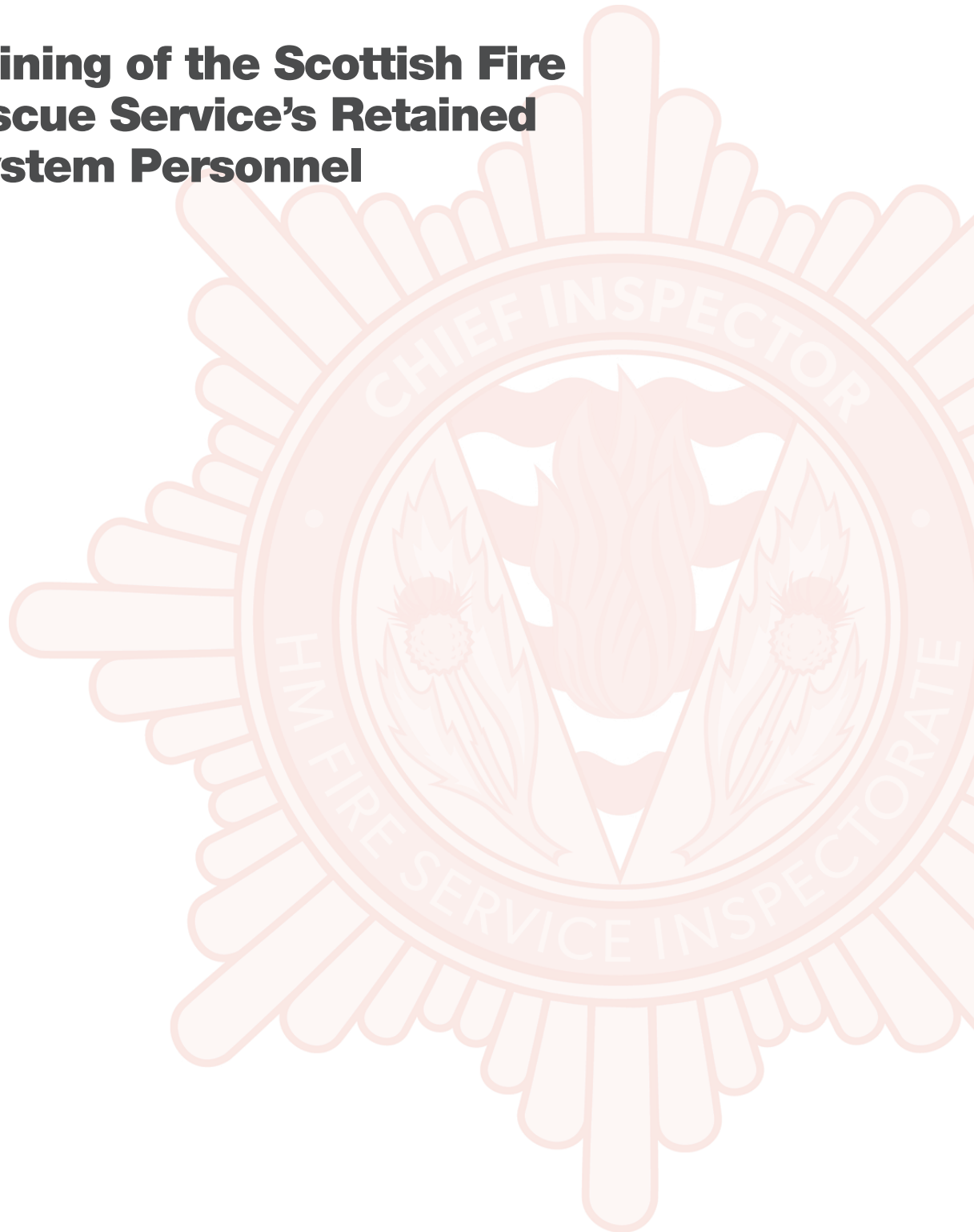
The Training of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Retained Duty System Personnel

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

HM Fire Service Inspectorate

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Board of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), managers and members of staff from Response and Resilience (R&R), Service Delivery (SD), Training and Employee Development (TED), Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HS&W) and all other members of staff who provided us with information and contributed constructively to interviews. We also thank Education Scotland for its professional assistance.

The Inspection team members were:

All members of the inspection team contributed to the development of this report and the quality assurance review provided a professional challenge to the contents, assumptions and conclusions made. However, the Chief Inspector takes sole responsibility for the report, its contents and conclusions.

Our report reflects the circumstance at the time of our visits and interviews which were initially undertaken between January and September 2018 and then between August and October 2019. The SFRS is continuing to change and evolve. Consequently material changes may have occurred since then.

This report was originally due to be published in January 2019, but prior to this date the SFRS commenced a training review (which included the training of RDS firefighters). As a consequence it was agreed by HMFSI and the Service to put our inspection on hold and delay the publication of the report until the outcome of the Service's review. However, following some findings from other inspection fieldwork by the Inspectorate, the Chief Inspector, with the agreement of the Chief Officer of the SFRS, decided in late 2019 to publish this report.

This Report was laid before the Scottish Parliament by HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service under section 43C(5) of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 SG/2020/36.

Contents

1_Introduction and background

This inspection looks at the arrangements for the provision of initial training, maintenance of skills and methods of recording competence of SFRS RDS staff.

The SFRS employs around 7,200 operational staff. Of these, around 3,000 are firefighters who work on the Retained Duty System (RDS) and approximately 400 are Volunteer firefighters. RDS and Volunteer firefighters are extremely important to ensuring the safety of communities across Scotland. Of the 356 fire stations in Scotland, 240 are crewed wholly by RDS firefighters, 42 are crewed by Volunteer firefighters, 23 are crewed jointly by Wholetime and RDS firefighters, and 51 are crewed solely by Wholetime firefighters.

RDS firefighters are alerted to attend emergency calls by means of a pager. They normally live near to their fire station and most have a primary employer other than the SFRS.

Figure 1: Photograph of a fire station which is crewed by RDS firefighters – courtesy of SFRS Corporate Communications

Fire-fighting and other emergencies are, by their very nature, hazardous operations. The role of a firefighter is an inherently dangerous one regardless of whether a firefighter works on the Wholetime, RDS or Volunteer duty system. It is important that staff are provided with initial training and suitable ongoing training to ensure they are competent to operate in a safe manner.

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The SFRS, as an employer, has responsibility to ensure the safety of its staff, in line with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated Regulations. This obligation includes suitable training.

Generally the RDS duty system allows for one programmed training night each week. It is recognised that one feature of this system, operated by RDS firefighters, is that there is a limited time available to undertake the training required.

Additionally the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (the 2005 Act) requires the SFRS to secure the provision of training for personnel for fire-fighting (section 9(2)(b)), for road traffic accidents (section 10(2)(b)), and for other emergencies (article 8(1)(b)) of the Fire (Additional Function) (Scotland) Order 2005.

The Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016 contains specific guidance in respect of RDS firefighters:

'The SFRS should ensure that the current Retained Duty System (RDS) is on a stable and standardised platform in preparation for any future modifications to service delivery which emerge from the RDS Future Options Project. The recruitment and retention of volunteer and retained firefighters remains a significant challenge in some parts of Scotland, and the SFRS should set out detailed plans about how it proposes to resolve relevant issues, including training, for the retained and volunteer Service. As part of this process, the SFRS should consider whether training for RDS and volunteer firefighters should be tailored to local risk and geography'.

2_About the inspection

2.1_The Inspectorate

HMFSI in Scotland is a body that operates within, but independently of, the Scottish Government. Inspectors have the scrutiny powers specified in section 43B of the 2005 Act. These include inquiring into the state and efficiency of the SFRS, its compliance with Best Value, and the manner in which it is carrying out its functions.

We also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on the emergency response, legislation and education in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland.

Our powers give latitude to investigate areas we consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of our functions:

- The SFRS must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require to enable us to carry out our functions.

- When we publish a report, the SFRS must have regard to what we have found and take such measures, if any, as it thinks fit.

- Where our report identifies that Best Value is not secured, or that the SFRS is not efficient or effective or will, unless remedial measures are taken, cease to be efficient or effective, Scottish Ministers may direct the SFRS to take such measures as may be required. The SFRS must comply with any direction given.

We work with other Inspectorates and agencies across the public sector and co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.

We aim to add value and strengthen public confidence in the SFRS and achieve this through independent scrutiny and evidence-led reporting about what we find. Where we make recommendations in a report, we will follow them up to assess the level of progress. We will identify good practice that can be applied across Scotland. Our approach is to support the SFRS to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective, and responsive to local and national needs.

2.2_The inspection

This inspection is self-directed by the Chief Inspector and conducted under the powers conferred on the Chief Inspector under sections 43B and 43C of the 2005 Act.

The inspection was instigated following our recent local area inspection programme where we have witnessed the RDS training programme and recording system in place. RDS firefighters have consistently raised issues and concerns with HMFSI about the Service's training and recording systems. The concerns raised included:

- the location of central training establishments;

- inconsistency of training time available;

- applicability of training delivered to local risks;

- lack of flexibility within the training plan;

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- the time available to complete the training programme and training activity;
- the content of training packages;
- an imbalance between theory and practical training; and
- availability and access to Incident Command Level 1 (ICL 1) courses.

As is normal practice, the terms of reference for this inspection were publicly consulted upon.

The intention of this inspection report is to set out the facts and then to present the Chief Inspector's independent view of the situation and where appropriate make recommendations to the Service.

2.3_Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this inspection is similar to other inspections that HMFSI has conducted and provides a structure which is risk-based, proportionate and focusses on improvement.

The aim of our inspection is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the RDS training systems in place across the Service. It considered:

- Initial training
- Maintenance of skills
- Two examples of specialist skills training
- Incident command training

The inspection commenced with a desktop review of data policies, procedures and information provided by SFRS. This was followed by a programme of fieldwork where members of the inspection team visited locations across the Service and conducted face-to-face interviews with relevant staff and observed training delivery to obtain evidence of practice.

Staff groups interviewed included the Chair of the SFRS Board, Chairs of Board committees, members of the SLT, lead officers with responsibility for training, area-based instructors, employee representative bodies and RDS and Volunteer crews from a range of fire stations across Scotland.

We considered the structures and disposition of instructional staff based at training facilities, and those who are deployed to support RDS managers in delivering training in fire stations. We considered the governance and processes in place to ensure the Service, and the Board, are provided with evidence that staff are capable of carrying out their role in a safe and competent manner.

Our inspection report is also informed by evidence obtained during our local area inspection programme. It reflects the circumstances at the time of our visits undertaken initially from January to July 2018 and then August to October 2019 respectively.

This inspection is not a comprehensive in-depth audit of all aspects of RDS training within the SFRS, albeit it is sufficiently detailed in order for HMFSI to give a professional judgement on the activity and suitability of the RDS training arrangements. The SFRS has a programme of internal audits which involve a detailed look at its strategic functions and we do not want to duplicate that work, although we do take that into consideration when carrying out our inspections.

The sampling methodology that we adopt is not guaranteed to identify all potential areas for improvement or good practice; we intend that it is a proportionate activity that provides an overview of the training activity. It has established to the Chief Inspector's satisfaction the facts needed to draw conclusions and make recommendations where appropriate.

We collaborated with Education Scotland to obtain an independent professional and specialist analysis of RDS firefighter training with particular focus on the systems in place for ensuring maintenance of skills.

During the inspection HMFSI provided feedback to key SFRS staff including the Chief Officer and strategic and training managers, so that significant emerging issues and themes could be acted upon at an early opportunity.

3_Our findings

3.1_Initial training

Applicants who have been successful within the Service's RDS firefighter recruitment process are invited to attend a Task and Task Management (TTM) training course at one of the SFRS's central training establishments. A copy of the TTM course programme is shown in Appendix 1.

The course is designed to provide candidates with a range of core skills, familiarising them with fire and rescue service equipment and basic firefighting and rescue techniques. The course is delivered over a two week period and all elements of the course must be completed in sequence for the candidate to achieve a pass.

Attendance at the TTM course is mandatory. Many of the attendees have to travel long distances to training venues and stay in hotel accommodation during the course. Course attendance can cause problems with family and primary employment commitments.

All attendees on the TTM course receive the same input. A consequence of this is that some new entrants receive training on equipment which they will never use. For example, a firefighter from a remote island will be trained on how to pitch a 13.5 metre ladder in a confined space, even though this equipment is not available on the island.

Although course subject input is standard, variation in techniques of teaching content between trainers and delivery sites was identified as an issue. The differences were said to be apparent when trainees return to their home station after attending a training centre outwith their local area. There was said to be no standard delivery approach and the explanation for the difference depended on 'who delivered the topic'. This can lead to confusion and a need for further training.

Following completion of the TTM course newly trained firefighters are required to attend a Breathing Apparatus (BA) training course. This course is also delivered over two consecutive weeks at a central training facility. Again, this can lead to some trainees having to travel long distances, stay in hotel accommodation, and may clash with personal commitments.

BA and TTM training, together require a four week commitment. Some attendees will use a full year's annual leave entitlement or take unpaid leave from their primary employer to attend the training. The time and commitment required to attend this initial training was identified as a barrier to recruitment for some individuals, who would otherwise be willing and capable of fulfilling the role of an RDS firefighter.

The SFRS is well aware of the demands of training course attendance for RDS personnel. The Service is in the process of developing modular type courses that could be delivered in a more flexible manner and where possible, closer to an individual's home location. We welcome this development.

In developing the modular TTM course, we believe an opportunity exists to revisit the course content and to deliver modules that are tailored to better meet the individual needs of those attending. For example, as previously explained, firefighters from a remote RDS or volunteer unit that does not carry a 13.5 metre ladder would not need that module.

There is a one day input within the TTM course relating to attendance at Road Traffic Collision (RTC) incidents, which at the time of writing this report, did not have a tool-handling module. The remaining four days of the RTC operator course is delivered by TED LSO area-based staff when the trainee returns to their fire station and it is expected to be completed within six months. However, in some locations this further RTC training has taken a lot longer to achieve.

We have been advised that there are examples of variation, on interpretation of national standards on the delivery of training between individual training centres. This had led to confusion when trainees return to their home station, and the methods employed at the home station are different to what is taught at the training centre.

When redesigning the content or delivery method of the RDS training courses it would be beneficial to involve RDS firefighters from around the country at the development stage to add value to the course content and outcomes.

Recommendations

The SFRS should consider the personal impact on new entrant RDS firefighters attending their initial TTM and BA training courses and review:

- alternative venues to deliver the training;

- the timescales allocated for the training;

- the course content and methods of delivery;

- the involvement of RDS firefighters in course design;

- the time taken in some locations to complete the remainder of the RTC operators' course where relevant; and

- the extent that all training centres teach to the national policy and procedures (but recognising the need for variation, due to the availability of differing equipment).

Figure 2: RTC tool-handling training – SFRS Corporate Communications

3.2_Maintenance of skills

Having attained basic skills through attendance at the TTM and BA training courses, RDS firefighters are expected to maintain their level of competence by adhering to the SFRS Training for Operational Competence (TfOC) Firefighter to Watch Manager Policy[1].

The TfOC programme comprises practical and theory work. It is made up of 12 core training modules, 12 standard training modules, and 24 advanced training modules. (See Figure 3.) The content of each of the TfOC modules is the same for RDS and Wholetime staff alike. Each of the core skills are broken down to key component parts which are mandatory for all fire station based firefighters and supervisory managers. All aspects of each core skill must be completed timeously as required by the programme calendar and to the required standard for individuals to maintain competence.

A Maintenance Phase Development Framework has been created on a modular basis to ensure an even distribution of learning content and subject matter throughout a 36 month cycle. Standard modules are applicable to all fire station based personnel regardless of duty system. RDS firefighters are expected to complete the following:

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1   Training for Operational Competence Policy: v6.0 2016

- all core training modules annually;

- all standard modules over a rolling three year period; and

- those advanced modules that are relative to the risks within their station area, on a three year rolling programme.

The TfOC modules have to be completed in a specific order, and are delivered as a blend of theory and practical based learning. The decision on what advanced modules should be covered by each RDS unit is made by LSOs and their teams, and notified to RDS managers. For example, it would not be necessary for crews on a remote island fire station to complete advanced modules on high rise buildings or railway incidents as these type of risks are not relevant to their location. However, during our inspections it was noted that there was confusion amongst local managers regarding the delivery of the advanced modules. There was uncertainty amongst some, as to whether there was a necessity to complete all of the 24 modules, or only those appropriate to the risks within their area.

The TfOC training materials are hosted on the Service's Learning Content Management System (LCMS) which is a web based system that can be accessed from a computer or mobile device with internet access. Hosting the packages in this way has the benefit of allowing content to be revised and kept up to date centrally without concerns regarding version control. The downside, as we have learned from our local area inspections, is that not all fire stations have reliable network connections. As a temporary solution some fire stations have been provided with a memory stick containing the entire content of the LCMS system. The use of memory sticks requires strict control and it also reduces the opportunity for staff to access the material off-station.
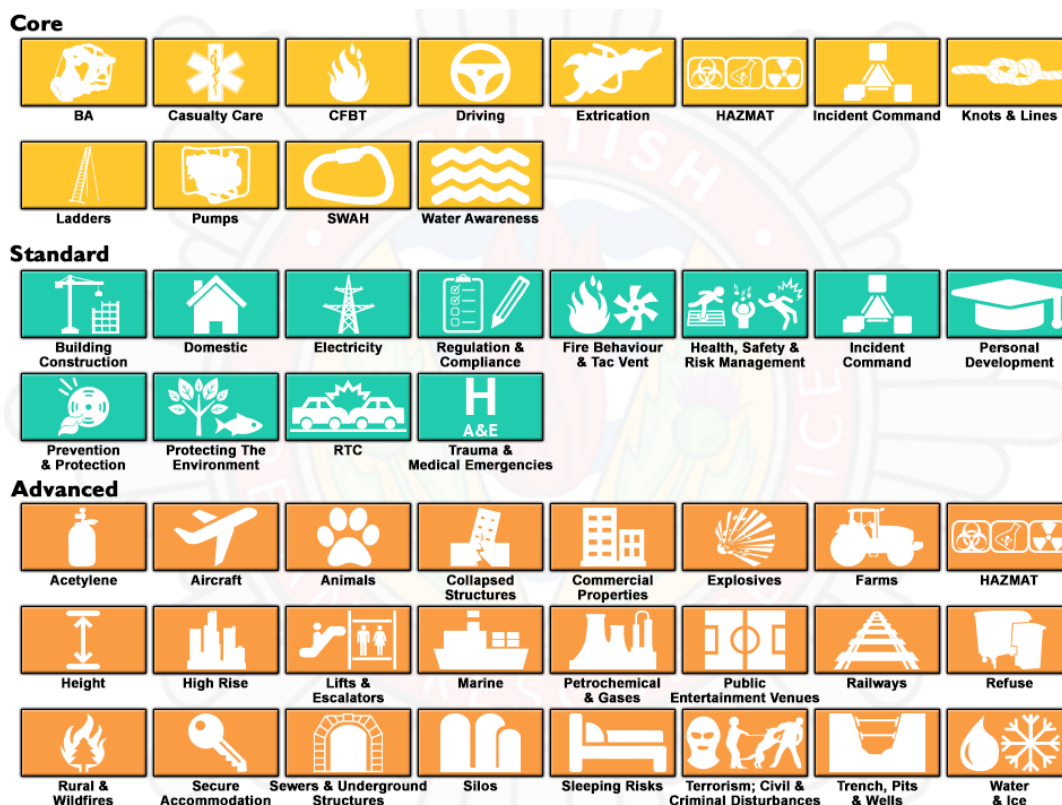

Figure 3: Pictogram of TfOC modules (courtesy of the SFRS)

Each TfOC module includes:

- core teaching material
- an assessment
- in some cases, supplementary materials

The learning modules on specific subjects have been developed with input from lead officers within the TED team, area based officers with a training reference, relevant practitioner groups and subject matter experts. *'The core operational training programmes are harmonised and aligned with national operational guidance/sector standards,'* as identified within the SFRS People and Organisational Development Strategy 2014 and referenced within the Training for Operational Competency Policy.

While there is a range of stakeholders involved in the development of these modules, the Service was unable to identify any level of involvement by RDS staff. Our assessment is that modules are predominately created by Wholetime officers and subject matter experts and are created with a Wholetime firefighter audience in mind. The Service did stipulate that the brief for the creation of modules was that they had to meet the needs of the end user and be delivered in the time available. However, we have witnessed a level of dissatisfaction amongst RDS staff who are expected to undertake the training within challenging timescales.

During our interviews with RDS firefighters we were regularly told that there is excessive theory content in TfOC modules. The time required to deliver the depth of content, and to complete online assessments and update training records, left staff with very little time to conduct practical training, a concern that was consistently raised across the Service.

We examined a number of the TfOC modules and members of the inspection team attended fire stations on training nights to observe training being delivered to RDS staff. On one of our visits the training was delivered by a training officer from the Invergordon training centre; on the other occasions the training was delivered by the officer in charge of the RDS unit.

Both the Wholetime instructor and the RDS officers delivering the training packages made every attempt to do so in an interactive manner, stopping at times to demonstrate practical elements or provide supplementary information. Despite their best efforts, it did appear very difficult for staff to remain attentive because the packages are very text heavy and in some modules contain information that RDS firefighters do not need to know for their role. Some of the packages are over 100 pages long and staff can be overwhelmed with information.

The confirmation testing that follows each module is undertaken as a group exercise with each member of the crew being encouraged to contribute to answering the questions before the group answer is submitted. Following completion of the test each individual is then required to log on individually and complete the same test again before logging onto a separate PDRPro system to maintain their development records. At times this can prove difficult due to the limited number of computer terminals available and the broadband capacity on stations. Due to the lack of IT resources in some locations, some staff complete their records from their home in their own time.

We utilised the skills and support of colleagues from Education Scotland to consider the process involved in creating and reviewing learning content, and presenting this to a range of staff groups (who are likely to have different levels of learning styles, abilities and time available to devote to study). Education Scotland was given access to the TfOC system and looked at the learning content of each module and the way in which it is presented, offering recommendations for improvement where appropriate to do so. Colleagues from Education Scotland also attended and observed training being delivered at a number of RDS fire stations across the country, to provide an opinion on the suitability of current delivery methods and the arrangements in place to prepare RDS managers to deliver training.

The report provided by Education Scotland can be found at Appendix 2. Positive outcomes and Areas for Development from the report are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Positive Findings

The range of units is comprehensive, covering areas that firefighters are required to understand and develop in order to operate safely. In the core units, there is a good mix of materials to reinforce learning.
The platform for the LCMS is easy to use and navigate and there is a wide range of resources.
In most of the training sessions, officers are provided with a good introduction which identifies the aims and outcomes of the lesson, with clear objectives established at the beginning and again at the end.
For those firefighters with additional support needs, such as dyslexia, arrangements are provided for additional time and coaching.
Carrying out assessments as a group exercise helps to stimulate discussion between crew members and encourages them to agree jointly on correct responses. It assists the trainer to clarify any necessary points.
Trainers often use personal perspectives and provide real-life examples and appropriate humour to engage participants. The use of practical demonstrations to illustrate elements contained within the PowerPoint presentations are of great value to the firefighters.

Table 1: TfOC areas of positive practice

Findings for Development

In almost all stations there are insufficient computers for the size of the group. This impacts on the opportunities to access online support materials and undertake individual assessments. Due to time constraints, and availability of computer terminals, it can be challenging to complete online assessments on a training night. The resources are devised to be used for individual study, but are used as a group teaching tool, due to lack of computers.

Assessment banks are very limited and are not in the form of formative or summative assessments. Materials are detailed in places, but very minimal in others, and many of the modules are lacking effective examples.

For part-time firefighters, the volume of specialist knowledge covered in the training units is unrealistic.

Learning is not sufficiently differentiated to take account of the learning needs of newer crew members and more experienced firefighters.

Learning is too passive and is not sufficiently active. Training relies too heavily on lengthy PowerPoint presentations in which the trainer reads aloud the text.

Time restrictions often encourage only surface learning. Much of the teaching approach relies on short-term memory retention, which is assessed during the test. This is poor practice as, in time, it will be lost from recall.

Trainers do not utilise a sufficient range of questioning techniques to check understanding. Training sessions can be seen as dull and not sufficiently stimulating for the crew.

In almost all cases, training for presenters had taken place some time ago and there has been no refresher courses to support them develop their training approaches. In some cases, the trainer had not received any formal input on delivering training.

Assessment feedback is underdeveloped with regards to identifying where learning has not been effective.

In almost all cases, firefighters do not value or enjoy the sessions.

Table 2: TfOC areas for development

It is evident that a considerable amount of good work has gone into creating a software platform that can host these packages which are very comprehensive and contain a great deal of useful information. Our examination of the modules and direct observation of their delivery led us and Education Scotland to conclude that modules can be overly complex and very text-heavy with content not always easy to understand. Modules are not tailored to the needs of RDS firefighters who have competing priorities and a limited amount of time available for training.

The modules have been created by subject matter experts and provide a great deal of background information, such as specific reference to legislation, medical terms, and facts and figures. This can prove very difficult to digest and even more difficult to recall when taking the online test at the end of the session.

We are aware that a review of the TfOC module content has been undertaken as part of a full review of TED. The Service recognises the benefits in seeking the opinions and views of RDS firefighters when developing the new style packages to ensure they can be delivered in a manner that takes into account the limited training time available within the duty system. The review team will aim to find opportunities to streamline packages and this will free up some time within the RDS training schedule. The full review of training was reported to the SFRS Senior Leadership Team in December 2019.

The current system of taking an online test then having to update a separate PDRPro system to confirm having taken the test leads to frustration, particularly in fire stations with limited numbers of terminals and/or limited broadband. A move toward a system that allows online records to be updated automatically on completion of training and validation of learning would reduce this frustration significantly, free up time and create capacity to do more practical training.

Another concern regularly voiced by RDS staff relates to an inconsistency in training hours available in RDS units across the country. This issue forms part of a wider discussion around the harmonisation of Legacy Terms and Conditions (see Glossary) for uniformed staff and has, by admission from the Service, taken longer than had originally been anticipated. Whilst many of the issues relating to harmonising terms and conditions have been addressed, the final decision on harmonising training hours for RDS staff is under consideration by a RDS review group reporting to the SFRS Board's Remuneration, Nominations and Appointments Committee.

Recommendations

The SFRS should consider:

- the content and relevance of RDS TfOC packages and amend accordingly;
- engagement with RDS staff when developing TfOC packages in the future;
- the availability and suitability of IT resources at RDS fire stations to support training;
- reviewing the method for assessing competence; and
- the delivery of more practical training for RDS staff with a reduction in theory content.

Figure 4: Image of individual working at a computer terminal – SFRS Corporate Communications

3.3_Specialist skills

In addition to the skills taught during the TTM and BA courses, and the TfOC programme, there are a number of specialist skills that RDS firefighters require. We identified two specialist skill areas during our fieldwork that raised training issues for RDS staff. We recognise that other vehicles and equipment in use by the Service may have similar or other specialist training implications.

Driver training

The most common type of specialist training is the requirement for a number of firefighters from each fire station to be trained to drive emergency vehicles. For those RDS fire stations operating with appliances that are categorised as Large Goods Vehicles (LGV) the acquisition of an appropriate licence is a legal requirement. The Service's policy also requires staff to have a full and valid category C1 licence to drive vehicles over three and a half tonnes and less than seven and a half tonnes. Driver training is provided by internal driving instructors. Candidates are required to attend a one week course that is routinely delivered from one of the SFRS's central training facilities. There is a requirement for an additional one week course in Emergency Fire Appliance Driving (EFAD) in order to drive under 'Blue Light' conditions.

Again, this commitment can prove difficult for RDS firefighters, particularly those living in remote areas who have to stay in hotel accommodation. As with other centrally delivered training, this can impact on some individuals' primary employment.

An issue raised by RDS staff on island locations is the relevance of undertaking Emergency Fire Appliance Driving courses in a city environment and on motorways. There is a strong view that EFAD courses should be delivered on the island where they will be responding to incidents, reflecting the environment and risks that they face. RDS drivers on remote islands do not respond to incidents on the mainland. (If an RDS firefighter/driver moved to a station on the mainland their level of training could be reviewed accordingly.) There are shortages of drivers at some island fire stations. Individuals we interviewed stated they would be prepared to undertake driver training if the training courses were delivered locally.

While the SFRS's driver training team has made efforts to make training available at times that suit candidates, this has not always been possible to achieve. Recent changes to terms and conditions of non-uniformed driving instructors as part of a pay and reward process has impacted on this facility.

We asked the Service if consideration has been given to using third party providers to deliver this element of training in remote areas and islands to minimise disruption for candidates, and provide driver training courses relevant to topography and risk. The SFRS advised that options have been considered following a recent pilot in the north east of the Service and as part of the wider review of training. The findings will be reported as soon as possible.

Recommendations

The SFRS should consider:

- providing LGV driving courses in remote and Island locations to minimise the personal impact to RDS staff;
- using third party providers to deliver LGV training; and
- delivering EFAD training courses on Islands to reflect topography and risk.

High reach appliance training

In 2017 the SFRS undertook a review of high reach appliance provision[2]. We were advised that one fire station has a high reach appliance that is driven and operated by RDS firefighters and that it is challenging to provide the necessary training to RDS staff to allow them to gain competence in operating this complex type of vehicle.

To improve training for RDS operators the Service has created a modular version of the high reach operators course. This approach is designed to allow staff to attend on days that suit them, and to complete individual modules, rather than require continuous attendance over a two week period. This modular approach, whilst well intentioned, does lead to a decay of skills between sessions and the loss of continuity and break in practice bring additional challenge for

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2   *Review of High Reach Appliance Provision in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service* 2017

the trainee and the instructor. Consequently, more time has to be factored into the programme to refresh the trainee on what they have learned on the previous module.

The content of the course is the same as that delivered to Wholetime firefighters. Much of the syllabus is dictated by the manufacturer of the appliance and as such it is difficult to be flexible with the content. Despite the requirement to replicate course content, the Service has attempted to offer flexible delivery options to allow RDS firefighters to access training in a way that best suits them, such as weekends, evenings, and weekdays etc.

There is also a further complication regarding the reliability of high reach appliances and the impact on training. During a visit to a RDS fire station in August 2018 as part of a thematic inspection[3], we identified that the high reach appliance

- is off the run on a regular basis and waiting for a replacement; and
- the vehicle being away frequently has a major impact on training for both new and existing operators and drivers.

In addition to initial training, high reach drivers are required to access training materials on LCMS (advanced module) and record that they have completed this module through the PDRPro system. They are also re-tested on a three-yearly basis to confirm competence to operate this equipment.

Earlier in this report it is recognised that RDS staff find it challenging to maintain their core operational competence, mainly due to the amount of time being spent on the theory elements of the LCMS packages. This is more challenging for RDS staff who have the added responsibility of training to operate a complex high reach appliance.

The Service should ensure that the training arrangements for RDS firefighters who operate a high reach appliance are appropriate to maintain both their operational competence for core firefighting skills and the high reach appliance competence. Depending on the number of incidents and other training commitments, the Service should consider crewing the high reach appliances by a different crewing model.

Recommendations

The SFRS should:

- ensure RDS firefighters are able to maintain both their core skills and high reach operational competence; and
- consider crewing the high reach appliance with members of staff using a different crewing model.

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3   HMFSI, *Inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Management of its Fleet and Equipment Function,* 2019

3.4_Incident command training

The SFRS operates an Incident Command System (ICS) in line with the National Operational Guidance produced for the UK Fire and Rescue Services[4]. The system allows for an appropriate structure to be put in place at incidents of all types and sizes. The ICS provides that operational resources are allocated, supervised and commanded, at all emergency incidents, in a safe and controlled manner.

The SFRS Incident Command Development Pathway Policy[5] states, *'it provides a consistent approach in regard to the training, development and assessment of Incident Commanders.'*

Personnel access the pathway based on their current or proposed level of Incident Command (IC) responsibility:

- Incident Command Level 1 (ICL1) – Initial Incident Command Course
- Incident Command Level 2 (ICL2) – Intermediate Incident Command Course
- Incident Command Level 3 (ICL3) – Advanced Incident Command Course
- Incident Command Level 4 (ICL4) – Strategic Incident Command Course

The ICL1 course is delivered in one week at one of the national training facilities. The course is available to Wholetime and RDS managers alike; however, it can be difficult to attract RDS managers due to the length of the course and the necessity for it to be run at a central facility. This barrier is similar to those described earlier in respect of TTM, BA, and driver training courses.

All staff who are expected to undertake the IC role are required to demonstrate competence on a periodic basis. This is is known as Incident Command Assessment (ICA). The ICA is theory based and assessed using a simulation of an incident on a computer. Assessment should also be supported by continual development.

RDS managers and RDS firefighters acting up should undertake an initial ICA (also known as 'ticket to ride') prior to completing an ICL1 course.

The ICA for the level one course is undertaken by local training staff in a day and can take place at any fire station or SFRS premises. At the conclusion of the ICA input, candidates are tested against standard marking criteria to ensure they have attained a satisfactory level of competence.

Incident commanders yet to attend an ICL1 development course will undertake a refresher every two years. Once someone has achieved ICL1, the refresher has a variable time to be completed, between two and three years.

While undertaking fieldwork for a recent local area inspection (LAI) we examined data provided by the Service and established that 25 individuals (49% of RDS incident commanders in that area) had not attended the ICL1 course, or the equivalent courses of the legacy FRS (see

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4   https://www.ukfrs.com/guidance/incident-command
5   SFRS Incident Command Development Pathway Policy 2015

Appendix 3). At the time of the inspection the LSO recognised the gaps in the RDS practical training and assessment for IC and was developing bespoke courses for staff to attend on weekends. We acknowledge this positive approach.

The evidence found during the LAI was substantiated further during other fieldwork on islands within a different LSO area. We interviewed a number of RDS incident commanders with varying lengths of service who also confirmed they had not attended the ICL1 course or received any practical IC training or assessment. Some individuals had asked to attend the course but were informed no courses were available for them. Other staff said they would like to attend the course but could not commit to a week away at a central training venue and welcomed alternative delivery options.

In remote rural areas and islands the level and physical presence of operational support to RDS units at incidents is less when compared to urban areas. At some incidents this means that RDS staff with an IC responsibility may be in charge of an incident for a long period of time before the next level of command arrives. We recognise command support is available and provided remotely by the Service using a radio or mobile phone; however, this does have limitations particularly during a dynamic and complex incident.

The Service's IC development pathway should, as referenced earlier, provide a consistent approach with regard to the training, development and assessment of incident commanders. We have witnessed a two tier approach for level one commanders within the SFRS, where an ICA is an acceptable level of competence for RDS staff to achieve whilst all Wholetime staff must attain ICL1. The Service should address this inconsistency and inherent risk and consider other delivery methods for RDS staff to achieve parity of IC training with Wholetime staff.

Staff involved in the delivery of ICA courses are trained centrally. However, we identified that there is no system in place to quality-assure this training to ensure a consistency of approach and delivery across the Service. A training standard for locally delivered courses is currently being considered by the SFRS as part of the ongoing review of training and we welcome this.

Recommendations

The SFRS should:

- provide initial IC level 1 command courses for RDS staff with IC responsibilities;

- provide alternative venues and delivery methods for the initial ICL1 command course; and

- develop a quality assurance process for the delivery of ICA and ICL1 courses.

Figure 5: Image of Incident Command – SFRS Corporate Communications

4_Other observations

While visiting fire stations, issues around support and networking were raised by RDS staff and are worthy of note.

We established that training and management support is variable across the Service. In one LSO area staff at some RDS fire stations, predominantly on island locations, were not having regular contact or support from LSO area trainers or managers. Some RDS managers reported not seeing anybody from the mainland for several months and being left to manage their own training with limited access to LCMS and PDRPro due to poor connectivity. This was witnessed at a number of locations. These concerns have also been raised in other remote locations during previous inspections.

By comparison, on an island in a different LSO area we found evidence that there was relevant training and management support for RDS staff which was frequent and structured. The LSO training staff would also update the station training records onto PDRPro at a mainland central location, thus overcoming any IT accessibility issues and providing more time for RDS staff to undertake other training or work.

We also witnessed different standards of TfOC training being delivered across LSO areas with no evidence of quality control.

Recommendation

The SFRS should review the current arrangements across the Service for RDS training support and the quality of training being delivered, and share good practice.

During our fieldwork we were informed that a legacy FRS used to hold annual weekend seminars for RDS managers. The majority of the RDS managers we spoke to from the legacy FRS identified positive benefits for all who attended and would like to see them reintroduced within the SFRS.

The seminars provided an opportunity for RDS managers from different locations to get together and share their operational experiences and learning, receive practical training, and discuss policies and procedures that impacted on RDS staff. It was recognised as a platform to debate issues with management to help identify ways of improving RDS working and developing informal support networks. RDS managers were enthusiastic when talking about the previous seminars and found them beneficial to their role.

Recommendation

While we acknowledge the issues raised in this report about the demands on RDS staff to attend training events, we think that the SFRS should consider introducing optional RDS manager seminars across the Service to enhance the opportunities for networking, practical training and learning.

At some fire stations we visited, a number of individuals stated they were resigning from the Service in the near future. The individuals specified that this was wholly or in part due to the amount of time the Service expected them to spend on computers working through the LCMS packages and filling in training records. They also made reference to the limited practical training opportunities available to them because of the excessive amount of theory based training.

We believe that by engaging with RDS staff that are leaving or considering leaving, through exit interviews, the SFRS can better understand the impact of current training processes and procedures on individuals and learn from them accordingly.

Recommendation

The SFRS should utilise the exit interview process with RDS staff to better understand their reasons for leaving in order to implement improvements to the RDS duty system training environment.

5_Conclusions

RDS firefighters have a limited window of time available for training and the Service should ensure that this time is used to maximum effect.

The SFRS has worked hard over the past six and a half years to standardise systems and practices relating to the attainment and maintenance of competence for RDS staff. A priority for the Service, amongst many others, has been to provide standard training programmes that could be delivered across all of its fire stations to ensure there is consistency in approach.

While a degree of consistency has been created in SFRS training programmes, these programmes are to an extent unsympathetic to RDS staff due to their competing day to day commitments. During our inspection it was evident that initial and maintenance phase training programmes require a complete review. We welcome the recent publication of the Service's own operational training review and look forward to seeing progress and implementation of the Service's 'Training Change Programme'.

Earlier in the report we identified specialist skills that require a further commitment to training. The Service should be satisfied that individuals are able to maintain any additional skills alongside their core skills. The introduction of new technologies and equipment, that offer a range of options for tackling fires in buildings and the possible broadening of the role of RDS staff to include, for example, Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest and/or Out of Hospital Emergency Response, will have a major impact on the time required for RDS staff to maintain their operational competence.

Our recommendations identify specific areas for improvement within the RDS initial, maintenance, specialist and IC training areas. The SFRS should consider challenging and changing existing policies and procedures, implementing different ways of working and engage more with RDS staff to better understand their needs so they can competently fulfil the role of RDS firefighters and incident commanders.

6_Recommendations

The recommendations contained in the body of this report are listed here for ease of reference but should be read together with the appropriate sections.

6.1_Initial training

The SFRS should consider the personal impact on new-entrant RDS firefighters attending their initial TTM and BA training courses and review:

1. alternative venues to deliver the training;

2. the current timescales allocated for the training;

3. the course content and methods of delivery;

4. the involvement of RDS firefighters in course design;

5. the time taken in some locations to complete the remainder of the RTC operators' course where relevant; and

6. the extent that all training centres teach to the national policy and procedures (but recognising the need for variations, due to the availability of differing equipment).

6.2_Maintenance of skills

The SFRS should consider:

7. the content and relevance of RDS TfOC packages, and amend accordingly;

8. engagement with RDS staff when developing TfOC packages in the future;

9. the availability and suitability of IT resources at RDS stations to support training;

10. reviewing the method for assessing competence; and

11. the delivery of more practical training for RDS staff with a reduction in theory content.

6.3_Specialist skills

Driver training

The SFRS should consider:

12. providing LGV driving courses in remote and Island locations to minimise the personal impact to RDS staff;

13. using third party providers to deliver LGV training; and

14. delivering EFAD training courses on remote Islands to reflect topography and risk.

High reach appliance training

The SFRS should:

15. ensure RDS firefighters are able to maintain both their core skills and high reach operational competence; and

16. consider crewing the high reach appliance with members of staff using a different crewing model.

6.4_Incident command training

The SFRS should:

17. provide initial ICL1 command courses for RDS staff with IC responsibilities;

18. provide alternative venues and delivery methods for the initial ICL1 command course; and

19. develop a quality assurance process for the delivery of ICA and ICL1 courses.

6.5_Other observations

The SFRS should:

20. review the current arrangements across the Service for RDS training support and the standard of training being delivered, and where relevant, share good practice;

21. consider introducing optional RDS manager seminars across the Service to enhance the opportunities for networking, practical training and learning (though we acknowledge the issues raised in this report about the demands on RDS staff to attend training events); and

22. utilise the exit interview process with RDS staff to better understand their reasons for leaving in order to implement improvements to the RDS duty system training environment.

Glossary and abbreviations

An explanation of abbreviations used can be found in the table below.

Acting Up	An individual who is undertaking a managerial position above their substantive position
ASN	Additional Support Needs
BA	Breathing apparatus
Education Scotland	The national body in Scotland for supporting quality and improvement in learning and teaching
EFAD	Emergency Fire Appliance Driving: training to ensure the driver has the knowledge, understanding and skill required to drive a fire service vehicle safely under emergency response conditions
FRS	Fire and Rescue Service
HMFSI	Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate
HS&W	Health, Safety and Wellbeing
IC	Incident Command: safe system of work needed at an incident
ICS	Incident Command System: a framework to structure, organise and manage an incident
IT	Information Technology
LAI	Local Area Inspection
Legacy Terms and Conditions	The eight former Services in Scotland had different arrangements in place regarding RDS training
LCMS	Learning Content Management System: an online learning resource for firefighters
LGV	Large Goods Vehicle
LSO	Local Senior Officer: by law the SFRS has to appoint a LSO for each local authority area in Scotland
PDRPro	Personal Development Recording: an electronic system used by both Wholetime and Retained firefighters to record training and learning development, both from formal training and from continuous development obtained during actual incidents
RDS	Retained Duty System

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

R&R	Response and Resilience: operational planning to ensure the right resources are available at the right time and in the right locations
RTC	Road Traffic Collision
SD	Service Delivery: front end delivery by operational staff
SDA	Service Delivery Area: the SFRS is organised into three geographical areas for service delivery (East, North and West)
SFRS	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
SLT	Strategic Leadership Team
Task and Task Management course	An initial training course for new entrant RDS firefighters
TED	Training and Employee Development
TfOC	Training for Operational Competence: a skills management training programme for firefighters
2005 Act	The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005

Appendix 1

SFRS Task & Task Managment Course for New Entrant RDS Firefighters

WEEK 1					
BAP027	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
09:00 10:00	**Parade and Introduction** Code of Conduct Sickness Procedure	**Technical** Small Gear Knots and Lines Hydrants and Water Supplies	**Technical** Hydraulics and Pumps	**Practical** Intro to Pumps	**Practical** Intro to Ladders Lifting and Handling
10:20 11:00	**Technical** Equality and Diversity	**Technical** Periodic Testing Hose and Hose Fittings		**Practical** Pump Drills P1-P4	**Practical** Ladder Climbing Sighting and Underrunning
11:00 11:45	**Technical** Health and Safety	**Technical** Intro to Practical Intro to Ladders			**Practical** Split Stow Ladder
11.45 12:00	**Technical** Senior Manager Introduction	**Technical** Banks Person	**Practical** Preliminary drills, numbering, Intro to Hydrants		
12:00 12:30	**Technical** Occupational Wellbeing				
13:30 14:00	**Technical** Discipline and Grievance	**Technical** PDR Pro LCMS TFFADL	**Practical** Intro to Hose	**Practical** Pump Drills P5-P7	**Practical** Pumps P8-P11
14:00 15:00	**Technical** Kit Issue/Audio Visual		**Practical** Hydrant Drills H1-H4		
15:20 16:00					
16:00 17:00	**Technical** Ice Breaker/Tour of Facilities		**Practical** Knots and Lines 1&2		**Practical** Knots and Lines 3 PM Remarks
			Technical PDR Pro	**Technical** PDR Pro	

BAP027	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
			WEEK 2		
09:00 09:15	**Technical** Consolidation	**RTC Technical** Legislation and Scene Safety	**Practical** Pumps P1-P11	**Practical** Ladders L1, L2 [using 9/10.5m ladder] Gantry Systems	**Practical** Introduction to L5
09:15 10:00	**Practical** Knots and Lines 4&5				
10:20 11:00	**Technical** Standard Messages	**RTC Technical** Systematic Approach			**Practical** L5
11:00 11:45	**Technical** Extinction of fire Foam and Extinguishers	**RTC Technical** Kinematics of Trauma	**Assessment (Written)** TTMS		**Practical** Ladders L3-L5
11.45 12:30	**Technical** Hazard ID	**RTC Technical** Stabilisation	**Assessment (Written)** Hydraulics and Pumps		
13:30 14:15	**Practical** Deep Lift Faulty Primer Hose at Head (where appropriate)	**RTC Practical** Vehicle Preparation	**Practical** Ladders L1,L2 Gantry Systems	**Practical** Introduction to L3	**Practical** Combined Drills PL1-PL3 [using 13.5]
14:15 15:00		**RTC Practical** Stabilisation/ Equipment Staging Area		**Practical** L3	
15:20 16:00		**RTC Practical** Glass Management Hazard ID & Vehicle Prep		**Practical** Introduction to L4	
16:00 17:00	**Practical** Face Fit	**RTC Technical** Written Assessment		**Practical** L4	**Technical** PM Remarks Course Debrief
			Technical PDR Pro		

Appendix 2

Education Scotland
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Education Scotland report on the quality of training of retained Firefighters in Scotland.

In May 2018, the Chief Inspector of Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI), requested that Education Scotland take part in the national HMFSI review of training of Retained Duty System Firefighters (RDS) in Scotland.

It was agreed that review teams from Education Scotland would evaluate the online materials utilised in training sessions for RDS Firefighters and would visit fire stations to observe training when it was taking place.

In agreement with the Chief Inspector of HMFSI, a team of HM Inspectors of Education and college Associate Assessors (AA) visited six fire stations during the evening training sessions for RDS Firefighters. These were in Kingussie, Fort William, Inverness, Troon, New Cumnock and Beauly. During these visits the team observed the training sessions and held discussions with the RDS Firefighters and those staff delivering the training.

RDS Firefighters in Scotland have evening training sessions each week. These generally occur on a Tuesday or Thursday evening and they work on training materials as a group during part of these sessions.

The Lead Officer for Post-16 Reform from Education Scotland attended a meeting with the Chief Inspector of HMFSI and his Depute, and the internal team from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service which produces and updates the online learning materials.

A team consisting of HM Inspectors and AAs from Education Scotland also visited the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service training headquarters in Cambuslang to review the online training materials in the Learning Content Management System (LCMS) and to speak with staff responsible for developing and hosting the materials.

This report highlights the main features of positive practice and areas for development.

Areas of positive practice
Use of resources

The range of units is comprehensive, containing a great deal of detailed information, and covers all of the areas of knowledge and competency that firefighters are required to understand and develop in order to operate safely.

The platform for the LCMS is easy to use and navigate and there is a wide range of resources, such as Sharable Content Object Reference Model resources, videos, photos and Portable Document Format (PDF) files. For example, the Training for Operational Competence section is well developed, the Core Skills Videos are useful and there is a strong Health and Safety section.

In most of the training sessions, officers are provided with a good introduction, which clearly identifies the aims and outcomes of the lesson, with clear objectives established at the beginning and again at the end.

For those firefighters with Additional Support Needs (ASN), such as dyslexia, arrangements for additional time and coaching are provided. Firefighters with ASN are referred to the Training Department which deals with specific requests to assist their learning.

In the core units, there is a good mix of materials, including PowerPoints and assessment questions, to reinforce learning. There are videos embedded into certain sections, but there are timing problems in loading and playing the videos. However, the quality of the videos is good and prove useful to firefighters.

Assessments

Formative assessment is usually carried out as a group exercise at the end of the training sessions. This stimulated discussion between crew members to agree jointly on correct responses and assisted the trainer to clarify any learning points, if necessary.

Summative assessment procedures allow for three attempts at an online assessment. If the firefighter fails three times they are referred to a senior staff member at central training headquarters, who will discuss remediation and next steps.

Trainers' experience and approaches

In the stations the team visited, trainers have a good rapport with the crew members and treat them professionally and respectfully. Trainers use personal perspectives well by providing real-life examples and use humour to engage participants.

The crew are able to use their considerable knowledge and experience to inform discussion around specific issues raised during the training sessions. This peer learning is particularly effective.

Practical demonstrations are of great value to the firefighters. For example, how to remove an unconscious motorcyclist's helmet and apply a neck brace. Where firefighters engage well in discussions, this is purposeful and helps to aid understanding.

During assessments, if any of the firefighters undertake a test and get a question wrong, they are referred back to the question they failed, to go over the material and have another attempt at the question.

Areas for development
Use of resources

In almost all stations there are insufficient computers for the size of the group and this disrupted their opportunities to go over the online support materials and to undertake individual assessments.

Due to time constraints, some retained firefighters find it challenging to complete the online assessments during their time at the fire station. This is due in part to a lack of available computers for all of the group to access on completion of a training session.

The resources are devised to be used as an individual study approach, but they are being used as a group teaching tool, due to lack of computers. There are severe Information Communication and Technology issues due to a software update and PDF files and videos cannot be opened and used in some stations.

Rather than be utilised as an effective online learning environment, the LCMS platform is used as a repository for materials. In some cases, it appears materials are uploaded with no thought to how the firefighters and trainers will work through them as teaching resources.

There is a lack of clarity on which units are mandatory elements, which of the online resources have expired and an inconsistent structure to how the courses are designed and delivered. This leads to a fragmented nature for each of the units and it is unclear how they link together. For example, the assessment banks are very limited and are not in the form of formative or summative assessments, materials are detailed in places, but very minimal in others and many of the modules are lacking effective examples.

In almost all cases, photographs in the training materials of firefighters in the PowerPoint slides, are usually male.

For part-time firefighters, the volume of specialist knowledge covered in the training units is unrealistic. All officers feel that there is excessive content on the LCMS, with too much information for participants to retain, which takes up a huge amount of their time and eats into their practical training time.

Learning and assessment

Many firefighters find it challenging to complete the individual online summative assessment during their training sessions at the fire station. The firefighters can access resources from home, but feel the training should be done in the station and find it frustrating that the resources are not available for them at the station.

Learning is not sufficiently differentiated to take account of the learning needs of newer crew members and more experienced firefighters. They struggle to identify which aspects of learning are essential and crucial to their role.

Learning is too passive and is not sufficiently active. Training relies too heavily on lengthy PowerPoint presentations in which the trainer reads aloud the text for each slide.

Many opportunities are missed to allow officers to be more active in their learning. Almost all officers state that time restrictions often encourage only surface learning and that there was insufficient time available to carry out both their online learning and the practical duties expected of their role. As a result, many officers undertake online learning in their own time.

Trainers do not utilise a sufficient range of questioning techniques to check understanding. There is little thinking, analysis or reflection by the firefighters to aid comprehension. This results in the training session being dull at times and not sufficiently stimulating for the crew.

Generally, most of the questions which are asked, are closed questions. Trainers also answer their own questions if the others do not respond sufficiently quickly, as they are under pressure to move on to the next bit of content. The pace of the sessions is very quick as there are large sections to get through in the time available.

In almost all cases, training for presenters had taken place some time ago and there has been no refresher courses to support them develop their training approaches. In some cases, the trainer had not received any formal training on delivering the training material or in adopting a range of learning methodologies to engage the retained firefighters.

In almost all cases, firefighters do not value or enjoy the sessions. They state that there are too many slides and there is too much detailed information, much of which is not relevant to their roles as part-time firefighters. In discussions with the review team, they complained of information overload.

Much of the teaching approach relies on short-term memory retention, which is assessed during the test. This is poor practice, as in time, it will be lost from recall.

Feedback is currently underdeveloped with regards to identifying where learning has not been effective and shaping future learning activities. Firefighters would benefit from more feedback on their assessment performance before they declare themselves as competent on some aspects of the learning materials. In a few instances, they express uncertainty about whether they had attained an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding to record competency in PDRPro.

Appendix 3

Extract from Appendix 4.2 of the SFRS Incident Command Development Pathway Policy

Incident Command Level 1 Pathway

ICL1 Equivalent considered to be:

A pass in one of the following courses, measured against the National Occupational Standards (NOS) at WM7:

- Incident Command Level 1 A (ICL1 A)

- Introduction to Managing Incidents (IMI)

- Incident Management Foundation (IMF)

- Incident Command Foundation (ICF)

- Supervisory Management Programme – Managing Incidents (SMP MI)

- Crew Manager Managing Incidents (CMMI)