

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org.uk

March 2007

RACE EQUALITY

Are we getting there?

Attacks on firefighters

Training tackles
hostilities



You are on hold ...

Regional
controls call
handling
would result
in rapid
meltdown



Day off

Me and my
records



Looking back, moving forward



The National Joint Council (NJC) recently agreed the introduction of a new scheme for payments for Continual Professional Development (CPD). The scheme, guidance and application forms have now been issued throughout the service.

The CPD scheme was agreed following more than twelve months of negotiations. These were required as part of the 2003 pay and conditions agreement which also agreed the ending of long service pay. I am aware that this has been a difficult and controversial subject for the union and that many of you will still be unhappy at the loss of long service pay.

However, the union collectively agreed in 2003 to the phasing out of long service pay and the introduction of CPD payments. That inevitably meant that any new agreement would see some gains and some losses. There are certain aspects of the CPD scheme which many FBU members may not like. At local meetings throughout the country officials who were involved in the discussions have explained step by step how each issue was encountered and how each issue was dealt with.

The talks over the past year were difficult and at times looked as though they would never reach a conclusion. Nevertheless an agreement was reached. I have no doubt that we will experience difficulties in some parts of the service in relation to CPD. In any such

cases the local officials of the union will need to draw on the assistance of the Joint Secretaries of the NJC. However, I am pleased to hear reports that in a number of areas the local management have been adopting a very sensible attitude towards the introduction.

The CPD negotiations were one of the final parts of the 2003 deal which needed to be resolved. From now on we will all be facing a new set of challenges. In many ways the arena in which we are operating has changed and the union is discussing the ways in which we also need to change to take account of the new situation.

The first significant challenge is the issue of pay. The 2006 pay rise marked the final formal stage the 2003 agreement. The union has therefore raised the issue of pay for 2007 with the employers.

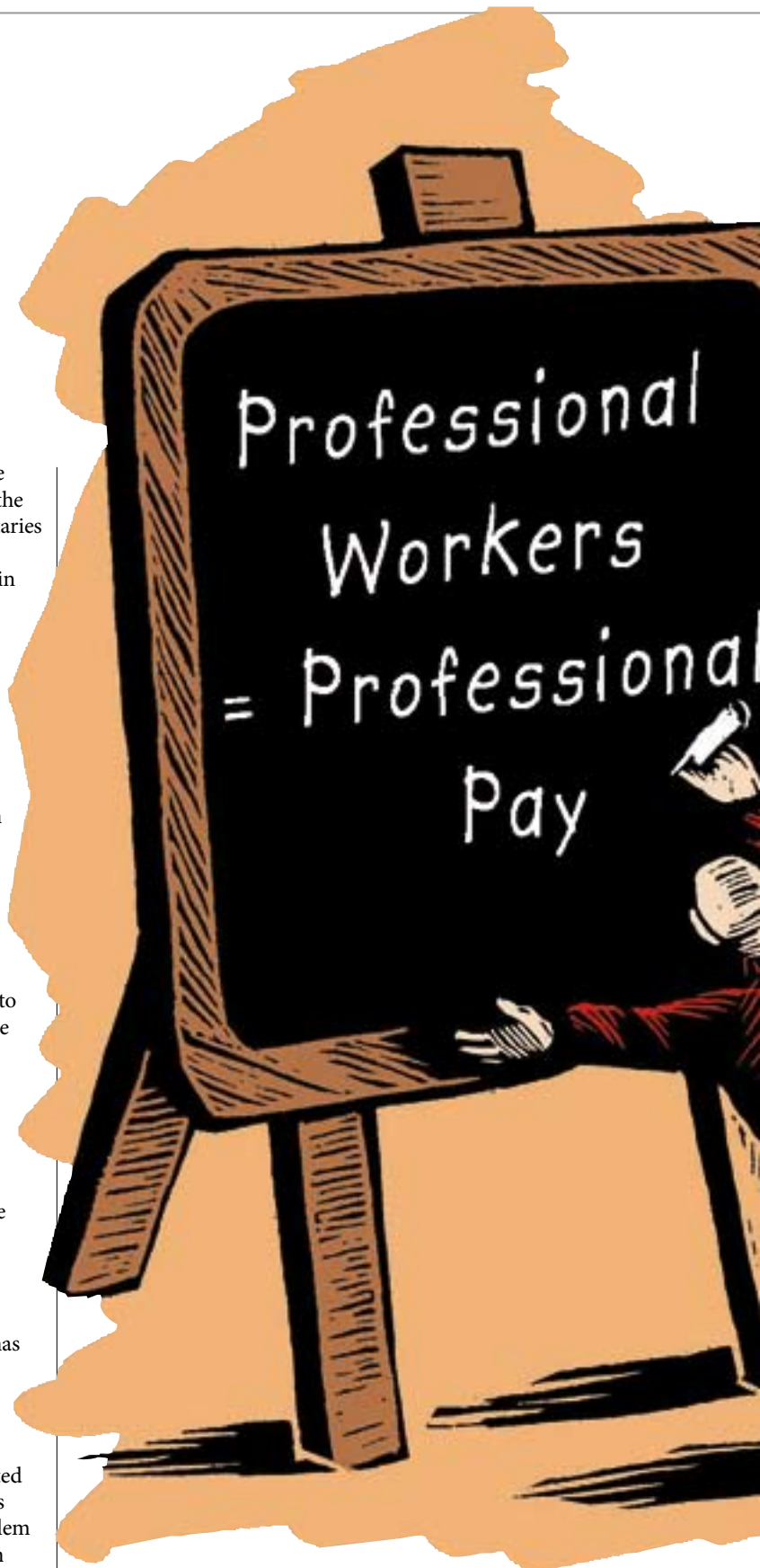
Time for some stability

The fire and rescue service has been through a period of enormous change since 2003. In a number of areas these changes have left FBU members angry and frustrated at the direction the service is moving in. There is no problem with genuine modernisation but all too often what we are seeing is cuts and attacks on our conditions of service.

The FBU has argued that to provide some stability in the service the pay formula should continue to be honoured. That has been suggested to the

employers at the NJC. The ball is now in their court and we expect some response during March. I hope that they will take the opportunity to send a message that they do value the people

who work for them, the people on the ground who provide such an excellent service to the public. Following the national dispute in 1977/78 and until 2002 pay within the service was decided





BRIAN GALLAGHER

today could also help to bring some stability back following a turbulent period.

FBU officials around the country will be meeting to discuss the issue of pay and to hear reports from your national negotiators. This is obviously a key issue for every single one of our members and their families.

I ask that every branch discusses the issue of pay and that all members participate in the meetings and the debate.

If necessary, our annual conference in Southport in May will address the current state of pay talks and will decide on the next steps the union needs to take.

However, all this could be resolved extremely easily by a simple decision on the part of the employers.

Control regionalisation

The threat to our emergency fire controls is still there. As the article in this month's magazine highlights, the union continues to highlight the threat to the service from these proposals and in particular from the plans in relation to call capacity.

At the same time as continuing with this aspect of our campaign, the union is also providing advice and training for local officials to ensure that the rights of our control members are fully protected under all circumstances. Training is also being provided for the Control Staff National Committee.

I would urge all control members to discuss any concerns with the local officials.
Matt Wrack

by means of a formula. This provided stability and continuity to industrial relations and for that lengthy period meant that industrial action over pay was avoided. A similar approach

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conditions, the FBU reveals

PUZZLES

WIN
A barbecue
see p22

Win this month's quiz, and you'll be the owner of an Outback Exclusive Charcoal Hooded Barbecue. It has a porcelain-coated cast iron cooking surface – rust-proof and more hygienic; a swingaway warming rack; a one-piece hood with a built-in heat indicator; a front leg brake for safety and a removable ash tray for easy cleaning. All mounted on a sturdy wood trolley with storage space concealed by a removable nylon screen.



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JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



ROB BRENNER

FBU members on the picketline in Merseyside – bullying is worse now than during last year's dispute

'Culture of bullying must stop'

MERSEYSIDE

A survey of Merseyside fire crews has found nearly all of them say bullying is a serious problem at work. Nearly one in nine respondents had been bullied and two out of three said they were still being bullied.

Nearly half of those who responded said bullying was happening on a daily basis. But only one in ten had confidence in using Merseyside fire service's system for dealing with complaints about bullying.

The Union, which carried out the survey between December 2006 and January 2007, said the findings are without precedent in a

British workforce. The union has called for the fire authority to listen to the findings and for senior managers to join with the Union to start a process of conciliation as rapidly as possible.

Respondents said there had been a steady rise in bullying from 2002 onwards that increased during the period of industrial action and became worse after the dispute ended.

Bullying reported included threats of "punishment postings" – moving people to workplaces as distant as possible from their homes – threats, intimidation, shouting, abuse and humiliation.

Some of the causes identified in the

survey include poor management, inadequate training for managers and staff, stressed managers and staff shortages.

"No survey of any British workforce has found bullying and intimidation at these levels," said Les Skarratts, Merseyside FBU brigade secretary.

"The survey found a fire service run by fear and threats with a sharp rise during and after our dispute. That is entirely wrong. Some managers appear to think they are free to abuse, threaten and intimidate. That culture has to end and that can only come through the leadership of the fire authority making senior managers address the problem."

Northumberland crews remind managers of law

CO-RESPONDING

Northumberland fire crews have hit out at attempts by senior managers to introduce a co-responding scheme in the brigade, pointing out that the legal responsibility to respond to medical emergencies lies with the ambulance service and not the fire service.

Attempts by two fire authorities – Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire – to force fire crews to attend serious medical emergencies on behalf of the ambulance service were defeated in the High Court in October last year. In his judgement, Justice Butterfield made it clear that co-responding cannot be forced on fire crews.

“Local fire crews only want what is best for the public of Northumberland,” said Gary Wilson, Northumberland FBU brigade chair. “Even the best, most highly qualified fire fighter is no match for Northumbria ambulance paramedics who have been trained for years.

Insult to paramedics

“It is an insult to highly skilled professional paramedics to suggest they can be replaced by an enthusiastic fire fighter with limited training. If the Northumbria Ambulance



A highly trained professional paramedic attends to a heart attack victim in an ambulance

Service is struggling to provide a timely medical response then it should be seeking additional funding to ensure the public get the proper medical response they deserve.

“When a member of the public dials 999 with a medical emergency they should rightly expect to get one of our highly trained professional paramedics responding. They do not want two fire fighters with basic first aid skills in a 4x4 pickup truck.

“Despite making several requests to the Northumberland Fire and Rescue service for a meeting to discuss these issues all requests have been turned down.”

New research launched into firefighter work experiences

SURVEY

The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) has commissioned ICM, a research company, to undertake research among wholetime and retained duty system firefighters in England – both serving and those who have recently left the service.

The research will investigate their workplace experiences to “support the service in the development of effective policies and practical approaches to tackle key workforce issues such as recruitment,

retention and progression.”

ICM has already begun its research, which is supported by the FBU and other fire and rescue service stakeholders, and

Guarantee that no-one who takes part will be able to be identified

will continue to work with firefighters and other stakeholders in the sector to design a questionnaire that will be sent to a random selection of firefighters by the end of March.

The company says it will conduct this project under

Market Research Society guidelines, meaning it will guarantee absolute confidentiality to anyone taking part – either by attending a focus group or completing a questionnaire. ICM says it guarantees that no-one who takes part will be able to be identified.

It is anticipated that the research findings will be this summer.

ICM is urging everyone who is invited to take part in the survey to complete and return the questionnaire. There will be a point of contact at ICM for anyone invited to take part who has any queries about the survey.

Sounding off!

LINDA SHANAHAN

Brigade Secretary Fife
(Seconded to Scottish Executive)

Violence at Work

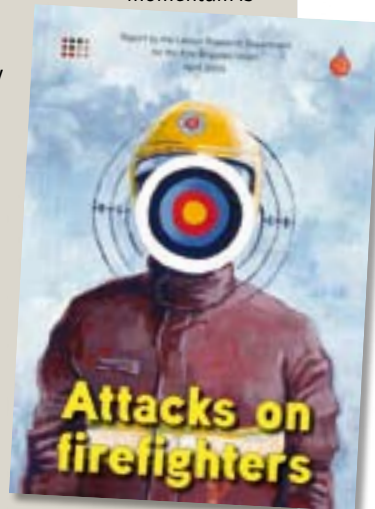
VIOLENCE at work has become a depressingly common issue that affects firefighters on the fireground or in the community offering fire safety advice. Officers carrying out enforcement duties or those working in control experience verbal abuse.

Unfortunately, although this has been happening for many years, the impact this can have on us as individuals, on the service we provide or the safety of community we serve, is only now becoming recognised.

In Scotland, following the introduction of the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act, the Scottish Executive, in partnership with the Scottish TUC, has been taking forward a package of measures to:

- Assess the level of the problem across all sectors working with the public
- Identify good practice in the sectors affected
- Promote the unacceptability of physically and verbally abusing workers

Many examples of good practice have been identified and one in particular which is gaining some momentum is



the approach of the Student Loans Company (SLC) that initiated research to discover the psychology behind anger and rage and the physical effects this can have on the person on the receiving end as well as the “customer” or “client”.

By understanding the psychology between what can be “acceptable anger” due to poor service, etc. and rage, which is always unacceptable, it becomes easier to manage the situation and maintain an appropriate level of service.

The approach adopted by the SLC has proved extremely successful. Staff report that they are able to deal more efficiently with aggression at work and that their personal communication skills outside the work environment have improved.

The partnership work is now working to develop this valuable insight to help inform and resource training in conflict management across all relevant sectors including the fire service. Watch this space! (See article on page 12 on Greater Manchester’s training initiative)

→ www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/attacks/

Formal complaints lodged against Wilts CFO and chair

RACE ALLEGATIONS

The Union has lodged formal complaints against Andrew Goves, the Chief Fire Officer of Wiltshire Fire Authority, and Jerry Willmott, the Chair of Wiltshire Fire Authority. The complaints centre on an email allegedly sent by Mr Willmott to Mr Goves and a second email allegedly sent by Mr Willmott to another fire authority employee.

The Union says there should be a full inquiry into highly offensive racist comments in the emails. As one of the emails

potentially sought to interfere with an investigation into allegations of race discrimination and victimisation at Marlborough fire station, the subsequent failure to pursue that investigation will also come under the spotlight.

The email concerning that investigation was allegedly from Mr Willmott to Mr Goves on 9 January 2006. The Marlborough investigation followed a complaint by a white firefighter over the racist treatment and victimisation of the station's only black firefighter.

This email, allegedly from Mr Willmott, refers to the

white firefighters at the station as a "good bunch" while the station's only black firefighter is described as a "darky" who is "nothing but trouble".

The Union has been informed that it is disputed that this is a genuine email and that the matter has been referred for independent forensic examination. The Union welcomes an independent investigation but this should be commissioned by another fire authority, not by Wiltshire.

More info: www.fbu.org.uk and article on page 10

Union reaffirms commitment to equality

DIGNITY AND RESPECT

The Union has moved to reaffirm its commitment to equality in the wake of press coverage and public debate concerning the 2006 Scotia Pride event in Glasgow and the attendance at this event by the Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service.

This event was followed by a highly publicised discipline case within the fire service.

In a letter to all FBU members, General Secretary Matt Wrack, did not comment on the case but said that "there appears to have been a great deal of misunderstanding of the issues involved, including the advice and representation provided to the FBU members concerned."

The General Secretary underlined Union opposition to discrimination on grounds of religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or trade union activity and added: "As professional members of the Fire and Rescue Service, FBU members are rightly expected to treat all sections of the community with dignity and respect."

"Both as professionals within the service and as Trade Unionists, we must ensure that these high standards of behaviour are maintained."

HOWARD DAVIES/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



Firefighters take part in a gay pride festival in Brighton

The UK fire and rescue service has once again put in a poor showing in Stonewall's ranking of the UK's top 100 gay-friendly employers. Stonewall, which campaigns for equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, puts London Fire Brigade at No. 28 and West Yorkshire at No. 73 for the 2007 ranking. Employers were ranked according to criteria ranging from implementation of an effective equality policy to demonstrating how they engage with their lesbian and gay staff and customers and service users.

In brief

◆ Fire engines equipped with cameras could be used to catch motorists committing a wide range of minor traffic offences under a proposed partnership between police and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The move has been condemned by the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) as a development that would put staff in danger of attack from the public. FBU official Gerry Pagan said: "It is clearly a police remit and something we don't want our members linked with because it would lead to attacks on firefighters."

◆ FBU members lobbied MPs in parliament on January 23 and attended a rally where speakers from 15 unions stressed the need to stop privatisation of public services. FBU national officer Dean Mills, responding to comments by TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber (inset) on the need for Government to work more closely with public sector unions said public sector unions could only start to work more closely together if the Government first stopped actively working against us.

◆ The £350m national radio network for the fire service has missed its first deadline and supplier O2 Airwave may be fined. The contract for the tetra-based Firelink system was signed in March last year, almost two years later than first planned. According to a regional management board report from Yorkshire and Humberside Fire Authority, implementation is already behind schedule. "O2 Airwave missed the first milestone of the contract and is now subject to liquidated damages," says the report seen by Computing magazine.

◆ Fireworks are being kept across Brighton and Hove in storage containers which can "go off like bombs" according to claims reported in the Brighton Argus. A concerned councillor has called for an investigation into three sites licensed to store fireworks in and around the city – at Moulsecoomb Way, Hollingbury Hollingbury and Devil's Dyke. East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's Brian Wembridge and Geoff Wicker both died at Festival Fireworks UK near Ringmer in East Sussex on December 3 following an explosion.

BARRY BATCHELOR/PA/EMPHICS



Jamie Oliver launches his new Fifteen restaurant at Watergate Bay, Cornwall

FIFTH COLUMN

An anonymous take on events in a brigade near you

Cornwall is the place to be if you're a celebrity chef looking for a location for your new trendy restaurant or a celebrity couple looking for a £3 million country get-away. We're ready to make you feel welcome. The brigade is also proud to proclaim its intention to make Cornwall the safest place to live, work and visit. But not, it seems, if you actually want to spend the night here. In 2008, 24-hour cover will end, surely making Cornwall the most dangerous place to sleep.

The Lib Dem council makes the normal pleading noises about Government taking our money to fund marginal constituencies in the South East, or levying taxes on landfill. They blame the second home owners and the millions of tourists who use the services, but don't pay any council tax.

As you would expect, the CFO has been noticeable in his failure to condemn these proposals. He meekly accepts year-on-year budget reductions, tinkers with structures, cuts officer posts to replace them with civilians and falls into the PFI money pit. When finally roused to comment on his plans for the brigade, he says: "It's the least worst option" and "not his recommendation". But he fails to make the consequence clear to his political masters.

As always it's left to the local FBU reps to stir up the press and councillors.

Cornwall is a paradox – economically so weak we get Objective One funding from Europe but with the largest pay-to-house price difference

CORNWALL

It's the place to be if you're a celebrity chef looking for a location for your new trendy restaurant

in the UK. It has a projected 20% increase in population over the next 10 years, mostly in the high-risk elderly age group. It has a large migrant worker population "hot bedding" but working in luxury hotels. And it has a poor communications infrastructure that groans under the summer influx of tourists.

Our two-shift stations are not as you might expect. Newquay provides fire cover for multiple HIMO's, transient workers and a population that swells to 100,000 in summer. City of Truro has the

largest life risk at the Royal Cornwall Hospital.

Then there's Camborne – the most socially deprived area of the county and the scene of £200m regeneration project that is leading to a 30% increase in population and business. It is also home to a rescue tender that covers all of West Cornwall and an incident response unit that is wholetime-only.

Falmouth has the third largest natural harbour in the world, home to a refit dock that relies on 24-hr cover to get Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service and private work. It is also a regular stop-off for the world's largest ocean liners and the home of the National Maritime Museum. Recently opened, the combined university bring thousands of students to rented accommodation in the town and surrounding area.

Long-term the answer for Cornwall is a sustainable budget based on a realistic emergency response plan. But for that to happen politicians locally and nationally need to face up to the fact that protecting life does cost!

Keep our NHS public

PAUL EVANS, DIRECTOR, NHS SUPPORT FEDERATION

“From the shires to the cities, Britain's streets and parks are seeing protests about the health service that are drawing comparisons to the poll tax. But what exactly is going on?

It is becoming clear that the government has a vision for the English NHS (the Scots and the Welsh have followed a different path). It is breaking up the service and passing much of it to private companies and others in a commercial market. What emerges will still be called the NHS, but it will be a mere logo attached to certain services, rather than a truly national system.

In its pursuit of this vision, the government is carrying out the 'patchwork privatisation' of the health service. Unlike the Thatcher privatisations of the 1980s, the entire NHS is not being put up for auction. Instead, it is being parcelled up into bite-sized pieces, and handed over to private control bit-by-bit.

So we are seeing private companies being paid by the NHS to carry out treatments like cataract and hip operations, often in mobile Portakabins set up in hospital car parks. They are paid a guaranteed sum of money whether they actually carry out the operations or not. Since patients often choose to stay with the NHS rather than go to the private centres, in many areas the cash-strapped NHS is literally giving money to the private sector for nothing.

Next time you go to your GP surgery you might find it has been taken over by a multinational company. The government has opened up GP services to the market, and huge corporations like America's United Health are lining up to make profits out of sick people.

The private sector is even being given a role deciding how to spend the NHS budget. The boss of one local NHS trust recently said he wants to cut his staff from 300 to 30 and let a private company effectively take over a public body – and gain the power to decide which treatments patients can receive. The chief executive told the press: “I want to get rid of everything, outsource it”.

This 'patchwork privatisation' is going hand-in-hand with constant reorganisation. Health secretary Patricia Hewitt is forcing through a new financial system – introducing a market in healthcare and telling NHS trusts that they have to be lean, mean commercial operators in the new competitive health service. The result is the deficit crisis that dominates the news and leads to job losses and the closure of wards, departments and even entire hospitals. This is dressed up as part of a drive to provide

'care closer to home', while in fact the cuts are just as drastic for local community staff. This 'crisis' is entirely self-made and avoidable, the result of a mad experiment with market forces.

Centralisation is a process familiar to workers in the fire service. Despite the fact that the NHS was created when Britain was bankrupt after World War II, we are told that the country cannot afford to keep the services it has now. Spurious reports are released insisting that closing A&E units can save lives, mirroring the claims of some councils that having fewer firefighters and closing fire stations can improve safety.

Last year the ambulance service was reorganised to give it a more centralised structure. Ambulance crews complained that response times would suffer. Meanwhile, non-emergency ambulance services are being privatised. This is already causing problems. In the south east coast area, where private company GSL won a contract for non-urgent patients, people have been left waiting for up to nine hours, and NHS ambulances have had to sort out the mess. There are reports that hospital staff have been classifying patients as more ill than they really are, to secure an emergency NHS ambulance.

The next battle looming is over charges for health care – the logical conclusion of privatisation and the market. A programme is already underway to soften up the public, with ex-minister Charles Clarke talking about introducing more charges like those for dentistry. But patients value the NHS precisely because they know that their health is the only priority for staff. They do not want the feeling of a dodgy garage, when you are never quite sure if the mechanic is ripping you off.

The tragedy is that these changes are the result of policies being forced on the NHS by a Labour government.

But the NHS will not be privatised and dismantled without a fight. Campaigns like Keep Our NHS Public – a coalition of health groups, unions, NHS staff and concerned individuals – are stepping up the pressure.

The FBU supports us nationally. Why not add your support or that of your branch? We urgently need to build a community wide defence of our NHS.

→ Contact us at NHS Support Federation, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG, or email olivia@nhscampaign.org. More information can be found on www.keepournhspublic.com/



Surgeons performing heart
transplant surgery in a
hospital operating theatre
PICTURE: SHOUT/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



It's about accountability

In a landmark moment for the FBU's campaign to end discrimination and promote equality in the UK fire and rescue service, all brigades throughout the country have now produced a Race Equality Scheme

In 1993 a young black man was murdered by five white men because of the colour of his skin. Who would have thought that out of such a tragedy could come something that has the potential to save lives in the future?

The 1999 McPherson report found that institutional racism – defined as the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin – played a part in the flawed investigation by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) of the murder of Stephen Lawrence. And it accepted the argument, made by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), that institutional

racism is not confined to the police.

Some 13 years after Stephen Lawrence's death, the UK fire and rescue service has made an important step in tackling the issue in its own ranks. Thanks to new legislation and pressure from the FBU and the CRE, all brigades throughout the country have now produced a Race Equality Scheme.

A Race Equality Scheme is a Specific Duty under the Race Relations Act 1976, which was amended in 2000 to include many of the recommendations made by the McPherson report. Public authorities like the fire service now have General Duties that oblige them to seek to eliminate racial discrimination, promote good relations between people of

different races and promote equality of opportunity. By producing and implementing a Race Equality Scheme, like other Specific Duties, they achieve minimum compliance with the law. All 58 brigades have to produce one.

Says Samantha Samuels, national chair of the FBU's Black and Ethnic Minority (B&EMM) section:

"It is often stated by fire authorities and FBU officials alike that there is no need to promote an equalities agenda because fire service personnel treat everyone 'the same'. It was also often stated by police authorities that their police officers treat everyone 'the same'.

"Unfortunately, as with the police, the facts don't support this in the fire service.

ANDREW WARD

them were disciplined or dismissed. The only way that fire and rescue services are going to make any progress in the area of equalities is to produce a Race Equality Scheme.”

According to the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE), a Race Equality Scheme “should summarise the public authority’s overall approach to racial equality and how this links to its corporate aims and objectives”, and public authorities will be answerable to the public for delivering the programme set out in the scheme.

It involves engaging with the black and ethnic communities the service serves and employs, monitoring and assessing all policies to ensure they don’t affect some groups negatively, and that all communities are satisfied with them.

Furthermore, it means dealing with evidence that its services and policies are not in line with the general duty to promote racial equality and to deal with complaints about the way it is meeting the duties, or other complaints about racial equality.

Fire authorities had two years to May 2002 to produce a scheme – or face one being imposed. Fast forward to February 2005 and the B&EMM National Committee wrote to all brigades asking them if they had a scheme, whether they had reviewed it, who they would be consulting with in reviewing the scheme (as well as whether they had conducted any equality impact assessments – see later).

Of the 60 fire and rescue services that B&EMM wrote to, 54 responded. Next B&EMM informed all who had responded that they were available to monitor their Schemes. It also chased down those who did not respond, informing them that it would be investigating their compliance with the Act and would reporting any perceived non-compliance directly to the CRE.

Over the following months, B&EMM regional reps began monitoring very closely all those who had not responded

Says Brian Amos, B&EMM rep for Wales: “Fire and rescue services across the UK have a legal obligation to produce Race Equality Schemes. Many had produced inadequate schemes or late schemes with little or no consultation with B&EMM or the diverse community which they serve.”

B&EMM also monitored those who had responded negatively to its requests for information.

A similar questionnaire on compliance was sent again to fire and rescue authorities. Out of the responses, B&EMM drew up a list of those that they felt were not compliant with the Act and wrote to those authority’s chief fire officer and chair telling them that the FBU was going to inform the CRE that it believed they were not complying with the law.

As with earlier requests for information, some responses were extremely negative, says

Samantha. “There were fire authorities who said they couldn’t ‘get round’ to producing a Race Equality Scheme because of ‘workloads’ and the ‘modernisation agenda.’ Equality and diversity in the workplace should be central to any genuine modernisation process.”

B&EMM then sent the information gathered on five authorities – West Midlands, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Merseyside and Cheshire – to the CRE and agreed a joint strategy to achieve compliance throughout the UK. The CRE followed up with a letter to all fire authorities expressing their interest in ensuring compliance nationwide. Meanwhile, B&EMM completed assessments of the five authorities, which involved detailed analysis of their schemes; their policies and functions; their websites; and collecting evidence from fire service personnel of their procedures in practice.

Armed with these assessments, the CRE sent three authorities letters saying that it was ‘minded’ to take enforcement action against them and sent two authorities letters demanding evidence and information to prove compliance, or demonstrate compliance. All 58 UK FRAs have now produced and revised their Race Equality Schemes.

In one major brigade with a high proportion of black and ethnic minority staff, a disproportionate number of them were disciplined or dismissed

“There are brigades that have no or few black or minority ethnic staff and no black or minority ethnic officers. There are brigades which lack understanding of communities within their service areas. There are brigades where hardly any black or minority ethnic people access their services, despite them representing sizeable communities in that brigade’s area. And, in one major brigade with a high proportion of black and ethnic minority staff, a disproportionate number of

Some authorities sent extremely negative responses to our requests for information on their compliance with the law

“This is an important milestone in our campaign for equality,” says Samantha. “But the campaign does not stop here.”

Samantha and her colleagues are now focusing on Equality Impact Assessments, which all fire authorities should have completed by now and training that FBU brigade officials will receive in March will help them ensure they are both adequate and implemented in full.

Adds Michael Nicholas, Executive Council member for B&EMM: “Race Equality Schemes are about accountability. We aim to ensure that UK fire and rescue services take their responsibilities to their employees and to their communities as seriously as we take them.

“And when you are talking about fire and other emergencies, it is no exaggeration to say that these measures are a matter of life or death to our communities.”

➔ For more information: www.fbu.org.uk
See also article on page 6.

TRAINING TACKLE

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service is training all its operational staff to deal with attacks in a programme that could provide a model for the rest of the UK

Attacks on firefighters will probably remain a sad fact of life for FBU members across the UK for some time to come. New legislation (the Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Act), it is hoped, will act as a deterrent, but with the best will in the world a problem tied up so closely with the wider issue of anti-social behaviour is going to take time to tackle.

In the meantime, crews facing violence at work need to be equipped to deal with it. And this means appropriate training. These were among the recommendations made by the Labour Research Department in its 2004 report on Attacks on Firefighters. The report, commissioned by the FBU, concluded that while operational guidance on dynamic risk assessment can be part of the solution, crews need to be properly trained in its application. That was nearly three years ago and as yet little has been done.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), which has from an early stage shown it is taking attacks seriously with, for example, support for the Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Act right from its inception as a private members' bill, is an honourable exception.

Following a successful pilot last July, it will this month roll out a sophisticated and tailored training programme for all its operational personnel.

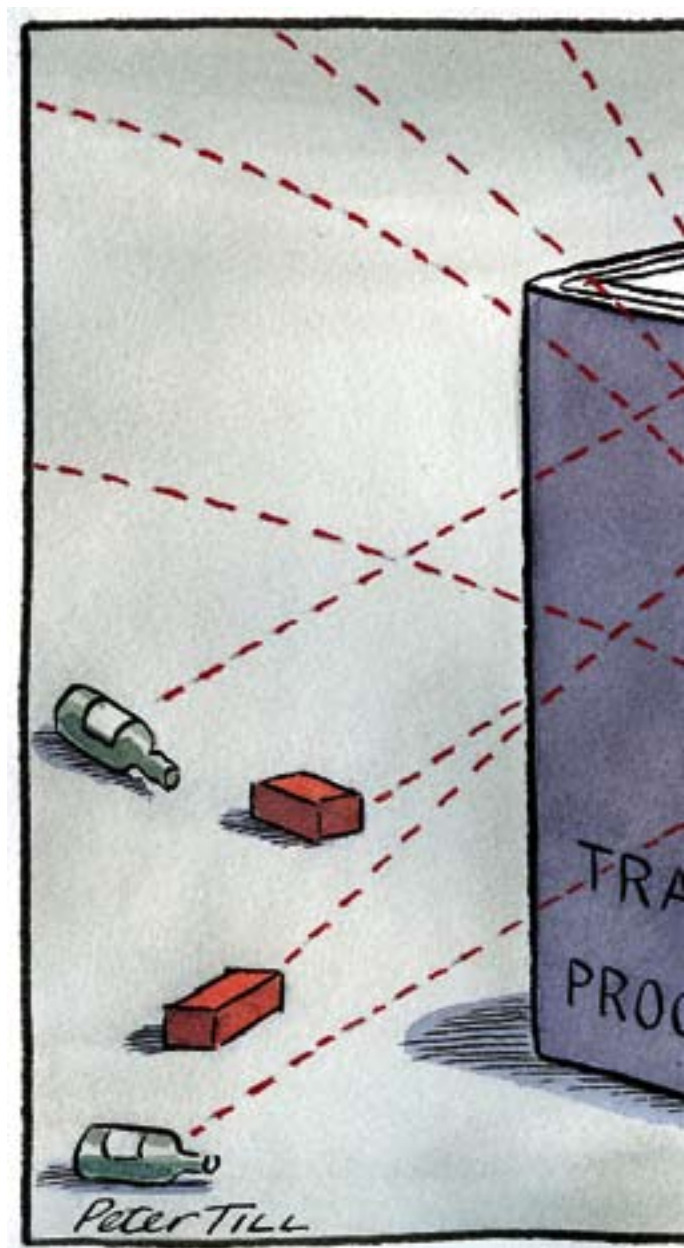
The training, which covers legal awareness, gathering evidence, conflict management, scenario role play and the system of relaying messages from the incident ground to control, is

based on academic research by station manager and FBU member Tony Bryan into the problem of attacks in Greater Manchester. This research included a survey of 232 operational firefighters in the brigade.

Tony researched the issue as part of his university degree and then subsequently worked on applying the conclusions of this research as part of the brigade's attacks task group. The upshot was a bespoke one-day pilot training course held last summer. Crews from Gorton, Salford, Broughton and Philips Park stations attended, along a local FBU health and safety representative. This training, the first of its kind in the country, was provided by Greater Manchester Police.

GMP, which offered its staff and facilities as a gesture of 'goodwill', were keen to develop this training to help equip GMFRS personnel with the skills and knowledge that are needed to deal with this problem in a more safe and effective

The pilot was received very positively and gave crews confidence to deal with the issue



Training course Content

Legal awareness The definition of work related violence; citizen's arrest; general lawful powers and the identification of offences eg criminal damage and different types of assault.

Gathering evidence Identification of the assailant; legal terminology and reporting to the police.

Conflict management Methods of dealing with the perpetrators of attacks and avoidance techniques.

Scenario roleplay A list of scenarios has been drawn up from statistical information and identifiable examples from the staff survey.

Messages from the incident ground this will involve the correct sequence of messages and also include the informative message 'police in attendance'. Messages shall be sent to control similar to the requirements of combined training and exercises. The format and content of the messages can be reviewed accordingly.

Debrief and feedback A debrief will be undertaken to identify the collective learning outcomes from the legal and scenario based input. This will be facilitated by GMP instructors. However, GMFRS trainees will need to take an active part in this part of the training.

LES HOSTILITY



THE PICTURE ELSEWHERE

Labour Research Department found in its 2004 Attacks on Firefighters report that there was a general lack of specific training for firefighters on violence at work in many brigades. In some brigades there was simply general advice to always wear PPE, helmets with visors down if facing violent situation, with some training in conflict resolution and negotiating skills for senior officers. There was a reliance on “collective wisdom” built up over the years, in some brigades. Firefighters, it found, also felt unsure of legal position, with some assuming that although they should not retaliate they could use reasonable force to defend themselves. There was also no specific guidance on how firefighters should respond to young children climbing on fire engines. For more info: www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/attacks

manner. Police instructors in conjunction with Tony, the GMFRS advisor, have spent much of their own time in the preparation and design of the course.

Says Tony: “The feedback from the students – delivered via questionnaires to all crews – has been very positive and extremely complimentary.

“There is no doubt that it has been received extremely positively and that the training is worthwhile. It gives crews the confidence to deal with the issue more appropriately and also understand how the police work and the type of information and evidence they require.”

Tony and his colleagues in GMFRS have enjoyed strong support for their efforts from chief fire officer Barry Dixon, who has agreed to roll out the training, to be carried out once again with assistance from GMP, to all 1,625 frontline personnel at an estimated cost of £34,000.

Says CFO Dixon: “We’ve decided to provide this training to all operational crews. It will be the first of its kind within the UK and would, without a doubt position us as the leading Fire and Rescue Service in terms of dealing with the issue and seeking proactive ways to address hostilities.”

Training course **Scenario role play**

The scenario roleplay depicted a range of ‘realistic situations’ – drawn up from statistical information and identifiable examples from the staff survey – that are experienced by the crews:

- theft of equipment from the appliance
- aggressive behaviour/assault
- criminal damage to the appliance/equipment
- actions to be taken in the event of missiles being thrown at the appliance/crew
- approach and threaten crews with various offensive weapons
- various booby trap situations to trap the crews
- attempt to obstruct the officer in charge
- grabbing the helmet visor of a firefighter
- attempt theft of the appliance and/or vehicle keys
- tampering with the appliance pump
- tampering with the water supply
- tampering with hose lines
- the retrieval of an arrested youth by an adult member of his/her – family/friend
- getting on top of the appliance
- riding on the back of the appliance
- tampering with a breathing apparatus set
- illegal use of the appliance radio.



You are on

You are on

You are on

You are on

999 call handling capacity of regional fire controls would result in rapid meltdown

The union has called on Government to halt the move to regional controls immediately after revelations about the very low call handling ability of the proposed regional controls.

The union said the new controls could handle so few calls the network faced collapse under genuinely sparse conditions.

At the time of the Buncefield explosion – 6am on a Sunday – the maximum hourly call handling capacity of the East of England regional control would only have been 105 calls an hour. The entire national network would only have had a call handling capability of only 1,050 calls an hour.

At the time of the 7 July bombings in London the hourly call handling capacity of the new regional control for London would have been 240 calls an hour. The entire national network of proposed new regional controls would only have been capable of handling 1,440 calls an hour at the time.

Even if a single New Dimension incident arrived when the regional controls were at

maximum staffing levels they could not handle more than 1,815 calls an hour across the entire national network. The three simultaneous attacks the fire service is planning to deal with could render the entire system ineffective because of the low staffing levels.

The revelations came in a Parliamentary Answer to a question tabled by Labour MP John McDonnell (see top right). In its answer – the first time it has ever revealed these

figures – the Government made clear the call-handling “capacity of each RCC depends on the number of staff and the shift pattern at any given time” and was “based on the current indicative staffing numbers and shift patterns...”

The staffing numbers have to be so low to make the “Business Plan” show the project will save money by employing fewer control staff than the current emergency fire controls. But these staffing numbers would result in a system with such few staff it would not work.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: “This is not the resilient network the Government claims. With this number of staff the system has the resilience and strength of a soap bubble.”

“The fatal mistake the Government is making is in thinking the technology alone provides resilience. As anyone in the fire service would tell them if they listened, it is people who give you resilience, not just screens, cabling and wires.

“When we saw the Government’s official figures for the first time we were stunned

They have not just got this disastrously wrong, this is bordering on criminally wrong

hold... hold... hold... hold...

by how few calls a regional control could handle in a busy period. Only one regional control outside London could handle more than 200 calls an hour at its peak and most far less than this.

“Major incidents don’t conveniently arrive to match your staffing model. Buncefield and the London bombings should have told them that and these were single incidents. The fire service is meant to be capable of dealing with three major incidents at the same time, but these regional controls would employ so few staff they would be incapable of that.”

Contacted about these figures numerous staff working in emergency fire controls told *Firefighter* that during spate conditions many single brigade controls have to handle the same number of calls a regional control would be expected to handle in future. Yet these regional controls are meant to handle the work done by up to 9 existing control rooms in nine brigades across vast regions.

In normal conditions the capacity

of regional controls might be just about adequate. But many times in the last year numerous local fire controls have had to cope with higher volumes than this on their own, never mind across a region.

General Secretary Matt Wrack told *Firefighter*: “In the last eight months severe weather has hit several regions at the same time generating thousands of calls for help from the public. With only a single control for

The public don’t want to be on hold listening to Vivaldi’s Four Seasons as the smoke is flowing into the room

Parliamentary Q&A

John McDonnell (Hayes & Harlington, Labour)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the (a) typical or average hourly call handling capacity and (b) maximum hourly call handling capacity is expected to be of each of the regional control centres proposed under the FiReControl project.

Angela Smith (Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Communities and Local Government)

The regional control centres are designed to meet or exceed the current Chief Fire Officer’s Association (CFOA) performance targets for call handling. These are: 85 per cent. of calls answered within 7 seconds; 95 per cent. of calls answered within 10 seconds; 98 per cent. of calls answered within 20 seconds.

The capacity of each RCC depends on the number of staff and the shift pattern at any given time. Based on the current indicative staffing numbers and shift patterns, the call handling capacity of each RCC is shown in the following table:

CALL CAPACITY OF REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRES

	08:00-16:00	16:00-20:00	20:00-23:00	23:00-08:00	24 hours	Annual
London						
Hourly	240	300	210	150	—	—
Period total	1,920	1,200	630	1,350	5,100	193,815
South East						
Hourly	150	195	150	105	—	—
Period total	1,200	780	450	945	3,375	1,286,625
South West						
Hourly	135	165	135	105	—	—
Period total	1,080	660	405	945	6,090	1,127,850
East of England						
Hourly	135	165	135	105	—	—
Period total	1,080	660	405	945	3,090	1,127,850
East Midlands						
Hourly	135	165	135	105	—	—
Period total	1,080	660	405	945	3,090	1,127,850
West Midlands						
Hourly	150	195	165	120	—	—
Period total	1,200	780	495	1,080	3,555	1,297,575
Yorks and Humber						
Hourly	150	195	165	120	—	—
Period total	1,200	780	495	1,080	3,555	1,97,575
North East						
Hourly	120	150	135	105	—	—
Period total	960	600	405	945	2,910	1,062,150
North West						
Hourly	225	285	195	135	—	—
Period total	1,800	1,140	585	1,215	4,740	1,730,100
Network						
Hourly	1,440	1,815	1,425	1,050	—	—
Period total	11,520	7,260	4,275	9,450	32,505	11,864,325

Notes:

1. These figures do not represent the projected requirement.

2. Assumes that a person working a 12 hour shift has the capacity to answer calls for nine of 12 hours.

3. Assumes an average call handling time of three minutes per call (taking account of all call types—emergency, administrative and additional assistance calls)

Source: Hansard

each region every one would have hit capacity quickly with no ability to take overflow calls from others.

“Regional controls might be able to deal with the desktop scenarios dreamt up by management consultants, but not with real life. Not only will they not make things better, on these figures they will be much worse when the public need them most.

“These figures will send a shudder down the spine of anyone who has any understanding of the real life strains being placed on the fire service. They have not just got this disastrously wrong, this is bordering on criminally wrong.

“The Government is trying to run 999 emergency command and control rooms like call centres. The public don’t want to be on hold listening to Vivaldi’s Four Seasons as the smoke is flowing into the room.

“The Government seems determined to press ahead with these plans. For the sake of firefighters and the public they must stop now and re-assess, because these figures show it will not work.”

WHAT DOES A RETAINED SUPPORT OFFICER DO?

Tony Talbot is lightening the load of RDS firefighters in Shropshire, acting as ambassador for the retained Service and a recruiting sergeant to boot

Firefighters working on the retained duty system (RDS), are the backbone of the fire service across large parts of the UK and the lifeblood of the service in rural areas such as Shropshire. Now Retained Support Officers (RSOs) have been put in post to lighten the load of RDS, prompted by local retained staff. They are also getting out there in the community as ambassadors and recruitment sergeants for the service.

The county's strategy is already paying off, and has even won praise from a government minister.

Tony has notched up 15 years service as a retained firefighter in Shropshire and he's still on call for 85 hours each week.

But since August, he has taken on a new job – working as one of eight RSOs in the county.

Shropshire has more RDS firefighters than any other brigade, providing over 70 per cent of cover in the county and staffing up 23 out

of 28 stations.

"Our main job is to keep appliances on the run," says Tony. "We are there to do what's needed – acting as driver, crew member and if necessary, officer in charge. We don't go in to take over, but to help out."

Shropshire RDS now get an extra three hours training every four weeks, under an £824,000 investment package

Few people realise how much the service relies on retained firefighters who also hold down other jobs. "A lot of people think there are crews waiting at the fire station all day. Not so," says Tony.

As well as crewing up appliances if needed, Tony and fellow RSOs are heavily involved in outreach, raising awareness of the role retained play and encouraging more people to join up.

They even have banners spelling out "Your Local Fire Station Needs Recruits." Women, traditionally unrepresented, are being particularly encouraged to put themselves forward.

Evening meetings provide a chance to give accurate information – and also whet the appetites of would-be recruits. Tony recounts



PICTURES: PAUL BOX

a recent meeting of local village traders in Albrighton, where most people thought the local station was fully crewed up all the time – a common misconception. "When you mention the word retained outside the service, most people think 'what's that all about?'" says Tony. He and other RSOs are out there putting them in the picture. By the end of the evening, at Albrighton, three people had signed up to explore becoming a RDS firefighter.

RSOs are not coy in spelling out the benefits joining can bring to both would-be recruits and their employers. Once recruited, RDS firefighters can earn between £5,000-£9,000 plus payments when they turn out to fight fires or attend traffic accidents once they pass recruitment and fitness tests.

Employers who release them can benefit from having staff trained up in first-aiding or even in driving larger vehicles at no cost, which can be a boon for small businesses. Trained RDS firefighters bring their new skills back to the workplace, and are not called out frequently, just when it matters. Every station was surveyed over a 12-month period, and there were only 20 fires in Albrighton and crews were away for no more than 30 minutes.

In Shropshire, local employers are



Tony Talbot holding up a new recruitment poster



Tony Talbot with a local employer (right) and his employee – a potential new recruit – at Much Wenlock fire station

“rewarded” with a buffet and a silver framed certificate for agreeing to release staff for retained duties.

Fire minister Angela Smith recently praised Shropshire Fire and Rescue for boosting retained in the county. She acknowledged the public needs to know that RDS firefighters “save lives.”

The impetus for the way Shropshire handled its review – which was carried out after a national review of the RDS – came up from rank and file retained who flagged up the need for more support.

They now get an extra three hours training every four weeks, under an extra £824,000 investment package for 2006/7 to upgrade fire appliances and equipment and increase staff. This includes the appointment of eight RSOs plus a project manager, funding community safety drives and recognising retained stations need 15 hours a week to keep up with the growing load of admin and paperwork.

Tony, still watch manager at Wellington

in his role in the RDS, is thriving in his new role. “I know how the retained service works and enjoy being part of it. I wanted a chance to make life easier for my colleagues.” Tony and his fellow RSOs believe that their job title gets it right. They do more than liaise. It is very much a hands-on job. Benefits to the county’s fire service since the RSOs were recruited in August are impressive.

Employers can benefit from having staff trained up in first-aiding or even in driving larger vehicles at no cost – a boon for small businesses

The number of fire alarms fitted in the county has quadrupled, home fire safety visits have increased and fire prevention campaigns are being rolled out across the county. RDS firefighters are under less pressure because of increased recruitment. When there’s a shortfall, RSOs can now step in.

But, as Tony puts it: “It’s not a long-term solution. We need more recruits.” The response looks promising, with people putting themselves forward for taster sessions at local stations. Recruitment has already risen by 166 per cent since August, compared to the same period the year before the RSOs came on stream.

Working For You

NORM PERRY

FBU/LGBT Rep

London



Stonewall’s Workplace Equality Index, which has just released its 2007 ranking (see page 6), is the definitive national benchmarking exercise showcasing Britain’s top employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff.

Top employers use the index to measure their own performance in relation to competitors as well as to ensure they are delivering world class services.

Working with Stonewall within London Fire Brigade has been challenging and thought-provoking. But at same time it has proved a useful tool to highlight the areas we see as ‘failure’, and where we can build on, using the index to set the standards for where we see London Fire Brigade and its agenda on LGB equality.

The index measures 20 criteria covering policy and practice — from having a non-discrimination policy promoted to all staff that includes sexual orientation to advertising in the pink media, and from supporting a lesbian and gay employee network group to having an openly gay senior member of staff.

Currently within LFEPA we have a staff network group, but we also have a functional FBU LGB (and transexual) group, who work closely together. This is vital to our success within the equality index and we hope to build on this in the future and work towards a top ten place. We cannot move this forward without the network group and the FBU working in partnership with London Fire Brigade.

As much as this is important to the future development of LFB, it is only a small part in the bigger picture, as we strive to bring about a fundamental cultural change in an organisation built on old-style core values dating back to the early 1900s.

Working with Stonewall through their diversity champions scheme will enable us to share good practice with other employers and eliminate the bad practices we have set, allowing us to move forward positively.

→ Stonewall’s diversity champions programme is Britain’s good practice forum in which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace.

Difficult to conceive

Problems are equally prevalent in men and women

INFERTILITY

Any couple trying to conceive are advised to follow a healthy lifestyle, to stop smoking or taking alcohol and to follow a healthy eating plan. It also has to be said that in some cases fertility may even be improved by simple lifestyle changes such as these.

Anyone who has been having unprotected intercourse for six months or more and has failed to conceive should approach their GP for advice. The GP can do some initial tests to check that the female partner is ovulating by taking some blood tests at the relevant time in her cycle, and a semen analysis from the male partner will also be analysed.

If any problems are found, usually the couple will then be referred to a consultant gynaecologist, and/or a urologist with specialist interest in fertility problems, where the results will be assessed and further tests carried out as required to ascertain the extent of the problem and decide upon the appropriate treatment plan.

Treatments range from simple drug regimes to help the female partner ovulate, through to IVF and other assisted conception techniques. The treatment recommended will obviously depend upon the diagnosis.

TOP TIPS:

- ◆ follow a healthy lifestyle
- ◆ stop smoking and taking alcohol
- ◆ follow a healthy eating plan
- ◆ if above fails, see a GP for advice
- ◆ GP can do some initial tests and if problems found ...
- ◆ likely be referred to gynaecologist/urologist ...
- ◆ gynaecologist/urologist will assess results and do further tests to ascertain the extent of the problem and decide upon the appropriate treatment plan

It is important to say that male and female fertility problems are equally prevalent, and in some cases, both partners are found to have problems.

The emotional impact

The emotional impact of infertility should never be underestimated. It is very real and can have quite serious effects on people. Infertility is an emotive subject, which many do not fully understand, because the vast majority of people take having a baby for granted. It is after all the natural progression of life. Conceiving a child is something that is private and special, and when told that you may never be able to have your own

child, it is totally devastating and affects every part of your life. Many people feel unable to even speak to family and friends about their suffering; such is the private and very isolating nature of this illness. There can be many hurdles to get over before even reaching the stage of having treatment, and meantime, all around, others seem to either be pregnant or have had a baby. Infertility is a very real illness and one which affects every part of the infertility sufferer's life, impacting on the very quality of their life.

Accessing treatment

In the UK, infertility sufferers are burdened with a postcode lottery. Access to NHS treatment will depend heavily upon where you live, with Scotland and Northern Ireland having much better funded services than those available to couples in England and Wales.

The National Infertility Awareness Campaign is an umbrella body which consists of many organisations within the field of infertility and was set up to campaign for fair and equal access to fertility treatment across the UK. Infertility Network UK (I N UK) lead this campaign and can provide those affected with advice on what they can do if they cannot access treatment.

Support, Help and Advice

Access to information is essential, but it should be relevant to you and to what treatments are available for you as well as being medically accurate.

I N UK provide a wide range of information and support services to those affected by fertility problems. These include:

- ◆ a daytime advice line
- ◆ factsheets on causes and treatments and many other related issues
- ◆ a quarterly magazine
- ◆ regional staff and local support groups
- ◆ medical advisors
- ◆ a wide range of books and videos for sale
- ◆ an interactive website

Those who use the services of I N UK tell us that the help, support and advice they receive has really helped them manage their illness and treatment.

→ If you are affected by fertility problems and would like to speak to someone, call I N UK on 08701 188 088
email admin@infertilitynetworkuk.com



Baby Nicholas Flickinger is the younger of two twin boys conceived on the same day by IVF, but born a year and a half apart. The twins' mother, Catherine, began IVF treatment in the USA in November 1986. 12 ripe eggs were taken from her ovaries and fertilised with her husband's sperm. Several of these were implanted in her womb and she became pregnant, giving birth to her first son, David, the following summer. The remaining fertilised eggs were frozen for later use. Catherine underwent a second successful embryo transfer, from the same batch of eggs, in May 1988, giving birth to Nicholas in 1989.

HANK MORGAN/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

Race discrimination

Q I believe I am being discriminated against at work on grounds of race and am considering going to an Employment Tribunal. Who can best advise me on this and what should the main considerations be?

A You should talk to your FBU rep before you do anything. Race discrimination cases are rarely straightforward and are probably the most difficult type of discrimination claim for an employee to succeed in proving.

Employers rarely now openly treat people differently because of their race and often genuinely believe that a decision has not been influenced by race. An employment tribunal must therefore decide whether the real reason for different treatment is race.

Race discrimination arises in four ways: direct, indirect, or by way of harassment or victimisation. It applies to how individuals are selected for a job, the terms on which that job is offered and provided, where someone is deliberately refused or not offered a job, in the way in which opportunities for promotion, transfer, training and benefits are offered and in the way an employee is disciplined or dismissed.

Therefore anyone considering pursuing a race discrimination case must be able to show that they have been discriminated against in one of those four ways and in those circumstances.

While direct discrimination – where someone has been treated less favourably than another on the grounds of their race – appears to be the most straightforward scenario, employers will almost always deny that the discrimination had anything to do with race and will go to great lengths to prove it. This causes difficulties for tribunals which must find the true reason for an employer's actions.

Indirect discrimination is where an employer operates a policy which appears to



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

have nothing to do with race but in practice the effect is to disadvantage ethnic minorities. This could include, for example, a requirement to have certain formal qualifications or to complete culturally biased recruitment tests.

There might also be a dress code or attendance requirements that a person from a particular ethnic background may find difficulty complying with.

All of these will be claimed by an employer to be non-discriminatory because they are required by all employees, regardless of their race. The onus however is on the employer to justify to the tribunal why it is

necessary to have such policies. A requirement for an employee to be able to read and write English, for example, where there is virtually no reading or writing required, is unlikely to be justifiable.

Pregnancy

Q I believe I am being treated badly at work because I'm pregnant. What are my rights?

A It is against the law for your employer to treat you unfairly, dismiss you or select you for redundancy for any reason connected with your pregnancy, childbirth or maternity leave. If you are dis-

missed while you are pregnant, or during your maternity leave, your employer must give you a written statement of the reasons for the dismissal. If you are dismissed or treated unfairly you can bring a claim in an Employment Tribunal for detrimental treatment, unfair dismissal and sex discrimination.

Maternity rights

Q There is a dispute at work about my maternity rights. What can I do?

A Most employers and their advisers are not familiar with the law on maternity rights, so if you have a problem it may help you to achieve a solution if you show them a Maternity Alliance factsheet explaining the law. Rights such as returning to work part-time are not very well known at all and your employer may not know that they are in danger of breaking the law.

You could write a letter to your employer explaining your views and send them one of the Maternity Alliance factsheets explaining your legal rights. Try and sort out the problem amicably. It may be that your employer is just mistaken or confused, rather than deliberately trying to treat you badly. You could ask for a meeting to discuss the problem. You can take someone into the meeting with you such as a friend, colleague, relative or an FBU representative. If you are not happy with how your employer has handled the situation you could make a formal complaint using the complaints or grievance procedure at your work. If you cannot negotiate a solution you will have to decide whether to take things further by making a claim to an Employment Tribunal. The time limit for making a tribunal claim is three months.

→ Write in with your legal problem to legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

‘I just love the American labels’

Alan Paterson’s hobby is so expensive that he would not be able to start it today. But he began early and has amassed more than 10,000 rare 45s and 1,500 albums from the 50s, 60s and 70s. And he’s not finished yet ...

As holidays go, two weeks spent in a warehouse in downtown Philadelphia doesn’t sound like much of a break. Unless, that is, you’re a northern soul fan with a passion for vintage vinyl.

Alan Paterson has been a music enthusiast since boyhood. He remembers being smitten by Ray Charles’ *Hit the Road, Jack* while listening to his parents’ radio-gram.

He developed a taste for fifties doo-wop group harmonies from the north-eastern states of the USA, and progressed to soul, Tamla Motown and the funkier sounds coming out of America in the seventies. While his schoolmates were into Slade and Status Quo, he was reading Beatles sleeve notes and tracking down the soul songs that had inspired them. He was obviously destined to become a record collector, attending fairs, swapping “doubles” and hunting down rare discs.

Alan even moved down to fight fires in Hertfordshire for two years in the early nineties, so he could save on expensive trips south to hunt down rare discs. He even became a regular at the famous 100 Club.

You can tell a serious collector by their grasp of detail and record company history, which Alan is happy to share. As any collector worth his salt knows, Tamla

and Motown were two separate US labels which came together when Berry Gordy started to distribute his records in the UK. Aficionados will also know the significance of TMG 501; it’s the serial number for *Stop in the Name of Love*, the first record Tamla Motown released in the UK. US labels Ric-Tic and Golden World tried to imitate the Tamla sound, but it wasn’t long before Berry Gordy bought them up.

True connoisseur

Alan, in the spirit of a true collector, tries to get hold of the originals, and has got “thousands,” including demos that were never released.

The Tamla Motown stable makes up a large chunk of Alan’s collection – with a good few US issues on Tamla (yellow label) Motown (blue with a map of Detroit) and Gordy, which just has Gordy’s signature on it and is highly collectable.

“I just love the American labels,” says Alan, speaking with the passion of a true connoisseur. “Over here they were largely black or blue. US sixties singles are highly collectable, particularly demos – and there are loads of collectors out there now, which drives up the price. I couldn’t afford to start collecting from scratch now.”

Alan has trawled Stateside warehouse and factory



PICTURES: DAVID BLADES



ALAN PATERSON

Grampian brigade secretary Alan Paterson has been a music enthusiast since boyhood. He was smitten by Ray Charles' *Hit the Road, Jack* on his parents' radiogram. He even moved to fight fires in Hertfordshire for two years in the nineties so he could hunt down rare discs.

The thrill of the chase: Alan Paterson hunts for rare records

'My boys can sell them if they want when I'm dead and gone. But I won't be selling'

outlets in his quest for rare discs, following leads, chasing tip-offs in the days before eBay and reference books made it easier to track down true finds. He was even able to bankroll one trip by selling on "doubles" to other collectors when he got home.

That two weeks in a Philadelphia warehouse with a fellow record collector back in '94 proved fairly lucrative. His fellow warehouse trawler has since "cashed in and sold the lot" but Alan isn't in it for the money and has no plans to follow suit. "My boys can sell them if they want when I'm dead and gone. But I won't be selling."

So what marks a disc out as collectable? "There are three main factors whatever people collect – demand, availability and condition determine the price."

Record prices have really rocketed

But Alan thinks records are there to be played. "If you take good care of your records, you don't need to worry. You can have them for years if you look after them properly. I've got paper sleeves, cardboard sleeves, the whole works."

Though a diehard vinyl enthusiast, Alan doesn't turn his nose up at CDs. "Record prices have really rocketed since I started to collect. Fortunately, I managed to get a lot of 'big pieces' before prices really took off, but I couldn't afford to start out collecting now."

He would encourage people who want to start from scratch to collect CDs instead. He's even got a good few himself. "I buy them to learn about new music, but they sometimes contain rare tracks and those that have never been issued before. And the "sleeve notes" can help me track down the original vinyl."

And for true collectors, tracking stuff down is, of course, part of the pleasure ...

ALAN'S TOP TEN

I feel so bad – Jackie Edwards (UK Island)

There's no love left – Isley Bros (Tamla)

Have I got a right – Chuck Cockerham (Mala)

The time is right for love – Bobby Reed (Bell)

My love is so strong – Joseph Webster (Crow)

You don't have to be a tower of strength – Gloria Lynn (Everest)

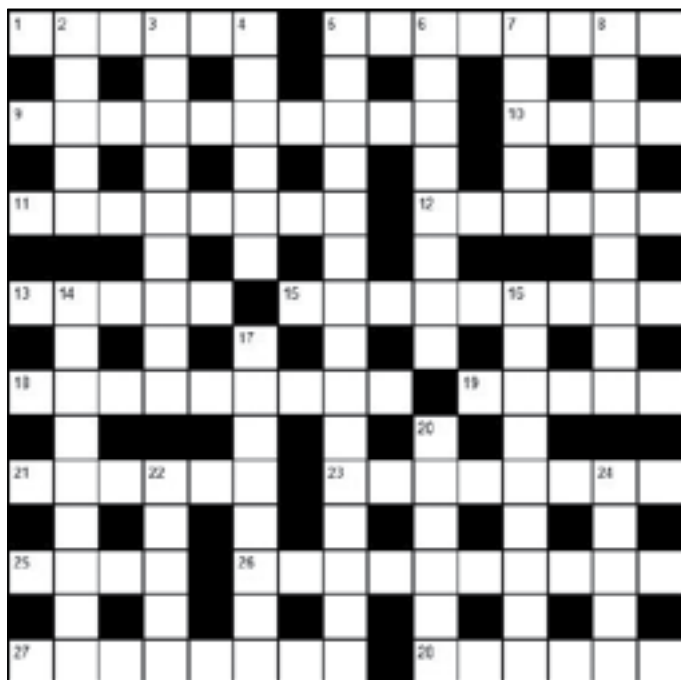
I'm the one who loves you – The Impressions (ABC Paramount)

What's a matter baby – Timi Yuro (Liberty)

I gotta have your love – The Sapphires (ABC Paramount)

Get involved – George Soule (Fame)

Quick Crossword



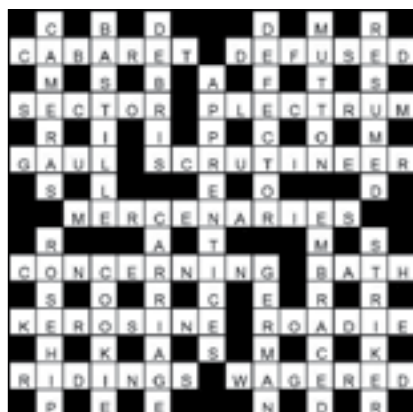
ACROSS

- 1 Package (of land or wine?) (6)
- 5 Used, with brushes, to clean floors (8)
- 9 CBeebies' 'hero next door', resident of 26 (7,3)
- 10 Flower of one's eye? (4)
- 11 Buy volumes here (8)
- 12 Type of jacket, or 'joint' (6)
- 13 9's oppo, or late resident of Graceland (5)
- 15 Put up with (9)
- 18 Natives of central European nation (9)
- 19 From Wales (5)
- 21 Cheat (with woodworking tool?) (6)
- 23 Very large numbers (8)
- 25 Eurovision gave them their Waterloo! (4)
- 26 Fictional 19 home of 9, 13 and Norman 7 (10)
- 27 www locations (8)

- 28 More reckless slice of bacon! (6)

DOWN

- 2 Spanish pal (5)
- 3 Inventory, used to make sure everything's there (9)
- 4 Hate (6)
- 5 Let-downs (15)
- 6 Southwest county (8)
- 7 Sum paid; or Norman, perennial pain in the posterior for 9 (5)
- 8 Silent (9)
- 14 Ludicrous, a bit of a joke (9)
- 16 Folk from across the pond (9)
- 17 Swift's land of the little people (8)
- 20 Former golfer Gary, or any sports person (6)
- 22 People who work when they really shouldn't (5)
- 24 Remind, with elbow? (5)



Solution to
January/
February
crossword



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP/EMPICS

Prize Quiz

Win an Outback Exclusive Charcoal Hooded Barbecue

Enter our prize quiz and it could be yours.
This issue the quiz is on music.
Answer the following questions to win.

- 1 Complete the title of the Madness song 'Baggy '?
- 2 Which band had hits with 'That's Entertainment' and 'Town called Malice'?



- 3 Name Lynyrd Skynyrd's song which includes the lyrics "Cause I'm as free as a bird now".

- 4 What was the name of Oasis's first top ten single in the UK?

- 5 Which newcomer has had a number one hit this year with the song 'Grace Kelly'?

- 6 'The most beautiful girl in the world' is which diminutive singer's only UK No. 1?



ANDY BUTTERTON/PA/EMPICS

EMPICS/TOPHAM PICTUREPOINT

HOW TO ENTER

To win the Outback Barbecue send your answers to the prize quiz by 31 March on a postcard to: Prize Competition (March 2007)

FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE.

Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.



Answers to the
January/February
quiz:
1. David Treseguet
2. Roger Federer
3. Ian Woosnam
4. Sussex
5. Ian Thorpe
6. Zara Phillips

Winner of the
November/
December quiz
was Neil Fretwell of
Doncaster

StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

Modern motors



Back to McGuirk's side where the world's greatest Chief Fire Officer Tony McGuirk still can't keep away from the email system. Tony sent a particularly crass and insensitive email after a blue transit van McGuirk's side use for their Special Rescue Team – and which was on the run during the strikes – was involved in a fatal road traffic accident.

Derrick Kelly was killed and a passenger injured when his Mercedes car was hit by McGuirk's side's blue transit at a road junction controlled by traffic lights. The three firefighters in the blue transit were also injured and taken to hospital.

In his email McGuirk hinted that Mr Kelly's death was linked to the age of the Mercedes. He wrote that "The vehicle it [the blue transit] hit was a relatively old vehicle without some of the protection of more modern vehicles." These comments provoked protests on Merseyside, including from Mr Kelly's family.

Like millions of other people, Mr Kelly may not have been able to afford a newer car with more modern protection systems. But unlike Mr McGuirk – who can more than afford to buy a modern car – Mr Kelly had to pay for his own vehicle.

As a Merseyside council tax payer Mr Kelly helped pay for the modern fleet of vehicles provided for the upper reaches of Merseyside FRS. This includes the gleaming Ford Galaxy Mr McGuirk drove to a "seminar" at a 4-star hotel in Warwickshire (pictured above).

Mr Kelly also contributed payment to the various BMWs and silver Range Rovers provided to some other senior managers in McGuirk's side. Just how much longer do the people of Merseyside have to put up with Mr McGuirk?

Awful Nick



The indescribably awful ex-fire minister Nick Raynsford has been giving evidence to the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee. He was bleating about how "very surprised" he was that he was not asked to account for his performance as fire minister.

JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



Galaxy man: The seven-seat Ford Galaxy Tony McGuirk used to a Warwickshire seminar

"The assumption was that if I did the job well then it would be fine and I would stay there or go on to other things; if I did not, I would go," he told the poor souls forced to listen to him. "... but there was no way in which one's performance was appraised in any sense other than just the occasional friendly remark of 'you have done very well.'"

Not the sort of remark that would have been made if he'd visited a fire station.

And it also sounds a million miles away from: "We value your terrific contribution to Government Nick, your ministerial career is now over. Please close the door on your way out." He's still on the backbenches of the Commons.

Stalinist scheme



Cambridge's tired old Parkside station does need a complete overhaul, but not on the lines put forward by the fire authority. They planned to demolish the station and build a new one with the overblown addition of 131 flats above it, a restaurant or café and car parking.

Not bloody likely. Cambridge City Council's planning committee said the scheme was overdevelopment and "Soviet-style Stalinist." Back to the drawing board with the local FBU wanting a new station and some redevelopment of the site, but not quite on the Soviet scale envisaged.

Not amused?



I hear Royal Berkshire FRS did not bag as many gongs in the New Year honours as it had hoped. But, as the locals point out, perhaps a certain Elizabeth Windsor (aka The Queen) has heard of the proposals to close Windsor Fire Station or switch it to retained duty.

Perhaps the Royal Household remembers the 45 appliances and hundreds of firefighters who helped tackle the Windsor castle fire. They also helped salvage a considerable amount of the nation's heritage and prevented more extensive damage.

There's always the birthday honours. If the plans are shelved, who knows?

25-year badges



Dave Aitken (left) of Buxton Blue Watch Derbyshire receives his 25-year badge from Brigade Secretary Mark Ferron



Chris Smith, South Cambs Fire Safety, (right) receives his 25-year badge from Paul Clarke, Cambridgeshire Brigade Secretary



Jim Fletcher (right) Training Centre Branch receives his 25-year badge from Lancs Membership Sec Tony Cavanagh



William McCutcheon (right) Thornhill retained, receives his 25-year badge from Colin Irving, Dumfries & Galloway Brigade Chair



Tony Clemenson (left) Dunkirk Branch Nottinghamshire receives his 25-year badge from Dave Limer Regional Secretary Region 6



Crew Manager Graham Riach (right) of Cromwell Road, Grimsby receives his 25-year badge from Humberside Membership Secretary Pete Smith



Chris Lever (left) Dunkirk Branch Nottinghamshire receives his 25-year badge from Dave Limer Regional Secretary Region 6



Watch manager William Slider (right) Thornhill Retained Station receives his 25-year badge from Colin Irving Dumfries & Galloway Brigade Chair



Tom Warnock (l) receiving his 25-year badge from Graeme Willis, Acomb Branch, North Yorkshire

Please send photographic prints or digital picture files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk (Please note that inkjet prints from digital pictures reproduce very poorly). Please include **FULL DETAILS** for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.



Dave Peet (left) of Buxton Blue Watch Derbyshire receives his 25-year badge from Brigade Secretary Mark Ferron



Tim Hague (left) Dunkirk Branch Nottinghamshire receives his 25-year badge from Dave Limer Regional Secretary Region 6

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0808 100 6061

The line provides advice for **personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.**

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.



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