



# *The Retained Duty System: A survey of local employers*

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Final Report



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A survey of local employers*

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Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 020 7944 4400  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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# Management Summary

Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters (those who respond to calls on a need-only basis, and are often fully employed in other occupations) are trained to deal with many of the situations and incidents attended by their wholetime counterparts. These include fires, road traffic incidents, dealing with hazardous materials and floods, and increasingly, protecting the community through fire safety work.

RDS personnel are a vital part of today's Fire and Rescue Service. They provide emergency cover to more than 90 per cent of the UK. The 14,000 firefighters who make up the Retained Duty System in England are generally located in rural communities, small towns and villages.

An earlier study<sup>1</sup> focused on the primary employment of RDS firefighters. While that generated a great deal of information about their employment patterns, it did not reveal much about the primary employers themselves, on whose support the Fire and Rescue Service is so reliant, in terms of the factors that motivate them to release their employees for RDS duties and the benefits they consider they gain from employing RDS firefighters. This survey was designed to fill that information gap.

Based on over 1,000 interviews, the results from this survey of current and former employers of RDS firefighters, and employers who have never employed or released RDS firefighters have proved very enlightening and challenge some preconceived ideas.

In general there appear to be no insurmountable barriers to releasing staff for the Retained Duty System. Most current and former employers were enthusiastic when they released their first employee for RDS duties and largely happy with the experience.

Contractually, almost all of them treat RDS firefighters in the same way as other staff.

Where there are non-contractual differences, they tend to offer concessions (such as flexibility in working, or priority parking to help facilitate quick response to an emergency call).

Employers who currently release their staff acknowledge the challenges (mainly concerning the ability to cover absences and maintain productivity) but appear willing to try to work around them. Relatively few had turned down an employee's request for release. Few cited financial incentive as an issue.

Among former employers, in most cases, RDS firefighters were no longer employed because of changes in the circumstances of the individual rather than as a result of a change of policy on the part of the organisation to preclude its employees from release.

While there are some preconditions attached to the release of employees, relating to the specific grade/level of responsibility of the individual and the potential impact of their absence while responding to an emergency call, the vast majority of current and former employers would consider requests from staff for release for RDS duties in the future.

<sup>1</sup> *The Primary Employment Status of Retained Duty System Firefighters*. Findings from a survey in England and Wales. Department for Communities and Local Government (2006).

The survey revealed that generally there is very limited contact between employers and the Fire and Rescue Service and/or their local fire station. Better communication would be welcomed by employers. Suggestions from them include providing more specific guidance on expectations, data on typical call-out frequencies/patterns and updates on any local developments in the Service.

Some employers would like recognition or a show of gratitude from the Service for their support. Perhaps a 'thank you' letter could be sent at quarterly or bi-annual intervals, summarising the level of activity in the intervening period, including details of major incidents that employees may have been called to.

Employers could be invited to meetings or social events arranged by the Service. Fire and Rescue Services might also consider offering some sign of association (eg a logo) to employers, which could be incorporated into note paper or letterheads as evidence of their support to the RDS.

Any increased contact with the local business community would require Fire and Rescue Services to hold and maintain comprehensive records. During the initial phase of this research it became evident that a number of Fire and Rescue Services did not have up-to-date records and, in some cases, kept no records at all.

Among local employers, once made aware of its existence, the majority were receptive to the idea of giving their support and willing to consider employees' future requests for release.

Comments offered during the survey suggested that individual Fire and Rescue Services should canvass local employers in the vicinity of fire stations (via mailshots, telephone or face to face) to promote the benefits of RDS firefighting. In collaboration with primary employers who already release their staff, Fire and Rescue Services could provide case studies illustrating how preconceptions compared with the reality of employing firefighters, and clearly explaining the commitment that would be asked of the employers and their employees.

They could also provide a range of recruitment material for internal dissemination at places of employment, for example posters for internal notice boards. The latter would also be useful for encouraging more recruits in current and former employer organisations.

## Summary of Results

- A total of 1,039 interviews were achieved (373 current employers, 109 former employers and 557 never employed/non-employers of Retained Duty System firefighters).
- Overall, the reaction to the study was positive, with an evidently high level of goodwill towards RDS firefighters; and even among the people who declined to take part there were several positive comments about the research.
- While questioning was tailored to the circumstances of each employer group, there are some similarities across current, former and non-employers.
- Chief among these is the level of contact with the local fire station or Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). Before being approached by staff for release for RDS duties around half of current and former employers had no contact with either the local fire station or FRS. While employing an RDS firefighter a similar level had no contact at all with the FRS. The same is apparently true for non-employers, since although each non-employer is located in the same postcode sector as an RDS fire station, less than half said they had heard of RDS firefighters.
- Levels of imagined benefits from employing an RDS firefighter are also broadly similar. Around a quarter of non-employers envisaged that staff released for RDS duties would bring extra health and safety and first aid training, or experience of, and training for dealing with emergencies back to their workplace. Around a seventh of non-employers identified that those staff could carry out fire safety checks, or that the release of staff could increase respect/prestige for the business within the local community. Under a tenth of non-employers foresaw benefits to the local community.
- Encouragingly, only 8 to 13 per cent of each employer group said they would not consider future requests from staff for release for RDS duties.

## Profile of current employers

- Over half of the current RDS employers interviewed employ 20 or more staff on site.
- The vast majority are located close to the nearest fire station, generally within one mile but almost always within three miles.
- Well over three-quarters employ just one RDS firefighter and almost half have been doing so for at least three years.
- On average (excluding those claiming no call-outs) each organisation's firefighters have been called out 69 times (where quantified) in the last 12 months. Of course, for some, this embraces more than one firefighter. It equates to an average of 132.5 work hours lost in the last 12 months.

## **Release of staff for RDS duties – practical considerations**

- Most employers will accommodate RDS staff where possible. Generally, release of RDS staff is a historical arrangement (on average 6.3 years since the last agreement was made with the Fire and Rescue Service to release staff) and, once a firefighter is in employment, the organisation will simply work around them.
- Once an organisation has agreed to allow staff to be released for RDS duties, they will try as much as possible to let them be released for their full contractual duty rather than placing restrictions on their release.
- Less than a third of employers imposed restrictions on availability of their RDS employees. Among these, release was mainly dependent on ensuring work cover, or on distance from the fire station, or restricted to a certain number of hours/days per week, with some allowing RDS employees to work only 'out of hours'.
- The majority (81%) release staff during work hours. All but two of these release staff during the day shift and almost a third (30%) during the night shift.
- Only a minority (9%) of current employers have turned down a request to be released. Some of the reasons given are because employees were too valuable to be allowed out of work, staff shortages or lack of cover, because they employ too many RDS firefighters already or because the employee needed full concentration at work.
- Again, only a minority (13%) say they would not consider requests for release for RDS duties in future. For these employers, concerns are generally related to covering the employee's work during their absence, not having enough staff, the effect on productivity or disruption of work.
- Generally, employers are more likely to give favourable consideration to releasing employees who are in positions which carry less responsibility, such as administration, production, yard, warehouse, support and workshop staff. Also, employees involved in shift work, casual work, care work, unskilled work, engineering and, in education, non-teaching staff.
- Ninety-eight per cent of current employers reported that RDS firefighters are treated the same as any other employee contractually, and 90 per cent non-contractually.
- For the 10 per cent of employers who say there are non-contractual ways in which RDS firefighters are treated differently, these are often positive. Examples include flexibility in working hours (including the ability to leave at any time or to make up hours), incentives/bonuses for attending training sessions, staff being looked upon more favourably (eg looked up to/respected in the company, higher profile due to ability to advise on issues such as Health & Safety, etc) and parking concessions, making it easier for staff to respond quickly to call-outs.

## **Benefits from employing RDS firefighters**

- For most current employers, the benefits they imagined they would gain from employing RDS firefighters were achieved in reality. Benefits received include: having staff with health and safety and first aid training; training in and experience of handling emergencies; ability to conduct fire safety checks; respect/prestige in the local community; benefits to the local community.

- Equally, many current employers foresaw disadvantages in employing an RDS firefighter. As with imagined benefits, the majority say these did occur. Disadvantages experienced include employees being away during working hours; employees leaving work at short notice; an adverse effect on production/ productivity; problems in covering staff absences; late night call-outs and employees coming to work tired.

## **Awareness of RDS firefighters and contact with the Fire and Rescue Service**

- Three-quarters of current employers said they were aware of the RDS before being approached by staff for release. Almost a fifth were not aware of the RDS before being approached by staff for release.
- This indicates that release of staff is largely driven by the employees themselves rather than being initiated by the employer or the FRS.
- Contact with the FRS while employing an RDS firefighter is low. Almost half have no contact at all. Where they do have contact it is split, with some mainly employer initiated (9 per cent of total), some mainly FRS initiated (15%), and 23 per cent about equal.
- A fifth of current employers think it is too little. Even among those who had no contact at all, 69 per cent still think that it is about right.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of current employers have never received any information explaining what employing an RDS firefighter involves. Those who have received information give an average score of 7.5 out of 10 for their satisfaction with it.
- Only a minority (8%) have ever been invited by the FRS to a meeting about employing or releasing firefighters. Their satisfaction with that meeting scores 8.4 out of 10 on average.
- Although over half the respondents did not have any suggestions as to how FRSs could improve their support to employers, a fifth (20%) want more/better information/communication, and 5 per cent want more guidelines on what employing RDS firefighters entails. Only a very small number of employers called for incentives, benefits or financial compensation. Some requested more FRS involvement, or more recognition or gratitude from the FRS/community.
- Very few current employers (7%) say the FRS publicises their commitment to the RDS. Eleven per cent do so themselves.
- Of those who don't do any self-publicity, over half never thought about it and 17 per cent see no point. Nine per cent won't publicise on principle as it is seen as boasting. In smaller village locations it is more likely that employers consider the community already knows.

## Former employers

- In general, results for former employers are very similar to those for current employers, demonstrating the same motivations and attitudes towards releasing staff for RDS duties.
- In most cases, RDS firefighters are no longer employed due to changes in the circumstances of the firefighters themselves rather than a change of policy on the part of the organisation.
- For 14 per cent, the RDS employee left the company to become a full-time firefighter and one joined FRS administrative staff. Seventy-three per cent simply left the company. In four businesses, staff are no longer firefighters and in two they are either too old, unfit or no longer interested. Five don't know why they no longer employ any RDS firefighters.
- The majority of former employers are still receptive to employment of RDS firefighters. Only 9 per cent say they would not consider future requests for release.

## Non-employers

- Generally there is a lack of awareness of the Retained Duty System among this group of employers. Although each organisation was sent a letter advising of the research and all were located in the same postcode sector as an RDS fire station, less than half of respondents (45%) said they had heard of the RDS.
- Imagined benefits from employing RDS firefighters are similar to those cited by current and former employers. In total, 59 per cent could imagine some benefit.
- Larger companies (with 20 or more employees) and those in retail/wholesale or education were more able to imagine benefits than others.
- Levels citing imagined disadvantages in employing RDS firefighters are much higher than among current and former employers. It is clear that, for non-employers, the disadvantages are much easier to envisage than the benefits. 88 per cent of non-employers could think of a disadvantage compared with 60 per cent of current and 55 per cent of former employers. Forty-one per cent of non-employers could not think of any benefits.
- Nevertheless, it is encouraging that non-employers appear amenable to at least consider releasing staff or employing existing RDS firefighters.
- If a new employee was already a firefighter when they joined the organisation, an encouraging 74 per cent of non-employers reported they would consider continuing to release them; only 9 per cent would not. And in future if an existing employee asked to be released for RDS duties, 78 per cent would consider the request; only 8 per cent would not.
- Most comments suggest that employers would be receptive to releasing staff, if it could be made to work for their organisation. As with the current and former employers, non-employers imagine that they would release staff to support the local community, because they would consider it a duty, because it is a worthwhile or important cause, or because they think it may benefit the company or be an asset to the business.

- For the minority who would not consider requests for release from either new or existing employees, reasons cited are because they are unable to spare staff or due to the nature of their business.
- Encouragingly, almost a third would like more information that explains what employing RDS firefighters involves and a quarter would like to be included on the list of invitations to any future local meeting about employing firefighters in the community.

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# 1 Introduction

## Overview

In November 2006, FDS International was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to examine engagement between the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and the business community concerning the release of employees for the Retained Duty System (RDS) in England.

RDS firefighters are paid volunteers who are trained to deal with a wide range of situations and incidents in the same way that Wholetime Duty System firefighters are. The difference is that they are not based at a fire station waiting for an alarm to sound, but instead are on standby, at home or at work, waiting to be called out. RDS firefighters provide emergency cover to more than 90 per cent of the UK. There are nearly 14,000 in England and they are generally located in rural communities, small towns and villages.

Research was undertaken to investigate:

- the experiences of current or former employers of RDS firefighters:
  - to measure their satisfaction with the system, barriers encountered and willingness to release staff.
- awareness and perceptions of RDS among ‘non-employers’, ie who do not have RDS staff:
  - to identify ways to encourage them to take on RDS firefighters or allow current staff to volunteer.

An initial qualitative exploration, consisting of nine telephone depth interviews with current, former and non-employers of RDS firefighters, aided the design of a structured questionnaire.

This was followed by the main stage of the research, which consisted of a large-scale telephone survey. Before making contact, all potential respondents were sent a letter from Communities and Local Government, advising them of the impending survey and requesting participation. A copy of this is given in Appendix A.

It is encouraging to note that many of those who opted out added an additional comment in support of the RDS research. For instance:

*‘Many thanks for your letter in connection with research into Retained Duty System firefighters. As a responsible employer we will always do all that we can to support staff working in the community. However we recognise that our valued local fire and rescue service has full time staff in the immediate area and that employees working here would not be able to participate in retained duty schemes through distance from a retained station and the time required to attend the station on call-out. As such it may not be appropriate for us to participate in the survey. We do participate in other community based schemes.’*

*‘We must advise that we would prefer not to become involved with this research and therefore ask you to be kind enough to delete our name from your list. You can be assured that we are very happy to have one retained firefighter on our staff, which has been the case now for probably over 35 years.’*

In the pilot (from 28 to 30 March 2007) usable interviews were achieved with:

- 14 current employers
- 13 non-employers.

This was mainly intended to test questionnaire wording, flow and appropriateness of content, and highlighted several required changes. Thus it was not feasible to include interviews from the pilot in the main analyses and they are therefore excluded from this report.

A copy of the final structured questionnaire for telephone interviewing is given in Appendix B.

In the main interviewing period (from 16 April to 11 May 2007) a total of 1,039 interviews with businesses were achieved, comprising:

- 373 interviews with current employers of RDS firefighters
- 109 interviews with former employers of RDS firefighters
- 557 interviews with non-employers of RDS firefighters.

The majority of those interviewed are owners/proprietors/managing directors or office/branch managers.

At various points in the report, results are described as significantly different. These are tested by standard statistical formulae. Where significant, we can be 95 per cent confident that the differences are real and did not occur by chance or sampling error.

## **Sample size and structure**

For the main survey, the sample was obtained from two sources:

- details of almost 1,900 current employers of RDS firefighters were supplied from records held by Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), and a census attempted; only 9 former employers were made available:
  - a list of the 22 FRSs able to supply employer details given in Appendix C; five of these returned less than ten names of local employers.
- details of 5,000 ‘non-employers’ were purchased from a reputable sample provider:
  - in defined locations corresponding with the postcode sectors of 50 randomly selected RDS fire stations;
  - these were de-duplicated against the provided list of current employers.

In all cases, if the employer was self-employed, and did not employ any other staff, they were excluded from the survey.

Due to the lack of former-employer sample, it was decided initially to exclude this category from the research. However, during the research, it was found that 60 of those provided as current employers and 49 of those from the purchased sample of ‘non-employers’ of RDS firefighters were in fact former employers. Similarly, 38 of those purchased as ‘non-employers’ proved to be current employers.

Forty-eight of those provided by FRSs as current employers had never (knowingly) employed RDS firefighters and were discarded.

For analysis purposes, all former employers have been grouped together. However, it should be remembered that the 109 businesses that turned out to be former employers of RDS firefighters were not selected in any systematic way and therefore, while answers given are valid, strictly speaking they only represent themselves. Nevertheless, they do provide a wealth of information about an otherwise unknown quantity.

Initially, we aimed to achieve interviews with 1,000 employers (400 current employers of RDS firefighters and 600 non-employers), but due to crossovers in the sample, outlined above, we finished up with 1,039 interviews.

A total of 443 current employers were interviewed in the mainstage from the FRS-supplied lists (335 current plus 60 former plus 48 never), representing a success rate of 44 per cent of those 998 for whom usable telephone numbers were available and who did not opt out when in receipt of the advisory letter. This outcome is more than double the anticipated 1 in 5 hit rate based on experience of similar surveys among business 'customers'.

Community and Local Government's previous survey into the Primary Employment Status of Retained Duty System Firefighters found that 65 per cent were employed in organisations with 24 or more staff. Compared with Office for National Statistics' figures of only 6 per cent of enterprises in England employing 20 or more people, this confirmed the expectation that large businesses are hugely disproportionately more likely to employ RDS firefighters. Thus, for this survey, the non-employer sample was stratified by employee size and deliberately biased to larger employers.

Six-hundred and forty-four mainstage interviews (557 non-employers, 49 former employers and 38 current employers) were achieved from 2,647 'non-employer' records used giving a success rate of 24 per cent. Again this is double the expected hit rate (of 1 in 8) for a general survey of businesses.

In each postcode sector, the population of employers of 20 or more staff was exhausted before being 'topped up' with a random selection of smaller employers. Among real non-employers, 196 have 20 or more staff on-site and 361 have 19 or less.

Any current employers encountered when interviewing from the list of 'non-employers' were added into the current employer dataset. These two sample sources are not strictly compatible, since:

- the FRS-provided sample of current employers is an incomplete sample frame and the survey in effect an attempted census
- the bought list contains non-employers located in only 50 postcode sectors.

However, they were kept as a discrete sub-group so their results could be tested for significant differences against each other.

A summary of characteristics of employers interviewed – company age, employee size, location, business sector, annual turnover, number of sites in England – is given in Appendix D.

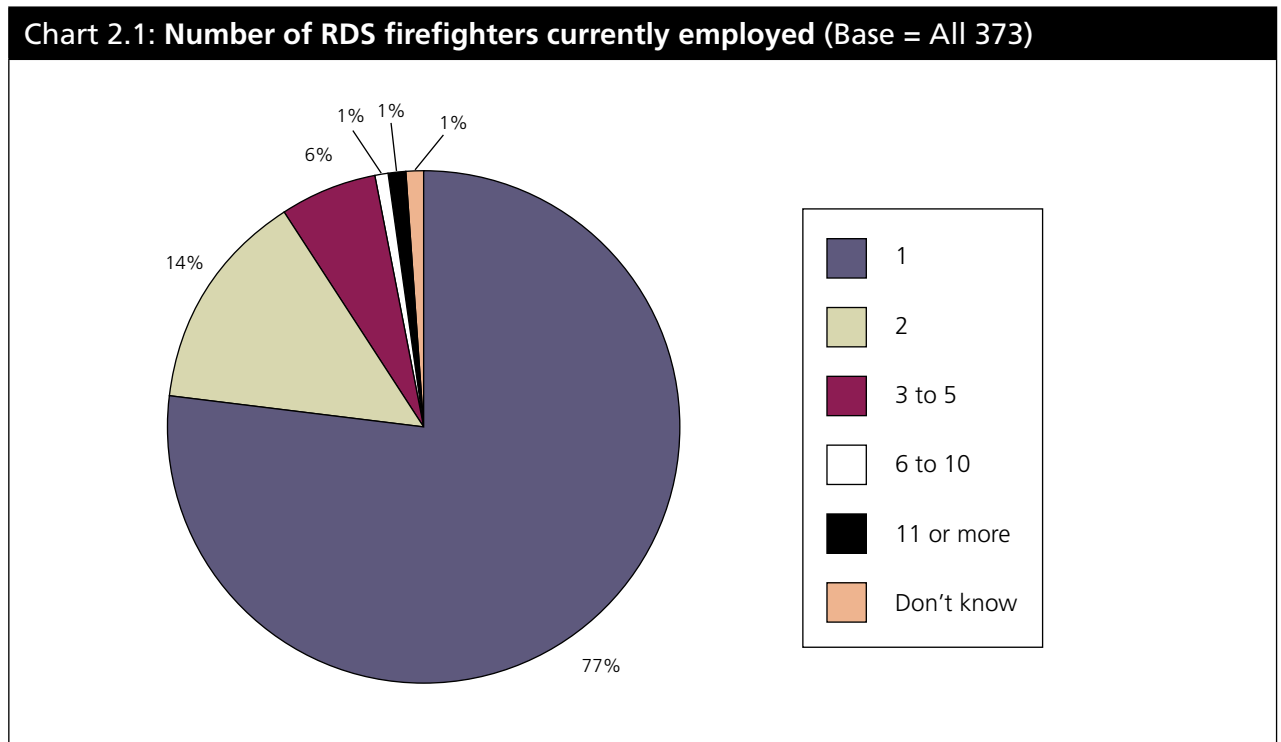
## 2 Results for current employers

Three-hundred and thirty-five interviews were completed from the current employer list and 38 from the ‘non-employer’ sample, making 373 in total.

As highlighted by Communities and Local Government’s previous survey into the Primary Employment Status of Retained Duty System Firefighters, the majority of current employers who release RDS staff are much larger organisations than the general profile of businesses. Fifty-three per cent employ 20 or more staff on site compared with just 6 per cent of enterprises throughout England.

Regarding the proximity of business premises to the nearest fire station, over half (57%) are within a mile and 95 per cent within three miles. On average the distance is 2.1 miles, taking 4.4 minutes by car.

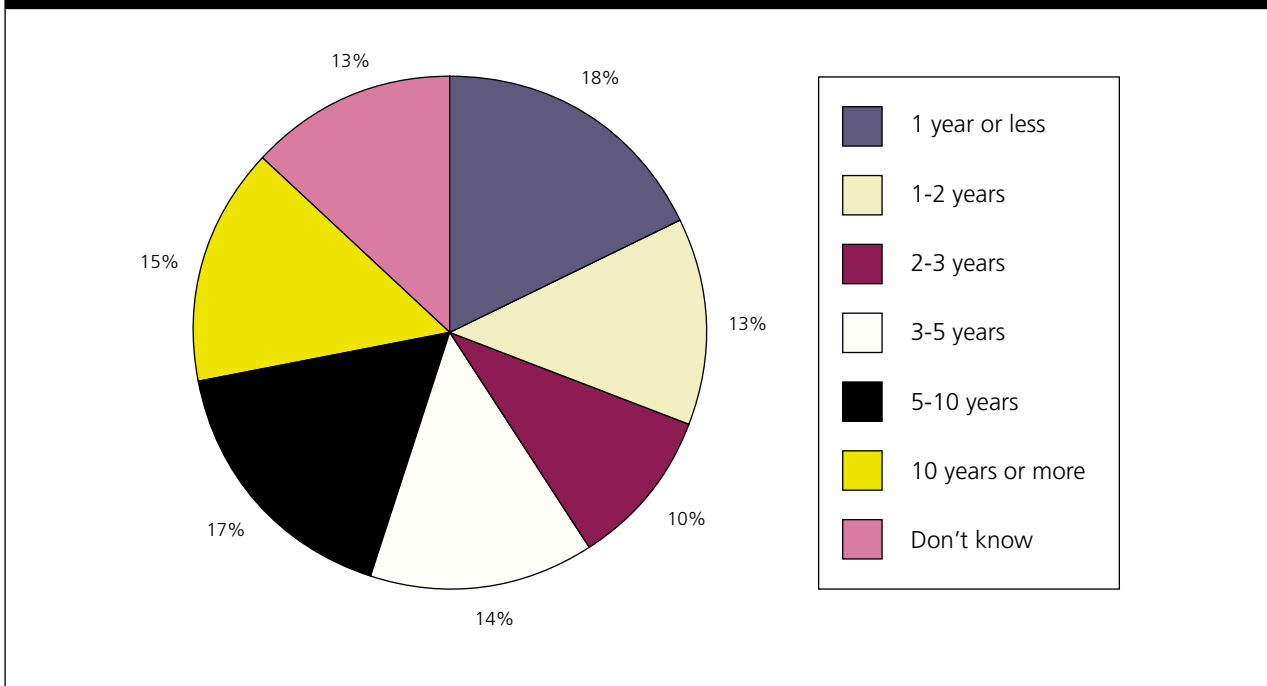
Well over three-quarters employ just one RDS firefighter, rising to a maximum of 20. The average is 1.5.



The four who don’t know how many RDS firefighters they employ, each estimate between 1 and 5. In the last five years, the maximum number of firefighters employed on site at any one time averages 1.8, with 64 per cent employing only one, 17 per cent two and 13 per cent three, four or five.

Almost half (46%) have been employing an RDS firefighter for at least three years. The average time elapsed since last agreeing that a member of staff could be an RDS firefighter is 6.3 years, heavily biased by twelve businesses who last made the decision over 20 years ago.

**Chart 2.2: How long ago the last agreement that a member of staff could be an RDS firefighter took place (Base = All 373)**



Current employers obtained from the 'non-employers' sample agreed to release a member of staff significantly more recently than those from the FRS-provided list, 3.8 years on average compared with 6.6 years respectively.

Additionally, the average time elapsed appears to decrease with the number of employees on site, presumably as there is more chance of staff moving where larger numbers are involved, that is:

- 8.0 years ago where under 10 employees
- 6.1 years for 11 to 19 employees
- 5.3 years for 20 to 49 employees
- 4.7 years for 50 to 249 employees
- 4.9 years for 250 or more employees.

Almost a fifth (18%) were not aware of the Retained Duty System before being approached by staff for release. Seventy-three per cent said they were aware, falling significantly to 57 per cent among those located in more populated areas.

Thirty-one per cent of employers who were aware of the RDS before being approached by staff for release had had contact with the local fire station and 19 per cent with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Fifty-seven per cent had no contact with either, rising to a significantly higher level of 64 per cent where only one RDS firefighter is employed, but falling to 41 per cent where there are 50 or more employees on site. Seven per cent can't remember.

Where they had contact with the fire station or FRS (97 employers):

- 33 per cent had links through previous employment/family members
  - more prevalent among those with fewer employees (51 per cent where less than 20).
- 21 per cent through fire/safety training
- 18 per cent through visits/checks from a fire safety officer
- 6 per cent through demonstrations/drills
- 6 per cent through charity work/fund-raising events
- 5 per cent through annual visits to a fire station.

Other contacts were mentioned by four or less employers each.

Eighty-one per cent of current employers release staff during work hours. All but two of these release staff during the day shift, and almost a third (30%) during the night shift.

It appears that once an organisation has agreed to allow staff to be released for RDS duties, it will try as much as possible to let them to continue to fulfil their contractual duty rather than placing restrictions on their release. In total, under a third (32%) imposes some restriction on availability.

Of these 118, principal restrictions are:

- 40 per cent to ensure work cover
- 24 per cent number of hours/days per week
- 22 per cent only released 'out of hours'
- 8 per cent distance from station.

*'Mainly when they are working off site and they are too far away from the fire station.'*

*'We ask them to sign off when they are off site fitting furniture because they may be two hours travelling from the fire station.'*

*'If our drivers are not in the vicinity, they have to stand down.'*

Then there were a mixture of comments, such as:

*'We have asked for advanced notice of training requirements.'*

*'If he's on training, he needs to inform the station he's not available for duty.'*

*'Only if we have booked an important meeting with clients.'*

*'It cannot compromise our health and safety needs.'*

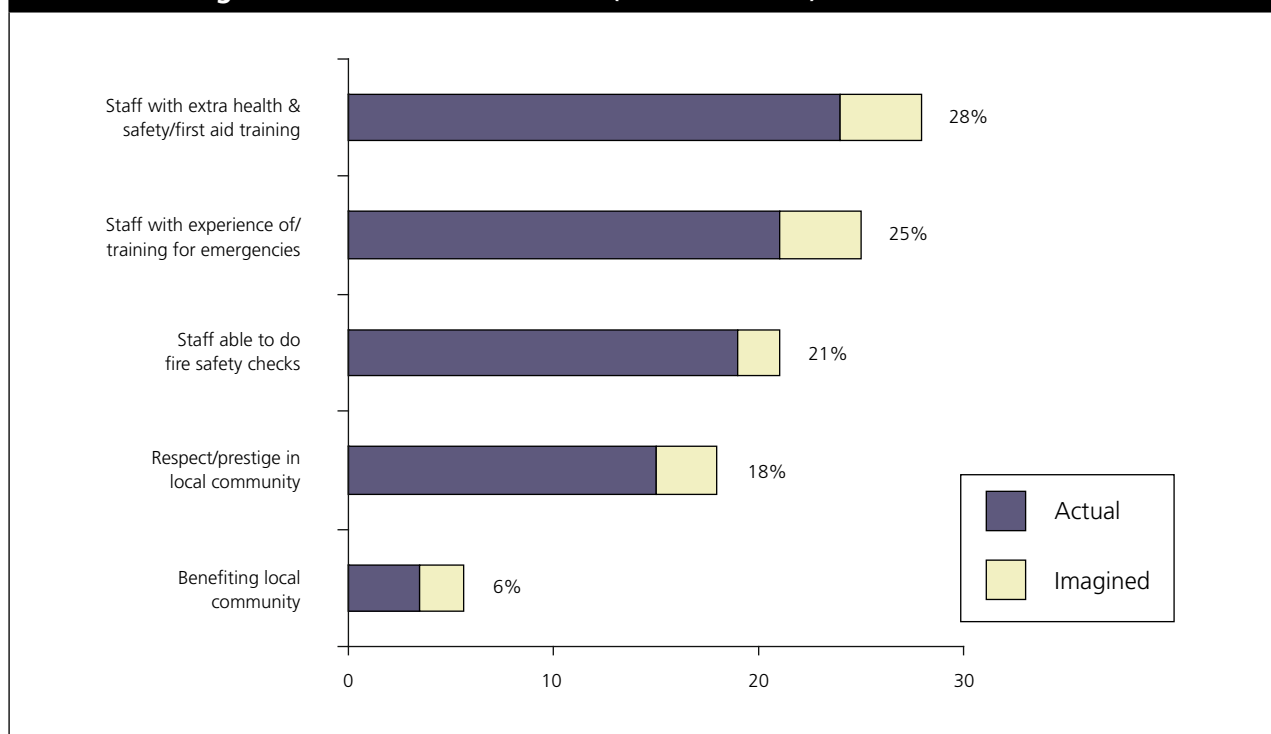
*'Use common sense on accepting shouts late at night when they are expected to be working for us the next morning.'*

We found that smaller companies can be more open and supportive to the idea of employing RDS firefighters. One particular company had 12 staff of which eight were RDS firefighters. This company makes furniture and simply set up its production line to allow staff to rotate and cover each other's work.

Among those who release staff during work hours, 63 per cent were *enthusiastic* to do so for the first employee, 4 per cent *reluctant* and 29 per cent *not too bothered*. Four per cent don't know.

Forty-five per cent of the 92 *reluctant or not too bothered* release staff to support the local community, 34 per cent consider it a duty and 13 per cent do it for historical/legacy reasons. Other reasons include seven who released staff because they were valued/good role models and six to benefit from the employee's expertise.

**Chart 2.3: Imagined versus actual benefits (Base = All 373)**



As shown in Chart 2.3, for most employers, imagined benefits from employing RDS firefighters were achieved:

- having staff with health and safety/first aid training:
  - 85 per cent of the 105 employers imagining this benefit actually got it.
- staff with experience of/training for dealing with emergencies:
  - 82 per cent of the 95 employers imagining this benefit actually got it.
- staff who could do fire safety checks:
  - 90 per cent of the 79 employers imagining this benefit actually got it.
- respect/prestige in the local community:
  - 80 per cent of the 69 employers imagining this benefit actually got it.
- benefiting the local community:
  - 62 per cent of the 21 employers imagining this benefit actually got it.

While not significantly different from average, the element of social responsibility is more noticeable among small villages. Often the justification for volunteering is simply:

*'It could be your house' or 'It could be my house'.*

Thirteen employers (3%) imagined they would gain better motivated staff or improved morale. Eleven of these say that was achieved.

Each of the other imagined benefits was mentioned by seven or less employers each. A third (33%) could imagine no benefits, this was significantly higher among businesses with less than 10 employees on site (at 44%) and lower among larger businesses (at 26%).

Eighteen per cent (67 employers) received benefits they didn't expect, mainly concerning health and safety qualifications and knowledge, and mirroring the above expected benefits.

In total, 60 per cent foresaw disadvantages in employing an RDS firefighter. As with imagined benefits, the majority say these did occur, citing:

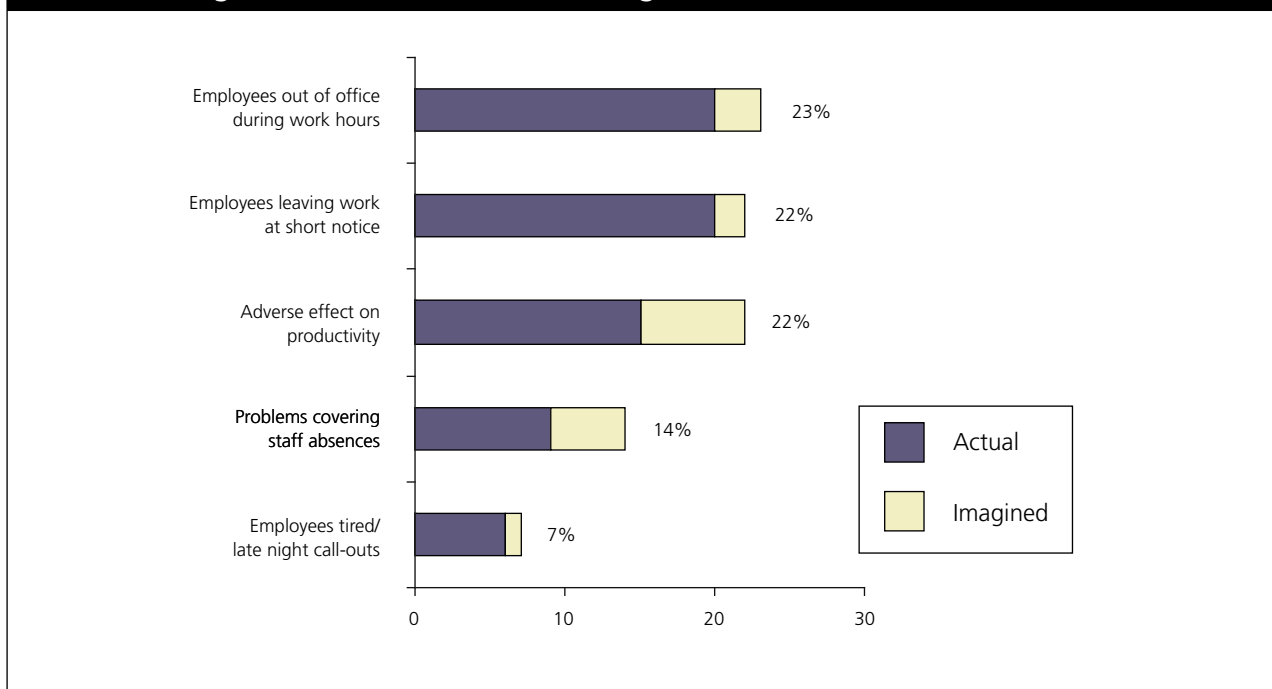
- employees being out of work during office hours:
  - 86 per cent of 85 employers say this happened.
- employees leaving work at short notice:
  - 90 per cent of 83 employers say this happened.
- an adverse effect on production/ productivity:
  - 67 per cent of 82 employers say this happened.

- problems in covering staff absences:
  - 65 per cent of 52 employers say this happened.
- employees coming to work tired/late night call-outs:
  - 81 per cent of 27 employers say this happened.

Sixteen employers (4%) imagined that releasing employees for the RDS would cause interruptions/disruption to work. Nine said this happened. Only four foresaw a risk of staff injury and for two this came true.

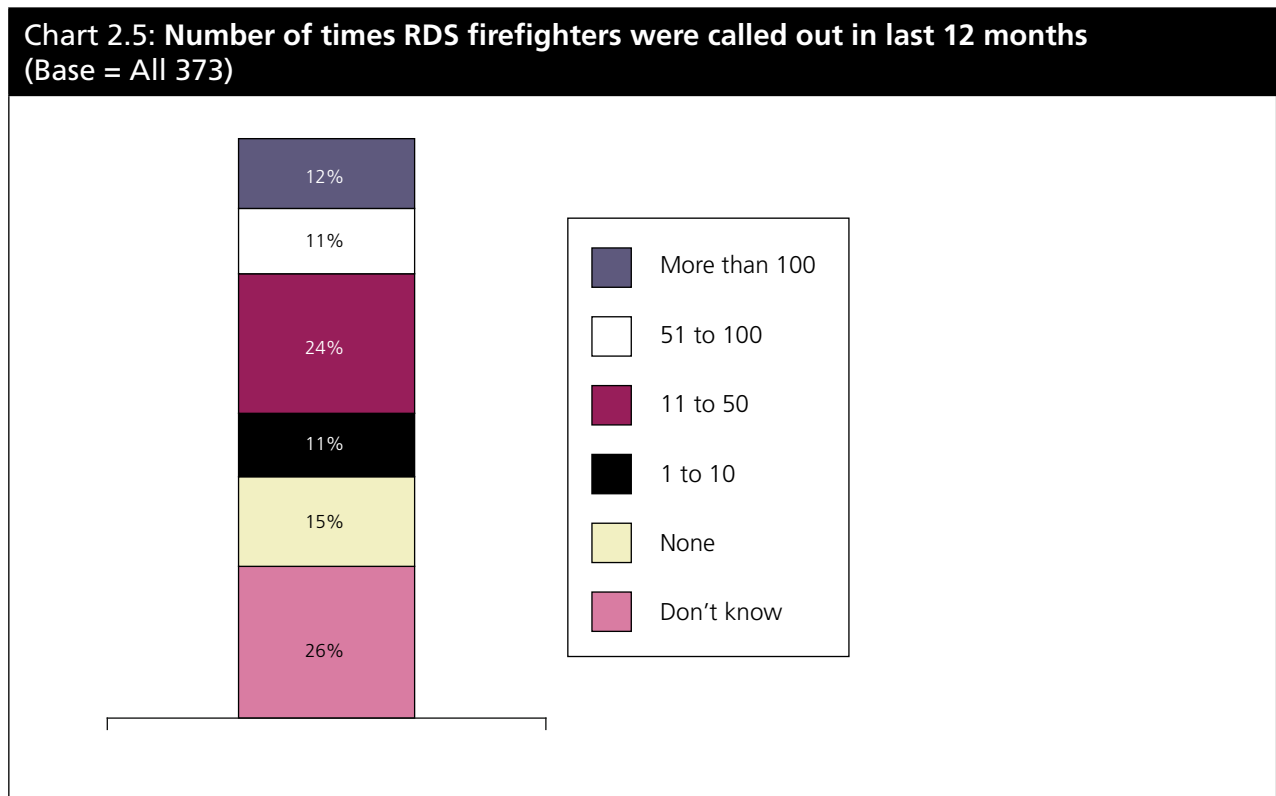
Each of the other disadvantages was mentioned by less than five employers each.

**Chart 2.4: Imagined versus actual disadvantages (Base = All 373)**



Sixteen per cent of employers experienced a disadvantage they didn't expect, mainly concerning disruption/inconvenience to work, problems with staff coverage and tiredness.

On average, each organisation's firefighters have been called out 55 times in the last 12 months. Of course, for some, this embraces more than one firefighter.



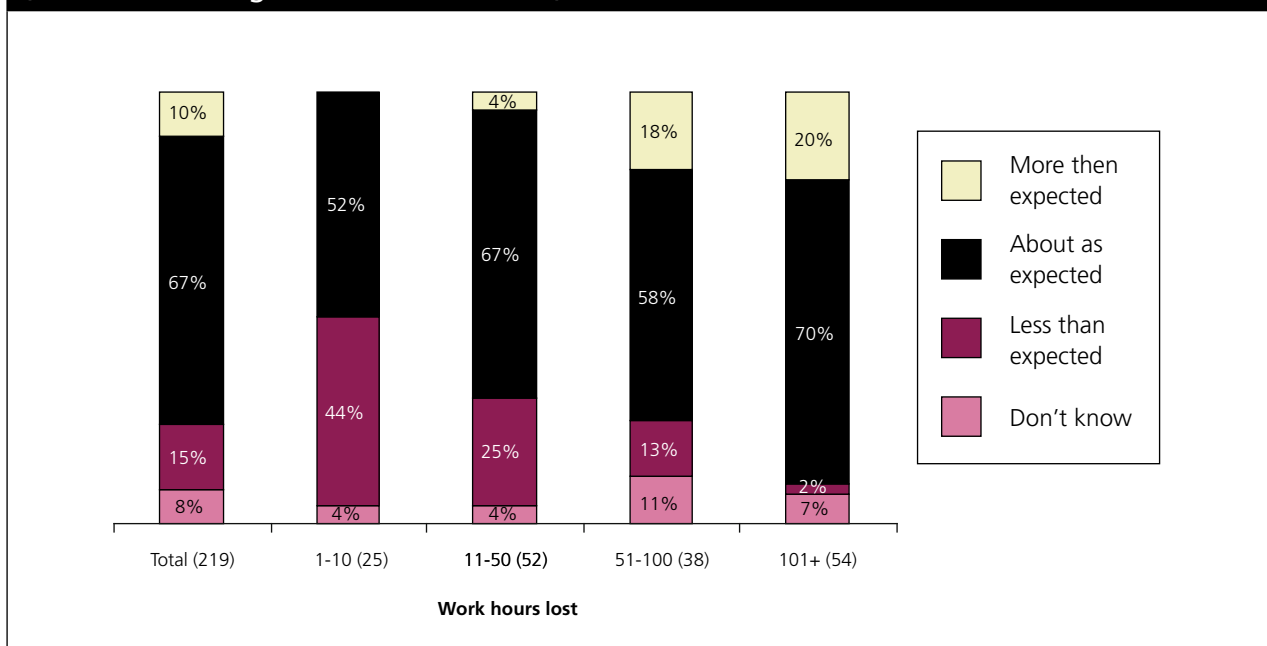
The average number of call-outs is significantly higher among smaller businesses with 10 or less employees (at 70.4) and lower among those with 50 or more employees (at 28.5). It is also significantly higher in market towns (at 68.1) and lower in countryside/rural locations, but not villages (at 34.6).

Overall, excluding the 15 per cent claiming no call-outs raises this figure to 69 times, and (where quantified) equates to an average of 132.5 work hours lost per annum.

Significantly more work hours were lost among businesses involved in construction (at 356.1 on average per annum) and those located in large town centres (474.3 per annum).

For two-thirds (67%), this was about as expected, for 10 per cent more and 15 per cent less. The rest have no view. As demonstrated in Chart 2.6, the proportion saying work hours lost is more than expected does, of course, rise as that number rises.

**Chart 2.6: Level of expectation for call-outs in last 12 months**  
(Base = All having one or more call-out)



Only 9 per cent (34 employers) have turned down a request to be released, and were asked why. Some gave more than one reason. Over half (20) turned down a request because employees were too valuable to be allowed out of work; five due to staff shortages/lack of cover; four because they employ too many RDS firefighters already; four because the employee needed full concentration at work. Six gave other reasons.

Only 13 per cent say they would not consider requests for release for RDS duties in the future. 57 per cent would consider requests from all staff and 24 per cent from specific grades/job functions. Six per cent don't know if they would.

Over half (26 out of 48) of those who would not consider requests for release in future are concerned about covering absences or don't have enough staff. A fifth (nine employers) think productivity would be adversely affected or work disrupted. Other issues (such as 'inconvenience', distance from station and cost implications of lost work) are mentioned by three or fewer employers each.

The 24 per cent (90 employers) who would consider requests from specific grades/roles, were asked which job functions they would not consider requests from. They cited a variety, including:

- 18 management
- 11 teaching staff/teaching assistants
- 5 machine operators
- 4 each: team leaders/supervisors; production; drivers; counter/till staff
- 3 each: technicians; reception/telephone operators
- 2 each: secretaries; installation team; head of department; labourers; key personnel.

Seventeen said it would depend on circumstances and eighteen gave other job functions.

Even among those who would consider requests from all grades/functions, 14 per cent say there are specific grades/job functions for which they are more likely to agree release than others. Again a variety of functions are specified, but they are generally staff employed in administration, production, yard, warehouse, support or workshop roles. Also, shift workers, casual workers, care workers, non-teaching staff, unskilled workers and engineers.

All but seven (98%) of the total sample say that their RDS employees are treated the same contractually as any other.

Where they are not treated the same it's because:

*'She is now self-employed and only goes out on call-outs when she isn't here.'*

*'He has in his contract that he can leave anytime to fight fires, etc.'*

*'If they are part of a fire crew, we pay them more.'*

*'We pay the fire leader for the in-house fire teams, who are the RDS, a stipend for training the others, and maintaining equipment.'*

Only 10 per cent say there are non-contractual ways in which RDS firefighters are treated differently.

Ten allow flexibility in working hours, including the ability to leave anytime, make up hours etc, for example:

*'I give them time off to go on courses so they don't have to use up their holidays; they can go on unpaid leave.'*

*'If a driver had been out and was tired, we would let them start later the next day.'*

Six say they give incentives/bonuses for attending training sessions.

Five look upon such staff more favourably, for example:

*'His skills make him more valuable in certain areas; [he] understands discipline more.'*

*'[He's] looked up to, respected for doing it.'*

*'A higher profile amongst our staff because of their ability to advise on things like Health and Safety and First Aid.'*

Five give parking concessions, making it easier for staff to respond quickly to call-outs.

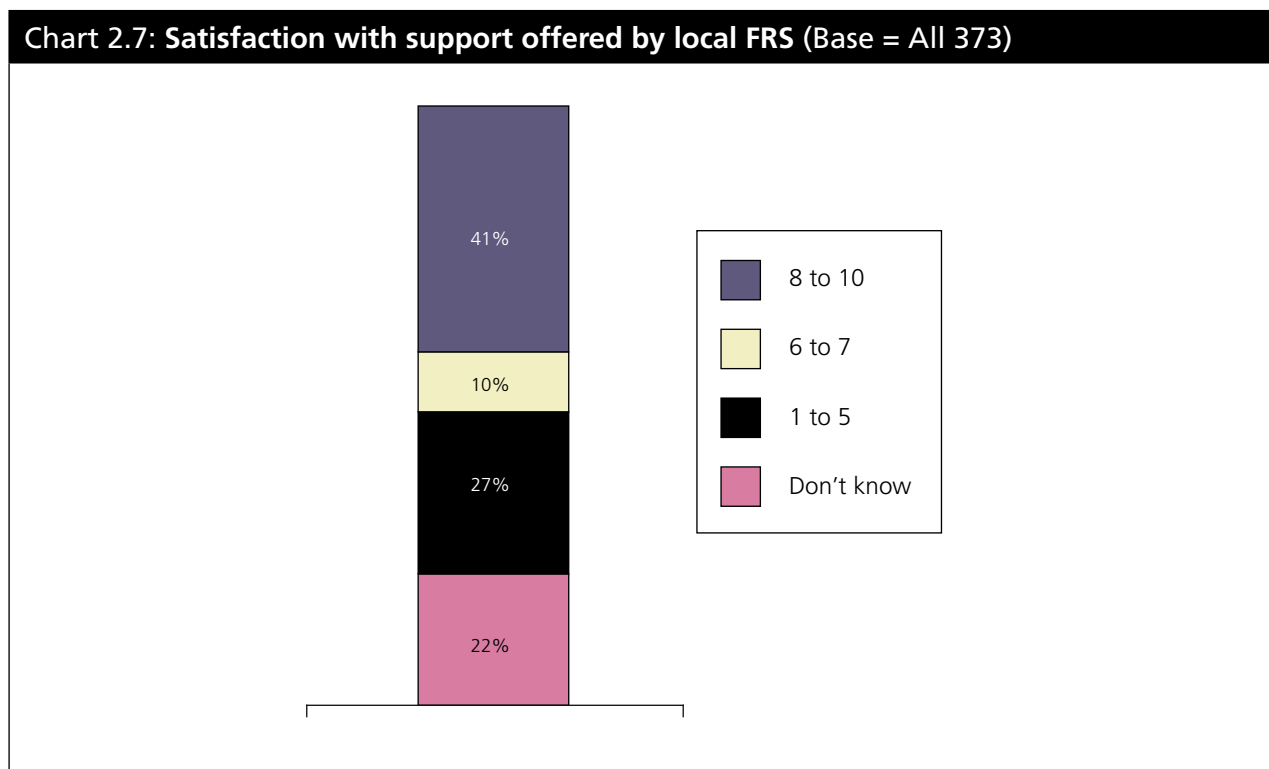
Other concessions include:

*'We allow their mobile phones with them'.*

Almost half (48%) of employers have no contact at all with the local FRS while employing an RDS firefighter. Those who have contact are split: in 9 per cent of cases its mainly company initiated, for 15 per cent mainly FRS initiated and for 23 per cent about equal. Five per cent don't know.

A fifth (21%) think the level of contact is too little, but 78 per cent think it's about right. Only one employer considers it has too much (FRS initiated) contact. However, even among those who had no contact at all, 69 per cent still think that is about right.

Satisfaction with the support offered by the local FRS to employers of firefighters scores just 6.6 out of 10 on average (where 10 means completely satisfied and 1 totally dissatisfied. Twenty-two per cent could not give a rating).



Sixty-three per cent have never received any information explaining what employing RDS firefighters involves. Twelve per cent received information within the last year, 6 per cent one to two years ago and 10 per cent three or more years ago. Nine per cent don't know if or when they received any information.

Where they have received information (104 employers), 88 give a score out of 10 for satisfaction with it, averaging 7.5.

Thirty-nine give a rating of 1 to 7 out of 10; most of those wanting clearer, more straightforward or up-to-date communication, for example:

*'It was pretty generic information and I think they could have tailored it a little bit more to the local station. It was just general information about the fire service, but if they included the stats and information about the local station, that would have been fine.'*

*'It would be useful to have a rota system so we know what to expect.'*

*'A bit more contact as regards to what the firefighter does, and to how we as an employer are responsible for an RDS.'*

*'Clearer expectations of what the company would have to do and what benefits the company would get could be provided.'*

*'It was just a job description and what was required, nothing more. Could give an indication or past stats as to amount of call-outs and length of time away? Seasonal variations too? It's about work planning, rather than the actual decision to allow RDS duty.'*

*'It doesn't explain what the commitment involves. It explains you can be called out but it doesn't explain that in busy periods you can be called out 3 to 4 times a week for 3 to 4 hours at a time. I can be out most of the day or most of the week and if it's a busy day...'*

*'It should contain more details of their training – how long it will take.'*

*'I had to write to them, on a specific problem. If they are changing duties and responsibilities, that could affect us, we should be kept informed.'*

And also:

*'More of it, updates where we are at and how valued, etc.'*

*'See us as partners in the arrangement, not perfunctorily.'*

Only 8 per cent (29) of current employers have ever been invited by the FRS to a meeting about employing firefighters in the community. Fourteen rated their satisfaction with the meeting, averaging 8.4 out of 10.

When asked what improvements in support they'd like from the FRS, approaching half (45%) don't know and 16 per cent say no improvements. A fifth (20%) want more or better information/communication, and 5 per cent more guidelines about employing RDS firefighters and what that entails, reflecting previous verbatim comments.

Only 3 per cent of respondents asked for incentives/benefits, for example:

*'Examples of support would be free advertising in fire fighting magazines, or if there are any galas or nights out within the FRS then RDS could be invited for free, etc.'*

*'It might be handy if perhaps the service opened up the training courses (first aid etc), for non RDS personnel at reduced rates. Or, asking the fire service to put the RDS through particular courses ie fire extinguisher inspection, which would benefit us at work as well. If there were spare places on the courses, it might be nice to offer them.'*

Three per cent asked for financial compensation, for example:

*'RDS should get paid for the night shift, so that they can get a day off work.'*

*'There is an issue over costs. It's very easy for the government to load the cost onto the business community. Why not give some incentive via a discount on the local business rate? It's not that we are necessarily seeking full recompense but some financial recognition is surely deserved.'*

*'I'd just like to see some sort of gratitude, not necessarily from the fire service. I think it should come from the council. At the end of the day, you are working in the community for the county council, helping the people. I don't know what they can give – not necessarily for me; but, if a company has business rates, they could give maybe a 2 per cent reduction in business rates or something.'*

Two per cent each would like more FRS involvement, or have more recognition by the FRS/community, or more gratitude, for example:

*'I think they could come and do some prevention-type things. If they come around and say you could do this or you could do that; like the police do to prevent crime.'*

*'I think it would be nice for a Liaison Officer to go around introducing himself, so that we can just put the name/title to the face behind the uniform.'*

*'Just some sort of contact, on a regular basis, to ensure that everything is all right. Or a thank you after heavy commitment jobs.'*

*'Reimbursement and also some recognition of the impact the release of staff has on a business would be a good start.'*

*'Examples of support would be free advertising in firefighting magazines or if there are any galas or nights out within the FRS then RDS could be invited for free etc.'*

*'A little bit of advertising of our company to show their gratitude. That would help with our business and reward our contribution to the local community. The fire service has a good reputation and a link with that would probably do us some good, and help to compensate for what the business loses through absences.'*

Other suggestions include:

*'I think they could target companies for the release for RDS during the days between 6am and 6pm. They aren't targeting the companies who could do it. Manufacturing companies would be able to do it. They are bigger and have more staff and could release staff more easily. It's a community fire service and the big companies don't know enough about it.'*

Seven per cent (26 employers) say the local FRS publicises their employment of RDS firefighters. Eleven per cent do so themselves.

Fifty-four per cent of those who didn't undertake self-publicity never thought about it and 17 per cent see no point. But 11 per cent think the community is aware anyway (rising significantly to 23 per cent in village locations) and 9 per cent either won't do it on principle or won't boast about it.

Fifteen per cent (57 employers) wanted to make further comments about RDS firefighters. Eighteen are happy with the arrangements for releasing staff and feel it works well in their organisation. Three each say it helps with fire safety training or they are in favour of helping the local community. The rest make somewhat negative comments, including the disruption and impact on productivity and the need for more information/communication from the FRS.

### 3 Results for former employers

Although a long time has elapsed for some – on average 7.4 years since they last allowed a member of staff to be an RDS firefighter – almost three-quarters (73%) say they were aware of the RDS before being approached by staff for release. Twenty-three per cent were not.

Time elapsed since last agreeing that a member of staff could be an RDS firefighter shows as significantly lower among the data of former employers provided by FRSs in the ‘current’ employer sample than those in the bought sample of ‘non-employers’: 5.8 versus 9.2 years on average.

The average length of time since the last RDS firefighter left the organisation also differs between the two sample types: 2.6 years in the FRS-provided sample versus 6.0 years in the purchased ‘non-employer’ sample.

Among those aware of the RDS before being approached by staff for release, 41 per cent had contact with the local fire station and 29 per cent with the FRS before being approached; 41 per cent had no contact with either and 10 per cent can’t remember.

Where they had contact with the fire station or FRS:

- 10 had links through previous employment/family members
- 9 through visits/checks from a fire safety officer/inspector
- 9 through fire safety training
- 6 when fire alarms went off
- 4 through annual visits to fire station.

Employers were asked if they released staff during work hours; 77 per cent did so. All but two of these released staff during the day shift, and a third (33%) during the night shift.

In total, 14 per cent (15 employers) imposed some restriction on availability, for example:

*‘That they work from home.’*

*‘That they take the morning off after late night calls, to recover before going on the machines.’*

*‘When there are limited numbers, for example on a night shift where the loss of one man out of four would stop production, we have to say they can’t log on. Otherwise, we can cover their absences.’*

*‘Only did it out of hours, or when he was in range of his station.’*

*‘Restrictions were imposed on the person who closed down and opened up the business.’*

*'We have to have two staff members on site in order to release one for firefighting. In the evening we drop to one staff member, and that person could not leave without closing the club, which we wouldn't want to do.'*

*'There was a job they couldn't leave – delivering explosives. There had to be two people in the vehicle; neither could have been released for firefighting.'*

*'He had to make sure that we were not busy on the days when he would be signing on at the station.'*

*'Only if they were with a customer.'*

*'Could only leave when his classes are being supervised by someone else.'*

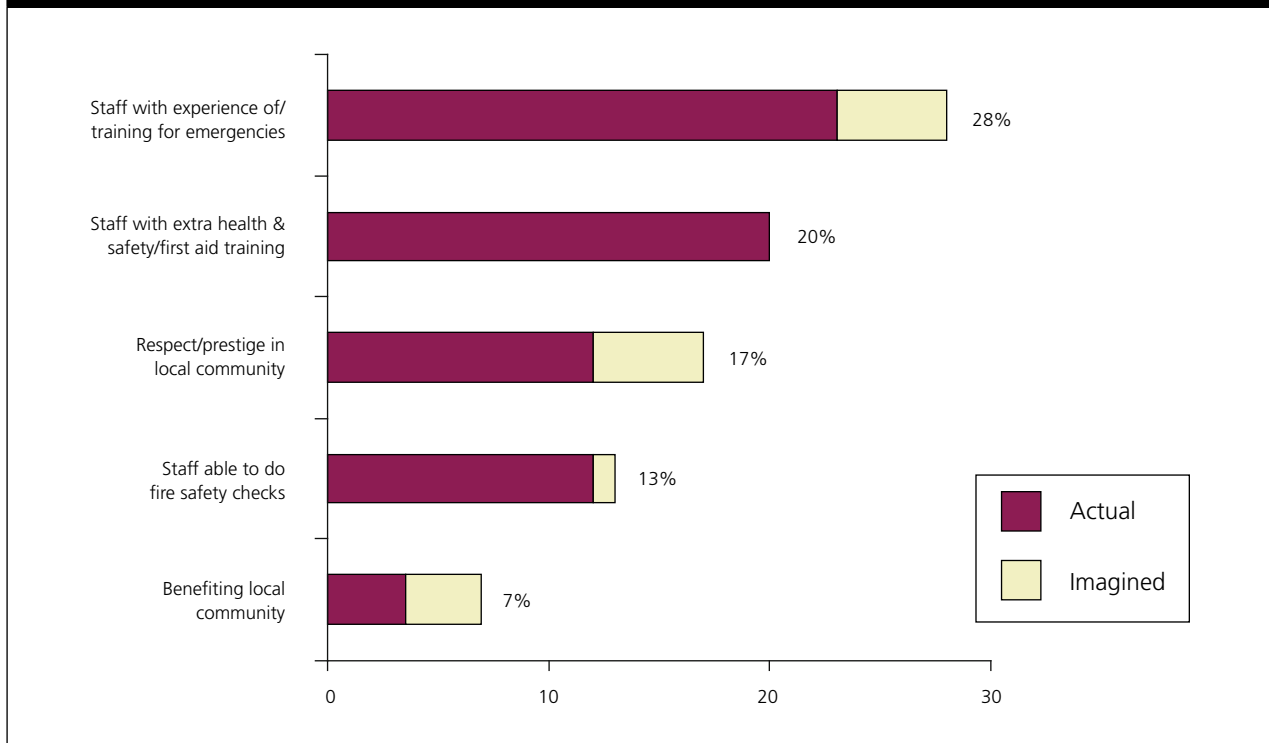
*'When they were on certain duties, key posts where they can't leave their post – duty officer or duty boatman – they can't be released for firefighting.'*

Among those who released staff during work hours, 53 per cent say they were “*enthusiastic*” to do so for the first employee. The level of enthusiasm rises significantly (to 66%) among those with 20 or more staff.

Those who were “*reluctant*” (8%) or “*not too bothered*” (34%) were motivated to release staff mainly to support the local community (57%) or because they considered it a duty (32%). Three employers did so for historical or legacy reasons and two because it helped create a valued member of staff/good role model.

As shown in Chart 3.1, for most employers, imagined benefits from employing RDS firefighters were achieved, namely:

- having staff trained in, or with experience of dealing with emergencies
  - 81 per cent of 31 employers say this happened.
- staff with extra health and safety/first aid training
  - all 22 employers got this.
- respect/prestige in the local community
  - 68 per cent of 19 employers got this.
- staff who could do fire safety checks
  - 93 per cent of 14 employers got this.
- benefitting the local community
  - four of eight employers say this happened.

**Chart 3.1: Imagined versus actual benefits (Base = All 109)**

More employers in rural than in more populated locations imagined they would gain respect/prestige in the local community by releasing staff for RDS duties (25% versus 12%).

Each of the other imagined benefits was mentioned by two or less employers. Thirty-six per cent could imagine no benefits – significantly higher among businesses with less than 10 employees on site (at 56%) and lower among larger businesses (at 27%).

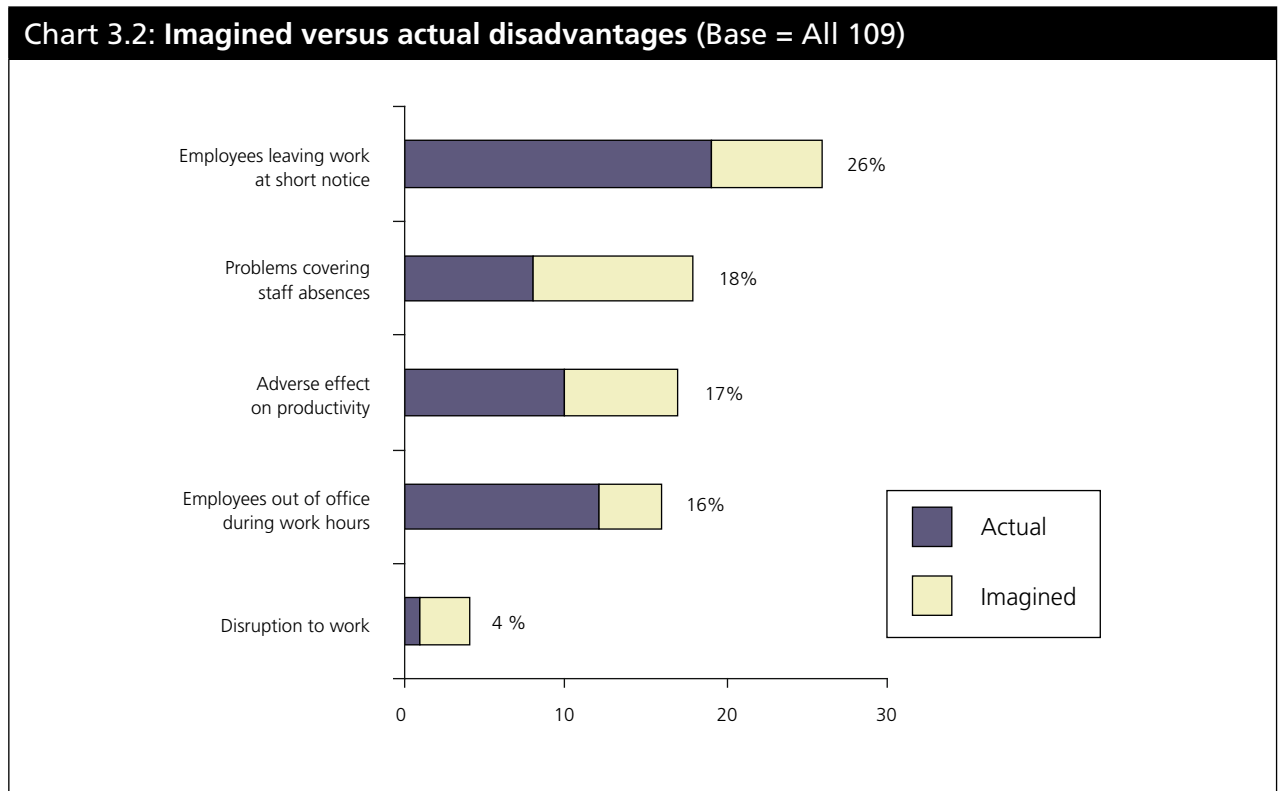
Ten per cent (11 employers) received benefits they didn't expect, mainly concerning health and safety qualifications and knowledge, and mirroring the above expected benefits.

In total, 55 per cent foresaw disadvantages in employing an RDS firefighter. These are mainly:

- employees leaving work at short notice
  - 75 per cent of 28 employers say this happened.
- problems in covering staff absences
  - 45 per cent of 20 employers say this happened.
- an adverse effect on productivity
  - 61 per cent of 18 employers say this happened.
- employees being absent during working hours
  - 76 per cent of 17 employers say this happened.

- disruption/interruption to work
  - one of four employers say this happened.

Comparing Charts 3.1 and 3.2 indicates that the level of experiencing each imagined disadvantage is somewhat lower than the level of experiencing each imagined benefit.



Each of the other imagined disadvantages was mentioned by three or less employers.

Significantly more employers in rural than more populated locations mentioned employees leaving work at short notice as an imagined barrier to releasing staff for RDS duties (41% versus 15%).

None foresaw a risk of injury to employees.

Eleven employers experienced a disadvantage they didn't expect, mainly focused around call-outs being more frequent/inconvenient/disruptive than imagined.

Only three former employers have turned down an employee request to be released: two because the employee was too valuable to be allowed out of work, one because the employee needed full concentration at work, with one don't know.

In all cases, the fact that an RDS firefighter is no longer employed appears to be due to the member of staff rather than the employer.

For 14 per cent of former employers, the employee who was an RDS firefighter left the company to become a full-time firefighter and one joined FRS administrative staff. Seventy-three per cent just left the company.

In four organisations, staff are no longer firefighters and in two they are too old, unfit or no longer interested. Five don't know why they no longer employ any RDS firefighters.

Former employers are amenable to future requests for release. Only 9 per cent say they would not consider requests for release for RDS duties. Sixty-six per cent would consider requests from all staff and 18 per cent from specific grades/job functions.

The ten employers who would not consider requests gave the following reasons:

*'Because of all the lost production hours.'*

*'Because of the increase in hours on the RDS.'*

*'We haven't got the staff to cover.'*

*'Depends on the job they are finishing off; if another employee cannot finish the job.'*

*'Because it causes too many disruptions.'*

*'Because it's a nightmare.'*

*'The business grew and we needed all our staff all the time to deal with our customers.'*

*'The company is smaller now and we couldn't cope with someone taking so much time off work any more.'*

*'Because of the nature of the business. It's a public service and a taxi service so there are tight schedules and the availability of staff is key.'*

*'The RDS in question faked call-outs, and took three times the actual time off, and so now, I am a little wary of re-employing an RDS, at least until more water has gone under the bridge. But they would need to be respectful of our critical hours.'*

The 18 per cent (20 employers) who would consider requests from specific grades/roles, were asked which job functions they would not consider requests from. They cited a variety, including:

- 3 team leaders/supervisors
- 3 drivers
- 2 teaching assistants
- 2 engineers
- 13 others.

Among those who would consider requests from all grades/functions, eight employers (or 10%) say there are specific grades/job functions for which they are more likely to actually grant requests than others. These are largely staff with less responsibility, that is:

*'We might have more trouble with managerial posts; people with infrequent critical responsibilities would be easier to release.'*

*'Unskilled craftspeople on shop floor.'*

*'Those not in supervisory positions.'*

*'Garden or estate staff.'*

*'More likely to say yes to positions with not a lot of responsibility, but it would not be that much of an issue because other people would be able to cover.'*

*'Person whose hours can be covered by someone else.'*

*'Those who are based at our premises are more likely to be considered than others.'*

*'It could be difficult with some staff. A driver could be out making a delivery and be difficult to contact and also further away from the fire station than this site. It would also be difficult for customer-facing staff if they were in a meeting with a customer. They could not just get up and leave the customer.'*

All claim RDS firefighters are treated the same as any other employee contractually. Only five say they are treated differently:

*'Special reserve forces in our organisation get up to 10 days' paid leave for training, designed for TA members. Further may be granted as appropriate.'*

*'Dispensation for RDS absences.'*

*'Time off.'*

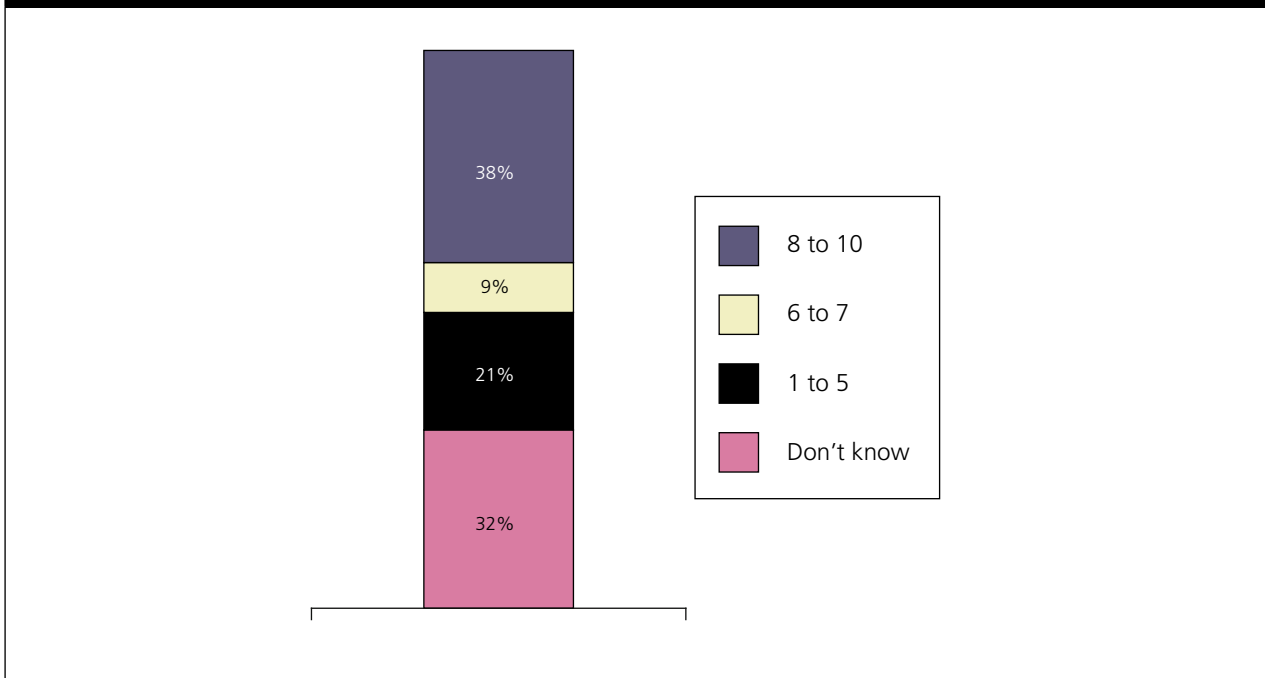
*'Now the driving regulations are stricter, they might have to be rested by law if they are drivers.'*

*'Covering his post when he disappears.'*

Fifty-seven per cent had no contact at all with the local FRS while employing a firefighter. Those who had contact are split: for 4 per cent it was mainly company initiated, for 12 per cent mainly FRS initiated and for 19 per cent about equal. Eight per cent don't know.

Thirteen per cent thought the level of contact was too little but 86 per cent said it was about right. Among those who had no contact at all, 82 per cent still thought that was about right.

Satisfaction with the support offered by the local FRS to employers of firefighters scores 7.1 out of 10 on average (where 10 means completely satisfied and 1 totally dissatisfied). As can be seen in Chart 3.3, almost a third (35 employers) felt unable to give a rating.

**Chart 3.3: Satisfaction with support offered by local FRS (Base = All 109)**

Sixty-four per cent have never received any information explaining what employing RDS firefighters involves. Five per cent received information within the last year, 9 per cent one to two years ago and 13 per cent three or more years ago. Nine per cent don't know.

Where they have received information (29 employers), 20 gave a score out of 10 for satisfaction, averaging a good 7.8.

Six gave a score below eight, and were asked why. Only three made suggestions for improvement or additional content:

*'If it was more to the point; sometimes we like to know exactly what's going on.'*

*'Only to follow information with personal contact.'*

*'Probably an annual monitoring of the staff within the organisation.'*

Only two have ever been invited by the FRS to a meeting about employing firefighters in the community, giving satisfaction scores with the meeting of 7 and 10.

Ten say the local FRS publicised their employment of RDS firefighters. Seven did so themselves.

Sixty-one per cent of those who didn't self-publicise never thought about it. Fourteen per cent saw no need. Six employers wouldn't do so on principle ("it's boasting") and five felt the community was aware anyway. Other reasons are cited by three or less each (eg confidentiality issues, cost, no means of advertising).

When asked what improvements in support they would like from the FRS, over half (56%) said they don't know and 15 per cent said there was nothing. A fifth (19%) want more or better information/communication:

*'They could make it easier to get information off them.'*

*'A bit more publicity/information would be good; there are employees here who are probably unaware of the RDS.'*

*'If they wanted, they could canvass my employees regarding RDS.'*

*'They could contact local employers, and inform them about the availability of RDS looking for work.'*

*'A visit from the fire service from time to time is valuable, their advice and input would be appreciated.'*

*'They could supply outline information on how the system operates.'*

*'More literature on RDS.'*

*'More communication about how things work, etc.'*

*'More regular communication from them would be welcomed, just to keep us informed.'*

*'Bit more communication, letter.'*

*'There could be more contact with the local business community.'*

*'Make themselves more known and invite us to meetings/Christmas parties.'*

*'Provide more information and make us more aware of their procedures.'*

*'I have not been contacted by them. That would be good; they should contact us.'*

*'More staff training of what their service requirements are and more information from the FRS.'*

*'Probably more information – just letting us know what they expect.'*

*'Get in contact with me; send me some literature; never had any.'*

*'More co-ordination, contact, to check everything is all right. The FRS need to be mindful of the number of calls, and the impact on the company, and to call to check that the level of calls are copeable, and feedback as to why the number of calls have been necessary, and perhaps a record of them, for comparison to our records. It should not have to come entirely from our end. It would be nice to hear, for example, two false alarms and a fire last month. Just to get a picture of what we are supporting.'*

Fourteen per cent (15 employers) wanted to make further comments about RDS firefighters. Three were happy with the arrangement and two were in favour of helping the local community. Two wanted more information/communication and the rest make individual comments (see Appendix E).

## 4 Results for non-employers

As discussed in the introduction, the sample of non-employers was deliberately biased to larger businesses, which are known to be more likely to release staff for RDS firefighting duties. Thus 35 per cent of interviews were completed with organisations employing 20 or more, but these were downweighted to reflect their true population proportion of 8 per cent. Organisations located in the centre of more populated areas have significantly more employees on average (45.5) than the total sample (13.9).

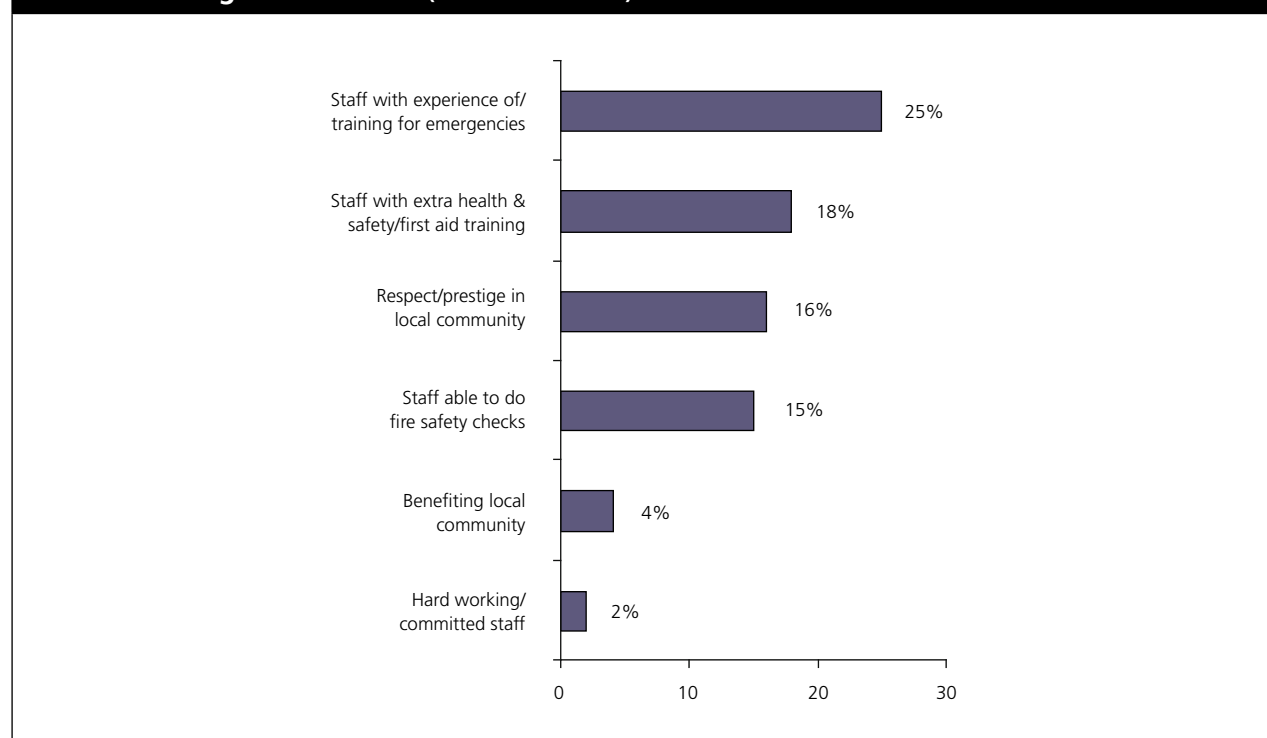
The first key result is lack of awareness of the RDS. Although each business was sent a letter advising them of the research, and all were located in the same postcode sector as an RDS fire station (within 2.1 miles of the fire station on average) less than half of respondents (45%) said they had heard of the RDS.

This level increases in rural locations and decreases in more populated areas, but the difference is not statistically significant and could have occurred by chance. There are no significant variations in awareness by other sub-groups.

Imagined benefits from employing RDS firefighters are shown in Chart 4.1 and are similar to those cited by current and former employers.

In total, 59 per cent could imagine some benefit, falling significantly to 35 per cent in the construction industry. Larger companies (with 20 or more employees) and those in retail/wholesale or education were more able to imagine benefits than others, with 68 per cent, 69 per cent and 77 per cent respectively formulating answers.

**Chart 4.1: Imagined benefits (Base = All 557)**

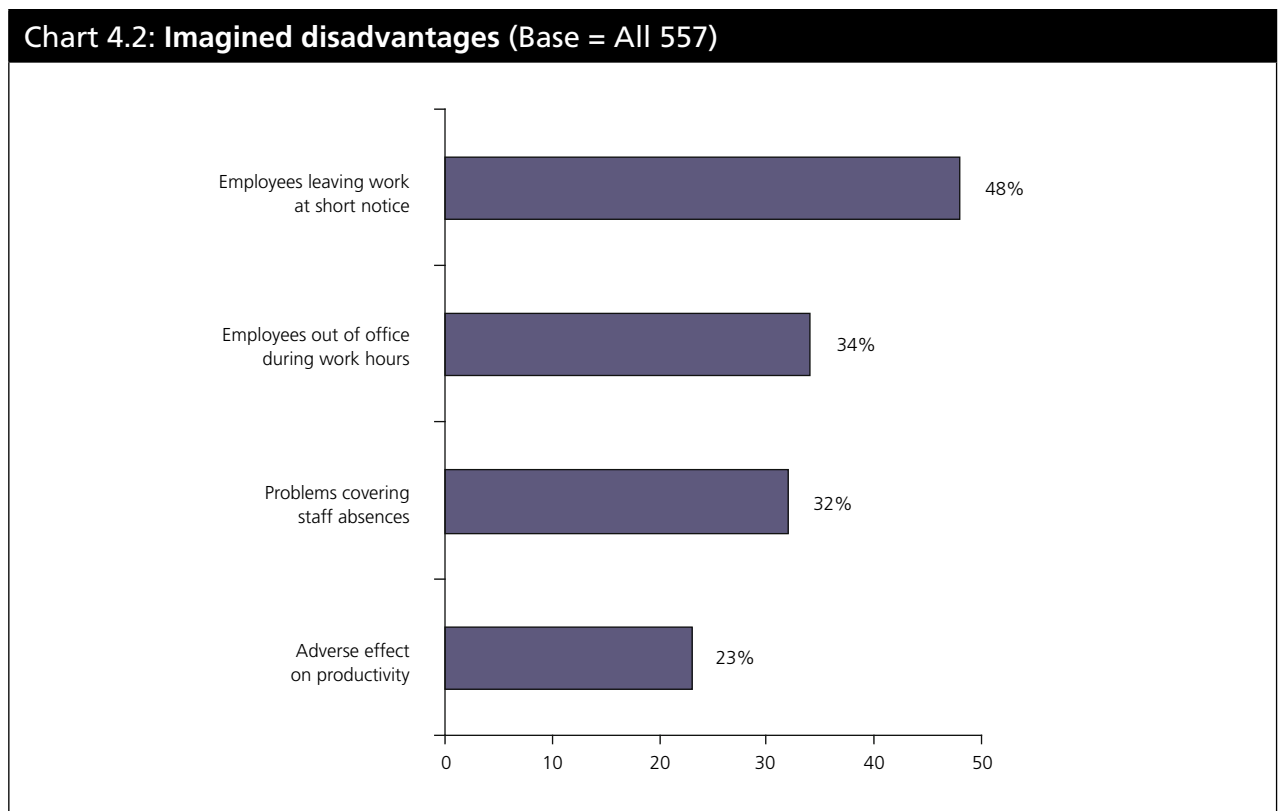


Each other imagined benefit was mentioned by 1 per cent or less of the sample.

Levels of awareness of each imagined benefit appear to differ by business sector. In education, this could be due to the higher proportion giving answers.

Otherwise, the proportion thinking they would benefit from staff with extra health and safety/first aid training is significantly higher than the total sample in health and social work (31%) but significantly lower for hotels and restaurants (9%) and transport and communications (4%).

Levels of imagined disadvantages in employing RDS firefighters are much higher than among current and former employers.



Additionally, 2 per cent each mentioned problems with employees:

- coming to work tired/late night call-outs
- risking injury.

Each other imagined disadvantage was mentioned by 1 per cent or less of the sample.

As with imagined benefits, there are some differences by sector:

- employees leaving work at short notice
  - significantly fewer in transport/ communications (31%).

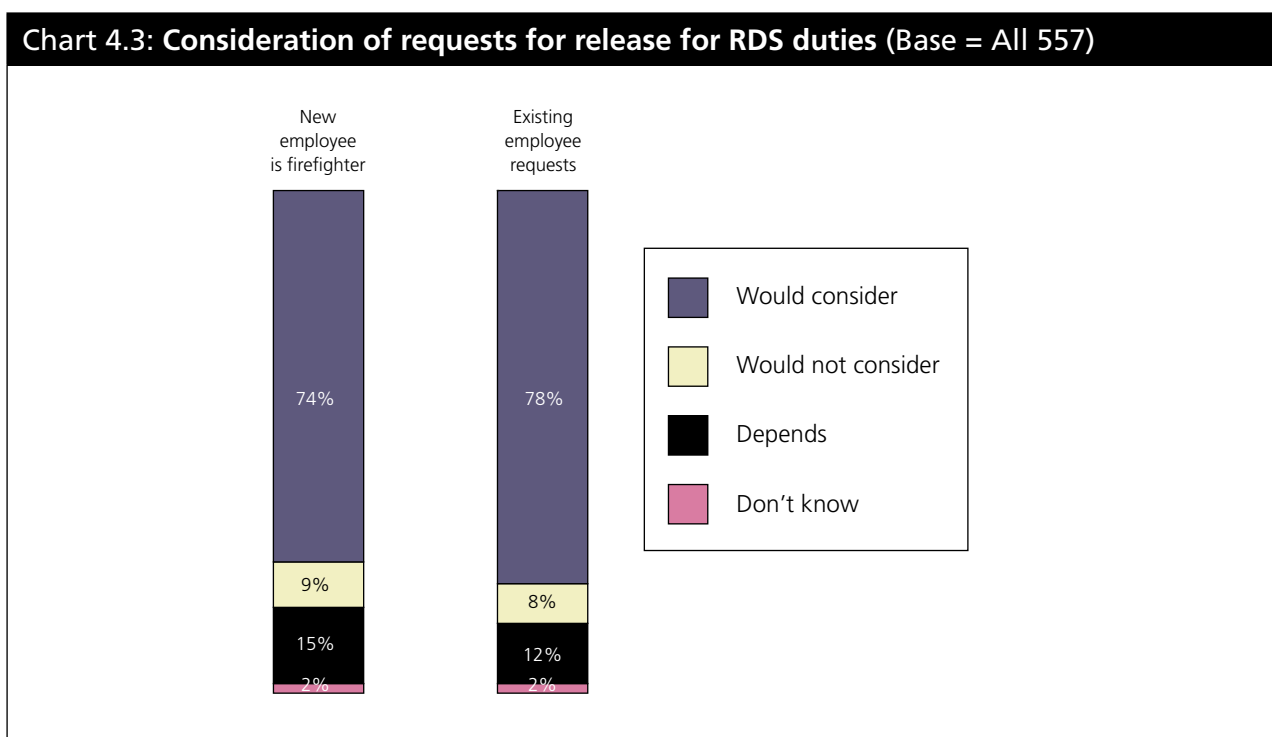
- problems in covering staff absences
  - significantly more in education (51%) and health & social work (55%).
- an adverse effect on productivity
  - as the concept of productivity is not entirely relevant to some sectors, significantly fewer might be expected in retail or wholesale (16%), hotels or restaurants (14%), education (10%), health and social work (8%);
  - significantly more in manufacturing (45%) and construction (40%).

It is clear that the disadvantages of releasing employees are much easier to envisage for this group of employers than the benefits – only 12 per cent **could not** think of a disadvantage, compared with 41 per cent who could not identify benefits.

Nevertheless, it is encouraging that non-employers appear amenable to at least considering employment of RDS firefighters.

As illustrated in Chart 4.3 below, if a new employee was already a firefighter when they joined the organisation, an encouraging 74 per cent of non-employers would consider continuing to release them. Only 9 per cent would not.

And in future if an existing employee asked to be released for RDS duties, 78 per cent would consider the request. Only 8 per cent would not.



Of the 377 companies where consideration would be given to releasing both new and existing staff:

- unprompted, 47 per cent say they would do it to support the local community
  - with mentions rising significantly to 59 per cent for businesses with 20 or more employees and 69 per cent in education;
  - and dropping significantly to 16 per cent in more populated areas.
- 37 per cent consider it a duty
  - with mentions rising significantly to 45 per cent in rural locations and 55 per cent in hotel or restaurant businesses;
  - and falling significantly to 27 per cent for businesses with 20 or more employees and 7 per cent in health & social work.
- 15 per cent see it as a worthwhile/important cause
- 3 per cent think it may benefit the company/be an asset
- 3 per cent don't know.

Other reasons (such as good to have their knowledge or abilities, helps motivate staff, keeps fire stations open) are given by 1 per cent or less each.

Thirty-one respondents would not consider requests for release from either new employees or existing employees, mainly because they are unable to spare staff and (38%) due to the nature of their business.

Four mention costs implications (all but one in the hotel/restaurant sector) and two (both education) inability due to legislation/regulations.

One-hundred and eighty would not consider releasing either new or existing staff.

When asked what would encourage them to do so, they raise issues such as the type of post the employee would hold (18%) and the availability of cover (17%):

*'It would all be dependent on their role. Shift engineers or electricians are not really expendable.'*

*'As long as they were not too operationally focused, if they had to rush off to deal with a fire that the operations here don't fall down.'*

Other comments:

- If the frequency/duration of call-outs was known (7 mentions)

*'It would be nice to know how long they would be off site.'*

- If it was outside working hours (5)

*'I just can't do it during working hours, it just isn't possible here. Outside working hours would be okay, but I can't imagine how that could be arranged.'*

- If compensation was given for staff time lost (5). Some verbatim comments suggest that businesses would expect some government involvement to encourage employers to release staff.

*'If we were going to get some compensation for them not being here'*

*'If the government would give me the funds for more teachers to cover the classes'*

Most comments suggest that employers would be open to the idea of releasing staff if it were possible to make it work for their organisation. However, others could not see it working for them due to the nature of their business:

*'Because the majority of staff are not based here on a daily basis it wouldn't work. If, however, they were just office based, then it would be fine'*

*'I don't think anything would encourage us, because it would involve losing our staff and we are that booked up with work.'*

The study does appear to have raised interest levels. Almost a third (31%) would like more information explaining what employing RDS firefighters involves, and a quarter (24%) would like to be included on the list of invitations to any future local meeting about employing firefighters in the community.

Thirty-seven wanted to make further comments about RDS firefighters. Twelve praised the job they do and eight reiterated the nature of their own business as a barrier to employment. Four requested more information, four think firefighters should be full-time rather than part-time and three commented on the help or support RDS gives the community. Other individual comments are given in Appendix E.

## APPENDIX A: The Letter

Research and Statistics Division

Fire and Resilience Directorate  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
5/A Allington Towers, Allington Street,  
PO BOX 50200,  
London, SW1E 5WY.  
020 7944 4400 ex 15436

Mark.Dunn@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Your ref: 7301/ xxxx

Dear Sir/Madam

### RDS Firefighters Research

I am writing to ask for your assistance with a short survey about the employment of Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters. The Department for Communities and Local Government has commissioned FDS International, an independent market research agency, to undertake a study on our behalf to collect the views of current, former and potential RDS employers.

As with all Communities and Local Government research, FDS will be conducting the interviewing in strict accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, ensuring your responses are kept anonymous unless you give permission for your answers to be attributed to you and your company.

If your business is selected, FDS International will contact you in the next couple of weeks and invite you to participate in a telephone interview lasting up to 15 minutes. I very much hope that you will be able to support this research, but if you would prefer to have your organisation removed from the list of potential contributors, please let us know by sending an email to [dclgoptout@fds.co.uk](mailto:dclgoptout@fds.co.uk) or by writing to me at the above address, quoting your reference number.

Communities and Local Government's work is heavily dependent on research such as this to ensure we deliver high quality services that are relevant to your business and local communities. If you are invited to participate, I very much hope you will spare the time to take part.

Yours sincerely,



**Mark Dunn**  
Senior Research Officer  
Research and Statistics Division  
Fire and Resilience Directorate  
Department for Communities and Local Government

# Appendix B: The Questionnaire



FDS International Ltd  
Hill House, Highgate Hill  
London N19 5NA  
Tel: 020 7272 7766 Fax: 020 7272 4468

C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
3	0	1				1

## **RDS Firefighter Survey merged – POST PILOT 7301/Sc/DD/AP**

### **SAMPLE TYPE:**

Current/former 1  
Never 2

**GET CONNECTED TO THE Owner/proprietor/MD (Small companies) or head of Human resources/personnel (large companies).**

### **ON INTRO SCREEN DISPLAY SAMPLE TYPE**

- FOR INTERVIEWER INFORMATION
- IE CURRENT OR NEVER
- NAME, JOB TITLE
- COMPANY DETAILS

### **ALSO DISPLAY:**

Good morning/afternoon. My name is ..... from FDS International. I am calling on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

**IF SAMPLE TYPE = 1, SAY INTRODUCTION 1.**

**IF SAMPLE TYPE = 2, SAY INTRODUCTION 2**

### **INTRODUCTION 1**

Good morning/afternoon. My name is ..... from FDS International. I am calling on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister). You should have received a letter from them recently asking for help with a short survey about employment of Retained Duty System firefighters. They have asked FDS to call a number of organisations to find out their views. Are you happy for me to run through a few questions now?

### **INTRODUCTION 2**

Good morning/afternoon. My name is ..... from FDS International. I am calling on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister). You should have received a letter from them recently asking for help with a short survey about the employment of Retained Duty System firefighters, where employers release them for firefighting duties when required. They have asked FDS to call a number of organisations to obtain their views about local fire service provision. Are you happy for me to run through a few questions now?

**NOTE FAX NO. OF ANY WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED LETTER AND WANT ONE FAXED.**

**IF REFERRED TO ANOTHER SITE, TAKE DOWN DETAILS AND PASS TO SUPERVISOR – EXIT AND START INTERVIEW AGAIN**

**IF NECESSARY:**

*We are making contact with a number of companies so that we collect a wide mix of views. Everything you tell us will be treated in strict confidence (under the Market Research Society Code of Conduct) and no information that could identify you or your company will be passed on to Communities and Local Government without your permission.*

A. It will take about .....[SAMPLE TYPE 1; 10 to 15 minutes: SAMPLE TYPE 2; 10 minutes]. Is it convenient now?

- |                    |   |                          |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Yes                | 1 | <b>CONTINUE</b>          |
| Not convenient now | 2 | <b>MAKE APPOINTMENT</b>  |
| Refused            | 3 | <b>THANK &amp; CLOSE</b> |

B. Firstly, INCLUDING YOURSELF, how many employees do you have at this site?

**KEY IN NUMBER**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Don't know | X |
|------------|---|

**IF Don't know, ASK QC. IF 1, ASK QF. OTHERS SKIP TO QD**

C. Would that be...**READ OUT**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Under 10    | 1 |
| 10 to 49    | 2 |
| 50 to 249   | 3 |
| 250 to 499  | 4 |
| 500 or more | 5 |
| Don't know  | 6 |

D. And how many sites does your organisation have in England?

**KEY IN NUMBER**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Don't know | X |
|------------|---|

**CHECK BACK TO SAMPLE TYPE. IF CODE 1, SKIP TO INSTRUCTION BEFORE QE. IF CODE 2, ASK QX**

X. Your local fire station is staffed by RDS firefighters....have you ever heard of RDS...

- |     |   |                             |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|
| Yes | 1 | <b>INSTRN BEFORE QE</b>     |
| No  | 2 | <b>READ OUT EXPLANATION</b> |

Retained duty system (RDS) firefighters provide emergency cover to more than 90 per cent of the UK. There are nearly 14,000 RDS firefighters in England and they are generally located in rural communities, small towns and villages. RDS firefighters are paid volunteers who are trained to deal with a wide range of situations and incidents in the same way that full-time firefighters are. The difference is that they are not based at a fire station waiting for an alarm to sound but instead are on standby, at home or at work, waiting to be called out.

**CHECK BACK TO QD. IF MORE THAN 1, ASK QE. OTHERS SKIP TO G**

E. Can I just check who in your organisation would decide that it is OK to employ an existing Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighter or to release an existing employee from their work for RDS duties?

Me	1	<b>INSTRN BEFORE QG1</b>
Decision maker here but not me	2	<b>QEa</b>
Decision maker at another site	3	<b>QEa</b>
Other	4	<b>QEa</b>

Ea. And is that person the...**READ OUT**

Head of HR/Personnel	1	<b>INSTRN BEFORE QG1</b>
Owner/proprietor/MD	2	<b>INSTRN BEFORE QG1</b>
Other central HR/personnel	3	<b>INSTRN BEFORE QG1</b>
Other	4	<b>QEb</b>

Eb. What is their job title? **KEY IN**

**SKIP TO INSTRUCTION BEFORE QG1**

F. So are you self-employed?

Yes	1	<b>THANK &amp; CLOSE</b>
No	2	

**CHECK BACK TO SAMPLE TYPE. IF CODE 1, SKIP TO QG2. IF CODE 2, ASK QG1**

G1. And do you employ any RDS firefighters?

Yes	1	<b>QG2</b>
No	2	<b>QI</b>

G2. And how many employees are currently RDS firefighters?

**KEY IN NUMBER. CANNOT BE GREATER THAN QB/C**

Don't know	X
------------	---

**IF RESPONDENT ISN'T SURE OF NUMBERS ASK QH. IF THEY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT PERSONNEL AND THEIR DUTIES AT ALL, GET CONNECTED TO SOMEONE WHO DOES. IF 0, ASK QI. OTHERS SKIP TO QK**

H. Would that be...**READ OUT. CANNOT BE GREATER THAN QB/C**

1-5	1
6-10	2
11 to 49	3
50 +	4
Don't know	5

**GO TO QK**

- I. Have you ever employed RDS firefighters?
- |            |   |   |
|------------|---|---|
| Yes        | 1 | <b>QJ</b>   |
| No         | 2 | <b>SKIP TO INSTRUCTION BEFORE Q1a1</b>                        |
| Don't know | 3 | <b>GET CONNECTED TO SOMEONE WHO DOES KNOW AND START AGAIN</b> |

**CHECK BACK TO SAMPLE TYPE. IF CODE 2, COUNT QUOTA FROM QB/C :**

0-19 employees

20+ employees

- J. Approximately how long ago did your last RDS firefighter leave your organisation?  
**KEY IN TO NEAREST HALF YEAR (0.5)**

- K. How long ago was the last time you agreed that a member of staff could be a Retained Duty System firefighter?

**KEY IN TO NEAREST HALF YEAR (0.5)**

**IF FIRE STATION IN SAMPLE ASK Q1a1. IF NOT ASK Q1a2.**

- 1a1. How far would you say this site is from ... **[FIRE STATION IN SAMPLE]** in miles?

**KEY IN TO NEAREST HALF MILE (0.5)**

**XX.X**

Don't know Y

**SKIP TO Q1b**

- 1a2. How far from this site is the nearest fire station in miles? **KEY IN TO NEAREST HALF MILE (0.5)**

**XX.X**

Don't know Y

- 1b. And typically how long would it take to reach the fire station on foot or by car?

**KEY IN MINUTES**

**FOOT: XX**

**CAR: XX**

Don't know Y

**CHECK BACK TO SAMPLE TYPE. IF CODE 2, SKIP TO OWN MODULE CORRESPONDING WITH NQ2b TO NQ5a OF NEVER QUESTIONNAIRE, THEN SKIP TO Q9f. IF CODE 1, CONTINUE**

**IF SAMPLE TYPE 1, BUT ANSWERED NO AT QI, SKIP TO QN2b NEVER MODULE**

**IF SAMPLE TYPE 2, BUT ANSWERED QG1 = 1 OR QI = 1 THEN GO TO Q2a**

- 2a. Thinking back were you aware of the Retained Duty System fire service before being approached by staff for release?

Yes 1 **Q2b**

No 2 **Q2d**

Wasn't here then 3 **Q2d**

Can't remember 4 **Q2d**

- 2b. So, before being approached by staff for release, did you or your company have any contact with the Fire & Rescue Service or the local fire station?

**CAN MULTI-CODE**

**NOTE: WE ARE INTERESTED IN CONTACT SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO RDS**

Fire & Rescue Service	1	<b>Q2c</b>
Local fire station	2	<b>Q2c</b>
Neither	3	<b>Q2d</b>
Can't remember	4	<b>Q2d</b>

- 2c. What was the nature of this contact? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

- 2d. Do you release RDS staff for firefighting duty during work hours?

Yes	1	<b>Q2e</b>
No	2	<b>INSTRN BEFORE Q3c</b>
Don't know	3	<b>INSTRN BEFORE Q3a</b>

- 2e. Is that on day or night shift?

Day	1
Night	2
Either	3

**CHECK BACK TO Q2a. IF Wasn't here then (CODE 3) SKIP TO Q3c**

- 3a. When you released your first employee for RDS duties, which one of the following best describes the company's attitude...**READ OUT. SINGLE CODE**

Enthusiastic	1	<b>Q3c</b>
Reluctant	2	<b>Q3b</b>
Not too bothered	3	<b>Q3b</b>
Don't know	4	<b>Q3c</b>

- 3b. So why did the company agree to release staff for RDS duties? **DO NOT READ OUT. CAN MULTI-CODE**

Historical/legacy	1
Consider it a duty	2
To support local community	3
Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )	4
Don't know	5

- 3c. What did you imagine the benefits to be of employing RDS firefighters?

**PROMPT IF NECESSARY. CAN MULTI-CODE**

Staff with experience of/training for dealing with emergencies	1	<b>Q3d</b>
Staff with extra health and safety/ first aid training	2	<b>Q3d</b>
Respect/prestige in the local community	3	<b>Q3d</b>
Staff who can do own fire safety checks	4	<b>Q3d</b>
Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )	X	<b>Q3d</b>
None	Y	<b>Q3e</b>
Don't know	Z	<b>Q3</b>

**FOR EACH BENEFIT EXPECTED, ASK Q3d.**

3d. And did you get ....**[READ OUT FROM Q3c]** ?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 3

3e. Are/were there any benefits that you didn't expect?

- Yes 1 **Q3f**
- No 2 **Q3g**
- Don't know 3 **Q3g**

3f. What are they? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

3g. Did you foresee any disadvantages in employing an RDS firefighter?

- Yes 1 **Q3h**
- No 2 **Q3j**
- Don't know 3 **Q3j**

3h. What were they? **PROMPT IF NECESSARY. CAN MULTI-CODE**

- Employees leaving work at short notice 1 **Q3i**
- Employees being out of work during office hours 2 **Q3i**
- Employees being at risk of injury 3 **Q3i**
- Employees coming to work tired/late night call-outs 4 **Q3i**
- An adverse effect on production/productivity 5 **Q3i**
- Problems in covering staff absences 6 **Q3i**
- Other (SPECIFY) X **Q3i**
- Don't know Y **Q3j**

**FOR EACH DISADVANTAGE FORESEEN, ASK Q3i**

3i. And did you experience ...**[READ OUT FROM Q3h]**?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 3

3j. Are/were there any disadvantages that you didn't foresee?

- Yes 1 **Q3k**
- No 2 **Q4a**
- Don't know 3 **Q4a**

3k. What were they? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

4a. Have you ever turned down a request by an employee to be released for RDS duties?

- Yes 1 **Q4b**
- No 2 **INSTRN BEFORE Q4c**
- Don't know 3 **INSTRN BEFORE Q4c**

- 4b. Why was that? **PROMPT IF NECESSARY. CAN MULTI-CODE**
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Employees are too valuable to be allowed out of work | 1 |
| Employees need full concentration at work            | 2 |
| You employ too many RDS firefighters already         | 3 |
| No clear/obvious benefits to your business           | 4 |
| Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )                             | X |
| Don't know   | Y |

**CHECK BACK TO Q1. IF CODED 1 ASK Q4c. OTHERS SKIP TO Q5a**

- 4c. So is the reason you no longer employ any RDS firefighters because the relevant staff left your company or the RDS service, or is there some other reason?
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Employee left company to become full-time firefighter | 1 |
| Employee left company for some other reason           | 2 |
| Employee no longer RDS                                | 3 |
| Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )                              | 4 |
| Don't know  | 5 |
- 5a. ....[Do **IF QG2>0**; did **IF QI=1**] you impose any restrictions on the availability of RDS firefighters for duty?
- |            |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| Yes        | 1 | <b>Q5b</b> |
| No         | 2 | <b>Q5c</b> |
| Don't know | 3 | <b>Q5c</b> |

- 5b. What restrictions are/were they? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

- 5c. In the future would you consider requests for release for RDS firefighter duties from all staff, or only from specific grades or job functions?
- |                               |   |            |
|-------------------------------|---|------------|
| All                           | 1 | <b>Q5f</b> |
| Specific grades/job functions | 2 | <b>Q5e</b> |
| Would not consider            | 3 | <b>Q5d</b> |
| Don't know                    | 4 | <b>Q5f</b> |

- 5d. Why would you not consider requests for release for duty in the future?  
**WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

**SKIP TO Q6a**

- 5e. So which grades or job functions would you NOT consider requests from?  
**TAKE DOWN**

**SKIP TO Q6a**

- 5f. Are there specific grades or job functions for which you are more likely to actually grant requests than others?
- |            |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| Yes        | 1 | <b>Q5g</b> |
| No         | 2 | <b>Q6a</b> |
| Don't know | 3 | <b>Q6a</b> |

- 5g. Which are these? **TAKE DOWN**

6a. Over the last 12 months, roughly how many times your RDS firefighters have been called out? **KEY IN NUMBER**

Don't know X

**IF 0, SKIP TO Q6d**

6b. So how many work hours would you have lost through RDS firefighters being called out? **KEY IN NUMBER**

**XXX**

Don't know Y

6c. Is that...**READ OUT**

More than you expected 1

Less than you expected 2

About as expected 3

Don't know 4

6d. Contractually is an RDS firefighter treated the same as any other employee in your company?

Yes 1 **Q6f**

No 2 **Q6e**

Don't know 3 **Q6f**

6e. In what ways does their contract differ? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

6f. Are there any other ways in which RDS firefighters are treated differently from other employees in your organisation?

Yes 1 **Q6g**

No 2 **Q7a**

Don't know 3 **Q7a**

6g. What are these? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

7a. Now I'd like to talk about the level of contact you ...[have **IF QD>0**; had **IF QG2=1**] with the local fire & rescue service while employing an RDS firefighter. Would you say that is/was...**READ OUT**

Mainly initiated by your company 1

Mainly initiated by the FRS 2

Or about equal 3

No contact at all 4

Don't know 5

7b. So is/was the level of contact with the FRS....

Too little 1

Too much 2

Or about right 3

7c. And on a scale from 10 meaning completely satisfied to 1 meaning totally dissatisfied, how satisfied ...[are **IF QG2>0**; were **IF QI=1**] you with the support offered by the fire & rescue service to you as an employer of a firefighter? **KEY IN NUMBER**

7d. How long is it since you received any information explaining what employing firefighters involves?

Within a year	1	<b>Q7e</b>
1-2 years	2	<b>Q7e</b>
3 or more years	3	<b>Q7e</b>
Never	4	<b>Q7g</b>
Don't know	3	<b>Q7g</b>

7e. Using the 1 to 10 scale, how satisfied were you with this information?  
**KEY IN NUMBER**

**IF SCORE 1 TO 7 ASK Q7f. OTHERS SKIP TO Q7g**

7f. Why do you give that score? What improvements to the information would you like to see? What else could it contain? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

7g. Have you ever been invited by the fire and rescue service to a meeting about employing firefighters in the community?

Yes	1	<b>Q7h</b>
No	2	<b>Q7j</b>
Don't know	3	<b>Q7j</b>

7h. Using the 1 to 10 scale, how satisfied were you with the meeting? **KEY IN NUMBER**

**IF SCORE 1 TO 7 ASK Q7i. OTHERS SKIP TO Q7j**

7i. Why do you give that score? What improvements to the meeting do you suggest?  
**WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

7j. As a local business that releases employees for RDS duties, what improvements in support from the FRS would you like to see? What else could they do for you?  
**WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

7k. Does your local fire & rescue service publicise your employment of RDS firefighters?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

7l. Does your company publicise their employment of RDS firefighters?

Yes	1	<b>Q8a</b>
No	2	<b>Q7m</b>
Don't know	3	<b>Q8a</b>

7m. Why is that? **PROMPT IF NECESSARY. CAN MULTI-CODE**

- Won't do it on principle/boasting 1
- Community is aware anyway 2
- Never thought about it 3
- Other (SPECIFY) 4
- Don't know 5

8a. Can I check, have you personally had any previous experience of employing RDS firefighters in other companies?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 3

8b. Would you like to make any further comments about how RDS impacts on your company and/or any changes you would like to see?

- Yes 1 **TAKE DOWN COMMENTS**
- No 2 **Q9**
- Don't know 3 **Q9**

9. Now I would like to finish by asking you some classification questions which will allow us to group your answers with similar companies.

9a. What is your job function?

- Owner/proprietor/MD 1
- Head of Human Resources/Personnel 2
- Office/branch/site manager 3
- Human Resources/Personnel manager 4
- Other (**SPECIFY**) 5

9b. In the last 5 years, what is the maximum number of firefighters your company has employed on site at any one time? **KEY IN NUMBER**

- Don't know X

**IF Don't know, ASK Q9c**

9c. Would that be...**READ OUT. PROBABLY LESS THAN QB/C**

- 1-5 1
- 6-10 2
- 11 to 49 3
- 50 + 4
- Don't know 5

9d. For how many years ...[has **IF QG2>0**; did **IF QI=1**] your company employ[ed] RDS firefighters? **KEY IN YEARS**

- Don't know X

9e. How many years ago was this company established? **KEY IN YEARS**

- Don't know X

**NEVER MODULE HERE**

N2b. In what circumstances do you think you would be prepared to consider releasing staff for RDS duties? Would you be prepared to consider only certain job functions/grades of staff? **WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

N2c. What benefits would the company expect from employing RDS firefighters? Is that...

**DO NOT READ OUT BUT CAN PROMPT. CAN MULTI-CODE**

Staff with experience of/training for dealing with emergencies	1
Staff with extra health and safety/first aid training	2
Respect/prestige in the local community	3
Staff who can do own fire safety checks	4
Other (SPECIFY)	X
None	Y
Don't know	Z

N2d. What disadvantages would the company expect from employing RDS firefighters?

**Is that...DO NOT READ OUT BUT CAN PROMPT. CAN MULTI-CODE**

Employees leaving work at short notice	1
Employees being out of work during office hours	2
Employees being at risk of injury	3
Employees coming to work tired/late night call-outs	4
An adverse effect on production/productivity	5
Problems in covering staff absences	6
Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )	X
Don't know	Y

N3a. Would you like more information that explains what employing firefighters involves?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

N3b. Would you like to be included on the list of invitations to any future local meeting about employing firefighters in the community?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

**CHECK BACK TO NQ3a AND NQ3b. IF EITHER CODED 1, ASK NQ3c. OTHERS SKIP TO Q4a**

N3c. I will have to pass your contact details onto the local fire & rescue service to do this. Is that OK?

Yes	1 <b>ASK N3c1</b>
No	2
Don't know	3

N3c1 So that we can do this, can I just confirm your name?

**INSERT NAME – GO TO N3c2**

N3c2 And your job title?

**INSERT JOB TITLE – CONTINUE**

N4a. If a new employee was already an RDS firefighter when they joined your organisation, would you consider releasing them for firefighting duties?

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Yes        | 1 |
| No         | 2 |
| Depends    | 3 |
| Don't know | 4 |

N4b. In the future, if an existing employee asked to be released for RDS firefighting duties, would you consider their request?

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Yes        | 1 |
| No         | 2 |
| Depends    | 3 |
| Don't know | 4 |

**CHECK BACK TO QN4a AND QN4b. IF CODED 2 AT BOTH ASK Q4c.**

**If CODED 1 AT BOTH QN4a and QN4b – ASK QN4c1**

**OTHERS SKIP TO Q4d**

N4c. Why would you not consider requests for release for RDS duties in the future?

**WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

N4c1. So why would your company agree to release staff for RDS duties in the future?

**DO NOT READ OUT. CAN MULTI-CODE**

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Consider it a duty         | 1 |
| To support local community | 2 |
| Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )   | 3 |
| Don't know                 | 4 |

**DO NOT ASK IF CODED 1 AT BOTH QN4a and QN4b**

N4d. What would encourage you to allow staff to be released for RDS firefighter duties?

**WRITE FULL VERBATIM**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Nothing    | Y |
| Don't know | Z |

N4e. Would you like to make any further comments about how RDS impacts on your company and/or any changes you would like to see?

- |            |   |                           |
|------------|---|---------------------------|
| Yes        | 1 | <b>TAKE DOWN COMMENTS</b> |
| No         | 2 | <b>Q5</b>                 |
| Don't know | 3 | <b>Q5</b>                 |

N4f. Is there anything else you would like to know about employing Retained Duty System firefighters?

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | <b>TAKE DOWN COMMENTS</b><br><b>SAY ‘Someone will get back to you with an answer’</b> |
| No  | 2 |   |

**ASK QN4g IF CODE 1 – ‘YES’ AT QN4f. OTHERS SKIP TO QN5**

N4g. I will have to pass your contact details onto the local fire & rescue service to do this. Is that OK?

- |            |   |                 |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes        | 1 | <b>ASK N4g1</b> |
| No         | 2 |                 |
| Don’t know | 3 |                 |

N4g1 So that we can do this, can I just confirm your name?

**INSERT NAME – GO TO N4g2**

N4g2 And your job title?

**INSERT JOB TITLE – CONTINUE**

N5. Now I would like to finish by asking you some classification questions which will allow us to group your answers with similar companies.

N5a. What is your job function? **TAKE DOWN**

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Owner/proprietor/MD               | 1 |
| Head of Human Resources/Personnel | 2 |
| Office/branch/site manager        | 3 |
| Human Resources/Personnel manager | 4 |
| Other ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )          | 5 |

**ASK ALL**

9f. Which of the following would you say best describes the location of your organisation. Is it..... **READ OUT**

**NOTE: WE ARE INTERESTED IN THE LOCATION OF THE SITE WHICH THEY WORK AT**

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| City (in the centre)        | 1 |
| City (in the suburbs)       | 2 |
| Large Town (in the centre)  | 3 |
| Large Town (in the suburbs) | 4 |
| Market town                 | 5 |
| Village                     | 6 |
| Countryside/rural           | 7 |

9g. Can I just check, which of the following business sectors most closely describes your company's business? Is that...**READ OUT**

Agriculture & fishing	1
Mining & quarrying	2
Manufacturing	3
Electricity/gas/water supply	4
Construction	5
Retail/wholesale/repair	6
Hotel/restaurants/pubs/bars/leisure	7
Transport, storage & communications (including distribution/logistics)	8
Finance (including banking, pensions, insurance)	9
Business activities/real estate renting	10
Public administration /defence/ emergency services	11
Education	12
Health & social work	13
Other community, social/personal service	14
Other activities ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )	15
Don't know	16

9h. Approximately what was your most recent annual turnover?

0-£99,000	1
£100,000-£199,000	2
£200,000-£349,000	3
£350,000-£499,000	4
£500,000-£600,000	5
£601,000-£999,000	6
Over £1m but less than £5m	7
Over £5m but less than £10m	8
Over £10m but less than £25m	9
More than £25 million	10
Don't know	11
Refused	12

**THANK AND CLOSE**

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. You have been interviewed by FDS International on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government. Are you happy for your responses to be attributed to you?

Yes	1
No	2

If you have any queries, I can give you the number of the executive in charge. Do you have any queries?

Yes	1
No	2

**IF Yes:** The number to call is 020 7272 7766. Please ask for Sheila Carey.

**CODE:** Gender:

Male	1
Female	2

**CHECK COMPANY DETAILS FROM SAMPLE**

## Appendix C: FRS Supplying Sample

Contact sample of employers received from the following FRSs:

1. Avon
2. Bedfordshire & Luton
3. Berkshire
4. Buckinghamshire
5. Cambridgeshire
6. Cleveland
7. Cornwall
8. Darlington and Durham
9. Derbyshire
10. Devon
11. Dorset
12. Hertfordshire
13. Humberside
14. Kent
15. Lancashire
16. Shropshire
17. Somerset
18. Suffolk
19. Tyne and Wear
20. Warwickshire
21. West Midlands
22. West Sussex

## Appendix D: Sample Profile

	<b>Current (Base: 373)</b>	<b>Former (Base: 109)</b>	<b>Non* (Base: 557)</b>
<b>Company age</b>	%	%	%
1–10	12	12	n/a
11–20	20	22	n/a
21–30	18	25	n/a
31–40	14	15	n/a
41–50	7	9	n/a
51+	24	15	n/a
Don't know	5	3	n/a
<b>Employee Size</b>			
Up to 10	34	31	57
11–19	13	20	35
20–49	23	19	6
50–249	20	20	2
250–499	5	7	<0.5
500+	4	1	<0.5
Don't know	<0.5	1	–
<b>Location</b>			
City (in centre)	2	1	1
City (in suburbs)	3	5	1
Large town (in centre)	7	6	4
Large town (in suburbs)	11	13	6
Market Town	36	35	36
Village	19	17	25
Countryside/Rural	21	23	27
<b>Business Sector</b>			
Agriculture & fishing	5	6	7
Mining & quarrying	<0.5	–	–
Manufacturing	28	22	8
Electricity/gas/water supply	2	1	1
Construction	11	9	7
Retail/wholesale/repair	21	28	22
Hotel/restaurants/pubs/bars/leisure	6	11	19
Transport, storage & communications (including distribution/logistics)	8	9	8
Finance (including banking, pensions, insurance)	1	–	2
Business activities/real estate renting	2	4	6

\* profile of weighted sample

	<b>Current (Base: 373)</b>	<b>Former (Base: 109)</b>	<b>Non* (Base: 557)</b>
Public administration/defence/emergency services	3	–	<0.5
Education	6	6	7
Health & social work	2	3	7
Other community, social/personal service	3	2	4
IT	1	–	1
Security	1	–	–
Other activities (SPECIFY)	<0.5	–	–
Don't know	<0.5	–	1
<b>No. of sites in England</b>			
1	56	57	67
2	14	12	9
3–4	7	7	4
5–6	5	2	2
7–10	4	3	3
11–20	3	5	2
21–50	2	1	1
51+	7	10	8
Don't know	3	4	3
<b>Last annual turnover</b>			
0–£99,000	4	3	8
£100,000–£199,000	3	6	5
£200,000–£349,000	6	5	5
£350,000–£499,000	3	3	4
£500,000–£600,000	2	5	5
£601,000–£999,000	6	8	8
£1m or more but less than £5m	23	15	10
£5m or more but less than £10m	6	6	2
£10m or more but less than £25m	6	6	1
£25m or more	8	6	1
Don't know	17	14	22
Refused	17	25	30
<b>Gender of respondent</b>			
Male	71	70	56
Female	29	30	44

\* profile of weighted sample

## Appendix E: Further comments on the RDS from former & non-employers

**Would you like to make any further comments about how RDS impacts on your company and/or any changes you would like to see?**

### Former employers

- You need to have them because of where we are and we would fully support them.
- I applaud retained firemen and what they do.
- Local FRS could contact employers, saying they have a pool of guys looking for various jobs, plus customers of companies could use RDS as they are more likely to use them for helping the community in a positive way eg health and safety issues.
- If it's a medium sized company there's a minimal effect. Smaller companies could have issues.
- I can't see it working in my company because of the nature of the business. Over the past four years there have been policy changes within the RDS system like, instead of being on call 24/7 it's 80 hours a week. That's why I would be so much against it because it would affect staff during their shifts.
- Couldn't do it now, we have too few staff now we've downsized.
- It does impact financially. It's just not practical to take on a firefighter.

### Non-employers

- I would like more reserved firefighters.
- I am getting very interested in doing it myself as a result of talking to you about it. It is a timely conversation, we deal with both insurance and construction industries and fire is a big issue.
- Only that we would welcome them.
- The local Fire Service have been here. If there is anything they would like to promote we have masses of wall space, so send us some posters and we'll gladly display them.
- I recently tried to call the local fire station without using 999 as it wasn't an emergency and there was no number to call. I think there should be at least an answering machine.
- At a branch I worked at previously we had members of the TA on our staff. I didn't realise the Fire Service had its own equivalent workforce.
- If we had some younger males here it would definitely be considered.