

Cheshire FBU News

September 2009

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1. The mess that is CPD

This year Senior Managers have surpassed themselves with the Cheshire's version of the National CPD policy. The service would not agree a sensible application of its quarters idea with the FBU (lose one quarter and you lost most of the others, the quarters idea was really a piece of sharp marketing) and so applied the National policy with a Cheshire flavour, very bitter to the taste.

But hey, if you don't apply the policy correctly one year don't let that stop you confusing everyone; don't let consistency or fairness get in the way of spotting your mistakes. Just apply the rules differently (correctly as it happens) and don't tell anyone till after they have applied.

Take temporary promotion for instance; Is it a mistake by the Service, plain incompetence or a cynical way of saving money?

Last year if you were temporary promoted you got CPD. This year if you are temporary promoted you don't get CPD.WHY?

Let us explain-You never should have got CPD if you acted up or were temporary promoted because an obscure NJC circular clearly states that you do not get CPD for performing the temporary duties of a higher role.

However the guidance given out to managers clearly states, under section 2 that you can evidence your continuous professional development by performing the duties of a higher role. (Good these well paid managers aren't they)

So why are Senior Managers applying the NJC circular this year and not last?

Heard of the credit crunch, well its looks like that is where the answer lies.

Don't take my word for it look at the stats the Service have produced:

1st year of CPD approx 82% of eligible staff are awarded CPD,

3rd year of CPD 51% of eligible staff are awarded CPD

Yet over the same period CFRS has performed to higher and higher standards (that means you have delivered and performed to a higher standard) but the percentage of members receiving CPD is drastically reduced.

Two possible reasons for this we are all a load of poor performing non committed workers or the service is using CPD to save money—which one do you think is the reason.

Of course, if you do not want to lose your CPD on temporary promotion-vote with your feet and don't volunteer.

2. Discipline.

Brigade officials reported to the last Brigade committee that the service were seeing the error of using discipline instead of good management practices to convince its staff of the need to modernise and that a more sensible and measured approach was now in force. If you have found it hard to contact a Brigade officials of late it's because for the last three months they have been tied up with numerous disciplines, sackings and suspensions.

3. Phantom Watch

What is going on with Blue Watch? All the operation staff are disappearing. As far back as January the Watch has been, on a regular basis, operating at or below minimum staffing level. One station reported for duty to find no one in charge and reports on the grapevine said that it was like the scene from Lord of the flies, people hiding in cupboards, in fear of losing their whistle and mobs running around shouting for piggy. Order was quickly restored when a parent, sorry Crew Manager turned up complete with a conch to rule over the lost tribe!

On a more serious note who is responsible for (mis)managing the Blue Watch staffing to such low and dangerous levels. The buck has to stop with Senior Managers, but no doubt they will find a way of blaming the poor old operational staff, You know the score, mistakes are only made and punishment melted out to the lowest ranks. Senior managers don't make mistakes; they just judge people who they think do.

4. HR.

The Professionals are moving around again, more comings and goings and departmental name changes. The rumour from inside HR is that they don't bother to train new comers that much anymore no point if they are not going to stay, they don't even get to 'hot desk' as it only reaches luke warm. What is a shame is that just as WM's start to build a relationship with their nominated HR advisor a new one comes in and all continuity is lost which in turn has a detrimental effect on all station to HR issues.

5. South Yorkshire

South Yorkshire have been at the forefront of this issue and as you will have read from National circulars the Fire Authority up there will not engage constructively with the FBU and is threatening to sack all 700 plus Firefighters if they do not sign up to 12 hour shifts.

Be aware that this fight is not just South Yorkshire's but every Public Sector worker in the UK. The total disregard Management has shown their staff by threatening to impose different working conditions on them is outrageous and should be resisted by us all. Watch on [fboutube](#) to the views of members from South Yorkshire and how Managers have totally ignored the views of staff and especially Women members.

6. RDS Update

Below are two extracts from a national circular sent to all RDS branches, make sure you open the mail and get the latest RDS updates

Pensions

Having won at the Employment Tribunal, the FBU submitted, as long ago as February 2009 detailed claim to the Treasury Solicitor in relation to the pension's component of the claims. The FBU continues to press for the option to elect for the contribution and benefit structures of either the FPS or the NFPS. The FBU also raised numerous technical issues, including the continued application of Rule J4 of the FPS and injury benefits.

The FBU **has yet to receive** a response to those detailed claims, despite chasing the Treasury Solicitor through its lawyers. It is for this reason that it has not been possible to progress the matter further.

The FBU, through our lawyers, have now said that, unless a response is received within the next 14 days, it will apply to the Employment Tribunal in Croydon for a Case Management Hearing to start the legal process moving forward again in the test cases.

Whatever the negotiated outcome, it is essential for RDS members to have in mind that, if they choose to take up the option of backdated pension entitlement, they will need to pay the backdated contributions for that entitlement. The FBU is negotiating as favourable terms as possible, and is seeking a facility to pay backdated contributions in installments.

NJC Terms and Conditions

The FBU is in detailed negotiations to amend the NJC terms and conditions to remove all elements of discrimination against RDS members under the Part-Time Workers Regulations for the future. The changes include sick pay and pay for bank holidays equivalent to whole-timers and more minor changes such as end of course leave payments.

These negotiations are at an advanced stage and it is hoped that the changes can be formally announced at or before the September meeting of the NJC.

7. Staff Survey

All staff have been encouraged over the summer months to take part in the 2nd staff survey, there remains a lot of anxiety though amongst members, in that, due to the way information about who filled the form in. It will be pretty easy to narrow down who has completed the questionnaire. It is also interesting to see how the wordings of some questions have been changed since the last survey. Of course Managers will say that some positives have come out of the last survey including the STAR awards. Unfortunately in its quest to recognise staff management have devalued some great work. Take the category of 'Fire Service Professionalism' for example, how can one particular incident be judged against another, how will the nominees feel who come second? Did the winners do a better job? Surely it would be better to recognise the acts of professionalism individually rather than make it a competition? Oh, and just another thought how can the best leader nominations contain a nominee from a department of one?

8. National Lobby

All members are encouraged to contact their respective MP's and arrange a meeting for the 21st October when a National lobby of Parliament will take place. This is the second year running that the FBU has staged such a lobby and is attempting to build on the success of last year.

You can contact your MP to arrange a meeting either by calling their constituency office or by using the website www.writetothem.com.

All the materials you will need on the day will be supplied by your Officials. Cheshire members who attended last year thought this was a very worthwhile event and gave them a chance to speak to their MP regarding real concerns about the Fire Service. For more details check out the main FBU website.

To contribute to further issues of Cheshire FBU News contact your Branch rep or email: cheshirefbunews@googlemail.com
Check out the website:<http://www.cheshire.fbu.org.uk>

