

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
IN
THE BRITISH FIRE SERVICE:
AN ILLUSION OF CHANGE?**

**BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Prologue

The role of a firefighter.

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PROLOGUE: THE ROLE OF A FIREFIGHTER

Firefighters

To understand what it actually means to be a firefighter one must consider the impact of fire service history upon the present and the bearing this has, if any, on future strategies. The following three accounts, spanning over 140 years encapsulate the spirit and tradition of firefighting and provide an insight into the every day work of the men and women of the fire service.

The first quotation is from Sir Eyre Massey-Shaw who commanded the London Fire Brigade from 1861 to 1892. The second quotation comes from 1970 from another Chief Fire Officer of the London Fire Brigade, Mr. Joe Milner. The final quotation is from a New York City Fire Department firefighter, Billy Green. Billy attended the World Trade Centre terrorist attack on September 11th 2001 and was the only survivor from his fire station, known as Engine 6.

The role of a London firefighter in 1861 (Honeycombe, 1976:18)

“A fireman, to be successful, must enter buildings. He must get in below, above, on every side; from opposite houses, over back walls, over side walls, through panels of doors, through windows, through skylights, through holes cut by himself in gates, walls and the roof. He must know how to reach the attic from the basement by ladders placed on half-burned stairs and the basement from the attic by a rope made fast on a chimney. His whole success depends on his getting in and remaining there and he must always carry his appliances with him, as without them he is no use.”

Sir Eyre Massey-Shaw, Chief Fire Officer London Fire Brigade 1861 to 1892.

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The role of a London firefighter in 1970 (Honeycombe, 1976:18-20)

“ Let me tell you the reality behind Massey-Shaw’s words and what it is like to be a fireman in London today. When the bells go down the firemen, whether at drills, lectures, meals or rest race to their appliances. The drivers rev up impatiently while the teleprinter chatters out the address. Two tone horns and flashing blue lights help to clear the road and also to reassure those in trouble that help is on the way. Perhaps it’s a fire in a smoke-logged building. The officer in charge’s first task is to radio for reinforcing appliances and to organise fireman wearing breathing apparatus in the search for casualties and the seat of the fire. These teams will grope their way forward, keeping close together, so that they may aid each other if trouble comes. They must remember each door they pass through, each turn they make, so that there can be no confusion about the way out. Each foot must be placed carefully, lest floors weakened by fire give way and plunge them into an inferno. Always they are aware of the heat. Its growing intensity tells them when they are approaching its source. They must always be ready for a sudden build-up of super heated gases, which may detonate in a flashover – a ball of flame scorching all in its path. As the search progresses, it may be found that the fire is in the basement, the firemen must find or force a way down. On their rumps or bellies now, they will be hot and sweaty; their clothing will be covered in filth and saturated with water. As they go down through the heat layer a band of high temperature gases toasts their exposed skin. Totally blinded by thick smoke they feel their way down each step before trusting their full weight upon it. They may be confronted with a confusion of passageways, which they must penetrate and explore, only too aware of the dangers surrounding them. Jets of water are directed at the flames and a dense cloud of hissing, scalding steam envelops them. Soon they know they are

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winning as the scalding heat loses its sting and they move on searching for small pockets of fire. By now they are tired, that remarkable something that drove them on has evaporated. They are wet, chilled and will be glad to see the outside again. They will have a sense of satisfaction that comes from achievement, they have done well, they know this, and that is enough."

Joe Milner, Chief Fire Officer London Fire Brigade 1970.

The role of a New York firefighter at the World Trade Centre terrorist attack in 2001 (Billy Green, 2002 <http://www.fdneyengine6.org/Pages/billy-green.htm>)

"My name is Billy Green and this is what happened to me on the 11th September 2001. I am a firefighter at Engine 6 of the New York City Fire Department, which is located just a few blocks from the World Trade Centre. We were returning from a call waiting at a stop sign at the corner of Avenue of the Finest and Rose Streets when we heard a very loud explosion. I saw a police officer pointing towards the World Trade Centre. We looked up and saw a large hole in the North Tower; it looked as if a bomb had exploded in the north wall. The hole looked to be on about the 80th floor. It was a big jagged hole maybe involving three stories (sic). When we arrived about a block away thousands of people were on the streets; we had to push people out of the way so we could respond. The north tower had multiple floors on fire and there were people jumping. It was hell. It was like a nightmare. That was one of my most dreaded fears of being a firefighter: to witness people jumping from a building. Our officer checked in at the command station. It was a few minutes while the officers figured out what tactics we would use. We prepared for duty, buttoning up our coats, checking the straps on our masks, turning our air cylinders on. We started up the stairs with our hose lines and tools. Many people

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were coming down the congested stairs while we were going up, a single file of firemen. Some of the people coming down were wounded and burned, others were carrying victims. These terrified people encouraged us. They were patting us on the back. "The firemen are here" they shouted. About the 37th floor the building shook violently, tossing us around. Someone shouted "The south tower has collapsed." A few seconds later an order was given to evacuate the building. There was no pushing, there was no yelling. Scores of firemen were filing in from every floor. When I reached the lobby there was a man dressed in a dark blue uniform covered in dust. He pointed up and held his hands out. We took that as a signal to wait as something was coming down, it was more jumpers. He then waved us to move out. I started north on West Street with many other firefighters when the building started to collapse. I looked up and saw what looked like the top twenty stories of the building lean towards me. I tried to run but couldn't outrun the cloud. I ran into a baseball field, I donned my facemask as the blast hit me. I tried to control my breathing, I was coughing, my eyes were all irritated, I then felt the fence. I couldn't run, a wall of people was coming at me, I fell to my knees, I was so fatigued. After a while paramedics came up to me and asked if I was all right, they took me to St. Vincent's Hospital. I remember they pushed my bed into an elevator, it made me feel uncomfortable, I didn't want to be inside a building. My wife came and stayed with me for the next 30 hours while they gave me treatment for my lungs. They released me on Thursday afternoon; there was a lot of press with cameras. I asked the police to keep them away and take me to my firehouse. When I arrived at the firehouse, I started to cry all the others had died, their cars were still outside. I was the only survivor."

Billy Green, New York City Fire Department firefighter.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the process of professional development in the context of the culture of the British Fire Service.

Professional development is concerned with the recruitment, training, promotion, appraisal and continuing development of staff. Its broad aim is to optimise the human resources in an organisation. It is often therefore described in rational, managerial terms. However, professional development does not take place in a vacuum. It is embedded in the structure and culture of the organisation, which can affect it in various ways. It is important therefore to see it in that context and to address the “irrational” aspects of that culture. This is particularly important in an organisation such as the fire service, which has over the years developed a powerful and distinctive culture that is unlike anything else in the public sector. This means that the thesis will focus not just on specific professional development policies, procedures and practices but on the conditions that may support or undermine these. This in turn will draw in broader questions about the nature and culture of the British Fire Service.

1.2 Scope and Rationale

The term “British Fire Service” in preference to “The United Kingdom Fire Service” has been used to identify the parameters of the research. The Northern Ireland Fire Service has not been included in the research due to the troubles and special circumstances still ongoing in the province. The purpose of the research is to investigate the complex human inter-actions and issues related to culture and professional development in order to generate a greater understanding of the topic for all those who all have an interest in

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the advancement of the service. This includes the employees, local government employers, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, professional bodies, representative bodies and other such organisations and institutions that make recommendations to and/or comment on the fire service.

The service is in the process of fundamental change to its work practices including a re-appraisal of the 1947 Fire Services Act that dissolved the National Fire Service into City and County Fire Brigades. This change over the years appears to have become rather parochial often reflecting specific local issues. This possible lack of central vision and the need to operate within strict central government budgetary guidelines may also be affecting thinking on professional development and this too requires investigation. A large number of reports, reviews and national steering groups have been commissioned over the years to look at specific improvements to the service and there is now a good deal of debate and even confusion as to the best way forward.

1.3 Key Questions

The research topic suggests a number of questions that need to be explored in the thesis:

- **The Historical Perspective.** To what extent are the traditions, values, beliefs, working practices and conflict from the past having an effect on present-day strategies, thinking and attitudes?
- **The National Context.** How is the service dealing nationally with professional development?

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- **Militarism.** Does militarism with its rank, uniform, style and specific ways of doing things still have a place in a modern fire service?
- **The Wider Context.** How do other organisations manage development and what can the fire service learn from them?
- **Accepted Development Practice.** Can the recognised development strategies from the private sector and other organisations be applied in a fire service environment and if not what are the factors preventing this?

In each of the above areas of study, a further set of questions will need answering so as to develop a greater understanding of the forces and interactions at work:

- Why do certain perceptions exist in the service and why do they continue?
- Why does the service accept, reject or ignore specific values? Has the service considered any alternatives?
- Are the alternatives appropriate for application in a fire service context and will they help the service move forward with professional development?
- What does the future hold and in which direction is the service moving? Will new strategies and a more flexible approach be required, and if yes, how can they be implemented?

1.4 The Organisational Context

As noted earlier, any attempt to answer the research questions must also consider the organisational perspective, as it is only through a greater understanding of the contextual issues can the fundamental problems surrounding professional development be

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addressed. In this respect, origins for the research can be traced to two events, one in 1991 and the other in 1993. One of the largest fire brigades in Europe, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and regarded by many as the sector leader became the first fire brigade in the United Kingdom to receive an Improvement Notice from the Health and Safety Executive. This forced the LFB to radically rethink its approach to the training and management of its workforce. The Chief Fire Officer of the LFB, Mr. Brian Robinson, spoke very honestly about the improvement notice and put in place drastic changes to ensure this never happened again. He concluded that the hierarchy and prescriptive management style had brought about a blame or threat culture creating an environment that discouraged the free flow of ideas and personal achievement. This prescriptive management style, in his opinion, issues instructions and orders with minimal training and supervision of their implementation with a resort to discipline procedures when failures arise. A start was made with the development of "The London Standards of Performance" and programmes to "train the trainers" before tackling the main development issues. A process of "role mapping" began to determine exactly what was required of individuals in the organisation. Interestingly it revealed there were too many ranks for the identified roles. The British Fire Service as a whole adopts a hierarchical and prescriptive style for the training and professional development of its members, this requires investigation to ascertain if the style is indeed causing problems.

In 1993 a further challenge to the professionalism of fire officers and the work of the fire service was published in a document entitled "Climbing Ladders" (Association of County Councils, 1993). This document created great uncertainty and in combination with the LFB Health and Safety Improvement Notice, triggered a chain reaction of

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debate and uncertainty. The fire service had always thought of itself as a well managed, high performing, confident, credible public service commanding great respect from a grateful community. The very essence and values of the British Fire Service were mercilessly scrutinised in the following years and the “trickle of uncertainty” became a “torrent of criticism.” New strategies did indeed appear, but the misconceptions and lack of understanding as to how the service had fallen from the high moral ground (it once took for granted) still pervade thinking to the present day. The organisational perspective will research these areas and provide a map, not only for the future direction but also the reasons for the present direction and why this is the case.

1.5 The Personal Perspective

The author, who joined the fire service in 1974, is currently a serving station commander and as such is an insider researcher.

During this period the author has witnessed a militaristic disciplined service change into a more democratic self-disciplined service and throughout this change, the service appears confused with the transformation process and where it is leading them. The service continually talks about “individual development gaps” but seems oblivious to the “transition/modification gap” that individuals go through as modernisation takes place. The completion of endless checklists (internal audits) to confirm application and compliance with the standards of performance within a tangle of red tape is slowly but surely strangling enthusiasm and the prime focus of professional development. This in turn makes individuals feel that “doing their job” is all they have time for and suggests the issue of addressing professional development is additional rather than integral. The

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service has always assumed that what is now called “best practice” lay inside people’s heads and the challenge for the author is to make explicit what may well be latent. These observations have led to a general concern by the author for the future well being of the service. It is hoped therefore that this research will close the knowledge gap, raise awareness and extend present thinking so that the service moves forward as an entity, proud of its past and proud of its new direction.

1.6 Limitations of the Research

Research into the issues surrounding professional development in the fire service is a relatively under-researched field and consequently there is a need to lay a descriptive basis for the analysis. The inter-woven nature of the issues such as the strong political influences from both central government and local government makes it difficult to manage the scope of the research in pure organisational terms. The confrontation between the Fire Brigades Union and the employers during the research period, whilst topical, may also be a limitation due to the influences that this may have on people’s responses, including the author’s own perspective. The research, whilst begun before the dispute, still had to contend with the current reality and perceptions of the fire service personnel being interviewed. The Bain Review, commissioned by central government to solve the dispute, proposed major changes to the way the service operates and this too became part of the investigation into professional development. The prevailing culture is a product of these historical and current events and therefore an issue. The final chapter has taken account of all of these issues. It does not provide specific prescriptive recommendations, but the conditions and direction necessary for a way forward.

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1.7 Outline Contents of the Chapters

The structure of the chapters brings together in a logical sequence the considerations and applications of the past and present with evidence from the fieldwork to create a better understanding and appreciation to help remove long standing problems. Each of the chapters forms a link between each other and the practicalities, realities, and culture of fire service life so that the research questions may be answered:

Chapter 1, Introduction: Description of the scope, purpose, rationale and limitations of the research, including the order of the thesis chapters.

Chapter 2, The Historical Perspective: Looks at the early beginnings and how the fire services traditions, values and beliefs came to be and provides reasons for the “fire brigade way of doing things.”

Chapter 3, Fire Service Literature Review: A review of the legislation, main policies, documents and articles from various government ministers, senior officers and the representative bodies that impinge on the stated objectives of the research. This chapter links back into chapter two identifying the reasons behind the modern day problems and conflict. The more general literature on organisations and professional development is referred to as appropriate in other chapters.

Chapter 4, Methodology: Provides the reasons for the chosen methods, how the data was gathered and the ethics involved in the process. The methodology is qualitative but does include some quantitative data analysis. The methods investigate the human interactions through interviews and observations of fire service personnel to analyse the kind of work activities they are involved in including their attitude and behaviour whilst they perform these tasks; not only as individuals, but as teams. The fieldwork looks at the fire

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service in Britain and Australia and how different organisations deal with people development and the structures provided for this support. The bias and beliefs that may be present from the work of an insider researcher is confronted and how potential bias was overcome and used to advantage within the general research process.

Chapter 5, The British Fire Service: This two-part chapter contains the fieldwork and looks into the present realities the fire service operates under and how change, and proposed change, are either accepted or challenged by the service personnel. The issue of culture and how this may be affecting thinking is investigated to determine if unnecessary barriers have been created between the employers, representative bodies, sections and individuals. Conversely, the unifying factor of culture in the form of tradition and common values is examined to determine if aspects either need strengthening or re-appraising due to the changing expectations and requirements demanded from society. The Historical Perspective and Literature Review chapters are the natural forerunners for this chapter with the Methodology chapter confirming the rationale and link.

Chapter 6, Comparative Studies: The work of the Australian Fire Service and that of other organisations are considered for relevancy to the British Fire Service. The organisations whilst providing a mix of service delivery on behalf of the general public, nevertheless have similar development needs to the fire service. The work of the British retained fire service has also been included in this chapter due to the fact that the British wholtime service often view this essential “section” as a separate inferior entity. The reasons for this attitude and approach, together with a refusal by the Fire Brigades Union not to support the mixed crewing of fire engines between the retained and the

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wholetime, prompted this comparative study approach. Possible solutions to help unify the service are suggested.

Chapter 7, Development Issues: This chapter explores the wider professional development perspectives outside of the fire service environment. It discusses how individuals develop and how individuals learn including their preferred learning methods. It discusses team development, mentoring, assessment, evaluation, how to manage oneself and the management of change including the strategic issues. The historical perspective and the fire service literature chapters explain the development applications used by the service so it is therefore necessary and a requirement of the research to expand upon this to determine if the wider development perspectives are suitable for a fire service environment. Professional development has never been more important to the service, particularly with the whirlwind of change and constant introduction of new technologies and equipment. This chapter leads to a way forward for the service.

Chapter 8, A Way Forward: This chapter draws together all the various research strands and discusses the findings to add to the present knowledge with a number of considerations for future policy and practice.

Bibliography and Appendices: The bibliography is a comprehensive list of all the references used in alphabetical order. A reference for inclusion in the bibliography is identified in the text by the name of the author and year of publication within closed brackets, for example: (Smith, 2003). All text in the thesis with quotation marks and in italics refers to the actual words used in the reference source. The appendices provide further detail on the research process.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Introduction

To investigate professional development within the British Fire Service it is essential to first understand the culture, traditions and beliefs of the service and why things are done in certain ways. The reasons for these particular customs and beliefs, such as the origins and acceptance of Royal Navy conventions, require investigation and comment to determine their current validity. After a brief account of the current structures, this chapter will examine the very earliest beginnings and conclude with the recent fire strikes of 2002 and 2003.

2.2 Operational Structures

An important part of any research is to establish what the current base line is, how this came to be and how it is changing and adapting. Since the Second World War brigades have adopted a hierarchical structure headed by a Chief Fire Officer through a single-tier entry system. This policy means all officers have to start their careers as firefighters, which is justified on the basis that operational experience at the “sharp end” is essential. This is further confirmed by an additional belief that those in command of others have greater credibility when making decisions in life threatening situations if they too were once firefighters. This belief and the one-tier entry system are the “sacred cows” of the fire service and are seldom challenged. A Deputy Chief Fire Officer and a number of Assistant Chief Officers support the Chief Fire Officer, each having functional responsibilities and operating from a central headquarters. (This terminology varies throughout Britain but the principle is the same). A brigade is then divided geographically into Divisions or Commands headed by a Divisional Commander and

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other senior officers with responsibilities for the fire stations in their area. The number of fire stations in the United Kingdom has remained constant over the last fifty years at just under 2,000 and these are divided into three types:

- Those crewed 24 hours a day by wholetime firefighters.
- Those crewed during the daytime only by wholetime firefighters.
- Those crewed by part-time firefighters which are mainly in the rural areas and are paid for emergency calls only plus either a 2 or 3 hour weekly training commitment.

Stations on a 24-hour basis operate a 42-hour shift system and provide continuous cover over four shifts, called Watches. A “tour of duty” lasts for two day shifts of 9 hours followed by two night shifts of 15 hours with four rest days before the pattern repeats itself. To differentiate between Watches, each is given a colour: red, white, blue and green. Depending on the size, status and location of the station each Watch may have four ranks: Station Officer, Sub Officer, Leading Firefighter and Firefighter. This station and divisional structure results in a total of eleven ranks with no specific criteria upon recruitment or promotion for academic qualifications. The increasing recognition and importance of management skills generally in the public services and the need for academic qualifications during a career has led to many debates over recent years but strangely this has not yet been considered at the recruitment level within the one-tier entry structure. All fire brigades are subject to local control, either through elected committees of the county council or committees formed from the district councils in the metropolitan areas. Finance for the service is derived from central and local government and each brigade is subjected to annual inspections from the Fire Service Inspectorate based at the Home Office. At the beginning of the 21st century, over 66,000 people are

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employed in the UK fire service and this modern day workforce is vastly different from its predecessor, so much so that it is hardly recognisable. Modern uniforms incorporate space age technology with heat resisting materials and breathing apparatus sets that include lightweight cylinders, built-in radios, location telemetry and infrared capability to penetrate the thickest smoke. Fire Appliances are multi-purpose vehicles that include mobile data terminals, printers, fax machines, sophisticated power rescue equipment and a range of other equipment that is constantly updated. Aerial Platforms extend over 30 metres delivering a range of extinguishing media with a capability of being operated from the ground. The latest computer communication technology also ensures resources are mobilised from remote locations when informed by automatic fire detection systems or whilst the caller is still on the telephone. Hazardous material containment is another arena the fire service is proficient in with firefighters using leak sealing equipment whilst dressed in gas-tight suits. Decontamination facilities are then prepared from Chemical Units that are also deployed to the scene of operations. Whatever the situation, the modern fire service has a moral duty to attend any incident whether large or small, at height, below ground, in confined spaces, in all weather conditions on land or water. Training and development for this workforce remains a constant high priority within a changing environment. To ascertain how this came to be, its early beginnings need to be examined before proceeding.

2.3 Early History

The first recorded attempts at firefighting go back to the 2nd century BC when an Alexandrian named Ctesibus built a hand pump capable of squirting water. In AD 6,

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following a large fire in Rome that destroyed a quarter of all the buildings, a corps of firefighters named The Vigiles was established. Their duties were to form bucket chains and pull down burning buildings with large hooks. This corps for the protection of Rome numbered 7,000 and this basic firefighting principle was so successful it was exported to the far corners of all the Roman territories. When the Roman Empire finally collapsed this well organised “fire brigade” was not seen again in Britain for over 1,200 years (Wallington, 1997).

2.4 Middle History

During the years 798, 982 and 989 large fires were experienced in the towns of Britain and it was only after the Norman invasion that attempts were made to reduce the risk of fire by requiring all fires at night to be extinguished. The French for “covering of fire” is *couvre feu* and this became known as the nightly “curfew.” Large fires continued though and in 1102 Winchester was destroyed followed by Worcester in 1113, Bath in 1116, Lincoln in 1123 and Chichester in 1130. In the year 1212, 3,000 people died in a fire that swept London this was referred to as the Great Fire of London until a further London fire in 1666 (Young, 1866). This later fire destroyed over 13,000 houses, 84 churches, 44 livery halls and thousands of other types of dwellings. In excess of 100,000 people were made homeless and the fire loss was estimated at over £10,000,000 - a huge sum for those days (Ingram, 1978). In 1680 “Insurance Offices” were set up and in order to limit claims these companies ran their own fire brigades to deal with fires at their customers property. “Insurance Marks” were then placed on the outside of the buildings so as to identify the particular insurance company who had the responsibility for

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firefighting. In 1708, during the reign of Queen Anne, two Acts of Parliament were passed which required all London parishes to install and maintain buckets, ladders and at least one fire engine complete with leather hose. Constables and Beadles were given a responsibility to call on citizens for help in fighting fires during this period. On New Years Day in 1833 a far-reaching decision was made in London; nineteen fire stations came into being using equipment from the insurance companies and crewed 24 hours a day (Ballantyne, 1867). This became known as the London Fire Engine Establishment (LFEE) and James Braidwood, a civil engineer, became the first Chief Fire Officer. In 1866 parliament replaced the LFEE with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade to become the largest fire brigade in the world.

2.5 Emergence of the Royal Navy Traditions

In 1903 the first petrol driven fire engine appeared, the same time as thousands of informal “brigades” throughout the country, but it was still not mandatory for the local authorities to provide a firefighting force. It was also around this time that Royal Navy traditions and culture, still present in the service of today, became firmly established. Ex-seamen were thought to make the best recruits due to their devotion to duty and reaction to rigid discipline. In some areas recruitment was entirely restricted to seamen due to their knowledge of knots, splices, working aloft, acceptance of long periods on watch and instant reaction to “all hands on deck” at vital moments. A tradition of sons following fathers into the fire service became normal and many went to sea at an early age to increase their chances of entry into the fire brigade. The maximum recruiting age of 31 (only recently abolished) was specially fixed during this period to attract sailors

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who left the navy at the expiration of their first period of service. In London in 1920 out of a fire brigade workforce of 1391, 444 were ex-members of the Royal Navy, 454 from the Merchant Marine, 261 from the Army and only 232 had no service experience at all. Discipline was harsh on the stations, with the language, social rules and work culture all revolving around a militaristic standpoint. Training and development of individuals was known as “drill and discipline” with “spit and polish” the order of the day so as to maintain a “well disciplined ship.” Stations were swabbed to a state of naval smartness and recruits had to clean the floors of senior officer’s homes. The fire service of today still clings to this naval heritage with the vernacular of referring to a week’s work as a tour of duty. Floors are called decks, deck scrubbers are used to clean them, working on ladders is called working aloft, ropes are called lines, on duty personnel are formed into Watches, the general office is the watchroom, meals are taken in the mess and so on.

2.6 The Fire Service at War

In 1936 Britain had 4,000 wholetime firemen, 2,000 police/firemen and 12,000 part-time firemen. In 1938 the Air Raid Precautions Act of 1937 was activated to recruit and train a volunteer force of auxiliaries and in 1939 the Auxiliary Fire Service was mobilised with 89,000 men and 6,000 women which dwarfed the regular brigades. This setting up of the Auxiliary Fire Service in 1938 caused great concern to the regular firemen, due mainly to the sheer size of the force and the entry of 6,000 women. For most of the regular firemen this had gone too far as they considered firefighting to be a “man’s job.” In 1941 after the worst of the German bombing campaign, the government acted to bring together the Auxiliary Fire Service and the regulars from the 16,000

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brigades into a co-ordinated body called the National Fire Service. Thus the foundations were laid for a modern day fire service. At the end of the war this force was cut from 110,000 to 42,000 and in 1948 control and responsibility for this organisation was given to the local authorities.

2.7 Post War Developments

The expansion of industry in Britain from 1950 onwards and the widespread use of plastics greatly increased the outbreaks of fire and to combat this, compressed air breathing sets were introduced to enable firefighters to work inside smokelogged buildings (Blackstone, 1957). Further new technology provided the brigades with even more flexibility as fire engines started to have radios fitted so that contact with their respective controls was continuous during incidents. The emphasis on saving life as well as property ensured the equipment carried on the fire engines became more extensive, varied and sophisticated. So too did the performance of the tasks expected of the firefighters. The widespread use of toxic, corrosive and flammable hazardous materials maintained the pressures on brigades to develop complex containment measures to protect not only persons and property but also the environment. Concerns were now being expressed regards the training and development for these changing circumstances and the qualifications necessary to perform the tasks. This was rapidly becoming a core issue for the service but brigades still reacted in their own way without proper national guidance. Reasons for this can be traced back to the structures set up after the war. Whilst the local authorities had the responsibility for equipment training and development, parochialism became the order of the day. This was due to the fact that

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small shire brigades operated alongside large metropolitan brigades with the needs of the community often coming second best when determining the quality of service delivery. At a Fire Brigades Union conference in Rothesay, May 1960, this frustration began to manifest itself [quite strongly]. One speaker said he found it incredible that officers were appointed responsible for the lives of others without any formal training or academic qualifications (Fire Brigades Union, 1960).

Although things have improved considerably today, it is still a sad fact that Chief Fire Officers often have to convince and negotiate for any additional resource input with the local fire brigade committee who in turn are constrained by the budget policies of central government. This fragmented and sometimes haphazard approach stems to a greater or lesser extent from the historical background described so far.

2.8 The Retained Fire Service

The retained service (part-time firefighters) was created after the Second World War when the fire service was returned to local authority control. The history of part-timers though can be traced back to the 17th century when the Fire Insurance Brigades began. By the middle of the 18th century volunteer fire brigades increased and Hythe in Kent, established in 1802, is generally considered to be the first such volunteer brigade in Britain. The number of part-time firefighters slowly increased and another such brigade was formed in Southampton in 1837 after a fire in which 22 people died. Standards, during this period, varied considerably throughout the country and evidence given by the Home Office to a Parliamentary Select Committee stated that there was no official knowledge as to the efficiency of the part-time fire brigades. Today the country relies on

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the part-time service for firefighting in the rural areas accounting for one third of its fire fighting strength. Of the 1612 fire stations in England and Wales, 876 are run exclusively by retained firefighters.

2.9 Legislation for The Fire Service

Current statutory provisions for the British Fire Service have evolved from the measures introduced slowly over the last two centuries. It was not until the 19th century that structured provisions were made for the safety of people within premises in case of fire. Nearly all fire legislation has been reactive rather than proactive. The “Great Fire of London” in 1666 is but one example. From this fire, London acquired its first code of building regulations, which stated that the walls of all new buildings must be made from either brick or stone. It was from this historical event that Local Government Acts and Bylaws included clauses as to the prevention and extinguishment of fires. In February 1862 the insurance companies, who were responsible for the London Fire Engine Establishment, wrote to the Home Secretary saying they no longer wished to be responsible for the safety of London from fire. Consequently a Select Committee was set up to enquire into the existing arrangements for the protection of life and property from fire and the legislation required to fulfil that duty. In 1867 a further Select Committee recommended a General Building Act for all towns in the United Kingdom ensuring fire safety provisions in buildings and their construction. On the 9th June 1902 a workshop caught fire in Queen Victoria Street London killing eight girls on the upper floors with many more throwing themselves to their deaths rather than be burnt alive. This led to amendments in the various acts and bylaws throughout the country.

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This “reaction” to events is by no means unique, as illustrated by the following:

- A Mill fire in Keighley February 1956 killed 8 people and led to the 1961 Factories Act.
- A fire at the Hendersons Department Store Liverpool in June 1960 killed 11 people and led to the introduction of the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963.
- A fire at the Top Story Club in Bolton killed 19 people and led to fire regulation amendments of the Licensing Act 1964.
- A fire at the Rose and Crown Hotel in Saffron Waldon on Boxing Day 1969 killed 11 people and led to Hotels and Boarding Houses being designated under the Fire Precautions Act 1971.
- A fire at the Woolworth’s Manchester Store in 1979 killed 10 people and led to the Upholstered Furniture Safety Regulations 1980.
- A fire at the Bradford Football Stadium in May 1985 killed 58 people and led to the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987.
- A fire at the Kings Cross Railway Station London in 1987 killed 31 people and led to the Fire Precautions (Sub Surface Railway Station) Regulations Act 1989.

The [need for] legislation to prescribe standards of efficiency within the fire service has a similar reactive history to the one described above and it was not until the Fire Brigade Act of 1938 that any real attempt was made to rectify this. Unfortunately, the Second World War interrupted this process. In 1941, further attempts were made with the newly created National Fire Service to introduce legislation for the training and development of fire officers with the setting up of the first central training establishment.

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In 1948, The Fire Services Act of 1947 came into force (Fire Services Act, 1947) and this can be regarded as the actual foundation stone of the modern British Fire Service.

Over the years this Act has been amended but it is still the prime piece of legislation for the United Kingdom Fire Service. Section 24 of the Act provides for the appointment of Inspectors to obtain information on how the various fire authorities are discharging their duties and to advise on operational, technical and administrative matters. This Act also created various Advisory and Negotiating Bodies. In matters affecting fire brigades as a whole, (excluding discipline and conditions of service) the appropriate Central Fire Brigades Council advises the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Each Council consists of officers from:

- The respective Home Departments.
- Representatives of the Local Authority Associations.
- Representatives of the Chief Fire Officers.
- Other persons with special qualifications.

Seven joint committees support these Councils and their purpose is to formulate common standards and doctrines on matters of national interest. One such committee is the Joint Training Committee that reviews courses on central training and offers guidance for local training. Sub-committees are established from time to time to consider particular aspects of training and development. Accepted recommendations of the Council are promulgated throughout the service by Fire Service Circulars, which are sent direct to the fire authorities from the Home Office. Training issues are also considered by a variety of other bodies such as The Chief and Assistant Chief Officers

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Association, the Fire Service Examination Board and a number of committees for the newly established Integrated Personal Development System.

European legislation (European Communities Act, 1972) also affects the British Fire Service and one example is the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 that came into force on the 1st December 1999. These regulations have been primarily made under Section 2(2) of the 1972 Act and give effect to the fire safety requirements of two European Council Directives adopted in 1989: The Framework Directive 89/391 EEC and The Workplace Directive 89/654 EEC, the aims of which are to secure minimum safety and health requirements for the workplace. Whilst legislation helps reduce the number of deaths to members of the public, deaths to firefighters still occur and currently these are running at just under two deaths per year. This and the inherent dangers associated with firefighting means that inspectors from The Health and Safety Executive, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, are now far more pro-active than in recent years. A number of Improvement Notices (now called enforcement notices) have now been served on various brigades stating that their arrangements for planning, organising, controlling and reviewing their practices and procedures are not sufficient. Professional development of those in key roles is another area of concern for the Health and Safety Inspectors and on The 1st February 1996, the South Wales Brigade received such an improvement notice following the deaths of two firefighters in Blaina, Gwent. The improvement notice detailed five areas to address:

- *Assess the specific health and safety training and development needs of operational officers and firefighters, including a review of the content and realism of existing training and the methods of its delivery with regard to national guidance.*

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- *Write or revise training and development programmes in the light of the above assessment.*
- *Assess existing training facilities and identify the improvements necessary to deliver the requisite training and development.*
- *Develop a system for monitoring and reviewing health and safety training and development.*
- *Devise a timetable for the implementation of the measures specified above.*

(Health and Safety Executive, 1996).

The above is an example of how reaction to events can sometimes overwhelm the service resulting in dramatic change that was not prepared or planned for.

2.10 Fire Service Reports

Numerous reports on the operations of the British Fire Service have been submitted over the years and only the main documents relating to professional development issues have been included here. Some of these are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

1921: It was recognised that the chaotic state of the nation's fire brigades could not be allowed to continue and a Royal Commission investigated this, but no action was taken.

1936: The Lord Riverdale Report confirmed the chaotic state, discovered by the Royal Commission in 1921, stating there were no standards for training and no statutory controls. This led to the Fire Brigade Act of 1938 but the war intervened and the service was nationalised (Riverdale, 1936).

1947: The 1947 Fire Services Act came into being (implemented 1948) and a period of relative inactivity followed.

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1960: The Fire Brigades Union expressed concerns at this lack of activity from 1948 and said so in numerous reports particularly at the lack of structured career development programmes for their members. At their annual conference held at Rothesay in May of 1960 the following statement was made: *“Only those who know the Fire Service from the inside can appreciate how difficult it is to introduce change into our Service. A report recently pleaded for the return of the sailors round caps because it is a “neat piece of headgear” and “so very distinctive.” History and tradition still threatens to clog any real advance.”* (Fire Brigades Union, 1960:5).

These concerns at the lack of professional development for fire brigade union members mirrored the general national frustrations at the lack of activity for all fire service personnel during this period of history.

1966: The report of Sir Harold Banwell and A. Abel (Banwell & Abel, 1966) looked into training facilities at the local level, specialist training and the implementation of national continuation training. They recommended that the practice of fire authorities sending their recruits to the cheapest training centres should cease and recruit training costs be standardised throughout the country. Their recommendations were never acted upon.

1967: The Home Office and the Scottish Home Office appointed a committee chaired by Sir Ronald Holroyd (Holroyd, 1970) to inquire into the running of the fire service and the key development issues. This became known as “The Holroyd Report” and was published in 1970. This was the first such report since the 1936 Riverdale Report. Holroyd concluded that the service needed to attract more recruits with educational qualifications as he was concerned at the low educational standards of recruits who

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eventually, due to the single tier entry system, would become the officers of the future. Degree courses for officers were also recommended.

1969: Following reports and a successful pilot of programmed learning and to prepare firefighters for promotion, the Home Office introduced programmed learning nationally to assist and improve the educational standards of firefighters (Home Office Unit for Educational Methods, 1969). Also during 1969 Bath University on behalf of the Home Office carried out a study into promotion examinations and procedures. This was published in 1971 and it concluded that the present examination system did not provide sound information on which to base promotion decisions.

1971: During this year a report called the “Cunningham Inquiry” (Cunningham, 1971) reported its findings into the work of the fire service. Once again a report highlighted the need for management training and the need to identify individual training requirements. As a direct result of the Holroyd and Cunningham reports various training committees were set up between 1971 and 1974 to implement change. Some of these reports were not acted upon, or even circulated, due to a lack of funds for implementation.

1973: A report was published by the Working Party to Review Higher Training in the Fire Service (Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council for England, Wales and Scotland, 1973). This report concluded that officer training should be progressive and the training necessary for promotion to the various ranks needed to be identified before promotion.

1974: Further reports highlighted the need for officer training and one such report issued by the Joint Committee on Fire Research looked at an analysis of training requirements

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for officers and the content and relevance of the current brigade and central training courses.

1976: A working party set up to review statutory promotion examinations published its recommendations in 1976 and they included changes to the syllabuses and curricula so that they related more directly to the needs and requirements of each rank. A new statutory promotion structure came into force in 1978 from this known as The Fire Services (Appointment and Promotion) Regulations 1978.

1986: An Occasional Paper Number 1. 1986, from the Audit Commission regarding the provision of training facilities recommended the setting up of regional training centres to accommodate the large number of recruits now entering the service. Similar recommendations in the past had not been acted upon so the recommendation this time was that the Fire Service Inspectorate from the Home Office should look at the problems of continuation training in their annual inspections of brigades (Audit Commission, 1986).

1990: A review was commissioned by the Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire into: "Command, Management and Leadership Training" carried out by a team from Sudbury Consultants Limited led by Major General K. Spacie CB, OBE. The aim of this review was to examine and comment on the provision of command, management and leadership training on the Fire Service College courses (Spacie, 1990). As a result, major restructuring of all the college courses occurred. Other reports maintained this pressure and the Birmingham University published a strategy for developing fire service managers for the future (Wynne, 1990).

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1990 onwards: During the rest of the 1990s', the fire service was subjected to a constant stream of reports, inquires and reviews - all demanding change, particularly improvements to training and academic standards (Russell, 1990). The transition from a Conservative to Labour Government brought about even more change, especially the concept of "best value" which had to be demonstrated at all levels in the service. All of these reports, inquiries, reviews and concepts, whilst trying to modernise the service only added to the problem due to their fragmented approach and apparent hopping from subject to subject without any real linkage, reasons or cohesion. The reports did however have one aspect in common - they often overlooked the historical context of why things have evolved in the way they have. This has resulted in needless hostility to the proposed changes and great apprehension as to the future direction and role of the service. One such report called "In the Line of Fire" published in February 1995 by the Audit Commission looked at this future direction and role and came to the following conclusion:

"The proposals outlined in this report will require sustained effort by the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, The Fire Service Inspectorate, The Department of the Environment, Local Fire Authorities, The Trade Unions and above all The Home Office, which has stewardship of the national framework and therefore is in the position to initiate and co-ordinate action. Although much can be achieved without new legislation, the agenda for change is substantial and demanding. However, to take no action would leave the service "in the line of fire" - under increasing financial pressures, facing the possibility of an overstretched front line, failing to take opportunities for increased effectiveness. The inertia of recent decades cannot continue."

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The report went on to say: *“The time has come to modernise the national framework and allow brigades to change - in short, to create a fire service for the 21st century.”*

(Audit Commission, 1995:15).

2.11 The Fire Service of Today - Structures

Fire Brigades in the UK currently employ over 66,000 people of whom 58,725 are uniformed personnel (this includes the 1730 control room staff who handle emergency calls and mobilise the fire appliances). In the rural areas there are 18,000 retained (part-time) firefighters who account for nearly a third of all uniformed staff.

Brigades are organised in the United Kingdom into 59 individual Local Government Fire Authorities. 47 of these are in England and 7 are “single purpose” Fire and Civil Defence Authorities which cover the metropolitan areas of London, West Midlands, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear. All the others are combinations of County Councils and Combined Fire Authorities following local government reorganisation in the 1990s. In Wales the 20 Unitary Councils formed in 1996 have combined into 3 Fire Authorities. Scotland has 8 Fire Authorities, 6 of which are Joint Boards from Tayside, Lothian and Borders, Strathclyde, Central Scotland, Grampian and Highland and Islands. A further two are Council Departments of the Unitary Authorities. In Northern Ireland there is only one Fire Authority operating under the Health, Social Services and Public Safety Department.

Local accountability varies considerably with these structures due to the variety in size, risk, composition and territory; for example, London has 5,684 full-time firefighters

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compared to the 61 full-time firefighters and 155 retained firefighters of the Isle of Wight. Even with this great diversity brigades still have to operate to a prescriptive and detailed national framework as determined by the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council. This council represents the various interests of the fire service and advises the Home Secretary on matters such as risk categorisation, emergency response standards including times and the pre-determined attendance for each risk. All brigades therefore categorise the risk in their area and deploy resources in accordance with the national standards ensuring they have sufficient fire stations, fire appliances and firefighters to discharge their duties. It is also a requirement of this national framework that any proposed reduction in the level of fire cover has to be approved by the Home Secretary before implementation. This balance between local need and the national standards framework dates back to the Fire Services Act of 1947, but the broad approach is based upon the work of the Riverdale Committee Inquiry of 1936 (Riverdale, 1936) which was considered to be ahead of its time when it was conceived.

2.12 The Fire Service of Today - Finance

Each Fire Authority in the UK operates within strict budget criteria with 85% of the funds coming from grants supplied by central government delivered through a procedure called "The Standard Spending Assessment." This applies to local government generally with the remaining 15% being raised from the Council Tax. The only exception to this is Northern Ireland, where 100% of the costs are met from central funds. In England and Wales the total annual cost for providing a fire service is around £1.5 billion or 2.5% of local authority expenditure. (This funding arrangement is currently under review).

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Most authorities are under great financial pressure in providing this service due mainly to the escalating costs of the fire brigade pension scheme. This is regarded as the main constraining factor that limits scope for development. Firefighters pay is also subject to a prescribed formula agreed in 1978 following a national strike for better remuneration. Pay is linked to the upper quartile of male manual earnings so that annual increases are automatic rather than the subject of collective bargaining. This predetermined way in which the fire service is run is one example of what is known throughout the service as: “the fire brigade way of doing things.” This pay formula became unacceptable to the Fire Brigades Union in 2002 leading to a long and bitter dispute (see 2.15).

2.13 The Fire Service of Today - Political Influences

The Audit Commission since the mid 1990s has paid considerable attention to the work of the fire service and has produced a number of reports to secure a better use of resources and control of costs. A report in 1995 (Audit Commission, 1995) and referred to previously in 2.10, called “*In The Line of Fire*” looked at conditions of service so as to enable future planning to take place based on a secure background. The report also identified a failure to address adequately the roles and responsibilities of firefighters within the changing climate of proactivity as opposed to reactivity. The major contribution of the Audit Commission report was that it questioned the historical prescriptive approach of the management of the service and required the Fire Service National Joint Council to undertake a comprehensive review of its work and procedures. This it duly did with the publication of its own report in 1998 called “*Out of the Line of Fire*” (Joint Committee of The Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council for England,

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Wales and Scotland, 1998). This report included a series of recommendations on how to improve the standards of fire cover based on risk assessment.

This continuous improvement and the way it is delivered is now a requirement for all public services under the “*Local Government Act 1999*” following a government White Paper in 1998 called “*Modern Local Government.*” A further White Paper in March 1999 called “*Modernising Government*” added more pressure with proposals for “best value.” This need to change placed a statutory requirement on fire authorities to make the necessary arrangements for continuous improvement whilst having regard to the combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness under the umbrella of “best value.” Present day thinking now revolves around this concept and “best value reviews” are carried out in accordance with the following criteria:

- **Challenge**: Should the service be provided?
- **Compare**: How does it compare to others providing the service and how do others do it?
- **Consult**: What do the stakeholders, service users and community think about the standard of service?
- **Compete**: How best can the service be provided and by whom?

2.14 History and Organisation of the Humberside Fire Brigade

The Humberside Fire Brigade, being the author’s brigade, has been used as a yardstick against which to measure professional development activities within the British Fire Service. Fire Authorities as previously stated consist of large metropolitan brigades, combined fire authorities, smaller shire brigades and variations in between throughout

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England, Scotland and Wales. Having taken account of the differences, it was decided by the author to use Humberside as it represents a typical fire brigade in geographical size and risk. A brief history of the brigade is therefore included in this chapter.

Humberside Fire Brigade was formed in 1974 following local government reorganisation and the amalgamation of the East Riding of Yorkshire County Fire Brigade, Hull City Fire Brigade, Grimsby Borough Fire Brigade, part of the Lindsey (Lincolnshire) Fire Brigade and part of the West Yorkshire Fire Brigade. In 1996 Humberside County Council (Humberside Fire Brigade, 1995-2003) was abolished and the brigade area now encompasses the four unitary authorities of the East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston Upon Hull, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. This area covers 1,356 square miles and serves a population of 890,000 people. To run the service an annual budget in excess of £27,000,000 is provided (1999 figures). The brigade deals with risks such as the petro-chemical industries, an international airport, four major dock installations, large areas of farmland, hospitals, commercial property, factories, offices, schools and residential areas. As well as responding to 20,000 emergency incidents each year, Fire Safety Officers carry out over 20,000 inspections annually and provide general safety advice to all sections of the community if asked to do so. To provide this service the brigade employs 700 firefighters, 300 retained firefighters, 31 control room staff and 100 non-uniformed support staff operating from a central headquarters, four divisional headquarters and 32 fire stations.

The main purpose of the Humberside Fire Brigade is to save life and property from fire. The Fire Services Act of 1947 does in fact only require this function to be performed, but like all other fire authorities, the brigade regards it as a moral duty to use its

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personnel and resources to perform a wide range of humanitarian tasks for which it is not financed. Within the existing budget therefore, provision is made to rescue people trapped in vehicles, provide flood relief, rescue animals and deal with any other emergency if the brigade has the skills and equipment to do so.

2.15 Recent Change in The British Fire Service

An understanding of the historical perspective is an important element for those seeking to challenge and change the service because change may not only be slow or sudden; it can also be unexpected. Unexpected change happened in June 2001 after the re-election of the Labour Government when the responsibility for the fire service was removed from the Home Office and transferred to a new Ministry called “The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions” (DTLR). Eleven months later this new Ministry was disbanded after the Minister responsible for the DTLR resigned after considerable criticism from the media regards his performance and judgements. The responsibility for the fire service was then transferred to a newly created department called “The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.” This department was separate from the Cabinet Office and formed a department of Government in its own right. At any other time this would have been good news for the service with its quick return to the political centre during an ongoing modernisation agenda, but the message was becoming clouded as this was the fire service’s third Minister and third Department in eleven months.

The Fire Brigades Union was also threatening to take industrial action in support of a substantial pay claim for firefighters to recognise the high skill levels demanded by

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society from the modern firefighter. A series of strikes were scheduled from November 2002 with the army put on standby to respond to emergencies. It is little wonder then that the fire service was concerned as to its future. Throughout all this, the Audit Commission consistently reported the service was still the best achiever of all the public service organisations. What appeared to be lacking was a cohesive strategy, or indication, from the fire service employers and their political masters regards the service's future role and place in society.

The British Fire Service in 2002 stood at the crossroads but at the time did not know this. It did not have a route map to show from where it had come from, where it was going to, who was going with it, the reasons for the journey and whether it was worth it. The fire service was on the threshold of tearing itself apart and all "sides" appeared impotent to prevent it.

CHAPTER THREE: FIRE SERVICE LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The historical perspective in the previous chapter detailed the birth of the service and its journey towards the present day with the legislation and documents that shaped and moulded the journey along the route. A more detailed examination of the principal literature attempting to influence professional development along that chosen route and who wrote it and why is now required.

The fire service is an organisation “bombarded” by technical guidance from which values and beliefs emerge, creating the “culture” or the “fire brigade way of doing things.” Due regard must be paid to these documents which describe not only the moral and legal obligations of the service but also an acceptance of social responsibility and a duty of care expected from the community. A structured development support mechanism for the whole of the British Fire Service has been the goal of numerous papers over the years but these reports have often been reactions to specific incidents or concerns without any real challenge to the traditional way of doing things. These documents and research studies use a variety of techniques and come as information to be acted upon, advice, suggestions, recommendations, requirements, and sometimes a certain amount of political coercion. The literature review must also take account of the many sources the service uses and accepts as best practice for this journey and how this is changing to accommodate the current reality the British Fire Service now operates in. By finding out what exists and why it exists it will then be possible to address the issue of further professional development for its human resources. The way in which the representative bodies work within this process is another issue to be explored. This review starts with the 1947 Fire Services Act and then proceeds in chronological order.

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3.2 The Fire Services Act 1947

The Fire Services Act of 1947 received Royal Assent on the 31st July 1947 and came into operation on the 1st April 1948. On that day the responsibility of the government for the National Fire Service in England and Wales was transferred to 135 separate Fire Brigades comprising of 50 County and 75 County Borough Brigades with 10 Brigades serving joint areas under arrangements made voluntarily by the authorities concerned under Section 5 (combination schemes), Section 7 (joint committees) or Section 12 (transfer of functions) of the Act. The purpose of the Act is defined thus:

An Act to make further provision for the fire services in Great Britain; to transfer fire-fighting functions from the National Fire Service to fire brigades maintained by the councils of counties and county boroughs; to provide for the combination of areas for fire service purposes; to make further provision for pensions and other awards in respect of persons employed in connection with the provision of fire services; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.

Various sections deal with training, qualifications, promotion and inspections:

Section 1 (1) states: *It shall be the duty of every fire authority in Great Britain to make provision for fire-fighting purposes and in particular every fire authority shall secure:*

1(1)(b): *The efficient training of the members of the fire brigade.*

The procedures and qualifications required for appointments and promotions are dealt with under Section 18: *The Secretary of State may, after consultation with The Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council constituted under the Act, make regulations as to any of the following matters:*

18(1)(a): *The method of appointment of chief officers of fire brigades maintained in*

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pursuance of this Act.

18(1)(b): *The procedure for the appointment by a fire authority of members, other than the chief officer, of any such brigade.*

18(1)(c): *The qualifications for appointment to any such brigade or to any rank therein, and for promotion into any such rank.*

18(1)(d): *The procedure for such promotion.*

Section 21 states: *The Secretary of State may, after consultation with the Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council constituted under this Act, by regulations provide for the observance by fire authorities of such requirements with respect to standards of training for members of fire brigades maintained in pursuance of this Act.*

Section 23 deals with Training Centres. 23(1): *The Secretary of State may establish and maintain:*

23(1)(a): *A central training institution.*

23(1)(b): *One or more local training centres for providing courses of instruction in matters relating to fire services.*

23(3): *A fire authority may establish and maintain training centres for providing courses of instruction for members of their own or other fire brigades and for training persons for service in fire brigades.*

Section 24 deals with inspections: *For the purpose of obtaining information as to the manner in which fire authorities are performing their functions under this Act and as to technical matters relating to those functions, inspectors may be appointed by His Majesty, and the Secretary of State may appoint assistant inspectors and other officers.*

The final pertinent section is Section 29, which deals with the constitution of a Central

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Fire Brigades Advisory Council:

29(1): The Secretary of State shall constitute a Council to be called "The Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council" for the purpose of advising him on any matters as to which he is required by this Act to consult the Council or any other matters arising, otherwise than under Section 17 (Conditions of Service) of this Act, which the Council have taken into consideration, whether on a reference from the Secretary of State or otherwise.

(Fire Services Act, 1947).

3.3 The Fire Service Inspection of 1948

The Chief Inspector of Fire Services reports annually to the Secretary of State and the first such report occurred in May 1949 (Home Department, 1948) and covered the period from the 1st April 1948 (the date of the return of the fire service to local authority control) to the 31st December 1948. This first report was nowhere near as comprehensive as the present day reports and appears to be based on opinions and perception, rather than facts, but it does provide a good insight into the situation of the day. The physical make-up of these new brigades included 19,006 wholetime and 15,219 part-time members. During the period of the first report a further 800 recruits enrolled, complying with the new age limits and physical standards as recommended by The Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and adopted by all the fire authorities. Further recommendations by the Council saw the larger fire authorities set up training centres. Agreements were also entered into for the training of recruits from the smaller fire authorities and a total of 16 training centres were approved. In the report it states:

"The arrangements were entered into in a most cordial spirit, the standard of training

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has been high and the scheme has generally proved satisfactory” (1948:5). Due to man-power deficiencies in all the fire authorities, the training courses for recruits were initially limited to two months on the understanding a three month course was a desirable objective and to be introduced as soon as circumstances permitted. A Fire Service College was also established in accordance with Section 23 of the Fire Services Act at Wotton House, near Dorking in Surrey. The report concludes with the following statement: “In concluding this report I should like to make particular reference to the smoothness with which the changeover of the Service took place. There were many problems to be overcome, including the large scale movement of officers and all ranks, the movement of appliances and equipment and alterations to communications, and at the same time it was necessary to ensure that the proper fire cover was maintained. That this was done so efficiently reflects great credit on the fire authorities and their Chief Officers. It is with confidence that I can report to the Secretary of State the high standard of efficiency the Fire Brigades have already achieved and that the traditions of the British Fire Service are being fully upheld” (1948:10).

The above was signed, H. M. Smith, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Fire Services.

3.4 Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

The Fire Brigades Union was founded in 1918 as a response to the harsh discipline, long hours, low wages and poor conditions [in being] at that time. Throughout its history the union believes that every improvement gained for its members ensues only after bitter struggles and every change in conditions of service proposed by the employer is an “attack” on these hard won conditions. It is not the intention of this research to

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document this history in detail but to reflect on specific aspects that may explain attitudes impacting on the research topic. The return of the fire service to local authority control in 1948 should have laid the foundation stone of co-operation in the transition to a highly trained professional fire service. Unfortunately the opposite occurred, which is still evident in the confrontation/negotiation stance between the employers and representative bodies of today. One aspiration of the union after the Second World War was a return to police parity as regards pay but this seemed incredible to the new fire authorities as in their experience council labourers doubled up as part-time firemen during the war. The situation deteriorated further due to a chronic manpower shortage resulting in duty systems ranging from 60 to 84 hours per week for the same scale of pay. In November 1951 the union staged its first industrial action by refusing to scrub floors, polish brass, clean windows or train for a period of 48 hours to further their claim for parity with the police on pay (Bailey, 1992). Emergency calls would be answered though and this limited action was known as the "Spit and Polish Demonstration." The local authorities described this refusal to scrub and clean as "sabotage" and in London alone, 1700 men were placed on disciplinary charges. Elsewhere in the country others were either suspended, fined, demoted or sacked. Public outrage at this stance resulted in the Dean of St. Paul's and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster intervening with the Dean asking his congregation at a Christmas sermon to "remember their firemen." This example of confrontation at the very birth of the modern fire service has affected thinking, style and attitude and will be expanded upon during the research.

There is another side to the work of the Fire Brigades Union and this has been recognised in recent years by their excellent work on a number of fire related topics. In

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1997 Mr. George Howarth, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, speaking at various meetings throughout the UK acknowledged this work and praised the FBU for their help and support and for behaving more like a professional body rather than a trade union. This “love/hate relationship” has been one of the few “constant features” during the period since the Second World War and vitriolic attack often follows such praise. An example of this employer/employee “love/hate relationship” occurred later in 1997 at the union’s annual general meeting, where the following statement was issued:

“This Annual General Meeting expresses great concern at the lack of a nationally agreed career development programme for officer members. Beyond the examination-based structure for determining potential for promotion to the rank of Station Officer, lies a grey area which is Senior Officer progression. A properly structured and equality based system would preclude questionable and unaccountable practices of either favouring individuals who belong to certain “fringe” organisations, or punishing active union members and other forms of nepotism. The Executive Council are therefore instructed to progress this as a matter of urgency and report back to next year’s Annual General Meeting.” (Fire Brigades Union, 1997:conference report, [record of proceedings section] pages not numbered).

Since 2000, there has been a real change in the emphasis on the role of the fire service. Government Ministers now require a change from the primary role of fighting fires to a primary role of preventing fires, using the workforce to go out and meet the public and provide advice on fire prevention. The added value for the service in doing this work is that it releases firefighters from the performance of “menial station cleaning routines.” The Fire Brigades Union wanted the removal of this type of work routine over 40 years

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ago but was viewed by the fire authorities of the day as another example of unrealistic demands from the employee. At the Lambeth Training School, in London 1960, during a typical 12 week recruit course, 77 hours were spent on cleaning tasks and only one hour spent on fire protection. In the Fire Brigades Union document, "A Service for the Sixties" (Fire Brigades Union, 1960:9) the following is stated:

"The present station routine kills initiative and enthusiasm. However keen a young recruit may be when he has left his training school, only by superhuman efforts will he keep that keenness and enthusiasm. We must face the fact that the major part of a fireman's life is spent in "charring." These menial tasks, which engage so much of the time of firemen, clearly stem from our past history. In these charring duties we meet once again the dead hands of tradition. The smart station, the shining appliances and the polished floors have as much to do with the problems of modern fire protection and with Britain's economic losses by fire as the hand squirts used at the Great Fire of London. Our first task then is to abolish the menial chores that keep men dispirited and disgruntled that breed cynicism and destroys interest and initiative."

[More than 40 years later government ministers came to the same conclusions]. The remainder of the report argues the case for structured training and development stating the present "happy-go-lucky" state of affairs cannot survive the sixties - a view extremely wide of the mark. Further examples of the union's frustrations in their document include:

"We want proper training while on duty - not drill tower training, the drill tower is the same as those seen on stations 80 years ago" (1960:10).

"The eternal slip and pitch [of a ladder] against the drill tower and a lecture in the

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recreation room when it is raining is the sum of training a young recruit receives - or is ever likely to receive” (1960:10).

“As we bring thousands of young men into the service in the next few years we cannot just pass them through the routine basic training of their first three months and then turn them adrift to the small isolated fire station to be left to their own devices, and to doubtful benefits of the instruction they will receive at the hands of others who have received in most cases, nothing more than the similar basic instruction and are certainly not trained to act as instructors” (1960:10).

“We want training for advancement and encouragement for those studying. The real facts are that men generally are left entirely to themselves to “flog up” for examinations” (1960:11).

“Our service remains rank-ridden, why should a modern fire service require two types of uniform depending on the rank of a man?” (1960:14).

“Saluting and heel clicking have nothing to do with mutual respect - this is based upon the quality of the work done and not upon the particular uniform worn” (1960:14).

The militaristic culture and the “handcuffs of tradition” are both blamed for the present problems of the service. Whilst these issues are slowly being addressed, there is still an incapacity and unwillingness to talk to all the stakeholders in the UK fire industry. This theme of confrontation and failure to communicate will be returned to.

3.5 Report of The Departmental Committee on The Fire Service

This report became known as the “Holroyd Report” (Holroyd, 1970) and was the first inquiry into the running of the fire service since the 1936 Lord Riverdale Report

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(Riverdale, 1936). The Riverdale Report concluded that standards of efficiency should be set by the Secretary of State with all local authorities required to set up fire brigades; only London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen were required to do so at that time. The Holroyd Report therefore was well overdue and even today it is still viewed as a watershed report with its recognition of the issues affecting the fire service. The report is split into 18 chapters, 457 pages and covers the full spectrum of fire service activity. 102 recommendations were made to improve the professionalism and career development of firefighters and officers. The document states that whilst the qualifications for appointments and promotion of wholetime personnel are prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, the responsibility for recruitment and promotion lies with the individual fire authorities. Due to the single-tier entry system, all recruits must enter as an operational firefighter and to qualify for promotion that person must have passed the relative promotion examination and served a minimum number of years in the rank immediately below, as prescribed by the regulations. It should be noted that there are no such regulations governing the recruitment of part-time firefighters. The quality of recruits was also a matter of concern due to the one-tier entry, not only for promotion but also in dealing with dynamic, complex emergency situations. The report goes on to say it regrets that so little research has been completed to analyse the duties of the various ranks and the personal qualities, aptitudes and educational standards required by an individual. It then argues that in-service training and further education requires development, as academic achievement has never been high in the fire service. Young people were now staying longer at school, due to a massive increase in school education beyond 15 years, so ways had to be found to improve the internal training, education

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and advancement opportunities within the service to make the job more attractive. In 1966 a number of fire authorities were involved in a programmed learning pilot scheme to prepare personnel for promotion and bring individuals to a common educational level. This was known as “The Home Office Unit for Educational Methods” (HOUEM) and was set up in 1969 based at the Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire. Holroyd wanted to build upon this but in March 1982 the Home Secretary took the decision to close HOUEM.

Other aspects of the report state the fire service must remain a uniformed, disciplined service with men responding immediately to orders given by superior officers. It was argued that by accepting orders, they not only confirm a willingness to accept the values of the service, they would not endanger their own lives and those of others by doing so. It naturally follows from this viewpoint that men should only be recruited with this “followership” attitude. Consideration was also given to the introduction of a two-tier entry system so that a “*better educated recruit*” would be attracted to the service with virtually guaranteed promotion after the appropriate training. It was decided not to recommend this as:

“The possession of education above the average and ability to pass examinations are in themselves no guarantee that a man has the qualities of initiative and leadership required if he is to reach the higher ranks in any employment” (1970:97).

Education and qualifications were returned to continually in the report with conflicting arguments. It argued that a line could not be drawn between education, training and development which they described as follows:

Education. The acquisition of knowledge, basic facts, principles and concepts.

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Training. Application of the knowledge.

Development. Self-expression of the individual.

They therefore decided to call all these elements “training” and to classify them under generic headings, this effectively ended the dilemma, as they needed to have a generic title without using three different words. The word “training” satisfies this need.

Examples of this training terminology include:

- Recruit training.
- Continuation training.
- Specialist training.
- Instructor training.
- Training for promotion.
- Training for command.

The terminology is still in general use in the UK fire service of today but becoming more inappropriate in favour of the word “development.”

Holroyd also noted that problems exist with recruit training at the centres set up around the country (which in effect were in direct competition with each other for business). This had been identified previously in a report on Local Fire Training Facilities (Banwell and Abel, 1966). This report commented upon the “cut-price” competition, with fire authorities sending their recruits to the lowest priced centre regardless of the facilities or the standard of training provided. The recommendation of Banwell and Abel to standardise training and price at these centres was never acted upon.

The Holroyd Report attempted to highlight all the service’s problems and place a number of contradictions into focus. Within the service generally there is reluctance by

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senior officers to recruit “academics” (possibly due to their own lack of formal qualifications) but this standpoint varies depending on the circumstances; training the trainers by specialists is one example.

The mixing of ranks on training courses was another problem area and one such argument is as follows: *“Those who oppose such an association of recruit and officer training do so from a conviction that the hierarchy of command in brigades makes it desirable to separate both the training arrangements and the social activities which accompany them”* (1970:112).

Professional development is identified within the report as: *“planned operational experiences”* (1970:112) with firemen being posted to busy stations during their early years of service. It goes on to say: *“Chief Fire Officers should regard this as one of their responsibilities”* (1970:112).

For officers who have passed their relevant promotion examination, arrangements are usually in hand for them to attend the Fire Service College at Moreton in Marsh but the report proposed that firemen with higher than average educational attainment should also attend such courses. This did not happen.

Accelerated promotion courses for firemen with at least two years experience and potential to attain Station Officer rank quickly was also recommended. This did not happen.

The desirability for degrees was discussed with a conclusion that: *“Few members of the fire service are likely in the foreseeable future to possess the qualifications necessary for admission to such courses”* (1970:124).

The report did recommend use should be made of the newly formed Open University

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and encouragement should be in practical terms – funded by the Home Office to cover all expenses, fees, books, travelling expenses and payment of normal pay during residential tuition. This did not happen.

The report then looked at the rank structure and concluded that all the ranks were essential, but did recommend a change in the total length of service required before appointment to the next rank which still stands at:

- Leading Fireman 2 years service.
- Sub Officer 4 years service.
- Station Officer 5 years service.

The proposals wanted to reduce this respectively to 1½ years, 3 years and 4 years respectively. This did not happen.

Holroyd goes on to say: *“The qualities determining suitability for promotion to the higher ranks can only be evaluated by examination of a man’s past performance, not by academic examinations”* (1970:135). This view has generally remained intact through to the present day.

The report also recognises that the time spent between emergency calls on fire stations requires improvement to make the job more attractive. Traditionally this time is used for drilling, cleaning and “spit and polish” activities. Two recommendations were made:

- The employment of civilian cleaners for station cleaning duties.
- The involvement of the firemen in fire prevention duties and inspection of premises.

Both of these did happen.

Morale in the fire service took up only one page of the report, which mentions a general dissatisfaction between the officer and men relationships. The recommendations

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included:

“Supervisory ranks at all levels should be given more supervisory and management training appropriate to the rank, with particular emphasis on the skills of effective communication and handling of human relations” (1970:157).

In its conclusion, the report identified a large number of professional development issues but the service was either not ready for change or unwilling to relinquish the power that emanates from a disciplined hierarchical structure and consequently many of the recommendations were ignored. Another possible reason for this reluctance to accept change is that senior officers would, in their eyes, *“become vulnerable.”* They had risen through the ranks without academic qualifications and *“worked hard”* for their promotions – others should do the same and accept the *“fire brigade traditions and way of doing things.”*

3.6 The Cunningham Inquiry into the Work of the Fire Service

The remit of this report (Cunningham, 1971) was to conduct a fact-finding inquiry and evaluation into the work of the fire service by visiting various brigades and conduct fieldwork through interviews with all the interested parties. This report highlights widespread differences in the amount of time spent on training and development and the way it is performed. Only one of the brigades visited had made any real attempt to identify individual needs and relate the findings to current and future training programmes. Management training for officers using outside agencies was non-existent and Cunningham proposed a national review to address this development issue. The inquiry recommended that the rank of Leading Fireman be withdrawn and replaced by

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“Qualified Fireman” and paid at an extra rate after successfully completing various development modules. It was further recommended that the officer rank structure was in need of revision so that re-grading and re-classification could take place. None of this was implemented. It was only after the national pay and conditions strikes of 2002/2003 that change did occur with proposals for new conditions of service, a change from ranks to roles and the introduction of an Integrated Personal Development System.

3.7 The period 1970 to 1994

Following the Holroyd Report in May 1970 and the Cunningham Inquiry in November 1971 reviews and reports followed in quick succession during the 1970s’ – all challenging the status quo. These further reviews looked at specific training and development issues unlike the all-encompassing Holroyd and Cunningham reports. Topics included a review of recruit training facilities, central training, technical and management training, analysis of training requirements for each rank, training at fire stations, brigade training and design and content of officer training courses at the Fire Service College. During this period of “report/review activity” the accelerated promotion-training scheme (APTS), established in 1964 ceased to exist at the end of 1974. The remit of the scheme was to improve the quality of senior officers, both immediately and progressively so that promising young men in the junior ranks could be identified and brought on much earlier in their careers. The reasons for the failure of the APTS are many, but the Joint Training Strategy Group Report (Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council, 1994) cited the main reasons as:

- Lack of meaningful assessment – it is not possible to fail the course.

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- The young officers selected would have been promoted to the higher ranks anyway.
- It fails to meet its main objective – to attract ambitious people into the service.

Many of the reports in the 1970s challenge the very ethos of the service and inevitably a number of Chief Fire Officers and Senior Officers entered the professional development debate by way of articles in the various fire service journals.

Chief Fire Officer Horan expresses a view that professional development starts with recruitment but was concerned that the fire service produces its leaders from the aptitudes necessary for them to initially become firemen without consideration for future rank (Horan, 1980). He argues that recruit selection procedures must take account of the needs of the service and be conducted by “*mature experienced officers who know what the job is about*” (1980:27). He uses the term “*followership*” with young people following the example of those with longer service as a way of dealing with the problem. This of course is an ideal; “*followership*” without structured career development pathways can perpetuate bad practice. Experience and maturity are seen as the main attributes for trainers without really dealing with the issues on how these people are to develop the qualities to influence and motivate others. He does identify the necessity to train people early in their careers for their future roles and responsibilities. He spoilt this somewhat by the statement: “*Many of us can look back at our service with some gratitude to the junior officer we worked under who displayed some autocracy and was not afraid to use the “sauce bottle technique.” If its thick at the neck, shake it up and give it a sharp knock on the bottom, its surprising what comes out*” (1980:30). In his final statement he concludes he would have no qualms promoting a person early in his career providing he has the necessary expertise but he would have problems

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promoting a person with twenty years experience if it amounts to “*one year’s experience repeated twenty times*” (1980:31). An interesting paradox compared to his earlier comments on maturity.

Deputy Chief Officer Scotfield advocates two-tier entry as an essential course of action for the fire service. He then adds the word “*regretfully*.” His concerns come from the widespread opposition in the fire service from officers who have benefited from the status quo and who would lose out in the future with a reduction in advancement opportunities if graduate entries were allowed. The answer was in the service’s own hands – ensure potential is recognised early in a career and provide appropriate development strategies from within. The article did concede two important points though:

- The increasing demands and pressures on the management role and responsibilities.
- The decreasing number of existing fire service personnel putting themselves forward to accept responsibility.

To be eligible for promotion, firefighters must pass each of the statutory examinations for the first three officer ranks up to station officer level; thereafter promotion is upon “merit.” Statistics, taken from the examination board reports, show that since the mid 1970s, between 300 and 500 men qualify for the station officer rank each year. If one takes a median figure this represents about one percent of the total establishment of the fire service or approximately seven percent of the officer establishment. Scotfield makes a number of statements:

“As you well know, not all persons who pass examinations are necessarily suitable for promotion.”

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“Why should the fire service act in a closed shop environment?”

“What right have we got to artificially deny the ratepayer the best possible service?”

“The fire service needs administrators, statisticians, communicators and managers.”

“We should not be saying we must only find these people from within our own resources, from people who initially joined to be firemen” (Scotfield, 1981:36-37).

Clearly this officer believes in the contribution academics would bring to the service whilst appreciating the depth of opposition this would generate - mainly from the present pool of officers mapping their own career advancement on their own terms.

Chief Fire Officer Fuller adopted an entirely different stance saying two-tier entry would create *“two classes of citizen.”* His understanding was that with proper training, progression through the ranks was acceptable and that *“you can’t teach, you can only experience.”* He goes on to say he would support *“some sort of officer graduate training”* but he does not believe in a system that selects people on academic merit that does not test the *“basic man.”* He then quotes his first Chief Officer whom he worked under: *“There is no substitute for hard work and no one would come into the service over my head in some advantaged position negating all my hard work”* (Fuller, 1981:38). That last statement used by Fuller states explicitly what others were saying implicitly and recognised as such in the Holroyd Report and by Scotford. (In Chapter Five the observations and interviews conducted during the fieldwork confirm that the above statement is still widely held and will be commented upon in greater detail).

Assistant Divisional Officer Kemp in an article in the Fire Magazine expressed a concern over an inability by individuals to pass statutory fire service examinations in sufficient numbers each year, a pre-requisite for climbing the promotion ladder (Kemp,

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1989). This was another source of debate during the 1980s with many officers putting pen to paper on this particular subject. Kemp provides a reasoned argument as to why this is so and identifies five factors (1989:35-36):

1. Satisfaction with the conditions and wages at the lower rank levels.
2. Unfavourable comparisons with the commitment and duty systems the higher up a rank you go.
3. The desires to avoid the pressures and stresses that go with rank.
4. An unwillingness to commit many months of study in order to pass fire service examinations.
5. The lack of a guarantee of promotion once a pass has been obtained.

There are other reasons and these include the total lack of individual feedback to a candidate after taking an examination and the identification of the mistakes that result in failure and how to rectify these and prepare for a re-take. The fire service written examinations only test memory and this requires the candidate to remember large amounts of information rather than test the application of this knowledge in a practical context. The vocational structures now being introduced into the service and the phasing out of examinations will address this concern, but this is still over twenty years since Kemp's article and provides an example of the slowness of change in the fire service. Professional development in the fire service appears to be like the service's emergency operational role in that it reacts to situations placed in front of it, rather than pro-active involvement to identify all the various factors before introducing another piecemeal solution to long standing problems.

Robert Jonsson followed up Kemp's article by explaining how the Swedish Fire Service

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has learned the lessons from history and how a fire officer's theory knowledge is upgraded to university degree standard (Jonsson, 1989). He says a principle objective of the Fire Engineering course at Lund University in Sweden ensures fire officers have the necessary depth of background information to be on at least an equal level with architects, construction engineers and fire protection consultants. The degree consists of 2½ years study at the university followed by one year's training in the rescue service and civil defence. After this education and training the individual is then able to plan, organise and lead the peacetime rescue service and civil defence and provide personal and economic management for the local fire brigades. Similar support structures exist in other European countries but during the period of the late 1980s, further reviews in the United Kingdom were still taking place.

3.8 The Sudbury Review of 1990

The review by Sudbury Consultants (Spacie, 1990) looked at Management and Leadership Training at the Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire and was commissioned by the college. This review was considered necessary due mainly to the large number of officers in post and still requiring training. The problem was summed up by paragraph 3.16 in the report: *"The fire service is an action centred service, which recruits firefighters for operational duties. It is not a profession associated in the first instance with management. Fire Officers aspire to operational command on the fireground, and whilst attitudes are changing many junior officers still appear to regard management as peripheral to that aim. To an extent this is reflected in the training afforded junior officers. As they become more senior and the need for*

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management skills more evident, officers become perturbed even stressed by their [lack of] understanding. As the demands of management grow a degree of cultural reorientation and increased training in the requisite management skills are required” (1990:3 [7]).

The recommendations were obvious to anyone conducting even basic research: Command, management and leadership training should be given to an individual prior to the assumption of an appointment and it should be progressive, continuous, relevant, responsive to the needs of the service and properly co-ordinated. The Fire Service College reacting to the recommendations set up a project team which became known as “The Core Progression Training Review Project Team” to restructure the command courses at the college. Unfortunately, this only addresses the effect; the cause still remains even to the present day, and officers are still being promoted throughout the UK without the necessary training and development – a symptom of the one-tier entry structure. Traditionally, recruits are selected solely on their potential to become firefighters with no requirement for formal educational qualifications. The justification for this derives from three tenets:

1. The notion that the service’s main pre-occupation is in dealing with physical tasks at emergency incidents. National statistics show this not to be true with emergency incidents accounting for only 5% of the firefighters time on duty. For example, in Humberside Fire Brigade the busiest wholetime fire station shows the figure to be 7% and the quietest 1% (source: Humberside Fire Brigade Mobilising Data).
2. The vast majority of the general public views the service as a manual profession. This view is confirmed by analysis of recruit data confirming a high percentage of

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entrants leave school at the age of 16 and quote “going to fires” as the main reason for enrolment.

3. Defence of the status quo. This is the fire service regenerating itself in its own image by recruiting firefighters like themselves, who work their way through the ranks and achieve senior posts late in their careers, like everyone else, without having to contend with ambitious, degree qualified young people “jumping the queue” and taking their jobs.

Many articles appeared after the Sudbury review and one article written by Deputy Chief Fire Officer Henson was very hard hitting and straight to the point (Henson, 1991). From the beginning it states the fire service is unlike other organisations - managers and specialists are trained after they have been appointed to a role and the Fire Service College courses are either not relevant to the individual, or come at the wrong point in a persons career. Henson says he has concerns at the increasing technical aspects of the job and the much heavier academic demands being placed upon personnel who are, in the main, ill prepared for this change in emphasis. He further suggests that the current duty system does nothing to motivate firefighters to study for qualifications and prepare them for promotion. This he argues, is because they can earn substantial sums of money from part-time work on their days off, without responsibility or stress (1991:8 and 12).

3.9 Association of County Councils Conference, January 1993

The early 1990s saw a number of changes regards qualifications and training. The Fire Service College, responding to criticisms of its training provision, created the “Fire

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Safety Technology and Management Programme” resulting in a B.Sc. Degree with the South Bank University upon completion of the main courses at the college. National Vocational Qualifications were introduced with the creation of The Emergency Fire Service Lead Body. The suite of vocational qualifications were designed to cover all the ranks but even today it is directed mainly towards the firefighters to confirm competence in their task role. During this period the service felt overwhelmed by the changes and the main coping strategy was often to slow down the pace of change [a tactic used successfully in the past]. Criticism was plentiful but solutions sparse; many conferences and seminars reflect this period of unease. At the Association of County Councils Conference in January 1993, the Dean of the Fire Service College, Dr. Robin Willis-Lee, (Willis-Lee, 1993) quoted a passage from the report of a working party in August 1992 set up by the Fire and Emergency Planning Committee: *“Positive career planning and development of staff with potential is not always given the attention it deserves. Chief Fire Officers must have clear policies on career progression in place, and must manage the process”* (Association of County Councils, 1992:8). Willis-Lee’s reply to this statement was: *“Future development of officers depends wholly on career development.”* Willis-Lee then develops his argument: *“Before a person is appointed to a position of command it is essential for that person to have been part of a team carrying out dangerous and arduous rescues. Fire Safety Officers have a much better understanding of the means of escape from a new building if they have had experience of rescuing people from burning buildings”* (1993:6 and 8). *“I go to many meetings where the main strategy for coping with change seems to be to try to slow change down so as to bring it under control. Unhappily, the momentum for some of the most*

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important changes taking place, is being generated externally to the fire service and it is not within the competence of the fire service to control these. Another strategy is to attempt to deal with one area of change at a time. The pervasiveness and pace of change is now such that this strategy is unworkable since the interaction between the various change elements is one of the issues needing to be addressed. If a one change element at a time approach is adopted, the interaction effect is likely to be missed” (1993:14-15).

The problems at the time must have seemed insurmountable especially with the paradox of operational incidents accounting for only 5% of a firefighters time and yet great faith being placed on operational expertise as a measure of ability at promotion interviews. This “act of faith” has become enshrined in the every day practices of the service even though there has never been any real measure of this facet such as the completion of personal profiles relating to operational incidents. This measure could be of real value, as not only would it accurately describe “operational experience” for an individual, it is also an internal fire service intervention strategy capable of defending the one-tier entry system. Willis-Lee, was raising valid points but the college was impotent to address the problem of officers attending courses for development training to the next rank when the fire authority in question had already promoted that individual. This was an effect of insufficient funding for the service and in it’s own way, became the “norm” for development training in the fire service. With the introduction of degree courses at the college, the introduction of national vocational qualifications, the acceptance of training for a post once you were in that post, the constant critical reports, reviews and inquiries, the strategy of slowing down the pace of change during this period was understandable. This tactic must have seemed a very safe harbour indeed in the sea of confusion.

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3.10 Report of the Training Strategy Group

This is an extremely well researched and well presented document by 14 senior fire professionals of the British Fire Service (Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council, 1994) looking at the level of fire service training for each post and every rank. The group was formed in 1992 following concerns by the Joint Training Committee of the Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council at the lack of a national focus, even though training had been the subject of more recommendations since 1970 than any other subject. The terms of reference for the group were to analyse the selection, training and development needs of the fire service both long and short term and to identify the problems and make proposals for action. In the foreword, the chairman Mr. B. L. Fuller, stated he hoped the report will not go the way of earlier reports and be quietly buried or founder due to the lack of available finance. A total of 78 recommendations were made including the introduction of systems for selection, training and development designed to support a framework of workplace standards of competence. The Strategy Group were adamant that the single tier entry system had to remain but with a support structure to identify potential for advancement at an early stage in a person's career. The need for academic qualifications linked to fire service training also features strongly in the report.

For the first time in British Fire Service history, a document has attempted to provide a complete approach towards professional development and has indeed provided the impetus for further research by wording recommendations in an open style for others to develop and act upon. The Integrated Personal Development System (see 3.24) took full advantage of the comments and issues raised in this document by applying the principles advocated.

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3.11 In the Line of Fire

Whilst the service debated how to implement the findings of the Training Strategy Group, the Audit Commission published the document “In the Line of Fire” (Audit Commission, 1995) aimed at providing: *“Value for Money in the Fire Service.”* This document is an agenda for change with 20 recommendations that challenges the national framework and conditions of employment. It states quite bluntly that changes have to be made as the balance between local management of operations and the national standards and methods had its origins in the 1930s’ and 1940s’ and in particular the 1947 Fire Services Act. It goes on to say that the current framework still remains largely unchanged and is based upon the pioneering work of the Riverdale Inquiry of 1936. The report further argues that the approach to risk categorisation and service standards are: *“Grounded in historical precedent rather than recent research. As a consequence, managers in brigades are still tightly regulated by a framework that originated before any currently serving fire officer was even born. The consistent preference of national decision-makers to avoid major changes can perhaps be explained by a combination of the world war and the post-war period, the strong public affection that exists for the service and the low levels of political concern about it. However, given the pressures and tensions that are now building up, it is necessary to question how much longer the anachronistic national framework can remain unaltered”* (1995:9-11).

This was not what the service wanted to hear and it took three years to produce its own report, “Out of the Line of Fire.” In the interim, each fire authority questioned its own core values with local and national committees set up to dissect aspects of the report, piecemeal fashion. Students at the Fire Service College became involved too. The

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Brigade and Divisional Command courses all require a dissertation on fire service topics and most of these reflect uncertainty during this period. Solutions and reasons for the various problems are offered, but unfortunately these documents now lie on the college library shelves gathering dust, their purpose for being written apparently fulfilled with their writers moving on to bigger and different things. One unpublished dissertation by Assistant Divisional Officer Sear (Sear, 1996) and held in the Fire Service College library, makes a profound statement on professional development: *“A strong culture exists within the service which perpetuates many highly traditional views and beliefs. These possibly originate from personnel who joined following the war and had a significant impact on shaping the service. This factor is evident in the widely held view that length of service is all-important. Even young firefighters, new to the organisation, express this view, suggesting it has been acquired from their peers. The reliance on traditional examinations as a means of measuring ability is inadequate and holds little credibility with the workforce. Although this cannot be dispensed with, a framework of competency, in the form of a role map would provide a clear and measurable standard for staff. In addition it may contribute towards a higher level of self-belief amongst personnel who could identify their own strengths and weaknesses against a criteria. This may allow staff to demonstrate ability regardless of time served”* (1996:70).

One suspects though that it has hardly been read either in the present day or during that time period, let alone appreciated. It could have provided a significant contribution to the debate as others reached similar conclusions much later. Role maps are now being introduced into the service and the reliance on a fire service examination as a test of knowledge is gradually being phased out.

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3.12 Management of Improved Performance in the Fire Service

Chief Fire Officer Doyle, studying for a Master of Philosophy degree on the management of improved performance, provides another dimension to the debate with counter arguments within his thesis (Doyle, 1996). He suggests a general unease and provides possible reasons for the in-action in dealing with the cause and effect of problems: *“The fire service has always recruited and promoted through a single-tier entry scheme and on many occasions that system has been challenged and criticised. Up till the present time, the service has been able to withstand such questioning. Almost to a man, the service’s senior management supports single entry. Many reasons are given to retain the current system and a great deal of them are immensely convincing. Whether they remain compelling is as open to question as the system itself. There are a growing trend of senior and principal officers gaining degree qualifications. As these numbers increase, it is generally accepted that the clamour for graduate entry will proportionately decrease. Being an unequivocal and unashamed supporter of single-tier entry is not sufficient. It is incumbent on those at senior level to be pragmatic and recognise that only degree qualifications will consistently withstand future incursions on single-tier entry”* (1996:2). The author balances this by saying the lure of higher qualifications such as MBA’s could lead to superficial management as identified by Mintzberg:

“They are a license to bypass the very things that organisations do, to leapfrog over the realities of organisational life into its abstractions” (Mintzberg, 1989:90).

Doyle has great respect throughout the service and the unease he spoke about has slowly divided into two approaches; those who think the acquisition of recognised higher

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qualifications should be the way ahead and those who prefer the service to provide all the in-house development and education. Both approaches however do have one theme in common – the continuation of the one-tier entry system for the foreseeable future.

3.13 Out of the Line of Fire Report

This report (Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council, 1998) is a response by the fire service to the “In the Line of Fire” report of 1995. The service did agree in principle to the recommendations contained in the 1995 document especially that risk assessment is the best way forward. The Out of the Line of Fire report came up with eight recommendations of its own including the need for further research. It states that task analysis will provide the basis for the planning of operational response options. The findings of the study also conclude that emergency incidents attended by the fire service can be grouped into 12 generic groups and divided into 59 incident types comprising 504 individual incident scenarios and that “*standards of competence may have to be specified in the future*” (1998:6[6]). What was being explored here was the possibility of a detailed professional strategic approach towards rank, role, personal development needs and the achievement of tasks through teamwork and to a measurable national standard. The importance of this document in providing support to the radical re-organisation of the work of the service was not acknowledged at the time but the review is still continuing. Pockets of resistance still remain, mainly from the representative bodies, due to their historical beliefs that change and flexibility may eventually harm the interests of their current and future members. Events were moving fast and the European Union with its policy of labour crossing frontiers to work was another issue to consider.

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3.14 The Concept of a European Firefighter

With the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications for the UK Fire Service and the proposals contained in the “Out of the Line of Fire” report regards role, task and measurable standards, the concept of a European firefighter emerged (Leonardo Da Vinci Programme, 1999). The principles explored in the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme were how to introduce professional development pathways to leapfrog years of inactivity and the countless national reports to produce a framework for a Pan European Firefighter. The report argues for a very simple principle; outcomes throughout the fire services of Europe are basically the same regardless of national differences in equipment, local geography, levels of management and the technical and practical attainment of firefighters.

The partners in this “European Firefighter” project included:

- The Danish Association of Fire Chiefs.
- The Finnish Fire Officers Association.
- The Chief Fire Officers Association of Ireland.
- London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.
- Norwegian Association of Fire Officers.
- Association Professional de Technicos de Bomberos (Spain).
- Swedish Association of Fire Chiefs.
- Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (UK).

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All of the partners agreed that the UK national vocational qualification structure for all the roles within the service is not only effective and easily recognisable, but confirms the skill levels of individuals who wish to transfer between the British brigades. This acceptance of the British structure has the potential to be adopted and used in the wider European context. The thinking behind this is significant, as “standards” can be used as descriptions of competence expressed as outcomes for each of the roles and ranks in each of the national fire brigades throughout Europe. These descriptions will satisfy four inter-related skills:

- Task Skills. The routine and technical components of the job function.
- Task Management Skills. The skills to manage a group of tasks and the ability to prioritise.
- Contingency Management Skills. To deal with things, the unexpected and when things go wrong.
- Role Skills. The interaction with people and the ability to cope with safety and environmental factors in the wider role.

The traditional training approach with its lack of further meaningful help, support and development for an individual was now being seriously questioned and becoming increasingly difficult to justify. This was in stark contrast to the traditional approach, which had always made the assumption that the “fire brigade way of doing things” was sufficient. This assumption therefore, became open to debate and the senior officers on courses at the Fire Service College took full advantage of this with their dissertations and reports. Professional development within the context of being competent to perform a particular role or roles was fast becoming a subject to be taken seriously.

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3.15 Succession Planning for Officers

Senior Divisional Officer Hullah on the Brigade Command Course at the Fire Service College (Hullah, 1999) provides a comprehensive dissertation on succession planning and the development of officers within the one-tier entry system. Unfortunately, this report also gathers dust on the library shelves at the Fire Service College. The issues Hullah raises in his document are fundamental to the professional development debate and reflect the service's concerns. Hullah's research provides evidence that social, economic and political awareness together with technological advancement are communicated to individuals via training courses and to those rising through the ranks (often after the promotion) but the most "important" shared value is that everyone was once a firefighter. This is regardless of the fact that a person may have been posted to an extremely quiet fire station with few chances to experience a full range of emergency incidents. At this point, it is important to re-affirm that owing to the hierarchical structure of the British Fire Service, there are eleven ranks. Some brigades do not use all eleven, but the process is the same; you start as a firefighter and work upwards - one rank at a time. Hullah through his research and the author with this research have identified the dominant principal belief of the fire service. You progress from firefighter to chief fire officer through the one-tier entry system through practical firefighting with great emphasis placed on this firefighting at promotion interviews even though your current role may be that of a specialist. You will not progress if your career "portfolio" does not include returns to the operational role at time intervals deemed appropriate by a promotion panel. The above happens even though the actual time spent on firefighting (as previously stated) at the busiest of fire stations in the country seldom goes into

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double percentage figures. This now poses a defining question. Does the passing of a statutory fire service examination and studying for promotion interviews by memorising operational procedures and being able to state you were once a firefighter prepare you to be a competent officer?

The ratio of firefighters to officers in the service is approximately 1.7 to 1. It is essential therefore that the service provides sufficient numbers of talented people upon recruitment, not only to meet its future officer requirements but to justify the legitimacy of the one-tier entry system. Hulland goes on to say he has concerns for the growing numbers of firefighters reluctant to accept responsibility that goes with rank and he identifies three broad categories:

- Those prepared to seek promotion.
- Those prepared to seek promotion but on their terms.
- Those not prepared to seek promotion.

He cites modern life as a reason for these changes and the reluctance to transfer to day duties from a shift based rota that allows plenty of time off. Previously the number of potential candidates for promotion had never been a problem and recruits are encouraged to undertake statutory promotion examinations as a career opportunity rather than part of a strategic development plan for future officers.

The viability and justification of the one-tier entry without such a strategy seems incredible.

The problem goes deeper. Most brigades leave individual development of others to the Watch and Station Commanders, particularly when it comes to career advice, but this is seldom made explicit in their job descriptions and many provide personal opinions

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rather than the corporate viewpoint. Hulland's research has helped establish the following:

- There is a need for professional development strategies at the recruit selection phase to meet the dual demands of replacement firefighters and future officers.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on business skills for senior officers and delivered by outside agencies so as to widen one's horizons. This is especially important when the person in question originally joined to be a firefighter.
- Officers now operate in an extremely complex environment and the need for academic qualifications must not be seen as "an add on." The modern officer has to perform to the exacting standards of business and the expectations of politicians within the principles of best value.

3.16 Prelude to the Review of the Fire Service College

In the June 1999 issue of the Fire Magazine the editor interviewed Mr. Glossop, Commandant of the Fire Service College, on the impending review by the Home Office on the future of the college. Glossop was asked to comment on a speech made by the Home Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw, at a local government meeting in Sheffield in March 1999 when the Home Secretary expressed a concern about a financial crisis at the college. Glossop in his reply (Glossop, 1999) said: "*a review is well overdue*" and that he was "*confident that changes implemented since he took command tied in with Government policy and should secure Moreton's future as the central training establishment for the fire service.*" He also adds that the "*college should be subject to a formal review every 3 to 5 years*" (1999:9). Glossop had indeed initiated changes with

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the introduction of Higher National Certificates and Diplomas on college courses including a Masters degree on the new Brigade Command courses. He uttered a word of caution though, saying, *“these changes and plans would not come to fruition unless a more strategic view on fire service training was undertaken.”* He also said he hoped the review would deliver a fundamental analysis but felt the wider issues concerning the whole future of the service needed addressing too. He concludes by saying: *“Once we know the future of the Fire Service College we will be able to see more clearly where the college is going to fit. We can then decide what training should be done locally, regionally or nationally to avoid wasteful duplication”* (1999:10).

The representative bodies also began to express concerns about the future of the Fire Service College and the quality and availability of training for its members and said so in an article in their publication; “A Fire Service for the Future” (Fire Brigades Union, 1998). They saw the problem as insufficient funds and the implications this had for the safety of firefighters. They noted the number of Improvement Notices served upon brigades by the Health and Safety Executive that had criticised the training provision, leading to inadequacies and the deaths of firefighters. The union was also concerned at the large number of officers who receive training for their new post after a promotion, sometimes quite a while after the promotion and they attributed this lack of training to a lack of funds and lack of any strategic plan.

3.17 Prior Options Review, Fire Service College

This review of the college called the Prior Options Review (Home Office, 1999) was commissioned by the Home Secretary to investigate the running of the Fire Service

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College and looked at a number of options for achieving best value and the provision of centralised training for fire service personnel. Six options were considered:

- Abolition of the college.
- A radical restructure of the college.
- Private sector involvement with the college.
- Merging the college with similar compatible services.
- Extending contractorisation of the college's activities.
- Re-integration with the Home Office.

The review was necessary due to the mounting criticism of the standard of service provision and a failure to respond to the changing environment and training needs. The review was extremely thorough with a number of meetings at the college, which included an inspection of files and visits with questionnaires to fire brigades to determine customer satisfaction. Talks took place between various key stakeholders and three further independent reviews were commissioned including a study by an experienced research team from the South Bank University. The findings were bleak; they were very critical as to the lack of commercial skills and the failure of the college to meet the training needs of its customers. The university researchers found there was no fundamental rationale for interrelating the educational and training needs or any effective diagnostic evaluation of the students prior to attendance on the courses. The review concluded that a three-way partnership be developed between the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and the private sector for the delivery of training. This was a very hard pill for the college to swallow as it had always regarded itself as a "Centre of Excellence" and was accountable to Ministers and Parliament. The principal written aim

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of the college is to be the pre-eminent higher educational college for fire related training and for promoting fire safety awareness with efficiency, effectiveness and economy to the maximum satisfaction of its customers. This aim is supported by three key objectives:

1. To provide cost effective, high quality, well validated training for the UK fire service in command, leadership, management and operational matters through a progressive system of training including fire safety engineering and other specialised fire related subjects.
2. To enhance the professional competence of UK fire brigades.
3. To identify and promote best practice in fire engineering and fire safety by developing a research capability associated with college training.

The college was clearly not meeting the demands of its customers and the survey of the fire service confirmed this. They wanted core progression training to fulfil their development needs. Indeed a number of brigades have set up training centres in direct competition to the Fire Service College. The paradox is that over half the brigades involved with the survey made specific mention of the importance of the college as a “*Centre of Excellence*” and the need for fire service officers to interact with their peers and to exchange ideas and information. Many described this as the “*glue*” which binds the fire service together. This “love affair” with the college was tempered by further criticism, especially the college’s ventures into academia, saying they wanted a technical college, not a university. When the researchers questioned the college staff it soon became obvious that major cultural differences and tensions exist between the uniformed and non-uniformed academic staff. The researchers noted that the non-

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uniformed staff often remarked that the college was run as an old fashioned fire brigade where rank, command and control dominate rather than a flexible, enterprising, commercial training establishment. Four distinct cultures were identified:

- The fire service uniformed culture.
- The teaching/academic culture.
- The business culture.
- The public service/ civil service culture.

Many of the non-uniformed staff (generally paid at a lower rate than their uniformed counterparts) remarked at the little experience of education and training, let alone commercial training that these uniformed lecturers had. The South Bank University research confirmed this by stating the college's organisation was hierarchical and rigid in operation with much time devoted by the uniformed staff in dealing with their own rules and procedures. In essence the review once again confirmed that the "fire brigade way of doing things" and "the college knows best" mentality had to change to embrace modern business practices of the technological age it now found itself in.

3.18 Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service

The Fire Service College was not alone in this wind of change, it was coming from every direction and report followed report. The Fire Service Inspectorate report into equality and fairness (Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999) issued 23 recommendations: "*To make major changes and eradicate outmoded culture*" (1999:3). The report states that out of all the issues arising from the review, leadership was the most important. The managerial style is often seen as outdated with excessive importance attached to the

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rank structure within a culture of “*maintaining the status quo*” (1999:4). This has led to senior officers becoming the guardians of this belief, thus preventing flair and enterprise from flourishing. Lack of communication between officers is another area preventing individual development. Responsibility is often communicated through prescriptive instructions or standing orders rather than information. The culture of the service is often viewed as a strength, but the report says this is misplaced, as the dominant culture is actually one of individuals having to “*fit in*” (1999:23). This “fitting-in” is possibly the principal requirement for every rank and role in the service of today. This leads in turn to a general distrust of the promotion procedures. Strong personal support from senior officers is often seen as the essential requirement for advancement. This “*loyalty to the command structure*” and “*knowing the right people*” (1999:4) prevents senior officers, who have the power, from initiating change. They are also apparently unaware of the need to develop life skills and social awareness in the future leaders they promote within a context of equality and fairness. They cannot see the problem because they are unaware of the problem.

The need for a defined national style of management is also emphasised in the review. The autocratic style of command and control at emergency incidents is often used on the fire stations due to a lack of managerial skills and lack of people management skills. Many officers do adopt a democratic management style but they often revert to autocracy if their authority is challenged. Yet again, the single-tier entry system came in for criticism. If entry into the fire service only considers the firefighter role, then by its very nature it is restrictive. By not considering the wider roles some of these recruits will eventually have to perform during their careers, the breadth of skill level

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requirements will only come from one main source; a very heavy reliance on brigade training. This now poses a key question for the research:

If this is the accepted way and route all past officers have undertaken, is this the defining implicit method that sustains the unbroken line of the fire brigade culture and way of doing things?

Andy Gilchrist, National Officer of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), provided a discussion paper within a union circular (Fire Brigades Union, 1999) as a response to the Fire Service Inspectorate's document on equality and fairness. The FBU was involved in a number of disputes with various fire authorities during this period, trying to protect their conditions of service, which in their eyes were slowly being dismantled by the employers. This they called "*Smash and Grab*" and had to be resisted at all costs. The fire service with its previous history of harsh discipline and record of confrontations with the representative bodies meant both sides would lose face if they yielded an inch. This is a history of missed opportunities, complacency, ignorance and an (incredible) lack of understanding by all concerned. The discussion paper from Gilchrist provides a good insight into the service's problems pointing out accurately that if equality and fairness conditions are not met, how can individuals flourish and expand career expectations within the ideal of a sophisticated, progressive modern fire service? Gilchrist identifies the value of highly trained teams working in close knit groups under the umbrella of "*Watches*" that foster a high level of trust and camaraderie; the first foundation stone in career development. He goes on to say that these tightly knit relationships can also be exclusive rather than inclusive making life difficult for "*outsiders*" and anyone not agreeing to the "*culture*" of the Watch. He said this

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acceptance of *“the fire brigade way of doing things”* starts at recruit training schools with many recruits being told by their instructors: *“You are of no use to the service till I have broken you”* (1999:1). This statement is totally opposite to the requirements of the Home Secretary (Fire Service Circular, 6/1999) which says it is his intention: *“To create a workforce and organisational culture that reflects and values diversity, and selection and promotion procedures that do not discriminate unfairly against anyone on any grounds”* (Fire Service Circular 6/1999:1).

Gilchrist recognises that for the service to be effective, discipline is a necessary requirement at operational incidents and in his words: *“This should not be instilled by fear, humiliation or brutal behaviour. Bawling at recruits and on drills [at the fire stations] does not improve firefighting skills. Nor will it encourage initiative, or the ability to speedily assess and respond to complex, high-risk situations. Treating people like bad children will do nothing to prevent them behaving like children. The hierarchical culture which surrounds the rituals of the service, both at work and in social situations are anachronistic. Taken as a whole, the so-called culture of the service reflects an era where unquestioning obedience was expected from the ranks, not just in the workplace but in social situations too”* (1999:9). In his conclusion, he said that to meet the objectives as defined by the Home Secretary, the managers of the service would require the co-operation of the FBU and that all members of the service have a responsibility to ensure this occurs. However, the constant industrial problems between the FBU and management are a situation not to be ignored or tolerated as per the service’s historical past. It is not possible to implement modernisation if it is implemented selectively or without proper dialogue.

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3.19 O'Brien, M. Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office.

A speech to the Local Government Association by Mr. O'Brien (Local Government Association, 8th March 2000) did not offer any solutions on how to modernise the fire service, he offered instead a "*vision*" with the application of the "*how*" left to others. This was said so that others could develop a vision of where the fire service is going and what it wants to achieve. All aspects of the service's role and functions are mentioned with some particular references as regards the development of management skills with high local standards but delivered to national standards. He said improvements needed to be made to the training system along with high quality curriculum at all levels to provide a well-motivated and trained workforce. Mr. O'Brien confirmed it was the Government's intention to ensure high standards of professionalism but is aware the service lacks the machinery for turning good intentions into actions to deliver a coherent strategy. The principle of "*best value*" features strongly in his speech along with a list of desired changes. It is of little wonder then that the individual fire authorities started to develop their own implementation plans and timetables in an effort to demonstrate a willingness to adapt and in doing so, hoping they would be left alone to get on with it. The main problem appears to be a lack of a national coordinated approach. The fire authorities need to operate within the context of a British Fire Service with recognisable corporate identities and to set standards able to respond to local needs. The speech placed great emphasis on the principles of best value and required brigades to use performance indicators for their current work with all new activities and initiatives demonstrating value for money to the general public. This simple statement by Mr. O'Brien radically changed thinking in the service. The writing of best value plans with

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full-page advertisements in local newspapers describing in great detail the process is one outcome of this requirement. This is now achieved through the setting up of “Best Value Sections” in brigades, often with a number of high-ranking officers in charge of lower ranks and non-uniformed administrative support staff.

On the positive side national groupings and committees, workings towards a “joined-up” approach have appeared. Their remit is to introduce real change and real best value within a process of consultation and communication. The evidence from the fieldwork (chapter five) suggests this is still not the case with a general lack of trust between the various groupings.

3.20 Inquiry into the Machinery for Determining Firefighters’ Conditions of Service

This inquiry undertaken by Professor Frank Burchill of the University of Keele (Burchill, 2000) considered what changes needed to be made when determining the conditions of service and working practices of firefighters. This was a response to the failure of the National Joint Council (NJC), established in 1947 under the Fire Services Act, to deal effectively with such arrangements. The NJC is comprised of 23 members from the employer’s side and 22 from the Fire Brigades Union and their task is to negotiate these conditions of service. Unfortunately, this is not always possible due to the historical adversarial stance of the two sides within an often hostile environment. The fire authorities are often “forced to reduce the number of fire appliances from fire stations” with the subsequent loss of personnel to meet tight budgetary restraints. The union are then “forced to defend” their members from “uncaring employers” who are

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trying to remove all their hard won improvements gained over the years. The employers want greater flexibility and the union wants the status quo, upheld by strike action if necessary. A statement inside the report identifies the problem but requires clarification:

“A number of respondents point to the historical culture of the fire service as conservative and resistant to change” (2000:11). This statement is an example of why the employers are immediately at a disadvantage in negotiations, they are under pressure from central government to act but the “cure” can often create greater turmoil followed by a climb down – and the union know this.

This negotiation by confrontation has followed an unbroken line from 1947 up to the present day. The solution offered by the inquiry includes changes to the National Joint Council to streamline the negotiating process and automatic recourse to conciliation when there is a failure to agree. The inquiry took five months to produce its findings and only thirty one months later a dispute on pay and conditions resulted in a national fire strike with the government, employers and the representative bodies all involved in a bitter feud with each side refusing to compromise. This is yet another example of piecemeal solutions in the form of another report trying to provide a quick answer to complex issues.

3.21 Concerns of Fire Professionals

Following the Prior Options Review of the Fire Service College (FSC) a large number of fire professionals once again put pen to paper to comment on the college and the service’s problems. Questions were being asked as to whether the FSC provides value for money. The revised Crew Command Course at the FSC had doubled in price which

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exacerbated the backlog of those waiting for courses (due to financial restraints placed on the fire authorities). Mr. Smith writing in the Fire Magazine (Smith, 2000) said he was concerned that whilst individual development needs were increasing, nominations for courses at the college were decreasing with training and development still occurring some considerable time after promotion. *“Training for Competence,”* was a much-used phrase during this period and Smith recommended vocational qualifications linked to the appropriate role maps in preference to expensive courses that keep officers away from their place of duty. He argued that vocational qualifications would provide more flexibility with an ability to prioritise within strict budget constraints. As more and more senior officers demanded change on how individuals are supported with their development needs it was becoming evident a plan was not only essential, but also overdue. The status quo was no longer an option.

The editor of the Fire Magazine, Simon Hoffman, reported in the July edition 2000 on the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association’s (CACFOA) annual conference held on the 6th May (Hoffman, 2000). He said a number of *“critical areas”* had been identified by the conference and CACFOA want greater flexibility in the use of human resources within a national training plan linked to role. The inevitable *“what is the future role for the Fire Service College”* also features strongly. The new president of CACFOA, Chief Fire Officer Malcolm Eastwood, made this statement to the conference: *“Modernisation – or change – is the watchword for the coming months. Historically the fire service is reluctant to embrace change. We cannot ignore the fact that change is upon us. I came across a lovely saying that states if things are going to stay the same, things have got to change. A phrase we should all remember”* (2000:9).

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The driver of fire service modernisation is the government with its demand for high quality standards under the terms of the Public Service Agreement. The Improvement and Development Agency, whilst accepting the fact that modernisation would be a major cultural change for the fire service, also wants change but through self-improvement. This agency thought the service was too inward looking and demanded the service implement change otherwise they would impose it on the service. Everyone from the Representative Bodies to Chief Fire Officers recognised the need for a plan; the hard part was agreeing and adopting a plan. The various sides had yet again taken up their respective corners with a new word introduced into the fire service arena. This word was accountability.

Brian Robinson, the Chief Fire Officer of the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, picked up the challenge to modernise and told the service to prepare for greater accountability (Robinson, 2000). He recognises that the Fire Service Inspectorate must also be accountable for their reports and able to defend the judgements they make about the service in the same way as individual brigades have to. Individual brigades now have to meet annual performance targets and confirm continuous improvement regards their service delivery and once these are met, more targets that are demanding come from the government. Robinson identifies other key areas for modernisation including the training and development of fire service personnel, the common phrase in present day use is “training for competence.” The need for a performance management structure, the move away from ranks to roles and the ever present debate on the future of the Fire Service College are all identified as crucial issues to address under the twin titles of modernisation and accountability. The piecemeal solution approach from the

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fire authorities was fast becoming unacceptable; a national approach to national problems was now seen as the way ahead.

Baigent studying for a Ph.D. on the work of the fire service, asks the question whether experience is more important than a degree level education (Baigent, 2001a). He develops this argument with strong views against the single-tier entry and promotion structure because it ensures that suitably qualified managers from outside the fire service are effectively barred. This stance then results in an internal process, which takes 25 years and over to develop firefighters into principal officers. Baigent says this principle not only ensures tradition is replicated in the fire service, it is a process that is isolated within the Public Service. Even the Dean of the Fire Service College (Willis-Lee, 1993:6-9) justifies this principle by stating shared experience is a more worthy attribute than having a degree. Baigent's studies identify resentment between firefighters and officers and rather than confirm an increased understanding through shared experiences, a lack of mutual respect appears to be the norm. His evidence for this comes from the fact that some officers deliberately distance themselves from the firefighters. Officer visits to fire stations are often formal occasions with either a collective debrief of an operational incident resulting in "*mud slinging*" or the asking of technical questions during an "*inspection of the premises.*" He argues there is little to gain from these "*shared experiences*" and if promotion through the ranks was really [if ever] a genuine occupational requirement, this link is certainly missing or misplaced (2001:23-24).

These arguments by the above author are not new; there have been many challenges over the years to the traditional "*through the ranks approach.*" Degree qualified non-

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uniformed managers are still not acceptable if they do not include a “*firefighter qualification*” even though that person may not have been a firefighter or an operational officer for twenty years. This conflict is now being expressed nationally by the subtle non-use of uniform in a variety of circumstances. The wearing of blazers without rank markings is a strategy adopted by a number of senior officers throughout the British Fire Service. This approach needs to be questioned. At the present time, the service has a tradition of ranks and uniform so why is this not acceptable especially with one-tier entry? What image are these senior officers trying to portray? Why has this non-programmed change become acceptable? How far down the line will senior officers allow this incremental change to occur? All of these issues will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The anomalies in the service criticised by Baigent brought a swift response from a number of senior officers, and they came out “fighting.” Chief Fire Officer Goddard: *“There appears to be a whole series of papers and reviews originating from within the service which, I believe, unfairly criticise the management and/or staff of what is in fact, probably the last remaining efficient public service. We do not need the constant drip of criticism or inferred criticism from the service; it is demoralising and works against those areas most in need of change. Who would want to join a service, which is as much in need of modernisation as some of our critics would have you believe?”* (Goddard, 2001:8).

Chief Fire Officer Bonney: *“How a two-tier approach would overcome the distance between officers and firefighters, so gleefully reported by the author [Baigent] was never explained. I suspect that if he were to interview army privates this would not*

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reveal any glowing solidarity between the officers and other ranks. While losing touch is one thing, never having been in touch in the first place is quite another. A system which provides opportunities for those with ability and the motivation to progress rapidly by providing relevant training and development is surely preferable than to a divisive two-tier system” (Bonney, 2001:8).

Chief Fire Officer Young: *“It seems almost fashionable to blame Principal Officers for the woes of the British Fire Service. There is certainly much more to be done. However, as we all know, encouragement brings better results than constant criticism” (Young, 2001:10).* The above examples of comment by senior officers and in Goddard’s words reacting to *“the constant drip of criticism”* were not only defensive; it was demoralising for the service to hear. The service, in reality, did need this extensive in-depth meticulous research as it not only looked at the subject matter in question but also took account of the wider picture and the changes in the environment the service now has to operate in. Baigent’s research confirmed there was a lack of appreciation or understanding of the historical viewpoint and this is indeed a factor in preventing real modernisation and change from taking place.

3.22 Managing a Modernised Fire Service

A further attempt to implement modernisation came in the form of a scoping study by Mr. Meldrum, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Fire Services (Fire Service Inspectorate, May 2001). This report was launched at a seminar on May 1st 2001, at the Southwark Training Centre in London. Mr.O’Brien, the Home Office Minister, said: *“It is about moving the fire service forward, the need to deliver a modern fire service, enabling the*

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service to develop talent – with no room for inertia” (O’Brien, 2001:12-14).

The report contains 31 recommendations, 20 designated as immediate and 11 as medium term. The study looks at leadership in the service, how careers for individuals evolve and how these careers develop through the single tier entry system. This is a very positive report that recognises both the traditional past of the service and the need to pursue new methods to develop talented people. In this way, it recognises the need to re-evaluate and renew the time-expired traditions and values of that earlier age. The career structure for those wishing to remain as firefighters are discussed and whilst real solutions were not forthcoming, problems were recognised.

All of the stakeholders at the document launch were supportive but saw great problems ahead in implementing the recommendations due to the workload involved. To the document’s credit, this is a real attempt to implement change through consensus rather than criticism. The amount of work to action the recommendations is its main weakness, together with the long timescales for some of the proposals.

Chief Fire Officer Richard Bull (Bull, 2001:15) in his response on behalf of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association and speaking in the Fire Magazine said: *“We need to learn from other organisations in the public and private sector about selection, training and development.”* He added there was a need to attract the right candidates for the service and admitted, *“There’s a lot of work to be done in that arena.”* During this period of extensive criticism and the need to modernise, (as identified by the Fire Service Inspectorate) there were genuine attempts by Chief Fire Officers to prioritise the issues. Modernisation was seen as a chance to change hearts and minds and re-build trust that had been lost over the years by introducing new

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supportive structures.

Chief Fire Officer Turner: *“My own view is that it’s all about obtaining the skills, setting the standard and certifying the skills, and then being paid accordingly for the skills you have got. I also think it has to be recognised that you ought to be able to move through the ranks more quickly if you’re talented, qualified and want to”* (Turner, 2001:22). He was also confident that Chief Officers generally were more willing than ever to share best practice with others and move the service forward.

Chief Fire Officer Bull, President of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (Bull, October 2001:10) carries on this theme of moving the service forward and talked about the report of the Training Strategy Group by the Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council in 1994. This group had made 78 recommendations on the training and development needs of fire service personnel. He defended the slow progress being made due to the complexity of the work and the setting up of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). The main purpose of the IPDS is personnel and organisational development linked to the fire service’s vocational qualifications and role maps for the various rank responsibilities. Bull admits there is a great deal of work to be done and that some fire authorities continue to work in isolation and that progress varies enormously. The need for this national strategy, recognised by Bull, is becoming paramount if the fire service’s goal of consistent measurable standards is ever to be achieved.

In a further article by Bull in the December 2001 issue of the Fire Magazine entitled “Right Rate for the Job” he argues that the pay for a firefighter is too low considering the expansion of the skills requirement over the last few years (Bull, December 2001:8).

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This remuneration issue identified by Bull was indeed playing a major role and responsible for preventing the modernisation and personal development within flexible working patterns that the government and local authority employers required. This was just what the representative bodies wanted to hear as they had argued consistently for the full value of their members' skills to be recognised and appreciated before any further modernisation or new working practices took place. Bull's comments, whilst said with the best of intentions, ensured the Fire Brigades Union stance would be one of no more modernisation until the pay issue is settled. The history of conflict, confrontation and resistance to change was still very evident and yet another battleground on which to tear each other apart was emerging.

3.23 Commitment to Cultural Change

The Equal Opportunities Task Group of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council produced a second document on cultural change with 28 action points for either implementation or consideration (Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, December 2001). The fire service as a whole was being asked to look at its organisational culture and how this has to change to reflect society as it is – not as it was. This was to ensure policy and practice conformed to the new realities. This document appeared on the scene amidst a plethora of such writings and its importance, reading and even application has still not been fully appreciated. The traditional view of a fire service in the UK was being challenged from within, not in an isolated fashion but the very essence of what constitutes a “brigade.” The term brigade in the document was considered inappropriate as too the priority of rank over role, separate facilities for

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officers, the style of uniform, barracks style working and sleeping arrangements, roll calls, recruit passing out parades, mess dinners, the culture of physique and endurance and the use of discipline regulations. In fact everything the service once thought of as accepted practice, behaviour and ritual was now under scrutiny and part of the modernisation programme.

The Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association is a partner within this change programme and as such recognises the problems that lie ahead. In their corporate strategy for 2001 to 2005, (Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Association, 2001:1) they make this statement: *“The Association is strongly placed at this time to make a major contribution to the future of the fire service. The service is undergoing considerable change in what it does on behalf of the communities: in the way it operates within communities; and in its employment values and practices. Change of this magnitude and nature requires leadership of the highest order and the Association has a significant role to play in supporting and assisting Principal Officers to fulfill their leadership responsibilities for the benefit of the fire service and society as a whole.”*

This was fine rhetoric by those who can implement change but they fail in a number of areas to communicate why change is necessary, the type of change that is coming and the manner in which it is coming. It is of little wonder that the Fire Brigades Union felt they were passive partners in this process and they began a campaign of non-cooperation until security and higher pay for their members has been agreed. The real failure of the British Fire Service is not one of failing to change, it is a failure to communicate the whole picture, failure to explain the reasons for change and failure to argue that change does not necessarily mean the service has failed in the past.

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Divisional Officer James, writing on cultural change and the role of education and learning (James, 2002) mentions a report written in the 1980s' stating that British managers have far less formal higher educational qualifications than their counterparts in other countries. James then argues the problem is exacerbated in the fire service due to a recruit selection process that only employs persons on their suitability to become firefighters – nothing else. James then re-phrases the question from “*How can the number of managers with qualifications be increased?*” to “*Are the consumers needs being met by managers with academic qualifications?*” (2002:29-30). He suggests academic qualifications are only of real value if coupled with practical application and application of knowledge in the working environment. He then makes a valid point by saying little thought has been given as to which particular degree, if any, would be of most value to a future chief officer, “*or is it merely the intellectual training of acquiring a degree that is relevant?*” Related to this is the issue of the fire service accepted management/leadership stereotype model that provides only a narrow approach without exposure to different management/leadership models. James describes this as part of cultural change in the service and asks another poignant question: “*We have to decide what it is we are trying to change?*” He goes on to say: “*Brigades must develop substantial career development and progression policies. Academic courses must be linked to “development for role” and brigade human resource planning strategies. Academic study must be applied in the workplace and individually recognised as a development opportunity. The emphasis must be focussed towards development outcomes*” (2002:28-29). He further argues that experience in the workplace is a more important source of development than the traditional fire service training course. Some

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extremely important observations are made in this article. Workplace experience is indeed a powerful development tool but only if the individual through academic awareness appreciates the experience and is in a position to convert the understanding and reflections into more informed high quality decisions in the future.

3.24 The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS)

The ethos behind the IPDS is simple, a step by step process where an individual can take responsibility for development within a role and link it to promotion at a higher level and role. This system is the culmination of eight years work in an attempt to change the culture of “train me” to one of greater responsibility by the individual towards development. The impetus for the work came from the Joint Training Strategy Group Report of 1994 (Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council, 1994).

The implementation of the IPDS has been described as: *“The largest single change in the way we develop and manage our staff in the history of the UK fire service. It is the key element in making sure the modernisation agenda becomes an integral part of the expectations of every individual within the service”* (Doyle, 2002: document pages not numbered).

At the same time a circular from the Fire Policy Division of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister gave a progress report on the IPDS and confirms formal endorsement and approval by the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council from the 16th October 2001 (Fire Service Circular 9/2002). An implementation date of the 1st April 2003 was agreed between all the parties developing the system and in their own words this will be *“the start of the roll out”* and a gradual process of managed change over a number of years

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rather than a “*big bang*.” Concerns are already being expressed about the long-term resource implications for local implementation and the lack of central resources available to the “key players” undertaking the IPDS pilot work, as these officers have their own substantial day jobs within their own brigades. The IPDS is a huge attempt by the service to manage change themselves before “it is done to them” but the lack of funding is once again becoming all too apparent. IPDS will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

3.25 Fire Service Funding

The way the fire service is funded has been detailed in 2.12 but this outdated method, subject of countless reports, was once again brought to prominence by the incoming President, Mr. Jef Ord, of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association in June 2002. Ord said that the Fire Service Expenditure Forecasting Group had concluded that in 2002 the real gap in the revenue funding was a staggering £156 million, a shortfall of just over 10% (Ord, 2002:news comment page). This lack of investment in the fire service has been one of the few constants since the 1947 Fire Services Act and possibly the real culprit for the present day problems. With the service having to live within inadequate budgets, it has to accept a reduced vision of expectations and reforms and what can be achieved under the circumstances. The technical role and skill levels of the service are expanding, especially with the threat of more terrorist attacks since the New York World Trade Centre destruction on September 11th 2001. There is also the increasing burden of flood relief work and road traffic accidents that the service regards as its moral duty to perform but receives no funding for.

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A general apathy and lack of interest therefore greeted the IPDS initiative introduced in 2002. Along with the funding problems, another potentially greater issue clouded the horizon in 2002 – a demand from the Fire Brigades Union for increases in the level of pay for the work the service is already doing.

3.26 The Fire Service Pay Dispute and Strikes of 2002 and 2003

At the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) annual conference at Bridlington on May 15th 2002, a vote was carried for a pay demand with the annual salary of a firefighter to be increased to £30,000, a rise of 39.3%. The employers claimed this would cost them an extra £450 million per year and refused to consider this and furthermore they said any increase must be linked to modernisation. Mr. Gilchrist, the General Secretary of the FBU, refuted this and argued that the salary increases were underpinned by the principle you cannot have a modern fire service if you do not have a skilled, motivated and well paid workforce. A report commissioned by the FBU by Cap Gemini Ernst and Young on the costs to the UK economy regards fire, flood and road traffic accidents claim a well paid modern fire service could deliver savings of over three billion pounds. This is cited by the FBU as justification for a well-paid modern service with firefighters being paid £30,000 a year. Statistics show that since 1980 the number of emergency calls have increased by 80% and the pay formula, agreed after the last national strike in 1977, was indeed falling behind what other comparative skilled workers are receiving. Yet the employers sought greater productivity and modernisation for a pay rise, but at a level well below the £30,000. The employers have yet again given the FBU “evidence” they are uncaring and ready to dismantle all the “hard won gains” the FBU have made over

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pay and conditions over the years. This adversarial/confrontation stance then took centre stage and in November 2002 the first of a series of strikes took place with the armed forces taking over firefighting duties using fifty-year-old “green goddess” fire engines. Further comment on the strikes and the setting up of yet another independent review by the government on the fire service, this one called: “The Agenda to Deliver a Modern Fire Service” can be found in Chapter Five (5.3).

3.27 Conclusion

The historical perspective and the fire service literature review have provided an insight into the problems surrounding fire service culture and professional development. It is only by identifying the many interlocking issues that affect individual development can the delivery of a modern fire service be achieved. A balanced methodology providing an examination of the people and practices of the British Fire Service together with comparative studies and the wider development issues is the next step in this process to produce a way forward.

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4.1 Introduction

Having identified the key questions in 1.3 with which to investigate fire service culture and professional development, the question of how to collect, process and analyse the data became the next focus. If this is not managed as a process, it may lead to unclear writing and expression and in this context, the order of the chapters and their contents needs to be considered as an implicit method in its own right. The order and composition of the material within the chapters should also provide a coherent presentation and illumination of the subject matter and the methodology needs to reflect this thinking. This chapter begins with the general methodological considerations, their suitability and range over a number of circumstances and concludes with a description of the chosen methods.

4.2 General Methodological Considerations

The methods of enquiry over a four-year research period can involve many modifications and decisions as the work progresses. Before a decision was made on the chosen methods therefore, the author had to make a variety of judgements and considerations. A cornerstone of this strategy was the keeping of a “study diary” for the full duration of the research. This strategy included a number of reports sent to the author’s brigade so that the study became a form of “action research” enabling issues to be addressed accordingly. This process allows not only reflection on various courses of action and adaptation of strategies, it enables others to become part of the “insider research” process by appreciating how problems were overcome during the study. This is documented on page 126 entitled “Natural History of the Study.”

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It is difficult to quantify work experiences, beliefs, understandings, and motivation of individuals in a fire service environment, yet the research methodology and methods must be aware of this and take account of these human factors. In parallel to this, the structures, strategies and the reasons why certain processes have become accepted practice also need to be explored. This investigation must include observations, interviews, study of literature, comparative studies, the integration of data from diverse sources and evaluation of this information whilst recognising the potential inherent biases of an “insider researcher.” The difference in the philosophies, perspectives and instruments of qualitative and quantitative methods must also be considered so that the study of professional development provides significant findings and becomes better understood. It is essential therefore, that the phenomenon under scrutiny has a methodology capable of meeting the aims and stated objectives of the research. The explanations must not only advance what is already known, they must allow others to understand the essence of what is being studied and appreciate the truth of that account. To explain a phenomenon is to account for what happens or happened. The methodology and the chosen methods are fundamental to this analysis including any relationship there may be between each of the research areas.

The methodology chosen for the research is qualitative but within the study there are:

- Quantitative measures of population samples to determine if there are any significant differences or relationships between set questions between different groupings.
- Statistical analysis of the number of emergency calls between fire stations in order to determine a station profile. This includes an individual value for the personnel allocated to that station to assist in professional development strategies

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4.3 Range and Circumstances of Qualitative Methodologies

In order to conduct research into the issues of culture and professional development in the fire service, an understanding of the complexities of the human factor must be a prime requirement. Issues such as rank, politics, myths, beliefs and values all have to be investigated from within rather than through an analysis that compiles mainly statistical data as in quantitative research. Qualitative research is about allowing matters to unfold naturally through probing whilst still maintaining focus and structure. This involves a combination of the analysis of words and images and the preference for naturally occurring data. This has been described as: *“The preference for meanings rather than behaviour and attempting to document the world from the point of view of the people studied”* (Hammersley, 1992:165). This process indicates a preference for hypothesis-generating approach rather than a hypothesis-testing one (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Observation is one of the key methods when conducting research involving human situations and can range between full participant to non-participant observation (Denzin, 1970). Participant observation usually involves an in-depth and extensive examination of the phenomena being investigated. Whilst this means the researcher becoming involved with those being researched, the researcher should still remain as detached as possible from those being observed so as not to influence the outcome (Jorgensen, 1989). A complete participant does not reveal his or her identity and a participant observer is one where both the observer and the observed are aware of the research project. An observer as participant usually involves surveys and one-visit interviews and a complete observer does not participate directly in the phenomena under observation (Loftland, 1995). Observation is a cornerstone of qualitative studies and essential for

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confirming research using several techniques (Patton, 1990). Observation is deemed to be one of the more important checks and controls when conducting fieldwork (Whyte, 1984). Observation supports triangulation with the use of multiple reference points to establish a correct diagnosis and confirms the validity of information obtained through interviews and questionnaires. This validation of data through observation makes explicit what is implicit and can often bring to light what is often taken for granted. Some people may find it difficult to describe in sufficient detail or verbalise the reasons for their particular actions and if the observer participates in the event this helps the researcher to understand how others make sense of the world around them, as noted by Smircich (Smircich, 1983). This method is particularly appropriate for environments (such as the fire service) that have traditions, jargon, symbolism, uniform, humour and a characteristic way of doing things (Jones, 1996).

Another primary qualitative technique suitable for a fire service environment is interviewing. This method can yield valuable information about behaviour, actions, activities and experiences (Spradley, 1979). Individuals may be questioned directly about an event the researcher observes or about events not witnessed. Most people in the fire service can tell stories to describe things that have happened and some individuals are more knowledgeable and/or articulate, whilst others are known for their use of jargon. Discovering who is the expert about a particular matter and who performs well in other arenas is one of the essential steps towards interpretation of meanings for the researcher. Interviews, as with observations can take different forms (Burgess, 1984) but follow three main forms: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. These interviews can be recognised by a number of styles from the very formal to the informal, which

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have the appearance of a discussion rather than formal question and answers. The researcher may have a range of topics, themes or issues rather than a structured list of questions or the interaction itself may generate the data. Interviews, whatever their style, can be one-to-one or with groups, both large and small.

The rationale for using qualitative interviews must follow accepted practice and principles in the realisation that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions of fire service life are genuine properties of the research question. The use of interviews is a legitimate method to generate data by listening and talking to people to gain access to their views, perceptions and understanding. Answers to the research questions lie in the depth and complexity of this data rather than in the answers to surface patterns that broad surveys provide (Mason, 1996). The researcher is not a passive collector of data but active and reflexive in this process of data generation, which may not be available in any other form. Qualitative interviewing provides further support for triangulation and there is also the belief that by giving interviewees more freedom, this in itself will generate a better and fuller insight into the research questions.

The analysis of documents is another appropriate method to answer the fire service research questions. Fire service documents include Acts of Parliament, Legislation, Fire Service Circulars, Technical Bulletins, Minutes from Meetings, Technical Advice, Standing Orders, Annual Reports, Home Office Circulars and Published Articles.

The justification for the analysis and use of specific document in the research is that:

- The documents and records are all meaningful constituents of the research questions.
- They are an expression or representation of the "fire brigade way of doing things."

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- They provide interpretations of the fire service's culture.
- Data on aspects of the research question may not be available in any other form.
- The documents and records can be used alongside the observations and interviews to validate the data collection.
- Looking at the available documentation on the fire service's past and current working practices can determine a suitable future direction.
- When working on an intellectual puzzle, it is reasonable to consider all the evidence available.

The methods of observations, interviews and the study of documents in the methodology is justified in the research by the recognition of three factors:

- a) They are valid because they are helping to identify and investigate the research questions.
- b) The accuracy of the data and the variation and triangulation of its production using different research instruments ensures greater reliability.
- c) The issue of generalisability may be a problem and an unavoidable aspect but nevertheless, the research can still make the claim that the fire service investigation on culture and professional development using different methods, principles, logic and analysis answers questions on specific issues from a broad approach.

4.4 Advantages of using Specific Qualitative Methods

The choice between using different research methods should depend on what the researcher is trying to find out. The research into fire service professional career development is about exploring a person's life history and everyday behaviour.

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Qualitative methods therefore, are the appropriate choice as quantitative methods are the ones that can only have values on a statistical basis. Qualitative data is more concerned with the words individuals use to describe, value and qualify experiences and Miles describes this as an attractive nuisance (Miles, 1979). This description is supported by Robson who found that the expression and meaning found in words is the most common form of qualitative data and a specialty of humans and their organisations. Whilst Robson admits there are no clear and accepted conventions for analysis, as can be found with quantitative data, he argues that many qualitative workers would resist such a development (Robson, 1993). If there are no standard tools to analyse data collected by interviews, questionnaires, discussions, observations and study of documents, does this mean systematic enquiry is not possible? Qualitative researchers argue that it is possible, however it means individuals are responsible for developing their own analytical frameworks to search their data for insights, truths and reality. This can place great reliance on qualitative methods, so should we believe the results of qualitative research? To answer this, researchers using qualitative data argue that it only takes a clue from a single incident noted by a perceptive researcher to understand the phenomenon more clearly. If the researcher becomes aware of this implication at the moment that he/she can still exploit the data already collected, the quality of the conclusions will be greatly enriched. Qualitative research is all about immersing oneself in naturally occurring events in order to gain first hand knowledge of the situation.

Participant Observation seems like an ideal medium for the fire service research and Douglas describes it thus: *“There is no way of getting at the social meanings from which one either implicitly or explicitly infers the larger patterns, except through some form of*

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communication with the members of that society or group; and, to be valid and reliable, any such communication with the members presupposes an understanding of their language, their uses of that language, their own understandings of what the people during observations are up to, and so on almost endlessly” (Douglas, 1971:9).

This study of the symbolic in organisations implies an anthropological approach and involves questions such as to where to look for meanings and how to document behaviour and settings. Jones supports this approach, particularly the work of an insider researcher who is capable of recognising this symbolic behaviour as performance within an organisational culture (Jones, 1996). Qualitative methods are very much suited to this symbolic interpretative approach where the researcher attempts to gain an “insiders view” of organisational life and experiencing the situations in which the members are immersed. Schwartzman advocates that understanding naturally evolves as people talk about their work experiences and perceptions (Schwartzman, 1993). Santino argues that this understanding is essential including the way “*stories*” are used to describe relationships between subordinates, supervisors, managers, situations and interpersonal problems. Stories are an effective method for gaining information and he goes on to say that group interviews on a particular topic (focus groups) is another effective method for eliciting information on attitudes, perceptions, management philosophy and procedures (Santino, 1978:37). In the fire service, the bulk of the work is performed in the specific locations of fire stations and emergency incidents - all remote locations away from the central core of the organisation. This inevitably produces distinct customs and cultures that consequently provide the ideal situations to observe the symbolic behaviour and to question the reasons for the processes observed. Breaks during the working shift are

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other valuable sources for information and have been described as “*theatre for performances*” (Stanley, 1977:1-11). Story telling during these breaks, prankish behaviour and being invited to participate often “*symbolises social acceptance within a group*” (Henry, 1988:141). This concept of separate domains (sections remote from the core) within organisations provides the qualitative researcher with vast amounts of data and it is only by research from within that one can begin to understand the repertoire of organisational behaviour. This may raise verification issues and discrepancies with the data for some researchers but for others: “*it is an example of meaning through symbolic expression*” (Van Maanen, 1983:45). The decorating of offices with posters, photos, policy statements, momentos, certificates, cartoon jokes, etc. all send out powerful messages and communicate sentiments, emotions, attitudes about work, attitudes regarding others, relationships and the roles individuals have. These are all legitimate research data for the specific qualitative methods within a fire service environment.

4.5 Potential Problems

- The reasoning and justification for using specific methods depend on the advantages and limitations of each method as suggested by Mason in the following list (Mason, 1996):
- What can each method yield in relation to the research questions?
- Which parts of the puzzle do they help address?
- How do the different methods feed into each other?
- How do they integrate logistically as well as intellectually?
- Can the research achieve what it set out to do?

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- How will the researcher derive data from each method, literally, interpretively and reflexively?

Due regard needs to be taken of the above in establishing a methodology for the research. It is essential to remember that the process will not be a clear-cut sequence of procedures but a series of messy interactions between the conceptual and empirical world. The fire service with its traditions, values, beliefs and culture can impede the process and distort the realities of changing circumstances. Researchers can very often influence the behaviour of their selected subjects: *“While researchers attend to the study of other persons and their activities, these others attend to the study of researchers and their activities”* (Van Maanan, 1991:31). The thrust of ethnomethodology and interactionism thus becomes clearer - the researcher can never ignore the interactional features of his/her own conduct and because of this it is possible different researchers may produce different findings (Fieldman, 1967). Fieldworkers are often viewed as symbols, and symbolism evokes emotions, influences actions and affects perceptions and beliefs (Jones, 1996). Hammersley argues that qualitative research by its very nature can often leave it open to criticism and he identifies this as a list of preferences (Hammersley, 1992:165):

- Analysis of words and images rather than numbers.
- Observation rather than experiment with unstructured rather than structured interviews.
- The attempt to document the world from the point of view of the people being studied.
- The rejection of natural science as a model.

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- The preference for inductive, hypothesis generating research rather than hypothesis testing.

The qualitative researcher, to ensure reliability of the observations must confront all of the issues raised by Mason and Hammersley from the supposition of the quantitative research tradition, in what they call the “positivist position.” This quantitative standpoint is one which sees no difference between the natural and social worlds (Mason, 1996). Conversely, it can be argued that once social reality is treated as always being in flux, it makes no sense to worry if the research instruments measure the phenomenon accurately. There is also the problem of “anecdotalism.” This anecdotalism can undermine the validity of qualitative research, due [in main] to the researcher not making any real attempt to deal with conflicting and contrary cases (Bryman, 1988). There is also the issue of the research providing only a few examples of some apparent phenomenon without any real attempt to analyse the less clear or contradictory data (Silverman, 1993).

Potential problems may also relate to one of evaluation by not confirming that the methods are appropriate to the nature of the questions being asked. This includes the adequacy on how themes and concepts are derived from the data. There must also be clear distinctions between the data, its interpretation and analysis. These problems, having taken account of the possible problems highlighted by other researchers, can now be summarised:

- Uniform and rank markings may well affect the data gathering. Firefighters may say what they think the researcher wants them to say and senior officers may feel exposed and vulnerable and become less than truthful with their answers.

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- Consider how you as a person and the role of the researcher are being viewed through the eyes of the people you are studying.
- Always reflect on the process so that you are aware that some people can and do perceive things differently. Personal involvement with the issues without this reflection may also result in unintentional bias by the researcher.
- You must be able to justify your chosen methods and the reasons why certain questions are being asked. It is important to remember that the people you are questioning are the “experts” on the subject matter.
- It is always useful to confirm with the subjects if there is any aspect of the research not covered; otherwise, the data gathering may not be complete.
- To ensure the qualitative process is as thorough as possible, the research methodology needs a mix of methods. This mix could include interviews, discussions, observations, experiences, examination of documents and a literature review.
- The work experiences of people in organisations tell us there is always more than one answer, approach or perspective to problems and a qualitative researcher can make use of this data using a variety of methods to test the hypothesis.
- The role of the researcher needs to be confirmed in relation to ethnography. The author’s involvement with the fire service ensures an appreciation of this problem, by being both a witness and a participant.
- Manual analysis of the data may be preferable to using a computer - a computer is merely a tool and the manual method allows you to really get to “know” your data. (The author chose this method, using pen and paper for all the fieldwork activities.)

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4.6 The Ethical Dimension

A number of issues also had to be recognised and guarded against during the fire service research. Ethical codes have been developed by the British Sociological Association for sociologists working in a wide variety of settings, competing obligations, conflicts of interests and any legal dilemmas (British Sociological Association, 1996). These are:

- To safeguard the interests of those involved in or affected by the research work.
- A requirement to report findings truthfully and accurately.
- Consideration of the effects their research or involvement may have, including the consequence of their work or its misuse for the subjects or other interested parties.
- Ensuring that the physical, social and psychological well being of the research participants is not being adversely affected by the research.
- Studying people without their knowledge or consent should not be undertaken unless there is no other way of obtaining the essential data. Ideally post-hoc consent should be gained.
- Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity given to the research participants must be honoured. Personal information should remain confidential.
- A common interest exists between sponsor, funder and sociologist so long as the aim of the social enquiry is to advance knowledge.
- The relationship between sponsors and researchers should enable the research to be conducted as impartially as possible.
- Research should be undertaken with a view to providing information or explanation rather than being constrained to reach particular conclusions or prescribe particular courses of action.

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These ethical codes provide practical support for researchers and have been incorporated within this research. To safeguard the interests of interviewees, guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity will be given, together with an assurance the information will not be used out of context. Consent will be sought for all information gathered during the observations and the overriding aim of this research is to advance knowledge without bias. Cavan describes ethical behaviour this way: *“Ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect for human dignity leaves one ignorant of human nature”* (Cavan, 1977:810).

The research methodology for the fire service research needs to be examined therefore in its three principle areas and the further issue of covert research to ensure it is ethically sound.

1. Observation. Whilst covert observation may not be an issue with the fire service research due to the identity and involvement of the researcher, there may nevertheless be concerns with ethics if it is not conducted in an open and frank manner. Researchers from within organisations have responsibilities to colleagues by not doing something without prior agreement. If the researcher does not secure such an agreement this represents an invasion of privacy and may close the doors to further research. It also runs counter to the usual norm of empirical research by not building up relationships of trust with those being studied (Bulmer, 1982).

2. Interviews. Before beginning an interview the researcher must be clear about the process and operate to a set of principles. Working to a set of interview rules can

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alleviate some concerns and pre-planning is essential in all cases but the researcher must also be prepared for making decisions on the spot (Mason, 1996). The researcher must consider the type of questions being asked which could be about mistakes, trauma or illegal activities that could distress, worry, annoy or make the interviewee feel uncomfortable. The converse may also happen with the interviewee enjoying the experience and revealing more than they should. In all cases, confidentiality and anonymity should be guaranteed. High-ranking officers will be interviewed during the research and this raises the possibility of them controlling the interview and/or the type of questions being asked. It must also be understood that whilst the interviewee may have consented to the interview they need to be aware of how the information will be used, analysed and interpreted and how you as the interviewer may make comparisons between other interviewees. There is also the ethical dilemma of using information that may be gathered about third parties during an interview without that person's consent or knowledge. Another consideration is whether the interviewees share your perception on what counts as data during the interview such as a person's body language, pauses and general demeanour.

3. Documents and Literature. The ethical issue may appear less important when researching the written word but nevertheless it is still an issue. Documents may be confidential and others may require consent before study or reproduction. Numerous documents in the fire service are for selected readership only and deal with specific areas of a problem without general consultation, use of this material may embarrass the writer if used in the context of completed research or as an academic example. Issues of copyright need to be resolved and the using of another person's work as your own

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without due acknowledgement is plagiarism. It is also important not to use selected quotations out of context or mis-represent the original meaning in order to justify an argument. At all times a code of ethical practice must be accepted and adhered to. This includes respect for the fire service traditions, beliefs, values and culture along with the legal framework and the rights to information and compliance with data protection legislation that the fire service operates to.

Covert research. This would appear not to be an issue with all the research to be conducted in an open and frank manner but one researcher argues that covert research can be a revealing method when one is searching for the truth (Douglas, 1976). Researchers have developed a principle of voluntary consent after the Nuremberg trials of the Second World War. At Nuremberg, Nazi Germans were charged with performing brutal medical experiments on people without their consent and this extreme example confirms that the ethics of research must always be considered.

Another researcher identifies this conflict between covert and overt research (Bulmer, 1982:250-251) and this can now be summarised:

The rights of subjects override the rights of science even if this means that some research may not be possible. Anonymity and confidentiality are necessary but not without sufficient safeguards for the subjects of research because social scientists cannot predict the consequences that will follow from their publications. Covert observation is in general harmful, not only to the subjects of research but to sociologists and sociology as an activity. The need for covert methods is often considerably exaggerated and more attention should be paid to the “overt insider” as becoming a recognised insider may provide good research access. A “covert outsider” is less reprehensible than the “covert

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insider” masquerading as a true participant. Sociologists have responsibilities to the subjects of research and sociologists are not the only judges of what constitutes ethical behaviour, constructive criticism and advice from non-sociologists are worth listening to. The sociologist should seek guidance from the ethical codes of professional associations before embarking upon the use of a research method that may be unethical and unnecessary. These principles from Bulmer have been incorporated into the research methodology and do not conflict with any of the methods designed to answer the research questions.

4.7 Qualitative Research Overview

Qualitative research deals with the interactions of humans and their behaviour, which is different from quantitative research where specifics are being measured. Much research though combines both methodologies and qualitative research, due to its nature, demands safeguards with the data analysis and presentation of findings. The crux of the problem with qualitative research is therefore the relationship between theory and practice, and how this is interpreted. Basic rules are required so that the researcher has a reference point, not only during the research, but also at the conclusion. Mason, in his book entitled “*Qualitative Researching*” (Mason, 1996), these basic rules are paraphrased and due account will be taken of them during the research. These basic rules require the researcher to produce good quality research with effective explanations and to anticipate how others may use the research and the explanations. The researcher must also be clear about his/her responsibilities in respect of the data analysis with a need to act in the spirit of the consent received to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

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4.8 Range and Circumstances of Quantitative Methods

Having established the qualitative aspect of the research with a hypothesis generating research methodology, quantitative statistical research then becomes a measure to test the hypothesis using a variety of variables. This strategy will identify any statistical relationships, thus providing a greater understanding of the subject matter. The aim of quantitative methods within this research is to collate statistics in specific areas and provide insights by the use of numbers. This data will be described and analysed with conclusions drawn from it. For nearly all-practical purposes, there are only two different types of measurement:

- a) Score/numerical measurement with the assignment of a numerical value to a measurement.
- b) Nominal/category measurement and the decision as to which category of a variable a particular case belongs to.

These concepts are in the form of pre-defined variables using statistical analysis conventions seeking to establish relationships between the variables and to make predictions. Such findings are independent of the context. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are not in opposition to each other and a combination of both methods helps to ensure consistency, reliability and validity of the findings in the research process.

4.9 The Quantitative Aspect of the Study

Humberside Fire Brigade, due to it being the author's brigade and one of median size in the British Fire Service, has been chosen for the quantitative aspect of the study. This study relates to five areas:

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- a) The expectation of trainee firefighters before any formal training takes place.
- b) How “experienced” firefighters score in relation to the trainee firefighter expectations.
- c) How the Humberside Fire Brigade regenerates its human resources over an extended time period.
- d) A demonstration of how operational incident data can produce station profiles.
- e) The use of operational incident data to produce individual officer profiles.

It is possible to have an underlying hypothesis with “hunches and guesses” at the pre-empirical stage but this must lead to a formal process during the empirical stage. One researcher (Punch, 1998), states that this process involves the questions of design, data analysis and the testing of a hypothesis. This can be achieved through pre-specified research questions, a tightly structured design and pre-structured data. For example, the quantitative survey questions developed for the trainee firefighter meets the above criteria with the information being collected to answer specific areas of concern. The design of the survey questions is a combination of ordinal and nominal data developed from the literature review. Robson has described this analysis by survey as an attempt to portray an accurate profile of persons, events and situations (Robson, 1999). The rationale for the data collection is to visit the trainees on the first evening of their residential course so as to ascertain their perceptions of a fire service career before internal conditions, such as the fire brigade way of doing things, influences their answers. The forms will be given to each trainee for them to complete whilst each question is read out to them; this will be undertaken in the residential training school classroom. The data will have values so that statistical analysis can take place. A total of

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50 individuals will undertake the survey over a period of eighteen months. The same questions will then be used on a sample of the same trainees (20 in total) after 12 months service at a fire station to assess any change. This in-built longitudinal design enables some conclusions to be drawn about the influences and variables at work. For example:

- Does age make a difference?
- Does the environment or workplace make a difference?
- What other combinations and influences are at work?

The survey will then be used on a sample of experienced firefighters remote from the training process. The analyses, tests and statistical techniques on the various sample populations will ensure validity and consistency of the findings.

4.10 Choosing the Samples and Sample Size

Within the one-tier entry structure, every Chief Fire Officer has to start at the firefighter level rising through the ranks one rank at a time. Individual motivation is the prime mover during this process and each individual has his or her own plan and time-scales for remaining a firefighter, seeking promotion and how far up the “ladder” they wish to go. In Humberside Fire Brigade there are 500 wholetime firefighters supported by regular recruit intakes to cater for promotions and retirements. This is the identified population to sample career expectations. The recruit sample units have been identified as two trainee firefighter intakes making a total of 50 individuals. In determining this figure due account was taken of the power calculation (Bland, 1995) so that it has a good chance of determining any significant relationships between variables such as age

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to promotion for example. To investigate possible internal influences a 10% sample from the 500 wholetime firefighters (50 in total) who have been in the service for more than one year will be taken. A further sample of the 50 recruits in the original survey will also take place after they have been posted to the fire stations to determine any changes after the original survey. This sample will take account of the age bands and involve 40% of the previously surveyed individuals. The rationale for this (Pocock, et al. 1987) is that if the further study has limited statistical power by being too small, analysis of the sub-groups should be avoided. Before proceeding with the research method, answers to a series of questions need to be considered. These are the identification of the units of study and target population including any difficulties with access, confirmation of the sample size, the type of sample and whose approval will be required (Bowling, 1997:163). A final consideration will be the ethical dimension, as those being surveyed need to be reassured that confidentiality will not be breached (Moore, 1979). A reassurance will also be given that particular responses will not be used in isolation. The withholding of some information may also be necessary to avoid bias with the responses. An explanation to those involved of the reasons for the questions has to be considered and how the results will be analysed and presented is yet another consideration.

4.11 Tests and Analyses with the Quantitative Data

Presenting and analysing data often involves the understanding of complex processes. Tables and charts may be understood by simply looking at the statistic and/or describing the data. In most published research though, it is more efficient to use numerical indexes

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to describe the distribution of variables. This process has been described by Bowling and large amounts of data can be described accurately using just a few numerical indexes (Bowling, 1997). The first examination of the data will be a comparison between the mean, median and the mode. This will give different values of the central tendency when applied to the same set of scores. This will then lead on naturally to the standard deviation from the mean and related to this is the z score, which determines the number of standard deviations a particular score lies above or below the mean in a set of scores. This now becomes of great value in significance testing. These types of tests apply probability theory to confirm or reject a particular hypothesis.

A significance level of 0.05 is commonly used as an indicator of significant difference between variables with the null hypothesis stating that the person/object/thing belongs and the alternative hypothesis stating that the person/object/ thing does not belong. This now produces an interesting dilemma with the research. The qualitative data could lead a researcher to an expectation of a result; this could possibly be manipulated by selecting a significance level lower than 0.05 or higher than 0.05. This will replicate the expected result but would produce one of two types of error:

- Type I. Rejecting the null hypothesis when in fact it is true.
- Type II. Accepting the alternative hypothesis when in fact it is false.

This paradox now relates back to the sample size, as it is almost always possible to reject the null hypothesis with large sample sizes, conversely too small a sample may not demonstrate a real difference resulting in a type II error. *“In any normal distribution, half of the observations fall above the mean and half fall below. In any normal distribution, 68% of the observations fall within one standard deviation of the*

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mean. Half of these (34%) fall within one standard deviation above the mean, and the other 34% within one standard deviation below the mean. Another 27% of the observations fall between one and two standard deviations away from the mean. So 95% (68% plus 27%) fall within two standard deviations of the mean. In all, 99.7% of the observations fall within three standard deviations of the mean” (Moore, 1979: 173).

Being aware of the possible problems will help in the balanced judgements to be made during the tests and analyses. Further analysis could be determined by use of a scatterplot to identify a relationship or correlation and used in conjunction with the Pearson Correlation. Once again with this type of analysis, researchers need to be careful when interpreting the results. There may well be a relationship but it should not be assumed that one causes the other. The difficulty with any analysis lies in determining the correct test and what is appropriate under the circumstances. As knowledge of the methods increase, amendments can be made so that correct interpretations can be made. Providing the data shows no obvious contradictions, such as the presence of outliers, marked skewness or great disparity of variances, the t-test should be used (Howell, 1997).

4.12 Justification of the Statistical Techniques in Relation to the Study

The research questions have developed from the research parameters so it is logical therefore to develop methods from the questions. The initial statistical techniques chosen in any research inevitably evolve as the study progresses and further answers are required. This does not necessarily mean tests will increase, indeed it is argued (Gardner & Altman, 1996) that an over emphasis on hypothesis testing and the use of P values

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can cast doubt on their credibility. This, together with an increase in statistical testing increases the risk of a type I error. Atkins and Jarrett make this very point. They state that there are many examples of research studies in which statistical tests have been applied inappropriately with incorrect assumptions as to the level of data and normal distribution (Irvine, et al. 1979). Other authors argue there is no such thing as a decision tree that will automatically lead the investigator to the correct choice of a statistical test in all circumstances (Kinnear & Gray, 2000). It is therefore of paramount importance to reflect upon the aims of the research and make a thorough exploration of one's data before making any decision on the type of statistical test. The justification for the quantitative statistical analysis within the research methodology is that it adds depth to the study with an ability to draw conclusions from the data. It will not only confirm that the findings are correct, but that they could be replicated if the study was repeated in the same manner.

4.13 Chosen Research Methods used in the Study

The qualitative methodology supported by a number of quantitative applications provides balance for the "methods of enquiry" into specific areas of the work of the fire service. The qualitative methods will bring a greater understanding of the everyday human interactions by examining the way in which the work is performed and how individuals relate and perceive their contribution to the organisation. The quantitative methods will apply a measure to these actions on a numerical basis to add depth to the study (Coolican, 1990). This combination approach is not in conflict as much research makes use of both methodologies. This not only ensures the research is worth doing, it

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tells you something you did not know before (Bassey, 1990). This places a duty upon all researchers to make sure their data and methods are accurate, clear and reliable, free from possible errors and subject to audit.

This chapter concludes with the eight methods chosen to answer the research questions:

Literature Research into the History of the Fire Service

The literature research into the history of the fire service and its early beginnings provides the initial framework in which to manage the research process and to develop an understanding of how and why these early values came to be. In order to answer the research questions it is necessary to comment on the history and traditions of the fire service and whether this history is affecting, preventing or slowing down the process of modernisation. These beliefs which the fire service calls its “culture” form the basis of nearly all decisions in the service of today. This culture which has been described as “the fire brigade way of doing things” has a tendency to become a “strait jacket” regards proposed change and nearly all change is viewed with suspicion. The reason for this suspicion is that it implants feelings of failure not consistent with feelings of pride from a traditional past. In the very early stages of the research, it became apparent that the history of the fire service must also include the earliest documented impressions of fire brigades in order to develop a baseline understanding of why things came to be. This understanding of early values would then help to place recent history and modern day decisions into perspective. Most of the research within this subject area took place at the Fire Service College library; Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire and the help of the library staff in searching their extensive archives was very much appreciated.

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Fire Service Literature Review

The literature review consists of an examination of legislation, Home Office Circulars, journals, books, policies, guidance, reviews, reports, surveys and comment from senior officials of the fire service. A number of choices on how to display this information resulted in a complete rewrite and approach. The initial plan was to examine the individual facets of professional development, the literature available on the subject and then move on to another facet. The problem with this method was that the jig saw pieces were either missing, already in place or disconnected from the whole picture. A decision was made to investigate the phenomena in a chronological manner, similar to the historical review. This method did produce a different picture to the one envisaged but it did provide the most trustworthy literature review journey. This journey of understanding provided answers to specific problems, previously misunderstood. One example was an answer as to the reasons for belligerence by the representative bodies on certain subjects. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) over the years has produced some excellent well researched documents on a whole range of fire service concerns and act in a way more characteristic of a professional body rather than that of a trade union. It is when the FBU having won previous hard fought battles (in their view) over conditions of service and other well-meaning persons, unaware of these linked historical events, challenge these conditions that conflict ensues and the FBU becomes “belligerent.” This totally confuses these well-meaning persons.

The fire service literature review is a critical study of the service’s activities and structures with comment by the author on the sometimes conflicting definitions and solutions to problems advocated by a number of authors.

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Literature Review and Fieldwork on Development Issues

A further literature review on the strategic issues and the wider development perspectives was undertaken. The fire service uses only specific forms of development and it is essential to identify other existing approaches to ascertain if what is known on the subject can be applied to the fire service. This part of the research used a variety of methods apart from a review of the literature. The fieldwork included visits to different organisations: A Christian charity, the Police Force and a training provider. This mix of organisations “brought to life” the subject matter and provided support for the Royal Navy and Australian Fire Service studies. The subject matter on professional development is indeed extensive and this may be the problem; generic solutions seldom work if applied holistically to the different sections of an organisation. A “tailor made approach” is the preferred way in the fire service because of the combined problems of a large geographical area with four Watches operating in each of the wholetime urban fire stations and retained fire stations operating in the rural areas. These problems may not just be physical problems; emotions and employer/employee relationships may be the real issue. The research was beginning to identify a number of other considerations and concerns such as the lack of an individual development profile linked to the fire station profile and the conflict between the culture of the fire service and accepted modern business practice. The fire service was not engaging its workforce in the development dialogue and this lack of involvement was a factor in the divisiveness between the wholetime and the retained. The discussions and observations with the employers and employees of these different organisations and being able to compare the findings to the fire service provided a good source of data for the research.

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Fieldwork with the Royal Navy

The traditions of the fire service emanate from the Royal Navy and this method had two research question strands:

- a) How are individuals developed?
- b) What makes the Royal Navy so successful in continually forming and re-forming different teams when they crew complicated warships?

The strategy to answer the above questions consisted of the following:

- Study of naval literature, procedures and standing orders.
- Semi-structured discussions with senior officers, junior officers and ratings.
- Visit to the Royal Britannia Naval College, Dartmouth.
- Visit to HMS Collingwood Training Establishment, Portsmouth.
- Visit to HMS Excellent Training Establishment, Portsmouth.
- Visit to HMS Raleigh Training Establishment, Plymouth.
- Visit to HMS Thunderer Training Establishment, Southampton.
- Visit to HMS Rooke Shore Base, Gibraltar.
- Visit to the warship HMS Exeter.
- Visit to the warship HMS Montrose.
- Visit to the warship HMS Sheffield.

The above strategy worked extremely well and provided good data for the research. The pre-conceived expectation that discipline in the navy is the main reason for high performance proved to be false. There was genuine pride at being part of the Royal Navy at whatever level. Traditions were not standing in the way of modernisation, in fact, tradition was often cited as the reason for continuity through the change processes

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and having to adapt to the present realities; both of these were considered normal. Observation and informal questioning was a key part in the information gathering process due in part to the openness and relaxed manner of the subjects. At no time did the author experience senior officers trying to explain or re-word answers given by the lower ranks. A verbal answer was often substantiated and proved to be correct by the inspection of evidence in the form of naval documents. The use of role markings was important to the navy, especially when groups of people come together to perform specific tasks. Officers had the respect of their subordinates because the system just does not allow poor performers to reach higher ranks. Individual confidence and confidence in others plays a healthy part in this process. Vocational qualifications are an important part of this development process for personnel undertaking tasks and these can eventually lead to promotion with access to degree courses.

Fieldwork with the British Fire Service

As expected, this area would generate a considerable amount of data and to manage the process it was necessary to catalogue the data into four distinct yet overlapping areas:

- Networking and Visits
- Observations.
- Interviews.
- Quantitative data gathering and analysis.

A good cross-section of officer contacts was established across a different range size of brigades (metropolitan and shire) throughout the country via email and brigade web sites. These contacts were established during December 2000 when the author was a

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guest speaker at a Research Event for senior fire professionals held at the Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire. Working with colleagues on similar interests and problems but on different studies generates a much greater appreciation of theoretical understanding. This has the added advantage of using these people as “sounding boards” for all manner of tangible and useful ideas. Once such contacts are established it becomes far easier to access brigade annual reports, strategic plans and investigation of working practices without having to travel many miles. This “email method” does have limitations, as it prevents face to face contacts and confirmation of the truthfulness of what has been said. Research opportunities may be lost by not being able to talk to others directly with different perspectives and those who perform different roles or are of a higher or lower rank.

Visits to these brigades occurred naturally through invitation and on the whole, they were a worthwhile relaxed experience. They were completely overt with participant observation, structured interviews with the senior officers and less formal interviews with the more junior ranks. All of the interviews became “conversations with a purpose” rather than question and answer sessions. The conduct of these interviews can be found in appendix 1. and includes the brigades visited. The interviews with the senior officers lasted two hours or even longer and a total of twenty took place. The twenty interviewees consisted of four chief fire officers, two deputy chief fire officers, four assistant chief fire officers, six divisional officers (grade one), and four divisional officers (grade three). The interviews with the junior ranks whilst intended to corroborate senior management perspectives, became much less formal with an emphasis on the attitudes and feelings they held. The ethical considerations previously

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discussed in this chapter played an important part and the researcher was extremely conscious of the fact that the fieldwork was conducted in an atmosphere of openness. It was also evident some brigades were better equipped than others when dealing with development issues, systems and people. It is for this reason that when the findings are discussed in Chapter Five, the officers from these brigades are not identified. This “gentle probing” during the fieldwork identified a generic condition present in all the visits – a lack of trust between sections and personnel, both vertical and horizontal, regards working practices and development issues. This was a strange paradox as it was in complete contrast to the openness previously referred to. The evidence suggested the individuals were blind to this. One reason for this blindness and lack of trust was that it was “part of the system” and therefore normal. Many names were given to this phenomenon but the most common name appeared as “accountability” with the word “audit” used as the solution. The quantitative data gathering and analysis strategy occurred in the author’s own brigade, Humberside Fire Brigade. The use of operational incident data to produce station profiles in the form of charts was undertaken to demonstrate how information such as this can be used as a tool to provide individual development plans for the station personnel. Similarly, the operational incident data can be interrogated to produce an individual officer profile confirming attendance and management at these emergency incidents and consequently, help identify any development needs.

Visits to the twenty retained (part time) fire stations in Humberside Fire Brigade took place to discuss feelings, attitudes and perceptions with the station personnel on how the brigade identified and delivered individual development needs. The process was once

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again participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted in mainly group settings. Comparison of the data between different retained stations provided a reliable crosscheck as to its reliability and validity. Once again a paradox became evident. Whilst there is no doubt the crews at these stations are highly motivated, mainly because they are responsible for the safety of the public and property in their own town or village, they do have an “axe to grind” on two issues. These are:

- a) The way the wholetime crews and officers perceive them as second rate.
- b) The manner in which they are professionally developed or as one person said, *“professionally ignored.”*

Due to the findings obtained during the retained fieldwork, it has been decided to include this aspect of the research within Chapter Six, “Comparative Studies.” This may seem strange considering they are part of the fire service, but there is a separate development issue to be confronted with retained personnel. Throughout the country the only commitment the retained have towards development is either a two hour or a three hour “training night.” This needs to be examined separately for adequacy.

Fieldwork with the Australian Fire Service

The possibility of an international study for a further comparative element became a reality with two visits, one in 2001 and the second in 2002. The network of British contacts provided the impetus and introductions to meet senior officers in a number of Australian Fire Brigades. Australian Fire Brigades are very large compared to their British counterparts and the fieldwork provided interesting insights into different solutions to similar problems.

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The brigades visited included:

- The Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade.
- The Victorian Country Fire Authority.
- The New South Wales Fire Brigades.
- The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.
- The Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia.

The fieldwork strategy during these visits was one of information gathering on how these large organisations approached career development. This process included discussions with senior officers and discussions with firefighters at the fire stations plus inspection of literature on the subject of professional development. It soon became apparent that the issues that concerned the British Fire Service were also those that concerned the Australian Fire Service but not to the same degree. The Australian approach was quite different; they dealt with the issues by an appropriate intervention introduced at an appropriate time and were not subject to endless debate with numerous changes to the original proposal in an attempt to satisfy all the parties concerned. From the author's point of view this was a unique experience, not only as to the way these issues were dealt with, but the actual research process. Whilst the issues were recognisable, the research was from the perspective of an "outsider researcher" not involved with the process and looking in as a neutral observer. There were fire stations, fire appliances, firefighters, similar shift patterns and working practices but the funding arrangements and philosophy ensured marked differences. There were different expectations within the ranks and roles, different attitudes and different response strategies to be observed once the "vener of similarities" had been removed.

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The international studies have added depth and different considerations to the study on professional development and enabled the research impetus to be maintained over the extended research period. These international studies continued upon return to the United Kingdom via the internet and email to confirm the interpretations from the fieldwork.

Natural History of the Study

Two decisions were made at the start of the research:

- a) The process should follow the principle of “action research” so that the author’s brigade could take advantage of the findings as and when they occurred.
- b) The whole process, the highs and the lows, needed to be documented so as to provide explanations for any changes to the research strategy once the study was underway.

The above approach developed into a separate method within the methodology and acted as a focal point at all times during the research, not only as confirmation of progress, but as early warning of problems so that changes could be considered and acted upon immediately. The way in which the natural history of the research was to be recorded became obvious:

- a) Regular written briefings to the Humberside Fire Brigade.
- b) The keeping of a study diary.

A total of twelve briefing reports were sent to the author’s brigade totaling 20,505 words. The titles of the reports are as follows:

- Ph.D. In Professional Development.

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- Operational Duty Systems and Procedures.
- The Introductions of Formal Procedures for a Change in Role.
- Internal Communication using the Brigade File Index.
- Reward Systems.
- Linked Research Strands.
- Militarism in the Fire Service.
- The Management of Change
- Research Update and Related Research Strands.
- Career Development – Management and Leadership.
- The use of Statistics with Personal Development Strategies.
- Expectations and Perceptions – Initial Trainees and Firefighters.

The writing of the reports proved to be of great value. Not only was the work proceeding, but feedback from senior officers became continuous during the whole of the research process. Theories could also be tested with this method as to their validity and depth of feeling on the subject matter.

The diary consists of one book of just over 13,000 words and two further books containing documents, memoranda, letters and other materials associated with the diary text. The keeping of a research diary further confirms the process of regular reviews and how this reflection adds to the cumulative knowledge which in turn assists with the study.

To conclude this natural history method, a selection of abridged reviews commenting on the activities recorded in the diary over various time periods and depicting a number of the highs and lows are reproduced.

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Winter 1998/9: *“After the early months of the work I feel apprehensive in continuing with the research as I am beginning to hit many unforeseen barriers, especially with the “culture” of the fire service. It was only when I discussed this with contacts from other brigades I knew research into this area was well overdue. My decision to link with a university was the correct one – I needed moral as well as academic support.”*

June 1999: *“ The last few months have been difficult. The brigade portrays a helpful image on the surface but seems to attach little importance to the work even though they have many projects underway investigating the very areas I am researching. I will not allow these frustrations to disillusion me and I have come to the conclusion I need to demonstrate the depth of my work. I am going to supply them with regular written briefings to bring my work into prominence.”*

September 1999: *“The brigade is now much more supportive, in fact they are asking my opinions on a number of issues and asking how they can support my work. 1999 has been very eventful and looking back I could very easily have given in. I now need to refine the research process in the coming months.”*

December 1999: *“I have now overcome my initial problems and feel I have a framework in place to really begin the research process. I am sure my problems are quite normal, the university is giving me total support and I am very happy with my supervisor relationship. The historical research into the core values and beliefs of the fire service has assisted me greatly in understanding the subject.”*

May 2000: *“My brigade is now working with me and my network of contacts with fellow professionals throughout the UK has increased and I am starting to enjoy the research. The workload is extensive but the Easter School at the university proved to be*

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very beneficial. Sometimes when you are working closely on research you have to “sell” what you are doing in order to explain your findings. What is obvious to you is not always obvious to others. I am looking forward to a challenging year ahead, my foundation is correct and I can build from this base.”

Autumn 2000: *“Upon reflection I am now approaching problems differently, in fact they are no longer problems, they are part of the process of research. I challenge issues more readily, listen to conflicting viewpoints and learn from them. My research path is now clear, it is not part of this research to describe the details of proposed development sessions but specify needs along career paths.”*

Spring 2001: *“This diary has been of immense value to me, it has helped me to focus on the unfolding issues and develop appropriate intervention strategies. My recent speech at the Fire Service College Research Event proved to be a great success and I have added greatly to my list of high level contacts in the fire service. My philosophy is that the solutions to one’s problems are often in the hands of those with the problems and “luck” should be considered as being prepared when opportunities present themselves.”*

June 2001: *“My father is dying of cancer and I am spending a lot of time at the hospital, consequently my research studies are suffering. I do not feel this will affect me in the long run as I am organised and the diary helps me to re-focus my energies.”*

July 2001: *“My son, a Royal Navy Officer, has been killed in a skydiving display. My father died in Hull on the same day of my son’s funeral in Southampton. I feel very guilty as I was not there at either of their deaths. I am writing this through tears, my wife and I are devastated and heartbroken. The only reason I am carrying on with the*

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Ph.D. is because of the many letters of support received especially from the University of Southampton where my son was studying for a degree. After reading the vast amount of work my son had written for his unfinished degree, I am determined to finish mine."

Early Spring 2002: *"My work is now back on schedule and I believe I can add constructive comment, new thinking, new knowledge and new applications for the benefit of the fire service. My supervisor fully supports me and we have formed a good friendship."*

March 2002: *"I am in total despair, I have just received a letter from Hull University telling me my supervisor, Dr. Ghazzali, is dead. I was just beginning to really get back into my work after the death of my son and father. Dr. Ghazzali gave me total support during this period and we had become very good friends. We enjoyed each other's company and I am going to miss him greatly. I now have to begin a new relationship with a new supervisor and try yet again to put stability back into my life."*

September 2002: *"A difficult period due mainly to pursuing lost credits allocated by Dr. Ghazzali, working with a new supervisor and losing data with a computer crash. On the plus side the compilation of the data into a comprehensive thesis, whilst being a difficult academic feat, is not beyond my new skill levels. This is due entirely to the academic rigours I have experienced at the university. I am becoming weary as I enter my fourth year of research but that is only to be expected. I am looking forward to completing the thesis as I know it will be of value to the British Fire Service."*

The last point is an appropriate time to curtail examples from the periodic reviews kept in conjunction with the study diary. The value of keeping a record of the natural history of extended research cannot be underestimated. Qualitative research looks at the

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meanings behind actions and why certain views are held, it is only correct therefore that the researcher, especially an insider researcher, reflects on the process from his/her point of view, perspective and bias. If any bias by the researcher is not explored or made explicit during the research process, personal values and expectations will affect the way in which the methodology is designed.

The Insider Researcher

The author joined the fire service in 1974 and it is therefore logical to presume influences during this period must affect the methodological judgements. It is also very easy to give more credence to some arguments and opinions and remember information that matches one's own expectations particularly when conducting interviews. This may be an involuntary response to how influential that person is, the rank they hold or the language and style they use. Selective examination of data that supports particular beliefs and only choosing certain evidence from published literature can also result in bias. Insider research is a very effective method in a balanced methodology and the author has used this knowledge to get to the very heart of the problems. Two researchers (Burgess, 1981 and Hutchinson, 1988) recommend the use of a diary to record personal feelings and reflections to transcend this personal bias. By being aware of possible bias and being self-critical, the role of insider researcher can be justified as a legitimate tool with this final method in the methodology chapter.

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the human interactions and perceptions held by the wholetime members of the British Fire Service and the prevailing culture that these viewpoints reflect. Two issues dominated during the fieldwork and these are commented upon first as a precursor to the main fieldwork in Section Two.

Section One:

1. The issues and events surrounding the introduction of the Integrated Personal Development System in 2002 and 2003.
2. The events surrounding the national strikes of 2002 and 2003 regarding remuneration and conditions of service.

Section Two:

3. Fieldwork on the views and perceptions held by trainee firefighters during their first twelve months of employment.
4. Fieldwork on the views and perceptions held by fire station personnel up to and including the rank of station officer.
5. Fieldwork on the views and perceptions held by the senior and principal officers of the British Fire Service.

The methodology chapter described the methods used during the study but not each and every reason for the changing programme of analysis that unfolded during the fieldwork. The study conducted over four years identified a number of issues requiring further research resulting in some development on the type of questions being asked and the conduct of observations. The fieldwork for the British Retained Fire Service is included in Chapter Six as a separate study but some comment is included in this

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chapter where appropriate. The historical perspective and literature review chapters provided the background for this process but all of the chapters contain comment from the fieldwork, thus facilitating a seamless conduit for the findings.

5.2 The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS)

The introduction of the IPDS, with a target date of April 2003, is the culmination of a ten-year development programme and will be a major cultural change for the fire service leading to a transformation in the way the service of the future will be structured and organised. The allocation of ranks within the new hierarchy will then become less important due to the use of “role mapping” intended to underpin the system. This mapping of roles extends beyond the ranks and includes:

- Recruitment.
- Initial training.
- The probation period of new firefighters.
- The standards of competence and methods of assessment required for each role.
- The procedures for individual and corporate development.
- The “fast tracking” of individuals displaying potential.
- The standardisation of training – both locally and nationally.
- Non-standard training and development for specific risks.
- Recording systems.
- The attainment of vocational awards.
- External validation.

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The changeover will be gradual and may take a number of years to fully implement. Much discussion and work still remains to modify the present systems in order to reflect the changes.

Vocational development, as confirmed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, is the cornerstone to the strategy: *“To achieve the necessary consistency of approach and application, the role maps are being used to develop a suite of National Occupational Standards within the national system for the award of NVQs [National Vocational Qualifications]. The fire service will adopt NVQs as part of an integrated training and qualification structure once this work has been completed”* (Fire Service Inspectorate, 2001:16). The background to this approach began in November 1993 when all the Chief Fire Officers and Firemasters received a draft copy of the Emergency Fire Services Lead Body Standards of Competence from the Fire Services Unit of the Home Office with a suggestion that they could be used in determining training objectives. In 1994, the Joint Training Committee (JTC) recommending a competence based approach, published an extensive report to training (Central Fire Brigade Advisory Council for England Wales and Scotland, 1994). In 1996, the Home Office issued a circular recommending acceptance of the proposals for a change to competency based training and the fire service NVQs (Fire Service Circular, 8/1996). A Standards Working Group (SWG) was then established by the Implementation Working Group (IWG), a sub-committee of the JTC, to develop the competence framework. In 1997, the IWG reported that the SWG had produced a document detailing such a competence framework linked to a performance management system for the fire service (Implementation Working Group, 1997). The IPG further reported that the long-term aim was to produce a single set of

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occupational standards for the fire service in which to measure performance and competency. The reasons for this was that the IWG considered that the NVQ structure, which was in being at that time, did not fully meet the needs of the service. The work undertaken by the IWG and the SWG was a move by the fire service to adopt a national training system incorporating a qualification structure and a career development plan within a performance management structure. The growth of “competence based training” in the fire service using NVQs as the qualification award during the period 1992 to 1999 can be illustrated by using the author’s own brigade.

HUMBERSIDE FIRE BRIGADE		
Type of NVQ	1992	1999
Coach Award	0	087
Assessor Award	0	245
Internal Verifier Award	0	081
Management Charter Initiative Award	0	041
Firefighter Award (includes NVQs in progress)	0	202

The Fire Brigades Union was lukewarm about their members undertaking competency based training (particularly NVQs) and would have preferred the status quo. This was due to the extensive training already taking place and figures produced by the Fire Service Inspectorate confirmed this. In 1992 this amounted to 17,750 training weeks at the Fire Service College, 30,000 weeks at Brigade Training Centres and 240,000 training weeks on the fire stations. The figures for the fire station training were calculated by using an average figure of two hours for each day/night duty estimated to be 140 days per annum resulting in 280 hours. Dividing the 280 hours by the 7 hour

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training day then produced a figure of 40 days. This 40 days was further divided by the working week of 5 days to produce 8 weeks. This figure of 8 weeks was then multiplied by an estimated figure of 30,000 Watch based personnel to produce the final figure of 240,000 weeks of training. Similar calculations were done for the Fire Service College and Brigade Training Centre figures. To alleviate the concerns of the Fire Brigades Union regular consultations took place and national officials of the union became members of the various groupings to devise the next stage of the strategy.

The Fire Service Circular “Training for Competence” was largely ignored by the service because many brigades viewed this as a training document rather than a dynamic change initiative. (Fire Service Circular, 15/1997). The IPDS became the natural successor to “competency based training” but the service was still experiencing problems with its terminology resulting from the decision in 1970 (Holroyd, 1970) to call education and development training (see 3.5). In September 2000, the Integrated Personal Development Working Group (IPDWG) was formed to develop the work of the SWG and to re-launch “*training for competence*” as “*personal and organisational development.*” The IPDWG formed four sub groups to move this work forward. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) at their annual conference in 2001 provided a further boost for the development of the IPDS with the passing of resolution 57 which stated:

In the knowledge that the Implementation Working Group is nearing the completion of its work on the recommendations of the Training Strategy Group Report and in order that the Fire Brigades Union may defend its members conditions through negotiated agreement, this conference demands that a strategy group be immediately established to examine and develop the implementation of quality skill base training through the

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introduction of role maps and their relationship and use with a suitable and acceptable method of assessing training needs and performance that;

- *Does not link capability with competence.*
- *Identifies training needs and adequately funds that training.*
- *Does not link pay to performance. [This became a factor in the pay and conditions dispute of 2002/2003].*
- *Maintains or improves the current pay and condition of Fire Brigade Union members.*
- *Ensures that all assessors are trained in all aspects of their responsibilities under the new training framework prior to implementation.*
- *Ensures that all role maps for firefighters, officers and control staff and performance assessments are agreed and in place prior to the introduction of training (Fire Brigades Union Conference, 2001:176).*

This was exactly what the fire service wanted to hear and a potential obstacle to the introduction of the IPDS had been removed. Only one year later though, in the fire service pay and conditions dispute of 2002/2003, the FBU were labeled as “*belligerent*” and “*failing to modernise*” by both the government and the local authority employers because of the FBU “*continually defending*” their members from the imposition of performance related pay. [Bain, reporting back to the government in December 2002 with his report entitled “The Agenda to deliver a Modern Fire Service” recommended performance related pay for specific skills. See 3.26 and 5.4]. Chief Fire Officer Richard Bull writing in the Fire Magazine in October 2001 commented that he was pleased to

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see that all the stakeholders, including the FBU, were fully signed up to the IPDS. He also said: *“We need a national implementation strategy, sooner rather than later, which clearly defines the route fire authorities must take to achieve a national standard and consistent approach. Authorities cannot continue to act in isolation: partnership, collaboration and cooperation is the only way forward for cost effective implementation”* (Bull, 2001b:10). A paper presented by a representative from the Fire Service Inspectorate at two meetings of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC) in May and June 2002 argued that: *“Change would best be achieved by focussing on the issue of leadership in the fire service, as only truly effective leaders are capable of acting as champions of cultural change”* (Currie, 2002:1). Currie further contended that IPDS could be regarded as the *“gold standard”* for the service due to the fact it had been formally endorsed by the CFBAC on the 16th October 2001. (Currie, 2002:2). The IPDS was appearing not only to be the saviour for the fire service, but the only legitimate pathway to a modernised service. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister confirmed this thinking with the issue of a fire service circular, which stated that the forthcoming Best Value Review of Training and Development would be deferred until April 2005. The circular also confirmed: *“It is the position of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister that as the IPDS is Best Value compliant, then implementation of IPDS will assist the service in its quest for Best Value status. As one of the major components of Best Value is collaboration, the service is invited to consider the advantages offered by this avenue of approach with regard to the implementation of the IPDS”* (Fire Service Circular, 9/2002:4, paragraph 16). The implication behind this circular was that the fire authorities were being given a three-

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year breathing space until April 2005 to introduce IPDS or they would have to justify non-compliance with a Best Value audit.

On September 23rd 2002, the Fire Service College announced the opening of what they referred to as the “IPDS Hub.” This was to assist brigades and individuals in the learning and development change process. The College had also brought together a specific development team enabling it to become the central training provider for IPDS with modules matched to the standards and roles. This was a dramatic change for the Fire Service College as it enabled it to regain its position as the pre-eminent training provider for the British Fire Service. It could now confidently claim, after a number of years in the wilderness, to be once again a “centre of excellence.” IPDS now became the recognised national benchmark for individual and organisational development within the British Fire Service.

The principle behind IPDS is simple. Roles rather than rank are the prime focus and individuals undergo a series of linked development cycles. Each cycle is specific to a role and designed to enhance and improve performance so that a person can plot his or her own career path in parallel to organisational development. The individual is provided with a personal development programme based on the acquisition, application and maintenance of skills within a process of “continuing” professional development. Each programme can also prepare a person for the next role and seven roles have been identified for the strategy:

1. Firefighter.
2. Crew Management (Crew Commander)
3. Watch Management (Watch Commander)

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4. Station Management. (Station Commander)
5. Group Management. (Group Commander)
6. Area Management. (Area Commander)
7. Brigade Management. (Brigade Commander)

Each of the roles follow a number of linked personal development cycles, called the “IPDS Helix” (see Appendix 2.). The cycles are designed to develop knowledge, understanding and application and a programme to maintain the currency of the required skills. If desired the individual can also have his/her potential for the next role assessed.

The cycle for a firefighter would be:

1. Assessment of Potential. If someone wants to join the fire service or desires promotion they are assessed against the requirements of the role, the requirements of the National Occupational Standards and the ability of the person to meet those requirements.
2. Individual Development. A programme of development is then undertaken based upon the information gathered at the assessment of potential stage.
3. Confirmation of Ability. The individual has the opportunity to provide evidence that they can apply their new skills consistently in the workplace.
4. National Qualification. The individual can have their new skills recognised by a national vocational qualification if they wish to do so.
5. Maintenance of Skills. The individual will then continue to maintain the skill levels and learn new skills for the role as necessary.
6. Test of Potential for a Different Role. If the individual wishes to move on to a different role, their potential is assessed and the cycle begins again.

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5.3 Possible Problems with the Integrated Personal Development System

The IPDS has the support of government and every professional body in the fire service and has the potential to become the largest single change in the way staff are developed and managed in the history of the British Fire Service. The biggest change is the change to a role culture in preference to a rank culture and according to Brown: *“Rules, procedures and job descriptions dominate the internal environment of a role culture, and promotion is based on the satisfactory performance of individuals in their jobs”* (Brown, 1998:67). Brown contends that the main problems with role cultures is that once established they can be slow to recognise and react to change which is frustrating for those who are ambitious or power-orientated. His research further identifies that people are also: *“Subject to a range of cognitive biases such as recency; over attributing importance to more recently acquired information and halo effects; allowing one positive feature to unduly affect our judgement”* (Brown, 1998:101). The IPDS using the acquisition and application principle of development in manageable pieces may fall into the problem categories as identified by Brown. The informal discussions and interviews carried out by the author (see Section Two) with the proposed users of the IPDS suggest this may well be the case, especially at the firefighter level. The general feeling from the firefighters is that the IPDS will become a *“bureaucratic nightmare”* and the test of potential for a promotion to a new role becoming an appraisal with what they term as *“officer favourites”* being selected. It became apparent they did not trust the new system because they had not been involved in the development phase and this has left the fire station personnel (who came through the traditional training route) extremely skeptical of the new approach. Great importance has been attached to

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the IPDS route as the only way forward for the service and the only way initial trainees (the new IPDS terminology for recruits) will be developed in the future. New firefighters to the fire stations now undergo what is called “phase two development” to advance their knowledge and skills which were not covered in phase one on their initial training course. These concerns and issues are covered in 5.5 to 5.7. All of the interviews with the Watch based personnel on the fire stations were informal affairs (usually over a cup of tea) and conducted in a manner to gather feelings and perceptions which would have been more difficult in a formal setting. (Appendix 1. describes the context of the interview procedures). Informal “mess room chat” can be a good provider of information to identify the wording and type of questions for the more formal and structured interviews to specific groups or persons. An example of this “understanding of perceptions” process came during another “mess room chat” immediately after a visit from the headquarters staff to explain how the IPDS will affect the Watches. Rather than instilling enthusiasm with their “look forward” talks, IPDS was seen as yet another management initiative to justify the one-tier entry system with a *“fait accompli”* approach for retaining the present officer ranks within a role system. They did not trust the promotion criteria and thought that only those willing to *“keep their noses clean”* would be selected for promotion development. In other words, they saw IPDS not as a firefighter development and promotion tool, but as the officer corps *“recreating itself in its own image and being able to justify it.”* Others thought it would prevent those with *“hands on experience”* or as frequently mentioned, *“the workers”* from entering senior management. This lack of consultation with Watch based personnel during the early development phase of the IPDS may result in difficulties due to the culture and

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perceptions of these people, especially in the anticipated long changeover period lasting several years. Schein is unsure that culture itself can be managed, but states: *“The consequences of culture are real, and these must be managed”* (Schein, 1985:xii). Another researcher, Anthony, believes that: *“Cultural change is a slow process, it can be assisted rather than controlled but, in given circumstances, its pursuit might be worthwhile as long as it is not sought as a facile, cosmetic and transitory change”* (Anthony, 1994:5). The Integrated Personal Development System has people development at its core, but if those whom the designers of the system wish to change and develop are not convinced, the system may eventually fail in the manner it is being introduced; gradually.

5.4 The Fire Service Pay and Conditions Dispute 2002 and 2003

The research has identified an adversarial stance between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the local authority employers resulting from three main factors:

1. The harsh discipline and poor working conditions present in the early brigades of the late 19th century and the early 20th century.
2. The lack of affiliation between the two parties to develop the service jointly after the National Fire Service was returned to local authority control after the Second World War.
3. The constant “battles” between the FBU and their employers as regards conditions of service. The FBU genuinely believe that all their conditions have to be fought for and these require constant protection from these “uncaring employers” who will try to remove them.

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This is because the local authority employers have to comply with the strict budgetary controls imposed upon them from central government. Central government has considerable power to affect the culture and structures of the fire service through financial support, regulations, policy decisions and changes to the legal framework. In recent years the application of business economics, corporate plans, performance indicators, performance management and best value plans suggest an acceleration of the process. The pay and conditions strikes of 2002 and 2003 therefore became virtually inevitable after a combination of the above factors came together following “skirmishes” going back to the last national fire strike of 1977/78. In 1992, Ian Linn on behalf of the FBU produced a booklet called “Their Business or our Service?” as a reaction to the change processes introduced by the conservative government headed by Margaret Thatcher. In the foreword, the General Secretary of the FBU, Ken Cameron spoke of his concerns: *“There is no doubt that with the re-election of a Tory Government, the attacks on public services and the trade unions who represent the members who work within them, will continue. Their intention is to undermine collective strength in the workplace – through outlawing, ignoring and bypassing established procedures which trade unions have fought for in order to protect and represent the interest of members. New management initiatives are a key part of this attack on trade unions and it is therefore most important that all officials and members are able to respond effectively to their introduction in our service”* (Linn, 1992:2). Linn expresses a view that these new management initiatives of setting and assessing individual performance standards and performance appraisal is the first step to a performance related pay system. He does say however: *“Although there is as yet little evidence that*

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brigades are using appraisal to determine an individual's pay, the possibility is there" (Linn, 1992:17). Ten years later the Bain Review provided the FBU with the evidence it needed by advocating performance related pay, thus confirming their deeply held beliefs. FBU articles leading up to the 2002/03 strikes also set the scene for the coming conflict: *"We must face the future, and in doing so, we should not forget our history, whilst continuing a principled struggle for the future of trade unionism within the fire service. Over many years, the union has demonstrated its ability to organise and direct the energies of its membership, in many successful campaigns. There can be no doubt that as a result of this the FBU is the premier public sector trade union. However, the particular challenges we are having to rise to today, means that a more professional approach to organising and campaigning must be developed if we are to be taken seriously"* (Pounder, 1997:12). In 1998, a letter from the General Secretary of the FBU to the retained membership about the annual pay award stated: *"The formula means we do not have to battle annually with our local authority employers over pay. However, we did have a battle to get the pay formula, which lifted the fire service personnel out of poverty pay. Indeed we have had to battle to secure all our conditions of service which some of our employers now seem determined to destroy. They want to scrap our national agreement and devolve decisions on leave, hours and working practices to individual brigades. Needless to say, the idea is to divide and rule and so diminish all of your hard won rights"* (Cameron, 1998). Unfortunately the service appeared to be immune to the rhetoric and ignored the early indications of a further deterioration in the labour/employer relationship. Gagliardi recognises this process and contends that organisations do not learn from negative experiences and rather than diffuse the build up

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of tensions, the search for excuses and scapegoats within an organisation increases. Cultural change therefore, does not occur in a harmonious manner. When the situation was finally recognised (with the strikes of 2002 and 2003), possible solutions came with the Bain Review. Bain recommended sweeping changes including reductions to the workforce through natural wastage. This in effect would accelerate the removal of the “old guard” and replace them with recruits who could be “conditioned” to a new order (Gagliardi, 1986:117-134).

It was not just the FBU talking about pay increases, the President of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association, Richard Bull, asked the following question in the December 2001 issue of the Fire Magazine: “*Do the pay levels of today provide adequate remuneration for the functions of the job of a firefighter that we expect now or in the future? The weekly pay levels of a firefighter today certainly do not bear comparison with those of a police constable (without overtime) or, indeed other skilled workers*” (Bull, 2001c:8). The editor of the Fire Magazine, Andrew Lynch, also entered the debate saying the service must be prepared to pay the rate for the job. He added: “*We must give our firefighters the pay they deserve and we must support a modernised agenda which advances training, improved standards of fire cover, equality and diversity, fairness, and in a radically shifting world state, enhanced emergency planning and ever improving standards of delivering community safety and all it encompasses*” (Lynch, 2002a:7). Lynch provided the fire service in the remainder of his article with an emotive appeal for common sense in the anticipated pay dispute and stated clearly both sides of the argument; improved pay for the employees and improvements to the working practices for the employers. Little heed was paid to this appeal and both “sides”

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pushed ahead with own agenda. Gilchrist, (General Secretary of the FBU) writing in the same edition of the Fire Magazine said: *“Modernisation and change must be rewarded, not taken for granted. It will be impossible to recruit, retain and train staff to the required level of skill and responsibility on current pay levels. That is why there will be no progress in the fire service without progress on pay”* (Gilchrist, 2002a:12-13).

Charles Nolda, the Employers Secretary, in a letter sent to the FBU made it explicit that the negotiations needed to cover a wide range of issues linked to a modernisation agenda and that *“nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.”* (Nolda, 2002). In the period June to August 2002, the FBU organised a high profile publicity campaign in support of their pay claim and on August 27th 2002, the National Employers made their offer:

- A 4% increase in pay from the settlement date of 7th November 2002.
- A new improved pay formula linked to average pay settlements across the economy.
- An independent inquiry into modernisation and pay.

This was rejected by the FBU at a National Joint Council meeting on the 2nd September and the union recalled their national conference on the 12th September to seek a mandate to ballot for a national strike.

[The National Joint Council (NJC) is the body that conducts the negotiations on pay and conditions for fire brigade personnel. The NJC covers England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland through representatives of the Local Government Association, The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, The Fire Authority for Northern Ireland and the Fire Brigades Union].

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On September 5th, Nick Raynsford the Minister with responsibility for the fire service, set up an independent review into fire service pay and conditions even though the FBU refused to support the review. The Minister said: *“This independent review will be an excellent opportunity to consider the issues facing the fire service including pay. I am delighted to say Professor Sir George Bain has agreed to conduct the review. This review provides an alternative to what would be unnecessary and deeply damaging industrial action”* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002). The FBU whilst refusing to give evidence to the review reiterated its pay demands, which amounted to an increase of 39.3% for firefighters, 51.3% for control room staff and pay parity with the wholtime membership for retained members. The FBU also confirmed its policy of no liaison with the other fire service unions, principally the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), consequently these unions took no part in the dispute. On the 20th September 2002, the independent review began its work with a requirement from central government to report as quickly as possible. In the review’s inaugural newsletter, Bain said: *“I recognise the need for this work to proceed quickly in order to address the concerns of the fire service staff and fire authorities. We will address the issues thoroughly and speedily and will aim to produce a full report by the middle of December”* (Bain, 2002a). The FBU thought this deadline was impossible and their General Secretary said so: *“A hastily cobbled together inquiry with an impossible deadline to meet is insulting to all members of the NJC.”* Gilchrist went on to say: *“The pay campaign is about one thing and one thing only – representing the strength of feeling of the UK’s firefighters and emergency fire control operators who seek nothing more than a fair wage for what they do”* (Gilchrist, 2002b:11).

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On the 17th October, Mr. John Prescott the Deputy Prime Minister, spoke in parliament about the dispute and said: *“Let us be clear a strike will be dangerous and damaging and do little to enhance their case. Strikes will achieve nothing. George Bain’s review is going ahead. The employers have made clear that there will be no negotiations on pay until the review has reached its conclusions. Strikes won’t affect the review. So they will literally achieve nothing – other than to put at risk people’s lives and property”* (Prescott, 2002). The die had already been cast and a series of national strikes by the FBU was announced on the 18th October.

On the 11th November, Bain released a “position paper” consisting of 23 pages, entitled “The Agenda to Deliver a Modern Fire Service” which offered an 11% pay increase over two years in exchange for a number of changes to the working practices. Bain advocated a “four strand approach” with change introduced over time-bounded periods consisting of 43 primary recommendations resulting in many more “*secondary*” recommendations. The position paper was comprehensive, forward looking and covered every aspect of the fire service. This appeared quite astonishing to everyone in the service considering it had only taken seven weeks to produce. Bain made comment that he was dismayed on the lack of progress over the years when report after report had recommended change and modernisation with only modest changes actually taking place (Bain, 2002b). Bain, for all his diligent work during the seven-week research period added to this inertia. The sheer volume of recommendations in the large number of previous reports and the further recommendations of Bain compounded the feelings of inadequacy for the once proud British Fire Service.

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The FBU rejected the position paper and began a 48-hour strike on the 13th November. Pay was no longer the main issue; the position paper, apart from major changes to the conditions of service recommended economic savings by not replacing staff upon retirement. Bain had completed the circle; the FBU were fighting for a “*service*” and the employers were fighting for “*the right to apply business economics.*” The Bain review had delivered a report polarising opinions and uniting the various groupings to win their particular argument - whatever the cost.

During the FBU strikes, the Fire Officers Association (FOA) continued to work and provide fire safety advice to the public and health and safety advice to the military commanders at emergency incidents. FOA also wanted improvements to the pay structure and modernisation to the conditions of service but would not strike to achieve this. On November 22nd in an internal newsletter to their members, they expressed a frustration that even though FOA was the only stakeholder not on strike representing wholtime firefighters, Bain had steadfastly avoided talking face to face with them. Consequently, they called upon the Deputy Prime Minister to disband the Bain Review as in their opinion it was fatally flawed and hindering progress (Fire Officers Association, 2002). During a further strike in November lasting eight days the Prime Minister entered the dispute by bringing forward his monthly press conference with the statement: “*If we were to concede this pay claim, the economic consequences would be dire, and this is really what I want to stress to you today. This government has worked very hard in our first term to lay the platform for economic stability, for full employment, for rising living standards, and it has required some difficult decisions. But it was only as a result of the hard-won stability and our success in getting down*

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unemployment, and the costs of economic and social failure that we were able to then begin properly this programme of investment in our public services.” He argued consistently throughout his speech that no government could pay what the firefighters were asking with nothing in return. When questioned on this point he added: *“Any pay claim above the 4% has to be paid for by modernisation. Now the modernisation is set out in the Bain Report. The Bain Report also set out certain figures. Anything that the employers and the union negotiate has got to be paid for by those changes in working practices. That has been the position of the government right from the very outset of the dispute. It remains the position now. Now, whatever percentage comes out of that has got to be related back to the modernisation”* (Blair, 2002). All the various groupings had now made their feelings explicit; resolving the problems was going to be difficult after decades of neglect and inaction. The much rushed Bain inquiry came in for more criticism from Andrew Lynch, editor of the Fire Magazine, who argued that whilst blame was being placed on the FBU and the fire service in general for not embracing change, Bain should also be blamed. Lynch said: *“We, as supporters of the whole fire service, ergo all firefighters, were offended by this comment [statement by Bain in his position paper]: “Even allowing for the risks and dangers of the service, firefighters compare well with similar jobs in the public and private sector.”* Lynch continued: *“Allowing for the dangers? What do you allow for the dangers? Quantify risking your life, day in day out. How do you measure the cost of a human life?”* (Lynch, 2002b:7).

Throughout the service during this period it appeared as though management, rank and discipline was starting to break down. Fire service officers were not used to firefighters not doing what they said and from the author’s discussions with the officers, who

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worked during the strike, this was beginning to occur on the incident ground as well. Truth and trust had become the first casualty and those not on strike became the subject of abuse and the focal point for the expression of a pay campaign going badly wrong. From the beginning, the FBU had expected to win the pay argument but instead they were fighting for the continuation of hard won conditions of service for a demoralised workforce. The FBU had provided their members with caps, T-shirts, flags and stickers to publicise the struggle and throughout the country the fire stations and fire engines were daubed with this symbolism with the firefighters saying they are: *“fighting a just cause against uncaring employers who did not value them.”* The fieldwork during this period included discussions with a number of officers not in the FBU and not on strike. Nearly all these officers said: *“they felt intimidated by those on strike, even though they had spent eight weeks on continuous strike in 1977/78.”* This previous strike did increase the pay, improve the conditions, reduce the length of the working week and bring into the service many thousands of new recruits. These new recruits were now the majority of people on strike and they publicly scorned the actions of the non-striking officers. The officers who were still in the FBU did go on strike and this is an example of the unique way in which the fraternity of the fire service operates. Officers not on strike said they were *“amazed to see their fellow officers, some high-ranking, on strike”* and most thought this was *“a token gesture by them in an attempt to show solidarity.”* The officer corps was becoming fragmented with many expressing a view privately that they were *“disillusioned by the whole affair and felt betrayed by the employers, the government and to some extent by their Chief Fire Officers.”* The Chief Fire Officers were in a no-win situation. By trying not to provoke the situation and/or

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irrational behaviour, they were accused of sitting on the fence and allowing the service to fragment. The officers not on strike were fast becoming the scapegoats for an ill-planned pay campaign with no exit strategy and these people felt “*let down by all the different groupings*” and expressed a view that they were “*witnessing the death of the service.*” These officers did have an exit strategy though; retirement.

The FBU are also in a no-win situation because even though they are on a number of national committees to improve service delivery, the needs of their members are their first consideration, regardless of the possible benefits to others. Management has never really engaged the FBU as a [vibrant] stakeholder coming to the table with different skills and perspectives and the local employers tend to view the FBU as a group that have to be considered and therefore consulted, but usually in the context of informing them of what is going to occur. The government [and previous governments] have never funded the service for the work it expects of them and have not provided the climate to infuse motivation to those who can instigate change. Change is often proposed in the fire service when there is a problem or a report says there is a problem rather than continuous scanning of the service and the society it protects. In its simplest term the fire service has developed “habits” which allows them to deal with routine situations quickly, and in most cases effectively. These habits coupled with the security of the current working conditions produces a workforce at ease with its customs and practices [the fire brigade way of doing things]. Firefighters, as a group, are not motivated by promotions because security and the status quo are more important. The fieldwork uncovered these feelings through the “mess room chat” approach and as such, they have uncovered a deep resistance to change. In the case of the IPDS, this may have serious

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implications for its continuity development programmes if the firefighters choose to “ignore” the development cycles based on individual motivation.

The firefighters’ frustration at the lack of progress with the dispute turned to anger on the 16th December 2002 when the full Bain Review was published. The report recommended massive changes and was commended by the government as the way the service should proceed. It soon became the official doctrine for the employers trying to resolve the dispute (Bain, 2002c). The report, to its credit, tried to involve as many of the stakeholders as possible in its 159 pages, with only one main stakeholder, the FBU, not making any comment. In the foreword, Bain mentions the large number of former reports demanding change but to little effect, which compounds the problems of the service. Bain blamed the weak management system, the unsatisfactory industrial relations and a lack of any feeling of ownership by those involved in managing the service. He tempered this by saying that no one group can be blamed and everyone in the fire service must bear some responsibility. The report attempts to bring together all the missed opportunities from the previous reports by encompassing their past philosophy to the present circumstances. This approach angered the FBU as they had heard this before and had fought “battles” to maintain the status quo. Bain missed this historical fact and as a consequence, he failed to convince the major stakeholder (the FBU) of its independence in trying to find solutions to long-standing problems. The FBU way of dealing with criticism is defiance, “*standing up for our hard won rights,*” whereas the employers’ way is to accept the criticism because with the help of a major review, they may finally be able to implement change. A paragraph by Bain entitled “Strong Leadership” emphasised this very point: “*Ministers, the employers’*

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organisations, fire authorities and senior management in the fire service need to own the reform agenda and commit themselves to delivering it. Change cannot be imposed from outside; it will only happen if those in a position of influence are prepared to make it happen" (Bain, 2002c:121). The FBU, in response to the Bain Review and to justify its stance, published its own report called "Trust the Professionals" (Fire Brigades Union, 2003).

The strikes continued during January and February 2003 with the government saying it would impose a settlement if the FBU continued to oppose the pay and modernisation package of the Bain Review. This statement by the government caused a deep resentment and anger by those on strike. They viewed this approach as a coordinated strategy to undermine the service's values and culture and a way to justify the removal of them through public opinion demanding an end to the dispute. The April 2003 target deadline for the introduction of the IPDS did not occur and the IPDS came in for more criticism from the firefighters, as they were becoming cynical as to the purpose for its introduction. It was now being viewed as the tool to *"introduce cultural change through the back door by using the new learning and development programmes on new entrants to slowly change the service from the grass root level."* This was an irrational view from the firefighters as the IPDS was a planned for and managed change process for all the roles in the service and the culmination of ten years' work. This new structure was in danger of becoming another casualty of the pay dispute through a lack of faith and trust and by it becoming entrapped within the politics and culture of the service.

The FBU continued to argue that Bain had selectively used parts of previous reports to suit the government's strategy and that it reflected the cost cutting agenda of Margaret

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Thatcher in the early 1990s, rather than free collective bargaining. The FBU General Secretary concluded that: *"We all know where the savings the government is talking about will come from: cuts to the amount of firefighters, the number of fire engines and fire stations"* (Gilchrist, 2003c:6). The Secretary of the Association of Principal Fire Officers, John Bonney, said that Principal Officers were dismayed by the situation which had now developed and it was something they had been warning about for some time. Bonney went on to say: *"The continual denigration of the service, and the denial of the significant progress which has already been achieved is not, we believe, the means by which to build a service for the future. Moreover, speculative calls for significant job cuts without any explanation or rationale add nothing to the debate. Rather it is a recipe for a demoralised workforce and further disaffection, which can only prolong the conflict"* (Bonney, 2003:5). The Chief Fire Officer of Somerset, writing in the Fire Magazine said: *"I was incensed over the Deputy Prime Minister's comments that savings could be funded from the 70% of people who retire on grounds of ill health. These figures are completely inaccurate. In Somerset over the past five years less than 3% of our total workforce have retired due to ill health"* (Kemp, 2003:9). On the same page in the Fire Magazine, the depth of feeling became obvious when an extremely angry Chief Fire Officer, wishing to remain anonymous, said: *"Having seen a tenth rate emergency service [the military with the aging Green Goddess fire engines] being applied first hand and the buildings that were lost because no firefighting skill was on-scene has been excruciatingly painful to endure. This was compounded by then having to suffer the indignity of a so-called Minister of Fire Services tell the world how exceptionally well we are coping. This was the final insult to*

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anyone's intelligence" (Anonymous Chief Fire Officer, 2003:9). Brown suggests that this type of outburst is only to be expected when a government uses a political strategy to shape change through influence and power. This power is utilised as a resource to change culture through a complex political game. The outburst by the anonymous officer in question supports Brown in this contention (Brown, 1998:189).

The fire service as a whole was becoming extremely frustrated by the government's rigid application of the Bain Review and the service, including the FBU, wanted a compromise so that dignity and a sense of value could be restored to the workforce. On the 19th March 2003, the FBU delegates attending a recall conference rejected the pay and conditions offer. On the 21st March 2003, the government published the Fire Services Bill to confer power on the Secretary of State to set or modify the conditions of service to members of fire brigades including pay. This was a drastic step and the Bill was to be enacted if the failure to agree continued (Fire Services Bill, 2003).

The only consistent factor in the dispute was the publicity material distributed by the FBU to their membership. From day one to the end of the dispute they argued for "fair pay for the job." It has always been assumed by the employers that the remuneration package includes more than pay; it includes the opportunity to rise to high office through the single tier entry system, a generous pension payable at the age of 55, job security, a shift system with plenty of time off, good working conditions based on teamwork, good personal development paid for by the employer and a position of value derived from an appreciative general public. In recent years most of the above became eroded with the advance of business economics and a pension scheme apparently on the verge of collapse. The sense of not being treated fairly developed with the pay formula

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not providing the year-on-year increases to keep the fire service in line with the service's perception of their value and place in society. Without this short-term remuneration, the longer-term career pathways became less attractive with a firefighter having to possibly work many miles away from his/her home address for a promotion on a pay scale hardly covering his/her additional travel costs. This becomes even less attractive with the fire service constantly downsizing resulting in fewer opportunities for a further promotion and/or a quick return to a fire station closer to home. Not being able to determine a career pathway through the once taken-for-granted promotion route produces an easier alternative option; a second job performed on the shift rota days. The focus on more money for performing in a current role may become the preferred option, as studying for a promotion and accepting greater responsibility is no longer necessary. To remain in a current role for more money and not having to travel to another workplace further away is an ideal worth fighting for. The advent of value for money produced the best value doctrine with individuals having to meet targets and performing to set standards with a confirmation of the process through continuous audits. The fieldwork suggests this has led to a corresponding feeling of not being trusted with hard work within this process often going unnoticed. The fire service has changed considerably over the last few years but the big change has hardly been noticed and it has occurred not through any pre-conceived strategy; it is the change from the fire service being a vocation to one of a job. Present day values originate from creeping change and new entrants applying to join the service do not accept as readily the militarism, disciplines and traditions of the fire service of yesterday.

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The reasons for this are many and complex, but five factors over the last 40 stand out and may provide answers for the change:

1. The abolition of National Service in the early 1960s with a corresponding drop in the number of fire service recruits entering from a military background. These new entrants therefore, have a general lack of formal discipline and a respect for authority than their predecessors.
2. The re-organisation of local government in 1974 created new education authorities with new strategies. Comprehensive schools increased, grammar schools decreased and a different way of teaching became fashionable. Teachers became facilitators with less emphasis on discipline and more emphasis on the subject matter being challenged and investigated.
3. Values and beliefs from former generations were also challenged and it became acceptable and “cool” to rebel, dress, act and behave in a more casual and informal manner.
4. Jobs were not viewed generally by younger people as a vocation or a career, but more as a means to an end. Money for leisure, sport, more time away from work and foreign holidays became the new motivators.
5. The introduction in the late 1970s of a fire service shift system of four shifts on followed by four shifts off, regular 12 day breaks every couple of months and two further breaks of 20 days during the year, has not only accelerated the process, but tends to confirm the process.

Many of the firefighters spoken to by the author still enjoy the job but said *“the sense of providing a service was slowly being replaced by business concepts and political*

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correctness which I do not really agree with.” If the expectations of the fire service and that of the firefighters in this modern society do not agree, conflict may inevitably follow. This conflict came with the concept of *“fair pay for the job”* and a failure to adapt to the realities of modern society.

On The 12th June 2003, the Fire Brigades Union at a recall conference in Glasgow, voted 3:1 to accept the employers pay offer. The pay and conditions package fell substantially short from their original demands, but the union was facing an imposed settlement from the government if the dispute continued. The service had reached a broad consensus on modernisation, although there was still a significant minority opposed to the agreement. The rank structure was to be replaced by roles, the IPDS was to proceed and restrictive practices abolished. A White Paper from the government, on the modernisation of the fire service, was soon to be published and the potential for real and effective improvements to the service was possible. The main problem still remained though, the workforce was not convinced. On The 13th June 2003, a demoralised workforce resumed their *“normal duties”* pledging to resist imposed change and to prepare for the struggles ahead.

The perceptions and expectations of trainee firefighters joining the service, the views of Watch based personnel and the views of senior officers become the next study areas.

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5.5 The Views and Perceptions of Trainee Firefighters

Brown argues that the culture of an organisation is conveyed to new recruits by pre-selection, socialisation and incorporation or rejection (Brown, 1998:55). He contends that individuals gather information about an organisation regarding its work practices from a variety of sources in order to make judgements before applying. Merton claims that recruits also make every effort to learn about an organisation's history and culture and tend to be inclined to support these values before joining (Merton, 1957). The fire service assists this process through comprehensive recruitment literature and a series of job specific selection tests. Once selected the process of "socialisation" intensifies with a period of time at a residential training school and a "probation" period upon joining a Watch to develop a greater understanding and awareness of the shared norms, values and beliefs. The Watch based culture is the most deeply seated acceptance ritual for a new entrant within the fire service and as such, newcomers inevitably take on the characteristics of the Watch they are posted to. This initial posting to a Watch usually requires an individual to stay there for at least two years, resulting in the incorporation/rejection process described in Brown. A miss-match in a new entrant's perception of the job and a failure to take on the culture of the Watch/organisation usually results in alienation and a progressive "falling behind" in the acquisition and application of the performance standards required by the fire service.

The research for this section uses Humberside Fire Brigade for the data gathering process because the brigade has introduced an innovative concept in trainee development, which may become the accepted initial development model for the British Fire Service. This development process links into the National Occupational Standards

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to fulfill the first phase of firefighter development with the acquisition of knowledge and practical application of this understanding to an acceptable standard, thus enabling them to take up an initial posting to a Watch on a fire station. Humberside Fire Brigade has pioneered this new thinking on trainee firefighter courses to provide the first crucial link in a structured, progressive, continuous chain of programmed development under the new Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). Those undergoing this development and those from the former “traditional” courses were surveyed to examine, interpret and evaluate the new course philosophy and to probe for any deeply rooted feelings or problems. The questionnaires used for this process can be found in Appendix 3. and involves four distinct stages:

- Analysis of the trainees’ expectations by questionnaire as they embarked upon their chosen career at the residential training school.
- Consultations with the trainees at the end of the course to confirm if these initial expectations were met.
- Conducting the same questionnaire with firefighters who came through a “traditional” recruit’s course to identify any differences of expectations between the two groups.
- Engaging firefighters from the former “traditional” courses in conversation to determine the level of acceptance or hostility towards the new thinking.

Whilst reasoned deductions can be made interpreting replies during structured conversations, disciplined methods must be made use of when interpreting statistics. Statistical inference using a set of methods to determine the characteristics of a

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population when sampling is the object of this type of analysis. This in turn should ensure that the results of the findings would be replicated if subjected to the same tests using other representative samples. The researcher must also be aware that certain factors or combination of factors produce certain results and be able to show the differences quite plainly so that others may make judgements. The influence of age on that of the expectations of trainees is one example, so too are the views of firefighters who have been with the brigade for a number of years. All of these combinations need to be investigated and documented. Significant differences may very well occur if one asks the same question to different age bands or to a greater or lesser sample within groupings. This hypothesis was tested using four age bands: under 25, 25-34, 35-44 and 45 and over. Significant differences did occur with the higher age groups and would have distorted the results due to the fact that these numbers were relatively small. This was managed by dividing the trainees responses into only two groupings: under 25 (group A) and over 25 (group B). These results based on age were first compared between two courses (groups C and D) and then added together to form one set of results (group E). Experienced firefighters (group F) with a similar composition to that of the trainees were then asked the same questions for comparison purposes. A total of 100 persons were used in the survey, which represented 20% of the Humberside Fire Brigade firefighter strength. The results in the analysis tables are displayed in the following order:

Group A. *All trainees under the age of 25 (on both training courses).*

Group B. *All trainees over the age of 25 (on both training courses).*

Group C. *All age bands on course 1.*

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Group D. *All age bands on course 2.*

Group E. *All age bands on courses 1. and 2.*

Group F. *Firefighters with the same age grouping and numbers as Group E.*

The results in questions 2, 5 and 9 refer to rank order, with all the other responses in percentages. Comments have been included under each table [based on the result]. All the trainees in each group completed the questionnaire during the first two days of the course to prevent the trainers from unintentionally affecting the result by delivering “the fire service way of doing things” in the course input. A sample of the trainees (20) were interviewed on a one-to-one and group basis after they had been on the fire stations for a few months to ascertain if any changes had occurred in these beliefs. The views of the firefighters who went through a “traditional recruit course” were also obtained to help triangulate the reasons for any miss-match between the trainees’ original expectations when they first joined the service and their current beliefs. It was also necessary to investigate and understand the reasons for any beliefs and perceptions the firefighters had about their new colleagues that may eventually lead to prejudice and misunderstanding.

Question One. This question asked the age of the fifty trainees surveyed so that they could be placed in an age band for further detailed analysis.

Percentage of trainees under the age of 25	35.5 percent
Percentage of trainees over the age of 25	64.5 percent

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Question One Comment. The fifty experienced firefighters given the same questions matched the age profile of the trainees.

Question Two. Place in descending order the following eight statements why you joined the fire service. (Firefighters in group F were asked to rank them as reasons for staying in the job).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Shift system: 2 days, 2 nights, 4 days off	8	8	8	8	8	2
Security	4	4	4	4	4	1
Responsibility	3	3	3	3	3	5
Self Development	2	2	2	2	2	6
Good promotion prospects	5	5	5	5	5	7
Good pay	7	7	7	7	7	8
Good pension	6	6	6	6	6	3
Job satisfaction	1	1	1	1	1	4

The above numbers refer to rank order with 1. the first choice and 8. the least preferred

Question Two Comment. All the trainee groups reflect the same gradings with only the firefighters showing differences. The biggest significant difference is that the continuation of the shift system is very important for the firefighters and reflects the Fire Brigades Union national thinking on this matter in the 2002/2003 industrial dispute. Comparisons of the trainee and firefighter perceptions may also help to provide answers as to the reasons for the dispute. Job security and job satisfaction feature strongly as a shared value for all groups choosing a career in the fire service. If job security and job

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satisfaction are reasons for joining the fire service, and an overwhelming majority of the current firefighters are happy with the shift system, any threat of removing any of these is likely to result in conflict.

Question Three. State your current ambition.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
I intend to remain an operational firefighter	00.0	03.0	00.0	04.0	02.0	55.5
I intend to seek promotion sometime in the future	50.5	34.5	29.0	50.0	39.5	03.7
I intend to rise as high as possible through the ranks	20.0	46.0	50.0	25.0	37.5	00.0
I am undecided at the present time regards promotion	29.5	16.5	21.0	21.0	21.0	40.8

The above numbers refer to percentages.

Question Three Comment. The trainees have high promotion expectations when they join the service but this is not reflected by the current firefighters. The brigade does have the potential to turn this around if the 40.8% undecided can be motivated to come off the fence and join the 3.7% who intend to seek promotion in the future. Such a strategy would also prevent the motivated trainees from joining those who have had second thoughts. Under the present single-tier entry arrangements, a promotion strategy should be regarded as essential. In the British Fire Service, 37% of the uniformed personnel are officers, which means that many firefighters must become officers some time in their careers to maintain the ratio. With entrants now being able to enter the

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service at any age, due to the abolition of the entry age limit, a new restriction has inevitably arisen. The time available for promotion will restrict the entrants on how high they can rise before retirement. This is regardless of personal ability, as all promotions are progressive and to the next rank only.

Question Four. If you met the entry criteria and training was given, would you have preferred to enter the fire service as an officer?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Yes	12.0	03.0	04.0	08.5	06.0	07.5
No	73.5	87.5	92.0	79.0	85.5	85.0
Don't know	14.5	09.5	04.0	12.5	08.5	07.5

The above numbers refer to percentages

Question Four Comment. These results are conclusive; there is reluctance about officer entry. The survey does not take into account the suitability of the trainees and firefighters. Officer entry under the present arrangements is therefore not a feasible option. Time and effort may be better spent motivating the present firefighters to become officers during their careers. Officer entry by university undergraduates is still an option, providing the requirements of the fire service are met. A feasibility study undertaken in consultation with a university would be required to determine this. Other factors to research would include the economics, business case and the pay scale for the rank/role upon initial entry into the fire service. Once the proposed switch over from ranks to roles has been completed, undergraduate entry may be feasible. A recognised fire service degree could also enhance the status of the officers already in post.

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Question Five. Place in rank order these four promotion motivators.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Enhanced status	3	3	4	2	3	4
More money	4	4	3	4	4	1
Greater responsibility	2	2	2	3	2	3
Personal ambition	1	1	1	1	1	2

The above numbers refer to rank order with 1.the first choice and 4. the least preferred.

Question Five Comment. A straightforward question to determine what motivates a person to seek promotion. Once the service knows what that is and whether sufficient numbers of the right calibre are putting themselves forward, the service can then introduce the appropriate intervention strategy. The small difference in pay scales from firefighter to leading firefighter may have a bearing on this subject and more focussed research would answer this hypothesis.

Question Six. Do you believe potential for career advancement such as dealing with information and dealing with people should have been identified during your initial training course?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Yes	42.0	67.0	83.0	33.0	58.0	48.0
No	36.5	27.0	17.0	46.0	31.5	37.0
Don't know	21.5	06.0	00.0	21.0	10.5	15.0

The above numbers refer to percentages

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Question Six Comment. The answers in this section go some way to answering the supposition in question five and the need for appropriate interventions. The mean for the yes answer in question six is 55% and identifying potential on an initial course enhances the profile and philosophy of the Integrated Personal Development System. The possibility of the service managing its own future officer needs (at the start of a career) reduces the need for graduate officer entry to maintain the flow of suitably qualified people, as commented upon in question four.

Question Seven. Should appraisals form part of an annual assessment of your performance?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Yes	83.0	90.5	88.0	88.0	88.0	37.0
No	12.0	06.5	08.0	08.0	08.0	37.0
Don't know	05.0	03.0	04.0	04.0	04.0	26.0

The above numbers refer to percentages

Question Seven Comment. The majority of trainees agree with appraisals but the firefighters already in the job are not wholly convinced, due possibly to Humberside Fire Brigade not having a set procedure in being at the time of this research. There is plenty of scope in this area for initiatives. The essential point when introducing appraisals is to ensure that all the recipients feel they have ownership of the system rather than being passive partners with "something being done to them." Appraisals form the backbone of the IPDS and the answers from the new entrants indicate they would be receptive to an appraisal system being introduced.

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Question Eight. Would you be willing to move anywhere in the brigade area for a promotion?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Yes	78.5	67.5	79.0	66.5	73.0	11.0
No	00.0	14.5	17.0	00.0	08.5	82.0
Don't know	21.5	18.0	04.0	33.5	18.5	07.0

The above numbers refer to percentages.

Question Eight Comment. The answer from the trainees and the firefighters is exactly what could have been predicted. The trainees provide the answer that is expected of them and the majority of firefighters confirm they become comfortable and settled once they are at a fire station of their choice. If only 11% of the more experienced firefighters are willing to move for a promotion, this is further evidence of the social realities and change that has occurred in modern lifestyles. Unfortunately posting trainees to stations that are a considerable journey time away from their homes may be adding to the problem. This is a problem that cannot be ignored with the present single-tier entry system.

Question Nine. Whom would you consult for career advice?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Colleagues	4	4	4	4	4	3
Watch Commander	2	2	2	1	2	1
Station Commander	1	1	1	2	1	2
Training Officer	3	3	3	3	3	4

The above numbers refer to rank order with 1.the first choice and 4. the least preferred.

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Question Nine Comment. This is what the brigade implicitly knows, the Watch and Station Commanders have crucial roles to play in this area. Career development advice is an important aspect of the Watch and Station Commander roles. The appropriate development in this area, to complement their experience would ensure their career development advice is the corporate one, regardless of the geographical location of their posting.

Question Ten. How important are management qualifications for the following ranks?

(Rate them as high, low or not at all).

		A	B	C	D	E	F
Leading Firefighter	High	30.0	51.6	62.5	25.0	43.7	37.0
	Low	58.0	45.2	37.5	62.5	50.0	44.0
	Not at all	12.0	03.2	00.0	12.5	06.3	19.0
Watch Commander	High	41.2	80.6	71.0	66.5	68.7	67.0
	Low	58.8	19.4	29.0	33.5	31.3	26.0
	Not at all	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	07.0
Station Commander	High	94.1	100.	100.	96.0	98.0	81.5
	Low	05.9	00.0	00.0	04.0	02.0	15.0
	Not at all	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	03.5
Divisional Commander	High	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	81.5
	Low	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	15.0
	Not at all	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	03.5

The above numbers refer to percentages.

Question Ten Comment. An expected result mirroring the change from a high vocational base to a progressively higher academic base as you move forward through

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the ranks. The question that leads on naturally from this is: “What type of management development is appropriate?” The answer is complicated as it depends on the role. A university degree can certainly provide the disciplined approach to management but should not be used as an excuse to gather qualifications. Generic management principles to develop a person’s thinking would seem a logical way forward including the appropriate specific development for the role, one example being financial management for officers within sections that have a responsibility for budgets. Modular management development ensures a “stepping stone” process linked to the role, rank and the increasing area of influence. The Fire Service College with its new modular development courses linked to the IPDS and/or the Management Charter Initiative NVQ modules (used by a number of brigades) appear to be the logical choices. Both of these would satisfy the requirements of the service and provide evidence of development as required by the service’s new national occupational standards.

Question Eleven. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
The brigade should provide all the development training during my career	09.5	14.5	10.0	15.0	12.5	29.2
I am willing to develop myself in my own time to obtain qualifications	38.0	33.0	32.0	37.0	34.5	18.7
Academic qualifications are important to career development	12.5	15.0	21.0	09.0	15.0	12.5
Personal development is a partnership between the brigade and the individual	40.0	37.5	37.0	39.0	38.0	39.6

The above numbers refer to percentages.

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Question Eleven Comment. Encouraging responses that bode well for the ideal of individuals taking a greater responsibility for their personal development. Every group identified the partnership approach as the one they are most likely to agree with.

The survey and analysis by questionnaire formed only part of the study and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 of the trainees after they had been posted to a fire station for a few months. A sample of firefighters from the old style “militaristic course” who had been on a Watch for at least a year also took place. A total of 50 interviews took place with these firefighters, some in a group setting and others on a one-to-one basis. Appendix 1. Provides details of the context of these interviews.

5.6 Interviews with the Trainees and Firefighters on the Fire Stations

Rather than go through a list of questions for both the trainees and the firefighters, only a few primary questions were asked. The main aim of the interview was to get them to talk and express feelings in a “non-threatening” informal environment. Asking them to expand on their responses and the reasons for certain beliefs provided the data without recourse to a long list of questions. This strategy used a combination of one-to-one and group interviews in order to make judgements on how group dynamics affect the process. Information collection in the fire service (for matters of expediency) usually follows two routes, a) group discussions and b) questionnaires sent to individuals for them to return without a name. This has a number of flaws, as from the author’s observations over his 28 years of service, the group (the Watch) support each other in their views as an act of fraternity and the confidential questionnaires are often

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completed as a group strategy to manipulate the outcome. Variances in the responses from the interviewees to the author's questions took account of the group dynamics and the one-to-one context. The representative sample of interviewees came from the fire stations in each of the four divisions in Humberside Fire Brigade.

Trainees: Question One. Did the course prepare you for Watch life?

No one was really happy with the course in the context of the question. Comments ranged from them *"feeling vulnerable and exposed"* to *"not knowing what to do or what was expected of them"* when they first turned up for duty. One can argue this is possibly a normal reaction but with careful probing, a common thread appeared. The trainees were made to feel they had been on an inferior course compared to their new colleagues. They were told the old courses were subject to *"discipline with continuous drills until you got it right"* with much emphasis on *"pride and practical equipment use."* Some of these "traditional" firefighters expressed a view that theirs was a *"man's course."* As a consequence, some of the new firefighters commented that their *"confidence took a nosedive as they always felt under pressure to perform well on practical drills."* Some did cope well with this *"pressure"* and stated they felt *"this was a subtle new form of an initiation rite"* with the Watch determined to *"re-create itself in its "accepted" image regardless of the new approach."*

Trainees: Question Two. Have your expectations of a career serving the community increased or diminished?

Most said: *"diminished, even though you feel good when putting out fires and responding to emergency calls."* They were a little confused, as their new colleagues expected them to *"learn and develop, but any expression of enthusiasm was looked*

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down upon.” It was expected that they have to be *“good at the job”* but they *“must not display devotion in doing it.”* Conversely, if they appeared indifferent, they were also criticised. The trainees had expected community fire safety to be high profile on the stations, due to the importance this was given on the course. This was not the case as the Watch officers generally did things on a whim and often only to *“keep the station commander off their backs.”* Some did comment however, *“that some good initiatives were taking place and the firefighters appeared to enjoy the work – providing they didn’t show too much enthusiasm.”*

Trainees: Question Three. Were there any problems on the course and can you think of any improvements?

Most did enjoy the course and felt it had been well delivered, but three issues emerged. It was remarked that *“if there was a problem it was handled as a removal of privileges,”* this confused them as up until then they thought this had been a normal working routine, not a “privilege”. Some form of discipline usually then occurred and more than one said they thought *“some of the officers did not really agree with how the course was being run and they enjoyed it more when they could revert to discipline.”*

Another area of confusion was remarks made by the visiting officers who often placed great emphasis on the statement: *“Don’t be like what you see on the stations.”* This made them feel unsure as they were told on the course *“how lucky they were to be starting a career in a professional well-respected service.”* Comments like these by officers are well intentioned but can often be taken out of context in the learning phase.

Some commented that they would have liked, as part of the course, *“a full day shift on a fire station with specific objectives to meet so that between them they would experience*

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quiet and busy stations.” After this day on the station, each of them could then “*give a talk on their experiences in a feedback session.*”

Overview to the interviews with the trainees: The style of the questioning was to probe for problems and as such did not concentrate on the many good points from the course. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere and did not lead the trainees to come to any particular conclusions. The main issue from a researcher’s point of view was their apparent lack of ability to separate their perception of the role of a firefighter before they joined, to the realities of the job once they are performing it. The very term firefighter conjures up in their minds what they think the dominant role is going to be, regardless of what they had been told to expect on the course. The trainees were encouraged to be explicit and to explain further any problems or concerns they had when answering the questions, and in this respect, they were indeed very open. A general concern was that because the course delivery procedure was new and deemed to be the best way forward for initial development, if any problems occurred, it was “*their fault and not the system.*” On discussing this further with the trainees, it became apparent that this was an implicit protection mechanism for the trainers. The trainees said the trainers often made the remarks: “*you are still making the same mistakes*” “*your report will reflect your poor personal standard*” and “*your Watch and station commander’s will sort out your problems.*” This may not be a problem on future courses as the trainers develop their own delivery skills but some trainers may not recognise the problem if they honestly believe the problem lies with the trainee. The consideration for Humberside Fire Brigade and the British Fire Service is whether this new style of course, as the first building block in the IPDS, is meeting the individuals

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learning needs or just meeting a corporate requirement. Learning is not about a “one-size-fits-all” process, and if changes are to be accepted they must improve things. Solutions are only solutions when they work and it may be necessary to conduct a further training needs analysis. This is explored in Chapter Seven.

The firefighters on the Watches who went through the old style militaristic recruit training course then became the next group to question:

Firefighters: Question One. Have you received any information as to why a new style training course has been developed?

A straightforward question with a straightforward answer - no. Further probing on this subject identified that officers from the brigade headquarters had visited them to tell them of the reasons but they did not believe the reasons and therefore ignored the information. A potential block was appearing so the question was re-phrased as question two.

Firefighters: Question Two. What is your perception as to why the course has changed?

This re-phrasing of question one identified deep feelings, and all those interviewed offered an opinion. The common theme was the belief that *“it was to lower the standard so that females could be employed.”* Some constructive comments were also given, such as: *“the style of the job is changing rapidly and it is in line with modern thinking and de-militarisation.”* Quite a few of the interviewees gave examples of things they had to explain to the trainees which they classed as *“basics”* and what *“in their day”* was a *“bread and butter”* subject. This presumption confirmed their opinions on females and added: *“that the service, by allowing this to happen, had lowered the standard for*

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everyone.” Those who held this view said that in their opinion *“they could, with time, bring the males up to the required standard but not the females.”* This response is a problem for the British Fire Service with its policy of fairness and equality. The firefighters understood the arguments but appear unwilling to change their attitudes to females. One explanation of why this should be is the Watch culture of a “men only club” over many generations and society still viewing the service as predominantly male, dashing in their red fire engines to help people in distress. This imagery appears to be a deeply held belief within society with the males inside the fire service responding to it.

Firefighters: Question Three. Do you think the trainees are prepared for Watch life?

Some firefighters said they *“could not comment as they had no idea what they had done on the course”* but the consensus was that they were not prepared. Some referred back to their recruit course days and admitted they were not prepared either. Others made the remark *“it has never been fair on recruits and it has always been sink or swim.”* Some offered personal accounts of how they had *“suffered”* under training school instructors who had *“intimidated them by shouting and swearing.”* Even though they accepted this was wrong, they still seem irritated during the interviews that the new trainees did not have to go through this.

Firefighters: Question Four. What do you think the priorities of the course should be?

To a person they all said *“practical work should be the priority”* with a majority adding *“more discipline is required, as the new course is too soft”*. Nearly all the interviewees saw the role of a firefighter as *“practical firefighting”* and *“the new trainees need to be given the basics for this at the training school.”* Some mentioned the fact that the

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trainees [on one of the courses] went into a supermarket to pack bags, as part of community fire safety initiative and this was “*laughable.*” This convinces them that the course had lost its way. When it was put to them that it gave the trainees a chance to meet and talk to the public in an informal way and prepare them for their role of providing safety advice to the community, they remained unconvinced. A common thread in this disbelief was the firefighter perception of their role. They had joined to be firefighters and that was what they were and not anything else. The message of the modern role of a firefighter was either not being communicated correctly to them or they were not listening to the message. The term “firefighter” is possibly adding to this belief, and misconceptions may remain whilst this terminology remains in use.

Firefighters: Question Five. With the course not being wholly dominated by young males, has this any impact on traditional equipment handling techniques and teamwork?

A few mentioned “*ladder work, carrying portable pumps and working for long periods at an incident or short bursts of very arduous work.*” Others were more pragmatic and said that “*providing the entry requirements were met they could see no problem but standards must be maintained not only at the training school but throughout the person’s career.*”

Overview of the interviews with the firefighters: As with the trainees, the style of the interview was to probe for problems without leading them. They talked quite openly and were genuinely concerned. The main consideration for Humberside Fire Brigade is better communication to the stations on what does occur on the initial development course, and why the changes have been made. The planned phases of continuing development in the workplace also requires explanation and how this links into the

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general maintenance of skills for all the Watch members, new and old, within a competence framework. The author's role of Station Commander with a responsibility for an individual's development has not identified any significant problems with these new entrants. The problem for the service may well be the long changeover period to the IPDS and a lack of belief by those firefighters (and officers) from the militaristic past not really believing in the new methods and the changing role of the service.

5.7 Conclusions from the Research on Trainee Firefighters

Recruitment is not a problem for the British Fire Service with an average throughout the United Kingdom of 38 applicants for every vacancy. The selection, induction and development of these applicants are therefore crucial to organisational development and the modernisation process. The new Humberside Fire Brigade initial development course for new entrants has the potential to become a powerful tool in this process. By using the Integrated Personal Development System and identifying possible problems, the system could be placed on a strong footing for implementation throughout the service. The main obstacle to this progress is the perception by those on the fire stations that the new course is inferior to the old recruits' course and the feelings of inadequacy from the trainees once they are posted to the fire stations. The trainees must have a belief in the course philosophy and those on the Watches must understand that they have an essential role in the trainee's development.

It is accepted practice in the fire service to promote or move people to the training section because they were good at their previous role, not because they have the aptitude to help others to learn. The problem with this model is that these people may rely too

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much on past experiences and fail to deliver what the service requires. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that all trainers who are required to deliver foundation training to new entrants undergo development themselves so that they fully understand the IPDS philosophy and can apply the principles. A key issue for the trainers and brigade management to come to terms with, is the allowance of individual differences between the new entrants, providing the brigade standard is being met. The previous philosophy, now discarded, was success by the achievement of a pre-set examination mark and competition between the recruits to achieve the highest mark to win the silver axe award for the best recruit. The IPDS way of learning is a gradual sequencing of events that increase in complexity with the acquisition of knowledge and the practical application of this new comprehension. The fire service with its teamwork approach needs to individualise this development and link further development to what the individual already knows and can apply. In the short term, this may well cause problems with individual goals taking priority over team (Watch) goals and the individual not being regarded as a full member of the Watch but seemingly taking advantage of his/her membership (Albanese & Van Fleet, 1985). Providing this development runs parallel to that of the group objectives, full incorporation into the Watch/teamwork system may prove to be quicker and stronger for the new member.

5.8 The Values and Beliefs of Watch Based Personnel

The subject matter for this research covers four ranks: firefighter, leading firefighter, sub officer and station officer. The Watch structure for operational requirements is split into four parts; red, white, blue and green Watches and is the chosen method for the

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continuous delivery of the emergency response by the British Fire Service. Organisational development and individual development therefore conforms to the rites, rituals, beliefs, values, attitudes and norms of behaviour of these Watches, and through an acceptance of ethical codes derived from fire service history. Modern attitudes and beliefs reflect a combination of these historical assumptions and the current environment the fire service has to operate in. Schein suggests that these assumptions in the form of artifacts, stories, myths and symbolism determine how deep a culture will be embodied in an organisation (Schein, 1985).

Expectations of individuals on a fire station can vary between their role and the different Watches they are posted to. The interviews undertaken by the author confirm these variances and also how individuals on the same Watch can provide different responses to the same question if asked in a group setting. The culture of the Watch system is based upon a strong bond between the members and this factor needs to be considered when conducting research. The bond develops over a period of time through a combination of shared experiences at emergency incidents, work on the fire stations and through socialising. The relative isolation of the fire station from the hub of the organisation [the brigade headquarters] and a selection system that recruits people with similar characteristics are all factors in the maintenance of this bond. The group affiliation becomes even stronger as the group associates itself with a trade union to protect the bond as per the fire service's case with the Fire Brigades Union. Morgen supports this viewpoint with his contention that trade union membership is important in maintaining these sub-cultures and can, and often does compete with the organisation for the loyalty and commitment of the employees (Morgen, 1986). Janis describes the

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way that groups think and behave in a similar mode as “groupthink.” This is particularly relevant to groups in the fire service, which operate in emergency situations. “Groupthink” provides security for the group [Watch] by accentuating positive feelings as regards their worth and beliefs (Janis, 1972:399). By engaging the Watches and the various ranks in conversation during semi-structured interviews, feelings were often expressed as stories relating to personal experiences. Weick believes this to be a reliable method for research: *“A system that values stories and story telling is potentially more reliable because people know more about their system, know more of the potential errors that might occur, and are more confident that they can handle those errors that do occur because they know that other people have already handled similar errors”* (Weick, 1987:113).

To prevent bias in the answers to specific questions the author also needed to take account of the context and times of the interviews. Times of the day on the fire stations can have different meanings for different people. Correlating responses from the firefighters on their practical ability tested this theory. If this type of question was asked during a practical drill period, the response tended to be what this person thought the organisation wanted to hear. The author became keenly aware that because of his station commander role, the interviewees too, were observing him. If practical ability questions were asked at times of the day when no practical drills were being performed, the responses indicated a more reflective and therefore more reliable answer. Balanced judgements also had to be made when the interviews were conducted in the author’s office or other such office. The office of an officer in the fire service can be an intimidating domain for the interviewee, through the symbolism of rank in the form of

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the office furnishings, organisational wall charts, station operating procedures and certificates of courses/achievements hung on the wall by the occupier. The informal opinion-based question approach was decided upon and conducted at times when there was no formal activity. A representative cross-section of the individuals from the four Watches at different locations was used in the author's own brigade and triangulation of the responses was achieved by using the same technique in different brigades' throughout the country during the fieldwork visits. Observations were conducted to validate particular responses and beliefs.

From observation and questions to the firefighters on how they viewed the command role of officers, it became apparent that apart from their "*own officers*" [officers on their Watch] they have no real affiliation with officers not posted to their Watch or fire station. The firefighters do not accept these "*other officers*" as valid team members. Officers on the Watches work alongside their teams and in the firefighters words, "*get dirty and sweaty as well.*" Officers who respond from remote offices wearing white shirts and ties (in some brigades this is more casual but still known as "dress rig") travel by car to manage large incidents and seldom get dirty because fighting the fire is not their role. Baigent acknowledges these differences and describes firefighters as "*getting in [into a building] to fight [extinguish] the fire.*" Baigent also postulates that because these officers have a management role in their normal office work and also on the incident ground, management is often seen as their only function. This argument by Baigent is worthy of consideration because a professional manager would not be locked into the fire brigade way of doing things and would not have to rise through a system of promotions, one successive rank at a time, lasting many years. This then leads to an

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inevitable question: Why not employ professional managers in the first place and leave command to full-time commanders? To counteract this proposal and to prevent potential major changes to the officer corps, Baigent suggests that the comprehensive command and control structures that have been developed for operational incidents (due mainly to health and safety legislation) over the last few years, is a response from the officers as a means of role protection; hence justification (Baigent, 2001b). A standard opinion from Watch based personnel, of whatever rank, is that they are "*the true custodians of the fire service*" and "*the white shirts*" [officers] *are out of touch with reality by living in their "comfort zones"* [offices] *managing pieces of paper, not people.*" Salaman and Butler have recognised this possible fracturing of organisational structure. In an article, designed to evoke critical understanding, they identified possible development barriers with the creation of a "them and us" culture. London Fire Brigade was used as an example stating Watch based officers develop close relationships because they share the same dangers and shift pattern with the firefighters. The next layer of management was unable to develop these strong bonds, present on the fire stations, because they worked in offices away from the fire stations (Salaman and Butler, 1994:35-41).

Terminology is very important to fire station personnel with their descriptions of "*fighting fires*" rather than extinguishing them and saying a "*building is lost*" when the structure and contents are consumed by fire. The very name "firefighter" can add to this mystique and the firefighters take full advantage of this by responding as quickly as possible to any incident, whether it is a rubbish fire, a house fire, or a response to an automatic fire alarm. This and the legend of "superheroes" suddenly appearing to provide help, whatever the emergency, reassures the general public. These

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“superheroes” then disappear just as quickly back to their fortresses (the fire stations) to await the next call for help, thus perpetuating the legend. This is a possible dilemma for everyone concerned in the fire service, because the public has nothing but admiration for the firefighters instant response, regardless of the type of call. The firefighters live in the glow of this admiration and see it as their duty to *“protect the service’s high moral values from damaging cuts.”* This was the most recurring theme during the fieldwork and the firefighters honestly believe it is up to them to defend the public from cuts because *“everyone else has let them down.”* The local authority employers, whilst sympathetic to the argument, have a duty to provide best value at every opportunity for the levy they charge the taxpayers. The government for their part are locked into an ideology of fiscal accountability and are determined to provide a set standard of service for the public throughout the whole of the public service. If the attitude of the firefighters defending the status quo is not challenged, then the government’s reform agenda for greater involvement in fire safety by the firefighters may have a limitation factor placed upon it, particularly if it appears not to be part of the perceived job description of a “firefighter.”

During all of the interviews and questions, the bond and loyalty individuals show to their Watch is substantial and spontaneously defended if any criticisms are suggested: *“any problems are not of our making”* and *“manufactured from outsiders.”* Senior officers come in for much criticism and examples of this were often given as anecdotes with officers made caricatures of to emphasise the firefighter viewpoint. The firefighters accepted that *“drills”* [practical continuation training] are important and that they *“should be done well”* and as *“a rehearsal for the reality of operational incidents, but*

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when a senior officer observes a drill all he wants is speed.” [This, they argued, is how senior officers make judgements as to whether a drill is satisfactory]. *“If mistakes happen on a fast drill, they put this down to enthusiasm, but a lack of interest if individuals make mistakes on slower drills.”* This viewpoint was common throughout the fieldwork and appears to be part of the fire service culture and an unwritten rule that speed is the main focus, whenever an officer observes a drill. This belief from individuals grows into a collective cynicism from the Watch who resent officer criticism of *“our Watch”* because they believe they have *“the necessary skills to perform the role asked of them.”* One firefighter made this explicit by saying: *“sooner or later one of us will make a mistake trying to impress these so called officers, this then reinforces their belief that we are rubbish and training is a continuous requirement.”* An intriguing comparison was made when the above comments were put to a senior officer. He rationalised this as not a fault on part of the officers or the system, but as a fault of *“slack Watch Commanders being too friendly with the firefighters.”* Davis argues that the study of organisational culture requires an examination of the culture of those employees with lower-level jobs as this often forms a distinct sub-culture in its own right. He suggests further that the way these people view their jobs and work is often totally different from the way management view them (Davis, 1985). In a questionnaire administered by the Fire Service Inspectorate, one of the questions asked if the service should retain its current culture since it enjoyed high levels of public confidence and support. The result identified a wide difference between the Watch personnel and everyone else in the organisation. The Watch based personnel saw no need for change whilst the rest appeared receptive to change (Fire Service Inspectorate, 2002:25-26).

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The allure of being part of the Watch culture should not be underestimated nor the effect it can have on individuals when the bond is broken so that a member may take a promotion. Firefighters during the research spoke of “*betrayal*” if the promotion was to a non-operational section. If the newly promoted person goes to another Watch, it is not seen as “*betraying one’s roots*” but there is another immediate disadvantage: Any inappropriate behaviour this new officer encounters on the new Watch is often put down to “*their way of doing things and the norm.*” This is seldom challenged because the new officer instinctively knows “*there will only be one winner.*”

Many of the personnel are happy with the new “casual uniform” of polo shirts, which has gradually been introduced in the British Fire Service since 1990. In some brigades, even the formal uniform is now open-necked shirts and these can be found in a variety of colours. The firefighters expressed a view that “*the old militaristic uniform that they used to wear as standard, with the senior officers having a different style with “scrambled egg” on their hats [a raised metallic relief depicting specific ranks] did not belong in the service of today.*” This was a strange paradox, considering all the evidence from previous reports (including what the firefighters were telling the author) suggesting they were happy with the way the service is, wanting things to remain the same and did not want any change whatsoever. The evidence from this research suggests change is not seen as change if the firefighters are happy with it. Some Watch officers did have a different perspective, they “*liked the casual dress as a working rig,*” but they also “*liked the symbolism of rank and prestige that came with the formal uniform.*” The service has responded to this with most brigades now issuing “mini” rank markings to be clipped on to the collar of the casual shirts. The phrase “*us and them*” as well as

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describing the differences in uniform, was also used to describe the general differences in approach by senior officers. In the brigades where even high-ranking officers wore the same open-necked uniform as the firefighters, this was rationalised as “*officers trying to pretend they are really like us, but they are not, they still spend their days shuffling paper around. All they do is make plans for some future event that never occurs, they have no idea or care what happens to us. They don't like us and we don't like them.*” With this sort of general attitude, there is little wonder at the apparent lack of trust between the various groupings in the fire service and appreciation of the different roles.

This lack of trust between the ranks and the system manifested itself in questions about promotion and promotion interviews. When asked why fewer firefighters are putting themselves forward to become officers, the common answer was: “*ability counts for nothing, they will promote who they want anyway.*” This practice of possible favouritism has been recognised in a document produced by the Fire Service Inspectorate on Equality and Fairness (Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999:40-41). The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), [which is now being called “Iggeldey Piggeldey Diddely Squat” by the firefighters nationally] intended to be a radical support structure for individual and organisational development, has unfortunately added to the problem. The general implementation date of 1st April 2003, whilst only a target, was not met and the uncertainty of the value of promotion examinations (to be removed once IPDS is fully implemented) has resulted in some Watch personnel neglecting their development needs. Both the firefighters and the Watch officers are unhappy with the situation and unsure how to proceed. One firefighter said: “*Why should I spend months*

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studying for an exam when others will only have to provide evidence they can meet the requirements of the new standards?” This is a simplistic response, but one the service has to deal with. The IPDS has the capacity to be more stringent than the examinations through a structured development programme confirming that understanding can be applied competently in a variety of practical contexts, both on the station and on the incident ground. Sub Officer Hayles of the London Fire Brigade, summing up general feelings about the promotion procedures said: *“I believe the promotion process is not right. I got through the half-hour interview when you had to know everything before you went into the interview room. Now you just need an assessor to sign you off. I agree that competence-based training is good, but the process is unclear at present. Some people wafted through, others were wading in treacle. And it did not reflect ability”* (Hayles, 2001:20). For those firefighters who did go for promotion, the job turned out to be not what they expected. A number of Watch officers confided, that after the first rush of euphoria after their promotion, a degree of inertia set in. They said they felt like *“a goldfish in a bowl under constant scrutiny.”* The working day on the fire stations is still strictly controlled with documented operating procedures for the officers to adhere to and set times for particular activities. *“If I try to do something different and a senior officer arrives, I have to justify my every action – so why bother.”* Other officers commented on the *“firefighters doing only what was asked of them and then waiting to be told what to do next. This is not to say they couldn’t care less, it’s just the way things happen. I feel the same as them, brigade orders [a document on the brigade operating procedures] are too restrictive.”* When asked about operational incidents the general feeling was *“it’s great, we all love doing that part of the job and we do it well.”* Even

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this was tempered with some concerns: *“I was promoted to do the job [supervising their teams] but they [senior officers] won’t even let me do that at a shout. [emergency call] A more senior officer usually turns up and takes over, after I have set everything up, and then he tells me what to do, but it’s already in place.”* Some Watch officers added to this by saying: *“the senior officer does not actually take over command, he uses his rank to delegate tasks, but at the same time he tells me I am still in charge but I still have to follow his orders.”* This is a legitimate point raised by the majority of the Watch officers interviewed during the research and will be commented upon more fully in 5.9.

If one had to condense all the views from the Watch personnel into a single theme, the lack of trust between all the ranks and the lack of belief in the proposed structures comes to the forefront. Possible solutions could add to the problems if handled in a piecemeal fashion without first investigating the reasons behind each of the problems. The lack of trust appears to be not only deep in particular brigades but also throughout the service as a whole. It was therefore significant to investigate the values and beliefs of the senior officers managing the brigades.

5.9 Introduction to the Values and Beliefs of Senior Officers

Brown states that leadership is an important factor in organisational culture (Brown, 1998:46). This has also been recognised by Selznick many years ago (Selznick, 1957). Davis asserts that: *“If the leader is a great person, then inspiring ideas will permeate the corporation’s culture. If the leader is mundane, then the guiding beliefs may well be uninspired. Strong beliefs make for strong cultures. The clearer the leader is about what*

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he stands for, the more apparent will be the culture of that company” (Davis, 1984:8).

This section, by researching the values and beliefs of the service’s senior officers, will help identify some of the reasons for the conflict and misunderstandings throughout the service and how the leadership is affecting and moulding the culture. The fieldwork includes a mix of observations and informal discussions, mainly to crosscheck values and perceptions from the earlier fieldwork with the watch based personnel. The final segment of the study involved twenty formal interviews. The interviewees comprised of four chief fire officers [in Scotland chief fire officers are called firemasters but the terms chief fire officer, deputy and assistant chief fire officer are used for anonymity], two deputy chief fire officers, four assistant chief fire officers, six divisional officers grade one and four divisional officers grade three.

In 5.8, the Watch officers expressed a view that senior officers were (inadvertently) undermining them at operational incidents by issuing orders but not taking command. The author can empathise with this viewpoint, because it happened to him when he was a station officer on a Watch. Humberside Fire Brigade does not keep statistics on the number of emergency calls a particular Watch attends. However, in 1998, the author did keep statistics on these calls as part of a project and they include the number of times he and his fellow officers took command during the year at emergency incidents:

Rank	Incident Commander – White Watch. Hull Central. 1998
Station Officer	227 times as incident commander.
Sub Officer	211 times as incident commander
Leading Firefighter	202 times as incident commander

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When the above is compared to the incident commander role performed in Humberside Fire Brigade by the 21 Station Officers, the 19 Assistant Divisional Officers, the 21 Divisional Officers on the flexible duty system and the three Principal Officers, a distinct difference can be seen. The 1st column shows the highest number of mobilisations for an individual, the 2nd column shows the lowest number of mobilisations and the 3rd column the mean for each group:

Rank	Highest	Lowest	Mean
Station Officers	245	031	110
Ass. Div. Officers	141	041	081
Divisional Officers	068	003	019
Principal Officers	003	001	002

From the officer mobilisation data below, 67% of all the officers go to fewer than 100 emergency calls per year, some substantially less. The breakdown for the percentages in relationship to the number of emergency calls these 64 officers attended in 2000 is as follows:

Number of emergency calls in a year	Number of officers within that range	Percentage of officers within that range
0 - 49	25	39%
50 - 99	18	28%
100 - 149	13	20%
150 - 199	05	08%
200 plus	03	05%

(Source: Humberside Fire Brigade Mobilising Data, 2000)

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All the figures refer to mobilisations only and as such, they do not provide any indication if the officer took command or actually got there (a “stop” message may have been received by the officer en route stating no more resources required). However, the Watch figures from 1998, provided by the author, do reflect the command role. [Taking actual command, not just being mobilised to the incident]

Senior officers with a command and control role are conditioned to a duty system that averages out to no more than 78 hours per week. These extra hours, above 42, reflect a stand by commitment and depending on where the officer lives, these command area duties can be performed from his own address. A 20% enhancement to the salary is paid for this duty. The commitment from senior officers to the operational command role is not only extensive throughout the British Fire Service, it is expected. This commitment has therefore to be catered for with constant operational updates, seminars and training courses to ensure the currency and validity of their skills for the operational role. This can put some senior officers at a disadvantage to their peers. A number of officers during the fieldwork expressed a view that they had *“feelings of inadequacy if they went to fewer emergency calls than others of the same rank.”* To prevent this occurring they would *“attend anything and everything if they were near an incident when mobile”* [in their cars]. This can create another dilemma for the service because these officers already lose a number of hours from their managerial role by attending operational updates and training sessions. By “attending anything and everything” in order to increase the number of emergency calls logged to them, they not only put pressure on themselves through increased workloads, they dilute the command opportunities for Watch officers. They become part-time managers and part-time commanders and are

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extremely busy - all at the same time. Upon further investigation, it became apparent that some officers are confusing their command role with the tactical command role of the Watch commanders. At large operational incidents a proportion of senior officers may well be designated as tactical commanders, but the main role of these officers attending "normal" incidents is the exercise of strategic command in order to plan the priorities for the tactical commanders. By just "turning up" at incidents when their attendance is not really justified, these officers feel obligated to become involved and in turn, justify their attendance. The Watch officers told the author that "*in some circumstances, when a senior officer turns up unexpected, we let him get on with it*" and some senior officers told the author "*it's a good job I decided to go, [to the incident] because they needed my help.*" It is little wonder then that some officers are experiencing stress as they have become conditioned to the circumstances with some adding "*there is too much to do and too little time to do it in.*" A study by the Fire Service Inspectorate recognised that fire service officers might attempt to do too much, resulting in stress and rendering them less effective: "*At present many people are only able to function by working many hours of their own time. This has created a long hours culture at senior management levels, which in turn can affect personal and family relationships*" (Fire Service Inspectorate, 2001:32). Discussing these issues informally with senior officers did indeed identify feelings of stress. Views ranged from "*doing more is never enough*" to "*how can we complain, we demand it of others.*" Stress in the fire service does appear to be more common than it used to be and the needs of senior officers must be catered for, but this seems to be either ignored, neglected or not recognised.

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Another “stressor” for officers can be the Watch culture resisting change through the Fire Brigades Union. The fire service is under constant pressure from the government to change and reorganise in order to meet demanding performance targets to restrict further increases in public expenditure. Colling argues that during the Conservative government of the 1980s and the 1990s these economies were often accompanied by “*the philosophical objective of breaking union power bases*” (Colling, 1995:134-145). In a research article on organisational change in the fire service, middle managers commented that “*real authority still rests with executive management and that much of the devolvement [to a flatter hierarchy] has been a paper exercise. I have no direct control over any money; all things are dictated by headquarters.*” The article goes on to mention that if an officer disagrees with the policy, they can really only oppose it through their FBU representatives (Fitzgerald & Stirling, 1999:46-60). This can place some officers in a predicament; they are FBU members applying policies that they and the FBU disagree with. A number of officers, particularly at the Assistant Divisional Officer rank, openly admitted to the author “*rather than create conflict with the firefighters, I become engrossed in projects and let others [the station officers] take on the Watches.*”

Observations by the author on how this attitude by a few officers translates into the realities of their role identified possible problems with this “specialisation.” Some officers, including those at ease with senior management policies, are becoming detached from their command and management role, often to the neglect of this important function. This is not intended as a criticism of individuals, as they put many hours into their “projects” [investigating how fitness affects performance for example],

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but as a criticism of the system. One officer spoke of his *“operational duties interfering with his work during the day”* so he consequently *“worked late on a night to make his day easier.”* During the fieldwork this viewpoint was aired many times and confirmed by observing officer practice. This “officer specialisation” also undermines the skills of the non-uniformed support staff and these concerns have been documented in a report on cultural equality in 1999. The report noted that that it was common practice to use highly ranked uniformed personnel to head sections of non-uniformed staff and that this not only caused *“disruption whilst the officer learned the basic elements of the job, but the effect was to limit drastically the opportunity for advancement in the service for other than uniformed officers.”* The report argued that *“the effect of this is that uniformed leadership fed from a single tier of development of officers, creates an “us and them” culture”* (Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999:22-23). The officers heading these sections do not see anything wrong in them commanding non-uniformed staff with greater skills than themselves because they believe, that as an officer, their job is to *“provide leadership and that is where the real skill lies.”* One non-uniformed academic (at the Fire Service College) told the author *“they [officers] are totally unaware of the frustration this causes me and the way my views are ignored.”* The author concluded that because this officer practice is “normal” throughout the British Fire Service, the problem is not recognised and therefore seldom challenged. When this proposition was put to some senior officers, the discussion was terminated [this was not unduly unexpected due to the rank of the author] with the power of rank enforced or a justification reply supporting the skills of the senior officer. In either case, the challenge was met by termination of the discussion. Baigent has identified this problem of access

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and in his thesis on the culture of the fire service he suggests (that in his case) *“the attempt by the fire service establishment to limit my access is sad. It suggests the fire service is reluctant to allow “independent” academics to carry out research into the fire service, almost as if they are a closed organisation concerned about scrutiny”* (Baigent, 2001b:32).

The senior officers of the service (above Assistant Divisional Officer rank) are extremely powerful people and they can determine not only who has access to how they conduct their business, but how the context of their business is viewed. Brown contends that: *“Organisational leaders have the power to call and postpone meetings, shape agendas and determine the way in which minutes are written up. They thus possess considerable influence to define those issues which are important to an organisation, and the organisation’s official view on key matters”* (Brown, 1998:179). This statement by Brown is of great significance to the author. Informal discussions with officers above Assistant Divisional Officer rank were not conducted due to these officers being uncomfortable with the “relaxed questioning” format. This style of interview was attempted in the early stages of the fieldwork but this seemed to generate a degree of suspicion from them with the questions often viewed as a challenge to their performance or even integrity. These officers then attempted to re-phrase the question into one they thought should be asked and one they would answer. A formal structured interview asking for their views, in their office, on a range of issues, in private and anonymous was an interview they could relate to as this was “non-threatening” to their status. Officers of the Assistant Divisional Officer rank did however speak freely in the informal interviews and these are now included.

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5.10 Informal Interviews with the Assistant Divisional Officers (ADOs)

A number of set questions were prepared with linked themes to enable the interviews to become more of a directed conversation. The main aim was to get these officers to talk on a variety of subjects in order to determine what was important to them. A total of twenty ADOs took part and the entire set of interviews was conducted on a one-to-one basis with anonymity guaranteed to the interviewees.

The pay and conditions dispute of 2002 and 2003 dominated these discussions and most thought that the new pay scales had the potential to be a powerful tool in the restructuring of the fire service and in the change from ranks to roles. Most could see real advantages in pay differentials for individuals who could provide evidence of competent performance. When the author asked if we should rely on this demonstration of competent performance as the criteria for promotion, the answers were totally different with the majority arguing that this was inconsistent with the principles of equality and fairness. The issue of *“patronage”* and that some promotion candidates *“are being selected for the job before the interview”* came across quite strongly, with some providing personal examples of *“why I should have got the job instead of him.”* Others contradicted their previous answers as regards support for performance related pay by saying *“one-off assessments of an individual’s value is wrong, we should be rewarding the team rather than individual performance.”* All of the interviewees had been members of promotion panels in the past, but they demonstrated great suspicion of the system when they themselves were candidates for promotion. The author re-phrased the question on individual performance to one of organisational performance and asked how the service could reward an individual who contributes to best practice. At first,

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they had difficulty composing a response, but the most frequent one was *“finding a suitable comfort zone [a job they enjoyed] and staying there.”* The fire service always assumes specialists and individuals to become very knowledgeable quite quickly to become the “brigade expert.” Once an individual has established this “comfort zone” their position is seldom challenged and their self-esteem rises. The ADO is the perfect rank for this practice and it is quite common in the fire service to find ADOs holding this rank (and their specialist role) for a number of years. It is also the perfect rank to pass problems both up and down the hierarchy and some of the officers interviewed were honest enough to admit to this and pointed to the pay system as one reason for this personal “plateau.” For example, there are pay increments during the first three years upon appointment to a higher rank and a further increase after fifteen years employment. It is therefore perfectly possible for an ADO on third year money, with fifteen years service in, to be on more money than a Divisional Officer grade III who is on second year money without fifteen years service in (2003 pay formula). There is also the added bonus for the ADOs of reduced responsibility for this greater pay and the maintenance of their particular comfort zone. Four of the interviewees mentioned that by them remaining as ADOs in their specialist roles *“it keeps us away from winging firefighters.”*

When questioned about appraisals most viewed them as *“something that is done to others,”* and in the case of the ADOs, who had reached their “personal plateau,” *“I don’t need anybody to appraise me.”* As to their value, the author received a mixed range of answers:

- *“Most appraisals are a waste of theirs and my time.”*

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- *“Why appraise? We now have performance standards.”*
- *“Appraisals only really identify training needs.”*
- *“I suppose it’s a good chance for someone to air their views.”*
- *“Appraisals need to be continuous, not once a year.”*

Mayo understands these concerns and he too questions the value of an annual discussion with employees about their performance and career aspirations. Mayo argues: *“Does it make any sense to leave high value people assets to the mercy of a once-a-year dialogue about their performance and their future. If this is the case, it is yet one more example of our failure of how to manage people as assets”* (Mayo, 2002:52). The ADOs would possibly agree with Mayo’s reasoning and this may be the crux of a number of fire service problems; the people with the authority and responsibility to instigate change often do not believe in the policy. Regular but informal communication with the personnel under an officer’s responsibility should be regarded as an essential feature of their role and may be the way forward to change the behaviours and attitudes of both the appraisee and the appraiser.

The discussions generated legitimate concerns with one officer summing up the majority of feelings: *“We feel let down by everyone, nobody is really happy. We only apply solutions to problems that are easy to solve. I haven’t a clue where the service is heading.”* A few officers were genuinely happy and content with their current role and expressed a view that lateral career development should be given more consideration as a way to instill new challenges and motivation. When questioned further upon this they admitted that at present their work is often undervalued or appreciated and the reward is often more work, more deadlines to meet or the senior officer heading the section taking

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all the plaudits. The research suggests that if these issues and concerns are not addressed throughout the British Fire Service there exists the possibility of a downward spiral in motivation for the officers who wish to remain in the ADO rank. Some officers in “specialist roles” have also become expert at saying one thing and doing another. They are doing work to the required standard but have no real faith in the usefulness of that work, either to their brigade or to the service generally. Government policies on best value, transparency, flexibility, performance standards, outcomes and audits were singled out by the ADOs as the main reasons for this growing apathy and lack of belief.

5.11 Formal Interviews with High Ranking Officers

The British Fire Service is an organisation in constant transition. Fire station personnel overcome problems through collective action, cooperation, teamwork and relationships based upon trust and friendship. The senior officers of each local authority fire brigade have a duty to train, develop and support this pool of human resources so that they can continue the transition process. This development is essential, as under the single-tier entry system, some will have to become the service’s senior officers and future leaders. To understand more fully this process and why change occurs in specific ways, it is necessary to unravel the beliefs and values of the service’ current leaders.

Twenty high ranking officers were interviewed by the author on a one-to-one basis in the officer’s own office to help identify the mainstream thinking and any inconsistencies in approach or beliefs. Eighteen questions were asked and most of the interviews took two hours to complete with four of the interviews taking in excess of three hours. The rank of the officer was taken into consideration and they were grouped to detect any

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variances between the rank and also the rank of the other officers interviewed. Four groupings were used for this approach:

- Group A: Four Chief Fire Officers.
- Group B: Two Deputy Chief Fire Officers and four Assistant Chief Fire Officers.
- Group C: Six Divisional Officers (grade I).
- Group D: Four Divisional Officers (grade III).

Question 1. Is the single-tier entry system still valid in a modern service, considering high-rank promotions usually occur late in a person's career?

Group A. They all agreed it is still valid but it has to have a structure that identifies and develops potential at a much earlier stage. Two of the Chief Fire Officers talked about their personal experience and how they nearly gave up on brigade command.

Group B. All identified it is still valid but wanted a system developing to fast-track individuals with potential. 50% thought that if this did not occur multi-tier entry was inevitable.

Group C. Most in the group were unsure but they all identified a need to develop potential at a much earlier stage.

Group D. All thought it is still valid providing a fast-track approach is introduced for those with identified potential.

Question 2. Now that the upper age limit for recruit entry has been abolished, will this prevent academically skilled people from applying, as they will not have enough time to achieve high office moving through the ranks one at a time?

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Group A. Half thought that it would prevent graduates from joining whilst the others said it will not be much of a problem because the service has always managed with the resources it has.

Group B. All said it will cause the service some problems in the future with everyone unsure as to the extent.

Group C. All said it will cause some problems but the service has always managed in the past and there is no reason to suggest the service will not manage in the future.

Group D. One officer said it would cause problems and if the calibre of the entrant did not have the intellect or the capacity to move into management, there would be real problems some time in the future. The others thought this was of little consequence and “*officership*” is something that can be “*developed*” and “*trained for.*”

Question 3. Would you support officer entry for individuals who apply with a proven management record?

Group A. This question created real problems with one saying: “*you cannot create a pseudo rank in an effort to provide experience. It is unreal.*” Another said: “*it is not possible, we have a system in place but if this changes then yes, there may be a possibility for graduate officer entry.*” The two remaining officers spent a lot of time grappling with the question but eventually thought it was not possible.

Group B. Four of the six officers supported officer entry and thought this was inevitable. The other two were unsure and after much deliberation decided against it.

Group C. All in this group thought that firefighting experience is essential and the service can “*train people to be academics.*”

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Group D. There was support for officer entry providing operational experience was not neglected.

Question 4. How important are academic qualifications in relation to operational management and command?

Group A. All of them separated the question by saying that management qualifications are a measure of a person's intellect, but for command purposes, experience is the essential factor.

Group B. No one in the group could agree with the linkage between management and command in the question. All argued that whilst management qualifications are important, experience is more important. One officer said: "*you can teach management but not experience.*"

Group C. The question once again triggered much discussion with one interviewee taking over half an hour to ponder all the possible alternatives. A consensus of opinion was that "*academic qualifications are useful but experience is essential.*"

Group D. Mixed answers with one officer summing up the feelings within this grouping by saying: "*academic qualifications provide an insight into business problems but experience is really the key.*"

The question was deliberately phrased in this way to ascertain how senior management would react. Throughout the research, "operational experience" was often quoted as the main requirement for good decision making, whatever task or role the individual had. Academic qualifications are often seen as additional and whilst good to have, they are not really necessary.

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Question 5. Should the recruit firefighter initial training course identify potential for career advancement such as dealing with information and dealing with people?

Group A. All of the interviewees held an opinion that the recruit course would bring this out naturally.

Group B. In contrast to group A, all the interviewees in this group said this should be an explicit objective of the course as it seldom happens or if it does, it is by chance.

Group C. The common viewpoint was that the recruit course was too late for this and that it should have been identified at the selection stage.

Group D. The identification of potential to become an officer was regarded as an essential feature of the single-tier entry system and therefore an essential requirement and objective of the firefighter training course.

Question 6. Has the service too many ranks and do you agree with the changeover to roles?

Group A. The Chief Fire Officers did not agree with roles saying that they depend on a number of variables whilst ranks are essential for command. They did see a need to be more flexible with the rank structure and all thought the Senior Divisional Officer rank should be removed. One officer expressed an opinion that the Leading Firefighter rank is *“too near the firefighting role and that it should be removed.”* The question identified that they were unhappy with the change from ranks to roles. This was because rank provides the principles of command. Some went further and said *“rank provides authority and some individuals will not carry out orders otherwise.”*

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Group B. One officer said: *“I have never believed in ranks, they only have a place for showing levels of importance externally.”* Whilst the change to roles was viewed as inevitable, a common belief was that rank should still be used at operational incidents due to the inherent dangers firefighters faced. The rank of Leading Firefighter was considered unnecessary.

Group C. The majority favoured ranks for operational incidents and roles for all other aspects of the fire service’s work. The rank of Divisional Officer grade II was identified as the one for removal.

Group D. All the interviewees were very positive, they preferred ranks because of the clearly defined supervision level with each rank. They could not really understand why the changeover to roles was necessary because people have roles now and the rank determines the degree of importance of that role and consequently the level of pay. The ranks of Divisional Officer grade II and Leading Firefighter were identified for removal.

Question 7. Do you think each individual should have their own career development plan?

Group A. This was seen as an essential ingredient for organisational development and with time it will become a mandatory requirement.

Group B. All the responses agreed with the Chief Fire Officers.

Group C. All the responses agreed with the Chief Fire Officers with one officer saying: *“I find it incredible we do not do this already.”*

Group D. All the responses agreed with the Chief Fire Officers but none were sure how this could be achieved.

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Question 8. Does the backlog of officers waiting for Fire Service College courses, which we deem essential, highlight weaknesses in a brigade's individual development strategy?

Group A. This is a constant problem for Chief Fire Officers, not only are they criticised for this backlog by the Fire Service Inspectorate on their annual inspections, but they cannot afford to have their officers away for extended periods of time. Another problem they identified is the lack of finance to reduce the backlog and the difficulty brigades and the College have to provide development at an appropriate time in an individual's career and at a time that is suitable to both parties.

Group B. This problem is well appreciated and all the officers realised that mandatory courses for everyone is not the way ahead. Being more selective and the introduction of locally run courses were common suggestions. They all hoped that the introduction of the Integrated Personal Development System would ease the problem.

Group C. The common viewpoint was that the problem was a lack of finance and that internal courses may need to be considered.

Group D. The value of the Fire Service College courses was questioned. Most thought that with the introduction on the National Occupational Standards and the IPDS it might no longer be necessary to send everyone to the College.

Question 9. Should a brigade fund all of an individual's development costs when the benefit to the individual is a promotion and an increase in salary?

Group A. The Chief Fire Officers all thought that the organisation has a duty to fund development but individuals should recognise that this is the minimum requirement and

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they too have a responsibility to develop themselves further. One officer said: *“an individual development plan would identify needs.”*

Group B. The consensus view was that a brigade should fund all the development but the word partnership dominated their answers. Most said this should be linked back to an individual development plan to prevent a *“blanket approach”* to training, thus reducing the costs.

Group C. All the interviewees said the brigade should fund the courses and by doing so, they would remain in control of the course content and it would be to the brigade’s advantage.

Group D. All but one said the brigade has a responsibility in this area and they should discharge it, as it is an investment in the future. One officer said: *“I would prefer to discuss my specific needs with the organisation and have the opportunity to be part-funded for an appropriate degree.”*

Question 10. Are Watches essential for teamwork and the operational role?

Group A. A mixed response with comments such as: *“Watches form a bond of trust”* and *“teamwork is overrated and individuals need to be more accountable.”* All agreed that with the new National Occupational Standards, the Watch ethos is becoming less important.

Group B. Most of the answers referred to specific problems with the Watches, such as the reluctance of individuals to move to another station once they became settled and the problems this can cause with *“Watch cultures doing it their way.”* Another said: *“unfortunately there is no alternative to the Watch system at the moment.”*

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Group C. A great deal of personal experience was recalled with much time spent talking about Watch based problems because “*they [the watches] are too close knit.*” They too would like to see them removed but could not think how to achieve this.

Group D. They all agreed, that Watches are not that important but they thought that management could do nothing about it because the service is locked into this way of thinking and the FBU would strike over any threat of removal. All the officers mentioned the large number of problems Watches cause senior officers and that this outweighs any benefits from the Watch system.

Question 11. Should uniform be mandatory for everyone in the service, or only for those on operational duties?

Group A. A contentious issue as the old style shirts worn with ties are gradually being replaced by polo or open-necked shirts. By the very nature of the single-tier entry system, the Chief Fire Officers have been in the service a very long time and all remember (with a degree of fondness) the smart militaristic uniform of yesteryear. They all thought that a smart uniform is important for everyone in the service but accepted the principle of the more casual approach.

Group B. All the interviewees came up with the same response, a casual uniform for the operational role and a formal style for special occasions. They wanted “*some sort of uniform for senior officers*” and thought “*blazers with ties are the most appropriate.*”

Group C. A number of mixed answers. They recognised the need to portray a professional image and some thought a uniform would meet this requirement whilst others thought it should be more casual for the operational crews and possibly not

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necessary at all for senior officers as *“name badges and their role was sufficient.”* One officer thought the service had already gone too far and he liked his uniform of shirt, tie and rank markings *“because I have worked bloody hard for it.”*

Group D. Only one officer thought that uniform was unnecessary and a simple working rig was all that was needed for the firefighters. All the others wanted *“a uniform of some sort and with badges of rank.”*

Question 12. If the British Fire Service is to have a uniform, should we agree upon a corporate style and colour that is immediately recognisable in the same way as the green of the paramedics is recognisable?

Group A. A definite yes by everyone.

Group B. A definite yes by everyone.

Group C. A definite yes by everyone.

Group D. A definite yes by everyone.

A conclusive response from all the officers interviewed with some going into great detail on what they thought the uniform should consist of. For the choice of colour, a few said it did not really matter, for the majority the choice was red.

Question 13 Operational fitness is a requirement throughout a career for everyone, is this appropriate?

Group A. All the Chief Fire Officers saw the need for a good standard of fitness to be maintained and added that the context of the role should be the determining factor for the degree of fitness, with the individual being responsible for this.

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Group B. The majority viewpoint was that it was only important for operational personnel.

Group C. The views mirrored group B and cited the Assistant Divisional Officer role as the level at which reduced fitness levels could be tolerated.

Group D. The common viewpoint was that maintenance of fitness levels should be appropriate to the role and also for good health.

Question 14. Who motivated you to seek promotion when you were a firefighter?

Group A. Everyone said it was their Watch officers.

Group B. Everyone said it was their Watch officers.

Group C. Everyone said it was their Watch officers.

Group D. Everyone said it was their Watch officers.

Nearly all the interviewees added that the officers in charge of the Watch constantly “*pushed them*” and seem to take a pride in someone from their Watch gaining a promotion as “*it reflected well upon them.*”

Question 15. Should the giving of career advice be included in an officer’s job description and who has the ideal role for this?

Group A. The Station Commander role was the obvious choice for the Chief Fire Officers due to this person’s link between the Watches, senior management and the needs of the individual and the organisation.

Group B. All thought that any officer should be capable of giving career advice and one said: “*some may need development in this so as to provide the corporate viewpoint.*”

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Group C. The Watch and Station Commanders were identified as the most appropriate persons and training should be given to these officers.

Group D. Whilst the Watch and Station Commanders featured strongly as the identified persons, other comments ranged from “*career advice should be incorporated into regular appraisal interviews*” and “*line managers may not be the best people to use as some people may feel exposed and will not open up.*” Another thought that non-uniformed specialists should be used.

Question 16. Should a person serve a minimum period of time in each rank before being eligible for further promotion?

Group A. Ability and potential were regarded as more important than set periods of time in each rank. They also acknowledged that at the moment, systems are not in place to audit these skills. All the Chief Fire Officers commented on the fact that there are always a certain number of officers temporarily promoted due to shortfalls and it gives: “*the brigade a chance to informally assess ability and potential.*”

Group B. The length of time in each rank was regarded as unimportant with competence as the real factor. Two officers said there should be tenure of office and that this period should be three years.

Group C. All agreed that a set period of time is unimportant and being able to do the job competently is the real issue.

Group D. One officer brought up the argument that for promotions up to station officer level you already have to serve a number of years in the ranks below before becoming eligible and that this should be extended for every promotion throughout the ranks.

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Others thought a “*blanket approach*” was the wrong way with most adding the service should rely on “*demonstration of competence.*”

Question 17. Is operational experience an essential criterion for promotion when even at the busiest of fire stations operational incidents account for less than 20% of the total time available?

Group A. The Chief Fire Officers all gave similar answers saying experience is poor justification and that skill levels need to be evidenced by audit. They added that at the moment there is no choice as there is no other measure. Ability and potential were once again regarded as the key measures.

Group B. Operational competence was regarded as the best measure for understanding and applying the requirements of the role.

Group C. All these officers thought that “*all-round experience is very important and the essential criteria for further promotion.*” Some saw a need for this being documented as a way of confirming competence.

Group D. Experience was also seen as the key measure and two officers described this as: “*the bedrock of the fire service.*” All thought that the keeping of an operational log recording the number of operational incidents attended and the actions implemented would confirm this reliance on experience.

Question 18. If there were one thing you could do, regardless of the cost, to improve professional development of individuals, what would that be?

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Group A. Two views dominated. A complete review of the Conditions of Service [as advocated in the Bain review] and the culture of the service was in need of a radical *“shake-up.”*

Group B. Half the officers in this grouping believed that full implementation of the Integrated Personal Development System would achieve this. The others thought *“a shift in emphasis back to the core role of the service is the way ahead.”* One officer said: *“we have taken our eye off the ball.”*

Group C. Two main views prevailed, support for those with the potential and aptitude for academic qualifications and a proper reward system to motivate people towards self-development.

Group D. Attempting to change personal attitudes dominated the thinking of these officers, but they were unable to state how this could be achieved.

5.12 Conclusions from the Formal Interviews

The interviews showed how different ranks could view the same problems differently. This may be due to the way the service approaches “team working.” One example of this is the way those of the same rank hold meetings to decide policy for a number of other ranks. These meetings can act as a “closed shop” with section heads (all of the same rank) deciding how a number of other ranks will act and behave. Whilst section heads and senior officers have the authority and responsibility to decide policy it may be beneficial to include a number of stakeholders to act as “sounding boards” for the intended policy before it goes out for “general consultation” which is often viewed as “the decision has been made.” Clarke and Meldrum suggest that managers need to

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consider moving their focus of control to one of creating the right conditions so as to enable their employees to give their best (Clarke and Meldrum, 1999:70-80).

A number of general themes emerged from the interviews and the main views and responses of the twenty senior officers are now listed:

1. There is a need to identify potential earlier in an individual's career and a structure to fast-track this potential.
2. With the abolition of the upper-age limit for recruit entry, there may be problems in attracting academically skilled people at these higher ages because they will not have time to reach high office.
3. Graduate officer entry into the fire service does not have extensive senior officer support. This stance means that the recruit selection procedure has an important and continuing role to play in providing the service's future leaders.
4. For command at operational incidents, experience is still regarded as an important facet of the command function. To support this contention, the keeping of an operational log may help in determining the basis for this belief through confirmation of the range of incidents attended and the actions taken.
5. The senior officers concluded that recruit selection and initial training has an important role to play in helping the service regenerate itself through the single-tier entry system and hence, justify its continuance.
6. The rank structure, whilst in need of an overhaul, is still favoured for operational command. Roles are the preferred option for non-operational work.
7. The provision of an individual development plan has much support from the officers interviewed.

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8. Some fire brigades have identified that sending their officers on Fire Service College courses creates problems with finance and work commitments with officers being away from their place of duty. They believe this may become less of a problem once the IPDS format takes over.
9. The general view is that the fire service has a responsibility to provide training courses to develop their personnel. There appears to be growing support for individuals to become more involved in this process by identifying their needs through an individual development plan.
10. Most senior officers thought that Watches were not fulfilling the task asked of them and that individuals needed to be more accountable for their actions. With the introduction of the National Occupational Standards, the dominant view is that Watches will become less important to the work of the service. Most saw the Watch culture as detrimental to the modernisation of the fire service.
11. Nearly all of the senior officers interviewed wanted some form of uniform to be worn by members of the service. There is conflict as to whether this should be casual or a more formal uniform, especially for the officer ranks.
12. There is strong support for a corporate style of uniform with red being the most common colour choice.
13. Fitness was seen as an essential criterion for operational personal with a general relaxation for senior officer and those on non-operational roles. The appropriate level of fitness for the role was considered to be the deciding factor in this matter.
14. Watch officers are identified as the persons who have the crucial role to motivate others to seek promotion.

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15. The provision of career advice needs to be recognised as a skill with the necessary training given to the nominated persons to support this.
16. Ability and potential have been recognised as the necessary attributes for further promotion; not how long a person has been in a post or rank.
17. The Chief Fire Officers believe that ability and potential are the key measure of an individual's competence. The other officers interviewed still regard operational experience as an important factor.
18. To improve the professional development of individuals, the senior officers saw a need to change the culture, review the conditions of service and ensure full implementation of the IPDS takes place.

5.13 Succession Planning

During the research on professional development in the British Fire Service, nearly all the persons spoken to, regardless of rank, commented that it was extremely difficult to forecast development needs hence the service has to deal with problems as and when they occur. This widely held belief stems from the evidence available:

- The large number of officers who receive training and development for the next rank only after when they are actually in that post.
- The large number of officers still waiting for courses at the Fire Service College, which under the present conditions, are deemed necessary for the role. For some officers this can be a considerable time after the promotion.
- The lack of a suitably qualified pool of promotion candidates in some brigades.
- Some brigades running below establishment.

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- Some brigades unable to keep up with the demand for recruits to replace retirements.
- The number of “unexpected” retirements in some brigades.

The lack of finance for some of the above is certainly an issue, but can not be used as an excuse for all of them. The author researched the problems of succession planning using Humberside Fire Brigade for the research due to its median size as a shire brigade. The results of this research can be found in Appendix 4. to complement the British Fire Service research and fieldwork. The statistics are provided to demonstrate one method that predicts the number of personnel required for each rank, the number and type of development needs that have to be catered for and the expected frequency for this intervention. By constantly recording the movements of personnel and updating the statistical information, focused development intervention strategies can be developed and “in place” before shortfalls occur and/or new persons are in post, thus aiding professional development strategies.

Another strategy for succession planning is the investigation of how other organisations deal with similar problems so as to help identify best practice. Chapter Six looks at how other organisations approach professional development, how this resource is treated and replaced and the effect (if any) the prevailing culture has upon it.

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6.1 Introduction

The investigation into professional development in the fire service is an essential part of the modernisation process and one that cannot be ignored considering the sweeping changes proposed in the Bain Review delivered to the government on the 16th December 2002. Many professions are seeking newer ways to coordinate the learning of their employees and to facilitate and accommodate a mix of personal, vocational and academic development throughout an individuals career. This is a process that cannot be left to chance and with the fire service reviewing its traditional beliefs and embracing vocational qualifications. It is necessary therefore for this study to look at how the fire service of another country and that of other organisations approach individual and organisational development. The rationale behind the comparative studies has four objectives:

1. To identify evidence of this developmental approach.
2. To ascertain if the changes the various organisations are introducing are indeed beneficial and are readily accepted by their workforce.
3. To expand understanding for the British Fire Service in the context of how other organisations deal with professional development.
4. To compare the delivery of a fire service in another country to that of the British Fire Service.

The organisations visited included:

- The Childrens Society, a Christian charity chosen because its function is one of helping people rather than making money. High skill levels are demanded from its workforce to perform its prime role of helping disadvantaged people in society, in a

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similar manner to that of the fire service but without the use of rank, discipline and uniform.

- A Training Provider, chosen not for the analysis of its external training methods but how a training organisation internally trains and develops its own employees.
- The Police Service, chosen because of the apparent similarities between the fire service and another uniformed, disciplined highly trained service providing an emergency response to others in time of trouble.
- The Australian Fire Service, to compare any differences in approach. A number of Australian brigades were visited and include: The Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade, The Victorian Country Fire Authority, The New South Wales Fire Brigades, The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, The Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia. All of the brigade areas visited are vast compared to the English brigades, so vast that the State brigades dwarf the whole of the United Kingdom. In this context, the studies are of great value to ascertain how it is possible to coordinate personal development over such a large geographical area.
- The Royal Navy, chosen because of the apparent similarities between the fire service and a uniformed, disciplined highly trained service providing an effective response in times of trouble. The fire service traditions emanate from the Royal Navy (as noted in 2.5, chapter two) and these are now being challenged in the fire service as unacceptable for a modern progressive service.
- The British Retained Fire Service, chosen because it is viewed by the “wholetime service” as a separate entity with different development approaches and regarded as “second rate” even though there are more retained than full-time fire stations in the

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UK. The paradox of this viewpoint is an expectation that retained personnel must perform to the same standards at emergency incidents. The retained service has indeed been neglected over the years, mainly because it is very difficult to implement any real professional development strategies to an organisation that is only on duty for emergency calls plus its two to three hour training commitment each week.

6.2 The Investigation Strategy

The investigation strategy is a series of “mini-studies” to determine the relationship, if any, between the development of individuals, the organisation and its culture. The aim therefore, is to provide a comparative perspective to the main study through a fieldwork approach that observes questions and listens to the people in these organisations to identify different styles, systems and techniques. Fieldwork research is very time consuming and it is therefore essential that these many interactions provide the necessary data on the subject matter without becoming distracted on unnecessary matters and/or deviation from the prime focus. Each study was overt and included a review of the organisation’s literature on professional development. Discussions with senior management focussed on how development is approached and informal discussions with the various grades in the organisation explored the development process to ascertain how they felt about the subject. The “mini-studies” provided good information for the main research with the Childrens Society, the Training Provider and the Police studies all completed in four months. The Australian Fire Service, The Royal Navy and the British Retained Fire Service took two years in total to complete,

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including return visits to confirm specific points. Research using fieldwork is a science that whilst never easy does become easier if approached in a logical manner, especially when investigating the same phenomenon a number of times in different organisations. In this respect, the comparative studies became a method in their own right and provided support for the extensive fieldwork with the British Fire Service. The author recognises the limitations of a study relating to specific aspects of an organisation's work, but the research did provide a link and a correlation to the fire service study. At all times the management of the various organisations were amenable for the author to interview a cross-section of the employees and to question management on their policies and human resource development structures. This cooperation suggests that the investigation was not seen or viewed as threat to their systems in place, indeed they seemed pleased to share their experiences with an outsider.

6.3 The Children's Society

The Children's Society is an independent Christian charity working with children, young people and families in more than 150 projects throughout England and Wales. The projects deal with a variety of problems and include drug and alcohol dependency, broken homes, poor housing, sexual abuse, learning difficulties, special needs, safe accommodation and the provision of "guardians ad litem." Due to this extensive work by the Society, they have in place a comprehensive range of development programmes to cater for corporate and individual development needs. As a Society they recognise the problem of trying to provide an all-encompassing service and the projects are continually being streamlined to enable the finite resources respond to particular defined

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needs. The author at this stage made a decision to concentrate on one particular aspect of their work and chose the guardian ad litem project.

The roots of the guardian ad litem service lie within the concept of a child's voice being heard in court proceedings. The legislation enabling this to happen was the Children Act of 1975. The Children Act of 1989 considerably extended the guardian's role and guardians ad litem are expected to give paramount consideration to the needs of the child and safeguard these interests until he/she achieves adulthood. The guardian's role therefore is to look after the interests of children when courts have to make decisions about a child's future and to prepare reports for the court with a recommendation for the future. It is a statutory duty of every local authority to provide a panel of guardians to meet the demands of the courts within its area and this task can be delegated to another organisation either wholly, or in part. Much evidence exists within the Childrens Society of development programmes to cater for the corporate and individual need with an abundance of training programmes and support mechanisms for personal growth. This process begins upon employment with an induction policy based upon five principles:

- To enable new members to join the workplace and meet its expectations.
- To develop knowledge and skills essential for the identified tasks.
- To meet the needs for personal survival and growth.
- To provide a basis for continuous development.
- To begin to meet the needs of the workplace and organisation in terms of competency.

To assist the guardians with their responsibilities the Society works to nationally agreed standards.

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The aim of the standards is to build on what currently exists and to encourage participation and personal development through seven common beliefs:

- A recognition of the need to preserve guardian independence.
- A recognition of the need to preserve case confidentiality.
- To help the guardians with their work.
- To minimise unnecessary bureaucracy.
- To involve the guardians with best practice and help them develop their own approach through sharing and learning.
- To help the guardians define local policies, guidelines, standards and to set targets.
- To allow guardians to maintain their own preferred ways of working, providing this does not compromise the national standard.

The national standards include a “toolbox” which contains blank proformas and checklists to assist the guardians without undermining an individual guardian’s ability to maintain independence or as a threat to personal integrity. The standards provide comprehensive support within a formal structure (Department of Health, 1997). Professional development is further in evidence with a wide variety of other support materials that encompass a number of learning opportunities. The organisation provides staff development managers whose role is to support line managers in all matters regarding personal development of their staff. These development managers also have a responsibility for organising corporate development at the local level and at the national level based at the National Training Centre at Wadderton near Birmingham. The supervision of staff is viewed by top management as a process to monitor and assess

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performance and identify the resources for development. Staff appraisals provide a yearly opportunity to review past performance and this is viewed by all concerned as one of the principal instruments for staff development with work targets and training requirements usually agreed during these sessions. Employees are provided with a “learning log” to provide “hard copy evidence” of the development process. The whole development process is meticulously defined in the Society’s operational procedures and is a feature of the deliberate and conscious learning process.

Professional development by the Children’s Society takes many forms and the process appears to be in balance by a fully resourced induction programme, corporate and individual development, self-directed learning, annual appraisals and the keeping of individual learning logs. All of this acts as an effective audit of work practices and an example of good business practice. Upon investigation and speaking to a variety of employees, the only discernible problem with the system was one of under use. The sheer scale of development information available, the problems of communication between the projects and an over confidence in one’s personal ability are all contributing factors and reasons as to why this is so. The Children’s Society operates in a complex and changing profession, not unlike the fire service and they recognise that fact.

6.4 Associated Industrial Management Services (AIMS)

AIMS is a training provider catering for a variety of courses on behalf of the Grimsby College in Lincolnshire, leading to qualifications in management, health and safety and a number of training qualifications. AIMS has now changed its name to the Humber Business School. The investigation was not into the delivery of their courses but the

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way in which they trained and developed their own employees. Their approach to this was very similar to the Childrens Society with development programmes catering for the requirements of their business. A formal appraisal system is in place for their staff within the context of how the business is going and how the employee and the company can both develop. Management, due to the nature of the business, view staff development as continuous as they need to ensure compliance with changing legislation, teaching methods, change in practices as well as the necessary technical updates. This commitment to staff development is enhanced by the achievement of the Investor in People award. All of the staff interviewed demonstrated an awareness of the AIMS business plan; this understanding is essential, as it has to be conveyed to clients as part of their normal work. This understanding of the business plan, whilst part of the information exchange to potential clients, also makes good business sense. Not only does it encourage individual improvement, it provides a more knowledgeable, satisfied and well-motivated workforce. Each of the trainers has a personal development plan that caters for individual and business needs. Within the formal framework of development, there exists non-formal development where skills such as teamwork, communication and personal relationships are undertaken. The whole of the employee development is constantly updated to reflect the present reality with the workforce informed as to why changes are being made. The importance of staff development is exactly what one would expect from a training organisation but nevertheless it is still refreshing to find good practical examples of professional development. All of the trainers spoken to had a belief in the organisation's way of doing things and portrayed a positive attitude. One trainer was leaving the company and he too spoke well of the organisation as he felt he

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had personally improved his performance during his employment with them. All the employees spoken to felt they could talk freely to management on any subject and management in return valued this contribution. This two-way communication and feedback by all concerned is an obvious business ingredient and continues under its new name of the Humber Business School.

6.5 The Police Service

The police service, like the fire service, is going through a very unsettled period with numerous reports, some scathing, and demanding fundamental changes to the way the service is run and organised. The criticisms contained in the reports have undermined confidence and consequently most of the officers spoken to have a negative attitude towards the proposals with most longing for a return to the status quo prior to the Sheehy Report of 1992. This report advocated major changes to the conditions of service and became the first in a long line demanding reform. On the 5th December 2001, Mr. Blunkett, the Home Secretary, issued a White Paper on the government's intentions as to the future of policing in England and Wales called: Policing a New Century. The impetus for the paper was the reduction of crime with a change in policing to provide a better service delivery to a measurable standard. The professional development of police officers features strongly in the White Paper with a better use of police time and resources and the government proposing a National Centre for Policing Excellence within the Central Police Training and Development Authority. This is for all aspects of operational policing to promote evidence-based practices and the development of a core of specialist detectives with a high degree of professional

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expertise. A further strategy was the exploitation of scientific and technological advances to provide greater flexibility and improvement to working practices. An intention to develop new job related standards with a common entry, selection and assessment process was proposed together with the identification of officers displaying high potential and a national development framework to improve the quality and consistency of training, including leadership development (Government White Paper, 2001).

In April 2002, a briefing note issued by Mr. Blunkett and produced by the Home Office Communications Directorate confirmed a settlement had been reached on the proposals and a period of implementation would now begin.

The fieldwork confirmed a reluctant acceptance of the proposals from most of the ranks with a few senior officers seeing retirement as their way of accepting change. Career development in the police force occurs at two levels and is subject to many internal debates. For those who are fortunate enough to be allocated a place on the accelerated promotion system, development plans are drawn up and put into place with constant monitoring of the progress. For the majority of officers, development takes place with an annual appraisal, which allows for “bids” for the training and development opportunities providing they improve individual performance against a number of pre-agreed priorities. A large number of these “bids” for development are not successful, particular those with a high cost factor. Individuals who narrowly fail in an attempt to gain promotion may also receive a development plan as part of their feedback, but these plans are normally drawn up with low cost and maximum development in mind. There is encouragement for academic studies but few people gain the financial backing for the course fees. Where funding is available it usually only covers 50% of the costs and time

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off for study is at the discretion of the officer's line manager. Rank is not normally an issue but there is a "cultural acceptance" that the higher the rank, the easier it is to gain support. Culture in the police force is still an implicit value and is used to great effect by senior officers to replicate certain beliefs in an organisation still searching for a "new" common value. For some senior officers this may mean they look for strong operational backgrounds from promotion candidates whilst others look for strategic thinkers. The only common ground they share is that they all have some sort of model in which to mould candidates for promotion in the current vacuum of no generic police officer model. Some police forces do provide good assistance with the police national examinations but others do not, there is no parity across the nation. Degrees and academia only really count in as much as they provide evidence of motivation and a more creative mind. The police force mini-study in some ways was like looking into a mirror and viewing the fire service. Both services are unsure of their future direction and both seem to have lost faith in their historical values and beliefs.

6.6 The Australian Fire Service

The Australian Fire Service study was an informal look at the operating procedures of various brigades including discussions with a variety of ranks ranging from senior officers to recruit firefighters. The purpose of the study was to gain an insight into how extremely large brigades deal with the issue of professional development. The brigades visited included: The Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade, The Victorian Country Fire Authority, The New South Wales Fire Brigades, The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, The Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia.

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Australia is a vast country and so too are the State brigades. The Fire and Emergency Service of Western Australia, for example, covers 2,529,000 square kilometres compared to the 130,441 square kilometre land mass of the United Kingdom and the 3,512 square kilometre area of the Humberside Fire Brigade. The brigades are broken down into Metropolitan and Country fire brigades with the metropolitan brigades covering extremely large cities in terms of land area. A large city such as Melbourne is broken down into hundreds of “suburbs” which are self-sufficient mini-towns with their own town council and central shopping areas. The city centre of Melbourne is a mass of high rise buildings consisting of large department stores and offices catering for thousands of workers and shoppers. This layout is typical of all Australian cities. Outside of the metropolitan areas, there are the country fire brigades to cover the rural risk with the firefighters either retained or volunteers and apart from providing emergency cover for their own towns, they cover some of the most dangerous bushfire risk in the world. These metropolitan and country fire brigades are then usually formed into a State Fire Service. The maintenance of standards, let alone development, is a huge challenge for the brigades and it is practically impossible to send someone on a central training course when they can be up to 2,500 kilometres away from their headquarters.

Australia, similar to most countries, now advocates competency-based training with a vocational qualification to apply common standards over these large areas. The Australian Vocational Education Training System and the National Training Board of Australia has approved the Australian Fire Agencies Competency Standards and the currency of the standards has now been transferred from the National Fire Industry Training and Development Project to the Australian Fire Authorities Council. A number

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of name changes for the various authorities are now underway but the application of national standards responsive to State needs has become the accepted practice. These initiatives present a pathway for personal and career development regardless of location throughout Australia. Problems still exist with the evidence requirements, validation and assessment but individual development through laid down standards has become the accepted culture. The shift patterns of the wholtime fire stations are similar to that of the British Fire Service and for the different responsibilities a rank structure operates with a dress uniform for formal occasions and a casual working rig for normal duties. The entry standards and selection criterion for a firefighter are similar to the United Kingdom with all the State brigades having an equal opportunity and employment policy. The wording of this policy is different for each State in order to cater for the local need. The policy for South Australia is:

“The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to ensuring our workforce reflects the diversity of the community by encouraging men and women, including people from non-English backgrounds, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, to apply for the position of firefighter”

(South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, 2003:1).

The Country Fire Authorities part-time firefighters appear to operate in a similar manner to the retained service in the United Kingdom but upon investigation, the two entities are entirely different. The Country Fire Authority of Victoria (CFA) for example, deal with the same number of annual emergencies as does the Humberside Fire Brigade (20,000) but with 63,000 volunteers and 800 career staff compared to the Humberside strength of just over 1000 staff. The main difference is the large geographical area of the

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CFA and the responsibility for 2,500,000 people compared to the 900,000 in the Humber region. Finance for the CFA is also different with 77.5% of the annual funds coming from the insurance companies and the remainder (22.5%) from the Victorian State Government. The CFA has its own training college at Fiskville, 79 kilometres from Melbourne, providing specialised training in incident attack and management (source: Country Fire Authority of Victoria, 2002). Fiskville is a registered training provider for vocational education and training. The facilities provided for the CFA ensures its status within the community is high; this is in stark contrast to the retained service in Britain with often-inadequate training facilities and development opportunities. The urban brigades all have extensive internal development programmes for their employees and make use of the facilities provided by the local universities to ensure their top managers and specialists are degree qualified. In 1992 the Melbourne brigade became the first fire service in the country to obtain national approval as a provider of training and education Australia-wide (Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade, 2002).

On January 1st 1999 the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA) came into being to bring under one umbrella a coordinated approach to emergency fire and rescue throughout Western Australia. The annual report of FESA 1999 to 2000 (Fire and Emergency Service Authority of Western Australia, 2000) provides many examples of professional development support for individuals and a commitment to develop and promote the national standards.

The New South Wales Fire Brigades in their annual report 1999 to 2000 (New South Wales Fire Brigades, 2000) provide similar examples of this commitment to develop

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people. The fieldwork after the literature review used the written information as the basis for discussions with the firefighters, senior officers and administrators to ascertain the realities of the situation.

The main users of the development, advocated in the literature, were the firefighters and officers seeking further promotion. Interviews with these people was very informal to discuss what development they were receiving, whether they believed in it and what problems still remain unresolved. The shift pattern of the wholetime firefighters is very similar to the British Fire Service; two day shifts, two night shifts and four days off. The number of days off is highly valued with most of the firefighters interviewed having part-time jobs. This does not appear to be a problem for senior management as it is in the UK. No evidence was found that this additional work affected the firefighting role, indeed it enhanced job satisfaction for the firefighter as they felt more in control of their lives. New working practices and the introduction of vocational qualifications has indeed caused implementation problems but there is a willingness from all parties to make the system work. This willingness to work together comes from shared values, good communication and involvement by the firefighters in all aspects of the development work.

Terminology plays a large part in this process and sections called "Assessment Units" often conduct internal examination programmes. These are now being re-named "Professional Development Units." This is in conjunction with the Curriculum Development Unit, which develops the educational resources for the Australian Fire Authorities Council. Senior officers with management responsibilities have access to a number of development opportunities and this includes secondment to industry and

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university qualifications. The pace and amount of change in the Australian Fire Service is massive and some personnel do not accept the necessity for such changes but the investigations throughout the target brigades found this to be isolated and not part of main stream thinking. The different Australian culture, size of the brigades, conditions, responsibilities and funding arrangements all play a part in this progressive thinking and nearly all of the personnel interviewed displayed a sense of real dedication and motivation to the service underpinned by an appreciative and supportive general public. Change in the Australian Fire Service was apparently not something that was done to them, it was a process the fire service was in control of with all members having a part to play and knowing the direction their service was going.

6.7 The Royal Navy

The Royal Navy is a professional service and its members are a distinct and identifiable group within society with a strong corporate spirit and a special code of conduct. The function of this military force is successful armed combat through the “management of violence” when directed to do so by the British government. The Royal Navy is therefore a political instrument to serve political purposes which places a demand on its members to not only understand the tactical, technical and strategic aspects of problems, but the political, social and economic implications arising from them. The Royal Navy is the nation’s expert for all maritime matters relating to defence and national security and the fire service as the nation’s expert for all fire and rescue matters relating to public safety. The traditions of the fire service emanate from the Royal Navy and the purpose of this study is to examine the training and development methods of the Navy.

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The fieldwork for the study needed to be extensive in order to ascertain whether the fire service still maintains the link, whether it is still relevant, whether it requires strengthening or whether there is anything the fire service can learn and apply from the Royal Navy of today. The fieldwork included:

- Study of naval literature, procedures and standing orders.
- Semi-structured discussions with senior officers, junior officers and ratings.
- Visit to the Royal Britannia Naval College, Dartmouth.
- Visit to HMS Collingwood Training Establishment, Portsmouth.
- Visit to HMS Excellent Training Establishment, Portsmouth.
- Visit to HMS Raleigh Training Establishment, Plymouth.
- Visit to HMS Thunderer Training Establishment, Southampton.
- Visit to HMS Rooke Shore Base, Gibraltar.
- Visit to the warship HMS Exeter.
- Visit to the warship HMS Montrose.
- Visit to the warship HMS Sheffield.

The uniformed strength of the Navy, excluding the Royal Marines, is 35,690 made up of 28,623 ratings and 7,067 officers. The basic training for ratings and artificers begins at the HMS Raleigh training establishment at Torpoint in Cornwall and takes either 7 or 11 weeks depending on the specialisation chosen. Drill on the parade ground plays an important part in this initial training and it is based on the premise that it develops a

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willingness to carry out orders without question. Drill is seen as an exercise that depends on group effort and a keen spirit, deemed as essential qualities for all members of the Royal Navy.

Training for officers takes place at the Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC), Dartmouth following a two-day assessment by The Admiralty Interview Board (AIB) at HMS Sultan near Gosport. All potential officers go through the AIB and it is possible to become an officer by joining direct from school, providing the candidate is working towards A level qualification. If the A levels include science subjects, a person could start their naval career by reading for an engineering degree and around forty students per year are sponsored in this method at the University of Southampton. Nearly a third of all officers are former ratings. This is not about “gap filling,” it is about the Navy making the best use of its resources within a meritocracy and allowing its members to climb as high as they wish. Depending on the method of entry, level of experience and qualifications the BRNC course consists of either a two or three term training package. The first term focuses on Naval General Training (NGT) lasting for 13 weeks followed by six weeks sea training aboard a warship where the officer cadet works alongside ratings and has to perform various tasks from a workbook. Upon return to the BRNC, the cadets continue with a further six weeks of NGT. The final term is called pre-professional training and replaces the old academic package. Once the course has been satisfactorily completed, further development work in the officer’s specialisation takes place.

The training and development of officers in the Royal Navy differs significantly from that of the fire service in two areas:

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- Officer entry in the Royal Navy can be direct, through graduate entry or from the ranks. In the fire service, it is always from the ranks.
- Officer training in the Royal Navy is “front-loaded” and they are not deemed to be officers until this is complete. In the fire service, the candidate only has to pass a promotion assessment and interview. Fire service officer training usually takes place after a promotion, and in some cases, this may be a considerable time afterwards. The Integrated Personal Development System will go some way in addressing this matter by the identification of potential and evidence gathering before a promotion takes place.

A recent innovation in the Navy has been the introduction of the “Three Tier Commission” so that officers may be promoted at any time up to the point at which they retire. For ratings, the requirement of a minimum number of years in a particular post before promotion has been abolished with promotion based upon merit alone. For promotion to the officer corps, the upper age limit is now 46. This now makes it possible to achieve promotion at almost any age during a rating’s career. Advancement based on the attainment of skills, rather than length of service has been a major change for the Navy and brought about mainly through the introduction of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) with many training courses receiving accreditation to the national standard. From April 1st 2000 over 85% of all new entrants are eligible for the civilian award of an NVQ or the appropriate academic qualification within three years of joining. Many of the naval schools now incorporate an individual training record underpinned by a process of records and reviews to encourage a greater interest in individual personal development.

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The fieldwork needed to establish any conflict between the traditions of the Royal Navy and this new thinking and any lessons for the fire service. The observation and respect for tradition is still very strong in the Navy with a good awareness of the historical links demonstrated by the lower and senior ranks interviewed by the author. A large number of daily rituals, terminology and a general feeling of pride of being a member of the “senior service” reinforce this knowledge of the past. The Trafalgar night dinner in the officers’ mess, wherever that may be in the world, is an example of continuity through inevitable change. Senior officers firmly believe in the valuable lessons that can be gained from past experiences and quote this as the main reason for taking pride in a history that goes back many hundreds of years. During discussions with officers on the warships and various shore establishments, King Alfred was described as the “Father of the Navy” due to his part in a sea-borne engagement in the Stour estuary in 882. Nearly nine hundred years later, in 1771, Nelson joined the Navy at a time when Britain had become a dominant colonial power relying on a strong naval force to protect those interests and trade routes. The Navy of today has adapted to the present circumstances but the same professionalism and devotion to duty is still a requirement based on the historical background and individuals from that former era. The harsh discipline of a bygone age has been removed and replaced with an understanding of the reasons for the former discipline but without a complete rejection of the traditions and heritage. This continuity through change and the “passing on” of values and beliefs to new members ensures the modern Navy has a respect for its role and pride in its structure. The fieldwork with the British Fire Service found this aspect to be missing with “change and modernisation” often seen as past failure. This viewpoint has come about though a

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failure to communicate the “heroes and innovations” of the past to new members of the fire service since the reorganisation after the Second World War. The feelings of failure can grow stronger with a lack of historical information, especially when reinforced by an undermining of terminology. An example of this is the term “brigade” which the Fire Brigades Union sees as inappropriate, as it implies militarism, a strange paradox when one considers the name of the Union.

Communication between the various establishments, sections and branches of the Navy is good and Commodore Duncan Fergusson, the incoming Commodore of Naval Drafting in 2002, made this statement in the Navy News (internal magazine): *“The key to managing change, and keeping the day job going, is good communications”* (Fergusson, 2002:19). He further states that the large amount of information sent from his department is unavoidable, which in many respects reflects the complex and demanding nature of information exchange. Another example of good communication in the Navy is the “Continuous Attitude Survey” (CAS), an eight-page questionnaire sent out randomly to 2000 officers and ratings every four months. The completed questionnaires, which are anonymous, are then analysed by the centre for Human Sciences at Farnborough with reports produced and circulated in February, June and October of each year. One of the key benefits of the survey is the identification of trends and areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction at an early stage. The results from June 2001 placed security of employment and training in a high order of satisfaction and leave restrictions and the amount of family separation as the main sources for dissatisfaction. (Lawton, 2001:3-6). The results from the author’s own fieldwork identified high satisfaction with training, development, career prospects and the retirement package.

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Travel, the facilities and status of the Navy was viewed as the main motivators for joining. An individual's Divisional Officer in the Navy has an important role in the communication chain with most of the respondents, during discussions and interviews with the author, confirming the Divisional Officer is indeed the person they would seek advice from in the first instance. The channels for communication are open and known throughout the service and supported by written communication, feedback questionnaires and various internal magazines.

On the 27th March 2001, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, announced the outcome of the Defence Training Review (DTR). He confirmed that the training for ratings and officers would remain in the control of the Naval Training Establishments as they provide good examples of best practice. The Navy, through programmes of managed change and good communication has argued strongly for the preservation of the Royal Navy's identity, values and ethos regards training and development. This willingness to adapt ensures continuity, a possible lesson for the fire service to take note of. The DTR recognises that the shifting social trends and expectations of young people has changed and that in an increasingly competitive labour market with the lowest unemployment for 30 years, there is a need to challenge training practices in order to remain competitive and innovative. In 2001, a new section of the Navy came into being, called Topmast, which stands for Tomorrows Personal Management System and comprises of 16 men and women of various ranks. The role of the section is to help all personnel in the Navy organise their lives through forward planning and in doing so improve the operational capability of the service. Commander Richard Jenkins, the founder behind the section states in an article in "People Matters" that this was a new

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approach and that: *“Topmast should create an environment in which people thrive professionally, and have more of an opportunity to influence their longer-term career and personal life”* (Jenkins, 2001:32-35). Rear Admiral John Chadwick, responsible for training and recruitment, made this statement on the new initiatives: *“Not only do we need to train our personnel for a Service that’s ready to fight and win, but we need to ensure that our people are capable of adapting to the new operational challenges. Coupled with this, we are faced with a climate of increasing pressure on resources, which means that we must further rationalise our training. Also we are having to compete in the recruiting market for young people who are better educated, more sophisticated and more demanding of their employers at a time of low unemployment”* (Chadwick, 2001:59-62). The Navy has recognised and continues to recognise that naval training cannot afford to stand still and is continuously evolving. All of the training establishments visited by the author seem to embrace this enthusiasm for effective improvements to training and development.

The Royal Navy now produces a strategic plan consisting of 32 pages (Naval Strategic Plan: The Next Fifteen Years, 2002) and sets the path for medium and longer-term development and improvement along with annual updates. The review recognises that career structures will need to become more flexible in order to recruit and retain the people they need. The removal of age restrictions for entry and “career breaks” during a person’s service are other possibilities. It further recognises that the management structure will have to be slimmed down and that the process of running and developing the Navy may have to be separated from the command of operations. This is an important point as officers with management responsibilities not only dilute the

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leadership talent at the “sharp end” they become part-time in their management duties; an issue identified in the British Fire Service fieldwork. The ethos of the Navy is discussed in the plan with the possibility of less reliance on rigid hierarchies and a change in style and culture to that of a culture that fosters continuous improvement. The review admits that the pace of change has been huge in recent years but the contention is that the Navy will only remain a vibrant organisation if a positive attitude is embedded in all levels and not just fed down by orders from senior management.

From the Defence Review and the publication of the Naval Strategic Plan, a Naval Personal Strategy (NPS) described as a “policy for people” was launched in September 2001. The NPS is a strategy for change and places naval personnel and their families at the centre of future plans for the Royal Navy. Explanations to the author as to why this is also necessary, considering the range of activities presently under way in people development is that it defines the essential factors required to care for people from recruitment to retirement. The strategy is a vision and direction for the future and yet another strand in the continuity through change concept the Royal Navy is presently undertaking.

6.8 The British Retained Fire Service

The British Retained Fire Service is an integral part of the British Fire Service but has been included in the comparative studies for a number of reasons:

- The author could not find any real depth or quantity of national written guidance for the retained service and the literature that is available sometimes identifies neglect without providing solutions.

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- Discussions with the wholetime firefighters and officers identified a perception that the retained are not really qualified to do the job and second-rate, but are tolerated because they are a cost- effective resource.
- Discussions with the retained firefighters and officers identified feelings of neglect and inadequacy as a reaction to the beliefs of the wholetime service.
- The paradox to this is that the retained service remains highly motivated and are doing an essential role for the fire service whilst being treated poorly by their wholetime colleagues.

The investigations into the reasons for these beliefs necessitate a comparison study in its own right to find a basis for this belief. This work will then contribute to the overall aims of the research. The examination will therefore look at the work and expectations of the retained service and the arrangements for this, both within a brigade and in a national context. The study includes discussions with wholetime firefighters and officers of all the brigades visited during the fieldwork to ascertain the depth of feeling and attitudes towards their retained colleagues. The author's own brigade, Humberside Fire Brigade (HFB), was chosen as the prime focus for the retained fieldwork. The HFB has 32 fire stations with 20 stations crewed entirely by the retained and a further two that have a mix of wholetime and retained personnel. The advantages of using HFB for the study is twofold: the author has freedom of access to all the stations for the fieldwork and the brigade is of a median size in the British Fire Service in relation to area, fire stations and number of personnel. The national statistics for the 58 fire brigades in the United Kingdom, as of 2001, are as follows: There are a total of 2048 fire stations with 1,100 crewed solely by the retained with a further 128 having mixed wholetime and

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retained crewing and 141 run by volunteers. This leaves only 679 wholetime fire stations or 33% (in HFB this percentage is 31%). The total number of retained personnel in the UK is 18,196 or 32% compared to a total firefighting workforce of 56,796 (in HFB the retained ratio is 31%). It costs £1.5 billion to run the UK Fire Service with the retained wing costing £70 million (Source: Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability, 2001).

The name “retained” comes from the provision of a retaining fee that is payable annually. In 2002 the retaining fee for a firefighter, after three years service, stood at £2913 with officers receiving more depending on their rank. Additional payments for each hour worked are made for attendance at emergency incidents, drill nights and training courses. A long service bounty scheme also operates with a payment of £948 for a firefighter after ten years service with officers paid more depending on their rank. Further payments are made every five years and a firefighter after 35 years service receives a maximum of £1809 in addition to the retaining fee. Retained personnel are at present not part of the pension scheme for the fire service with only wholetime personnel benefiting from this scheme. They do qualify for benefits however if killed or injured during the course of their duty. The amount payable is based on the severity of the injury and their length of employment as a retained firefighter.

The retained service, as it exists today, came into being after the Second World War with the return of the fire service to local authority control within the framework of the Fire Services Act of 1947. Today, there are retained firefighters in all but two of the brigades in the United Kingdom and their numbers vary according to the degree of risk. For example, retained firefighters are an essential element in the provision of fire cover

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in the rural area and other areas of low or medium risk. In Northern Ireland there are nearly 1000 retained firefighters but in the West Midlands there are under 20. Home Office Ministers with a responsibility for the fire service have been subject to frequent change during the course of a parliament, let alone a change in government, and this lack of continuity may be a factor in the uncertainty and a clear direction for the retained. The common thread between all these Ministers is their admiration for the work of the retained, stating that they provide an excellent service with minimum training; this usually prefaces a speech when they talk about the retained. The training of the retained is particularly daunting, as the service requires them to possess a mixture of high practical and technical skills together with strength of character and all-round fitness. These skills must be maintained and developed throughout their career to deal with a variety of complex situations safely and effectively in all conditions and on only two hours continuation training per week. This training period, usually on an evening, also has to allow for the maintenance of equipment and fire appliances. A third hour has been agreed in principle, at the discretion of the Fire Authority, but in 2003 nearly 80% of the brigades still do not implement this additional hour due to a lack of finance. Government Ministers praise the achievements of the retained in supporting the wholetime service, but this praise can mean different things to different people. The Fire Brigades Union in their own study identified four viewpoints:

- 1. To Chief Fire Officers they are an important integral part of all brigades who have retained firefighters.*
- 2. To Local Authority Employers they represent an economical form of fire cover.*

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3. *To the general public, the term retained firefighter has very little meaning. Retained firefighters are not distinguishable from their wholetime colleagues.*
4. *To retained firefighters themselves, they are the backbone of the service in the UK, and they provide a vital and irreplaceable service to the public in the more rural parts of the country (Fire Brigades Union, 1998b:2).*

This research adds to the last viewpoint with the retained taking great pride in the fact that in any 24 hour period there are approximately 6,500 wholetime firefighters on duty compared to an estimated 15,000 retained available for duty. There are also feelings of frustration and inadequacy, due in the main to a lack of understanding, appreciation and lack of support from the individual brigades. These feelings of “being inferior and not really a credible fire-fighting force” is a belief perpetuated by a number of wholetime firefighters and officers who quote the lack of training the retained receive as evidence for this type of thinking. The research investigated all of these facets through observation and by listening and talking to the retained personnel on their stations. The study needed to find out:

- What motivates them to become retained firefighters?
- What is their perception of the retained firefighter role?
- What is their perception of the wholetime firefighters view of them?
- Are they satisfied with the present training and development input?
- What are the factors preventing improvements?
- What changes would they make to the service?

The data from the questioning confirmed that the retained are indeed highly motivated and proud of the service and the observations confirmed a keenness to perform to the

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highest possible standard within their ability. Occasional aggressive attitudes did surface but this was due more to frustration with the lack of progress nationally on a career and development structure for the retained. The standard used to measure motivation was straightforward; observation of a willingness to perform tasks well – in other words to give their best. The role of the retained officer is important in this regard and the fieldwork observed them instilling the importance of their work into their teams and gave praise for effort and a job well done at operational incidents and on the training sessions. The officers appreciated help from the firefighters with the station administration and their approach to station tasks such as equipment maintenance, standard tests, individual references and cleaning tasks. At all times the teamwork and camaraderie on retained stations was not only explicit, it was a very effective tool for high performance. The combination of challenging work at emergency incidents, the status of being a firefighter, the responsibilities to their community, the recognition and appreciation of this from their community plus the feeling of ownership with “their fire engine, their fire station and their community” are some of the greatest motivation factors to be found. During all the fieldwork visits a general feeling of enthusiasm, cooperation with one another, a willingness to accept responsibility and most important of all, a willingness to accept change was observed. A further observation was the lack of complaints to the sometimes menial but necessary cleaning and equipment maintenance tasks allocated to them. It was only during the group discussions, when the subject of understanding their problems so that support could be provided, did any real cynicism occur. Remarks such as “*we’ve heard it all before*” and “*you’re wasting your time*” became the most frequent initial comment. Those who had spent over 20 years in

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the retained service provided evidence for this by recalling events, in the form of stories. They stated that numerous wholetime officers in the past were also going to change things and improve their conditions, only to see these officers use their retained support role as a springboard for further promotion. Consequently, little action occurred except for the appearance of another ambitious wholetime officer, also determined to improve things. This in reality amounted only to the officer's improvement with yet another promotion. Wholetime officer characters from the past "*keeping their heads down*" and using this "*traditional form of promotion*" were described in great detail and much laughter usually followed these stories, especially if the officer was still in the service. The younger ones agreed with this interpretation. The perception of officers gaining promotion not through ability and being dynamic in implementing change but through "keeping their heads down" and "not causing problems" is worrying for the service, even if it is treated in a lighthearted manner. Promotion viewed as "patronage" with a lack of trust or faith in the officers and the structures that support this stance cannot be sustained indefinitely. This is an example of how beliefs and the traditional way of doing things can be passed on to the next generation by word of mouth having either a positive or negative effect on the culture of the organisation. In this instance, it reinforces to the retained a feeling of impotence, as change is something not within their area of influence. This probing into attitudes and perceptions continued and the author hit a real nerve when a Government Survey was read out to them (this was repeated at a number of fire stations with the same result). The survey was about the wholetimers view on the retained and amounted to some very unfavourable comments made about them. The wholetime service recognised a need for the retained but they regarded them

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as unqualified and unprofessional and not coming up to the same standard with no sense of vocation and only in it for the money. The survey also identified a lack of faith in the ability of retained officers and the view that they should never be in charge of wholetime crews at emergency incidents (Thomas, 1969). The reaction and comments to the survey could best be described as a mixture of anger and sadness:

- *That's typical of the wholetime.*
- *They don't understand or even care about our problems.*
- *It's okay for them in the cities with fire stations every few miles, try coping without no immediate back-up, try driving on dark icy roads in the middle of winter with no hydrants. Let's see how they would cope.*
- *They have never liked or accepted us.*
- *The ones who mix with us are all right, the others always run us down because they don't know what we do and worse still, they couldn't care less.*
- *I would like to see them do our job on two hours training a week.*
- *Why do they hate us, it's not as though we are a threat?*

They were then asked what year was the survey taken from? Their answers ranged from yesterday to five years ago, with one person saying: *"It doesn't matter, new recruits [wholetime] will be saying the same, once they've been indoctrinated."* The survey was actually conducted in May 1969. The reasons for the attitude and perceptions by the wholetime and retained towards each other appear complex, but from the answers given in the survey and the reactions to it, a common thread emerges. Apart from working together at large incidents, there is a general lack of mixing and communication between

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the two sections as this is only really possible during the retained drill nights. This is compounded by a refusal of the Fire Brigades Union to allow mixed crewing on the fire appliances and the employers treating the two sections of the fire service as separate. Since the return of the fire service to local authority control in 1947, very little has been done or documented to bring the two “sides” closer together and the survey from 1969 not only reflects the service as it was, it reflects the service as it actually is today.

The two-hour weekly training session then became the subject of analysis. The objective of the analysis was not to conduct a time and motion study of who does what, when and for how long, but to investigate the actual reality of the session. The observations had identified that the session is much more than a training period, it is an opportunity to address all the other work tasks demanded of the retained. These tasks include equipment and station maintenance, administration, visits from officers to conduct debriefs from recent operational incidents, the issue of new brigade instructions, operating procedures and health and safety information. A feature of these training sessions is the many unpaid hours undertaken during the week by personnel eager to “catch up” on essential work in order to make the formal session work. Whilst this is to be commended it is also masking problems, at the local and national level. A variable approach to the formal sessions appears to be the norm with some personnel arriving early to take part in physical training and others arriving late. Some take a full and active role, others wait for direction (possibly due to them not being sure of what is actually going to happen on that particular night), and some leave before the end of the session but most continue working after the official end time of the session. It is hard to criticise this approach as the fire service receives value for money by people motivated

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enough to make systems work. The general supervision procedure in Humberside Fire Brigade, and throughout the country, is for officers to visit retained stations on their drill night. This is to confirm brigade procedures are being adhered to and different officers attend on a rota. This appears to be a balanced audit system with different officers seeing different stations. In practice, this is causing problems, as anything that stops or slows down the training activity is time that has to be made up. Discussions with the retained personnel confirmed this, as no matter what the station personnel had arranged, the officer visit took precedence. The tasks of these visiting officers ranged from dropping internal mail or equipment off, informal chats, conducting the drill session or simply being there. Most of the retained officers expressed a view that they wished to be trusted more and that they wanted to be responsible for the drill session. Some expressed an opinion that because the visiting officer was only on duty for emergency calls during the night; it was an easy start to the shift for that person, as they usually only came for a chat and a cup of tea. One retained officer was slightly kinder, saying he has seen a lot of different officers over the years and a lot of different perspectives. During the fieldwork, team briefings, experiential learning, vocational qualifications and individual development plans were all explored. These sessions were conducted in a positive atmosphere and a willingness by them to accept new ideas if it enhanced their status and supported their needs. The lasting impression was one of a motivated workforce doing their best for their rural communities with limited resources. They have genuine concerns for the future of the service due to recruits not coming forward in sufficient numbers. The reason for this, in their opinion, is one of neglect from the employers within an atmosphere of continual undermining by the wholetime service.

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Over the years there have been a number of initiatives to raise the profile of the retained and provide a better training and development structure. The annual reports from the Chief Inspector of Fire Services has highlighted the implementation problems and associated costs with these support structures and in the late 1980s the National Joint Council set up a Working Party to look into these problems. In 1991, a seminar involving all the interested parties was held at the Fire Service College to examine the same issues and in the same year, the Home Office commissioned a consultancy group for the same investigations. On the 19th May 1998 the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council considered a report from the Home Office Working Group on the procedures for good practice in the retained service. This was commended to the British Fire Service in the form of a Dear Chief Fire Officer Letter (regular briefings from the Home Office to the fire service). The letter identified a number of issues and provided solutions in the form of suggestions regarding recruitment and retention. One example of this can be found on page six of the letter with the suggestion of sending a Christmas card to the retained firefighter's employer thanking them for their support (Dear Chief Officer Letter 11/1998).

Chief Fire Officer McCall writing in the Fire Magazine expressed concerns about competence due to the limited training opportunities, the available finance and the increased workloads the retained have to contend with (McCall, 1998). He stated:

“Since 1947 there has been an acceptance of a two tier system of service delivery. The first through wholtime professionally trained units covering the predominately urban conurbation, and part-time retained units covering the predominately rural risk. In relation to the application of the role in terms of firefighting, and more recently rescue,

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there has been no distinction placed between the wholetime and retained firefighter” (1998:30). He further states: *“Can we ensure a competent workforce within the retained and volunteer service? I think we can, but not without some radical thinking, changes in philosophy and more importantly changes in culture. First and foremost, we must ask ourselves what do we want the retained and volunteer units to do? What will be their role within the service? Do we, when applying their skill, expect them to reach the same levels of competence as our wholetime and if so in what areas?”* (1998:31). The fire service hopes it has the answers to these questions with the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) which is being phased in over a number of years from April 2003. IPDS uses the principle of structured development to defined standards with the intention it is to be applied to all groupings within the service. The question raised by McCall asking what does the service require of the retained? whilst valid, should be rephrased to: “what is it that they actually do? Once that question is answered, appropriate development can then take place using the IPDS model.

The initial training module for the retained has remained virtually the same since the 1971 guidance (Fire Service Circular 31/1971), with only minor changes made to the original thinking in order to cater for new equipment and working practices. The 1971 guidance does provide sound basic training techniques so that development, that is more advanced, including continuation training can take place. Further guidance was issued in 1996 (Fire Service Circular 5/1996) regarding realistic fire training before the principles of training for the role came into being with IPDS. The common factor with all the guidance is that it is difficult for the fire authorities to cater for the specific needs of the retained using generic training strategies. The missing element is the local needs factor

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based upon the type and frequency of emergency calls each individual retained fire station attends. In other words, “what is it that they actually do?” By studying the retained in isolation from the British Fire Service, and using the 20 retained fire stations of Humberside Fire Brigade as a model, the author was able to offer an answer to the question. This then provides an opportunity to implement development plans for each station with each individual at that station using the IPDS as the development tool. Brigades, when compiling statistics on the number of emergency calls attended in their area each year, provide monthly and annual totals. These totals do not differentiate between the emergency calls answered by the wholetime or retained crews but by interrogating the station statistics, it is possible to find out the actual workload of each retained station in relation to the category of calls. A simple formula can then be used to identify station and individual needs based upon what actually happens.

The following definitions are used for all the incident categories in the following charts.

- **Primary fire.** Defined as someone’s property on fire and having a value such as a building or a vehicle.
- **Secondary fire.** Defined as a fire with little or no value such as a rubbish or grass fire.
- **Chimney fire.** A fire confined solely to a chimney.
- **Special Service.** A non-fire situation such as a road traffic accident or animal rescue.
- **False alarm.** A call for help that proves to be false, either maliciously, one of good intent or from an automatic fire alarm.
- **Stand by.** The mobilisation of a fire engine to provide emergency cover at another fire station for a limited period.

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Figure 6.1 is a comparison chart showing the Humberside Fire Brigade emergency response in 2002 for both the wholetime and the retained service. Column one gives the different incident categories. Column two shows the total number of calls for each incident category. Column three is an individual workload value derived by dividing the total number of category calls by the total number of personnel in the brigade. In reality, the calls attended by individuals can be much higher due to the number of personnel on a fire engine and more than one engine attending some incidents. The value does provide a simple comparison standard and can be used not only between the wholetime and the retained, but also between fire stations when analysing station calls. Figure 6.2 provides the same information as 6.1 but for the retained service only, and with the addition of an extra column showing the percentage workload of the retained compared to the wholetime.

Figure 6.1 Humberside Fire Brigade (wholetime and retained) calls for 2002

Category type	Number of calls	Individual value
Primary fires	4140	4.34
Secondary fires	6630	6.96
Chimney fires	0153	0.16
Special Service calls	2702	2.83
False alarms	6016	6.31
Stand by calls	2120	2.22
Totals	21761	22.85

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Figure 6.2 Humberside Fire Brigade (retained only) calls for 2002

Category type	Number of calls	Individual value	Workload %
Primary fires	766	2.58	18.50
Secondary fires	597	2.01	09.00
Chimney fires	093	0.31	60.78
Special service calls	599	2.02	22.16
False alarms	987	3.33	16.40
Stand by calls	955	3.22	45.04
Totals	3997	13.50	18.36

Column four in figure 6.2 provides the workload percentage in each incident category compared to the wholetime crews.

The two charts viewed together provide a framework for the retained and the wholetime regards professional development. For example, the retained undertake 18.36% of the total workload but the total individual value figure for the retained is 13.50 compared to the brigade value of 22.85. This is a basic comparison, but an indication of the individual workload by retained personnel.

A comparison between the retained stations is the next logical step to ascertain how many stations are above and below the brigade retained standard workload value of 13.50. Figure 6.3 provides this comparison for the year 2002. An interrogation of the 1995 statistics has been included to identify any increase in the station workloads and consequently, any greater demands required of the individual. (Stations are identified by their Divisional call sign)

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Figure 6.3 Humberside Fire Brigade retained station and individual workloads

Fire station	Calls in 1995	Value 1995	Calls in 2002	Value in 2002
A4	275	13.7	630	31.5
A5	271	13.5	539	26.9
A6	133	06.6	211	10.5
A7	172	08.6	134	06.7
B4	183	09.1	204	10.2
B5	036	03.0	066	05.5
B6	147	07.3	170	08.5
B7	131	06.5	164	08.2
B8	091	07.5	131	10.9
B9	249	20.7	436	36.3
C3	601	50.8	450	37.5
C5	168	14.0	202	16.8
C7	198	16.5	280	23.3
D3	129	10.7	116	09.6
D4	074	06.1	148	12.3
D5	113	09.4	126	10.5
D6	115	09.5	061	05.1
D7	073	06.0	348	29.0
D8	112	09.3	151	12.5
D9	219	18.2	292	24.3

Eight fire stations are identified in figure 6.3 where an individuals workload is higher than the retained standard value of 13.50 and sixteen stations (80%) show an increase in the number of emergency calls since 1995.

The number of calls a station receives in each category now requires investigation and figure 6.4 expresses this as a percentage.

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Figure 6.4 Humberside Fire Brigade retained station category percentages

fire station	primary fire	second'ry fire	chimney fire	special service	false alarm	stand by
A4	13.8%	12.1%	01.8%	13.0%	41.4%	17.9%
A5	12.5%	03.5%	01.0%	08.5%	25.0%	49.5%
A6	16.2%	08.8%	08.1%	15.5%	15.5%	35.9%
A7	20.5%	10.9%	08.0%	21.1%	35.0%	04.5%
B4	19.6%	13.3%	02.3%	16.2%	30.6%	18.0%
B5	25.0%	02.5%	22.5%	12.5%	15.0%	22.5%
B6	27.2%	09.6%	04.8%	13.2%	38.5%	06.7%
B7	32.1%	22.1%	02.1%	19.3%	24.4%	00.0%
B8	21.8%	06.4%	05.1%	25.6%	21.9%	19.2%
B9	15.5%	10.4%	00.3%	11.7%	13.6%	48.5%
C3	19.5%	38.6%	00.2%	17.0%	24.0%	00.7%
C5	16.5%	19.8%	01.4%	20.5%	20.5%	21.3%
C7	24.7%	18.8%	01.2%	13.4%	30.5%	11.4%
D3	33.9%	21.5	01.7%	17.9%	08.9%	16.1%
D4	25.0%	12.5%	03.7%	10.0%	16.3%	32.5%
D5	17.4%	14.7%	04.6%	19.2%	42.2%	01.9%
D6	35.4%	10.5%	00.0%	20.8%	14.6%	18.7%
D7	10.6%	03.3%	02.0%	07.0%	12.7%	64.4%
D8	26.7%	08.8%	03.0%	22.3%	23.7%	15.5%
D9	19.5%	14.6%	00.8%	17.0%	33.5%	14.6%

By studying the retained separate from the wholetime and to analyse what they actually do, large differences between the busiest and quietist station in each emergency category are identified. For example, the highest workload for primary fires is D6 with 35.4% compared to the 10.6% of D7. The highest workload for secondary fires is C3 with

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38.6% compared to the 2.5% of B5. The highest workload for chimney fires is B5 with 22.5% compared to the 0.0% of D6. The highest workload for special service calls is B8 with 25.6% compared to the 7.05% of D7. The highest workload for false alarms is D5 with 42.2% compared to the 8.9% of D3. The highest workload for stand by calls is D7 with 64.4% compared to the 0.0% of B7.

A station profile can now be mapped out for each retained station using the available statistical data to enable specific development, appropriate to the needs of the station and station personnel using the IPDS structure. The closing of any “development gap” with this approach satisfies two objectives:

- The issue of competence is addressed (concerns identified by McCall, 1998).
- The retained and the wholetime become one entity servicing the needs of the fire authority and the local community.

The use of percentages for incident categories have limited use and it is important that the number of emergency calls in each category is noted so that the numbers of trained people and the equipment available matches the need. A further consideration is the number of stand by duties performed by the retained. In 2002 this category represented 45.04% (figure 6.2) of the brigade total. This raises a number of concerns when designing development programmes. When standing by at another fire station did the crew remain there until that station’s fire engine returned? Did they eventually proceed to the same incident? Did they receive a call to attend a different incident in that station’s area? Were the crew trained or competent to deal with the emergency,” for example, a village crew attending a lift rescue when standing by at a city fire station. It is not possible to train the retained for every eventuality, but there is a need to recognise

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what they may be called upon to do when standing by out of their area so that further support can be mobilised.

Figure 6.5 Humberside Fire Brigade – example of a station profile for A4 fire station

A4 fire station		Number of station personnel: 20		
Category type	No. of calls	A4 value	Retained value	Brigade value
Primary	076	3.80	2.58	4.34
Secondary	067	3.35	2.01	6.96
Chimney fires	010	0.50	0.31	0.16
Special service	072	3.60	2.02	2.83
False alarms	228	11.40	3.33	6.31
Stand by calls	099	4.95	3.22	2.22
<i>Note: With this example, the number of incidents A4 attended as an additional resource for large incidents has not been included due to insufficient data being available.</i>				

The above chart uses the individual workload value as a comparison measure for all the other retained stations and the Humberside Fire Brigade as a whole. The values can then be used as justification for the local bias with development needs compared to other fire stations. Upon return to the station after an emergency call a simple tick box form could be completed to identify the equipment used and by whom. This information could then form the basis of individual development in conjunction with the number and type of emergency calls attended. The retained station then has ownership of the emergency response, which meets not only its needs, but that of the brigade. The data from the emergency analysis would then provide data for the community safety initiatives in the station's area, thus preventing duplication of effort.

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An article in *The Fire Officers' Association Magazine* identifies that a new approach is required by the fire service towards the retained service, especially in its ability to contribute to the operational effectiveness of brigades without compromising health and safety. The article argues that whilst the retained have to meet the same entry requirements as the wholetime service, experience at emergency incidents is limited due to fewer opportunities in the rural areas. This is further compounded by the number of retained firefighters that have to be allocated to a fire station to ensure a crew is available for a fire engine. This is due to the part-time availability of the personnel to answer emergency calls. The article concludes that the fire service needs not only to value this essential role played by the retained service, but develop a new means of training to ensure compatibility with the wholetime service (Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, 2002:18-19).

The Retained Firefighters Union has argued for a number of years that without a more flexible approach, a slow strangulation of the retained service will occur, if this is not already a deliberate policy by some sections of the fire service (Retained Firefighters Union, 2003:3).

The Fire Brigades Union argues that the fire service has to decide what it requires from retained firefighters due to inadequate training practices and if it is decided to limit the type of emergency incidents they attend, the wholetime cover will have to be extended (Fire Brigades Union, 1998b:13).

These arguments are the one big fear for both the retained and the wholetime fire services and a big factor in the gulf between them. They both feel the other party is trying to "steal" their jobs.

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6.9 Findings from the Comparative Studies

The Children's Society (6.3): The Guardian ad Litem project has in place a substantial professional development programme and a wide range of support materials for personal development. The social workers' involvement with children demands they operate under current legislation using high skill levels so that judgements are arrived at through a professional approach. All of the projects, whilst relatively small in nature and in geographical isolation from each other, operate to set standards and come under a high degree of internal and external scrutiny. An under use of the support materials provided was detected. This is possibly due to the qualifications the social workers hold, confidence in one's personal ability and the amount of audits they are subjected to resulting in a belief that any problems would be identified quickly. The study identified similarities between the Children's Society and the fire service's approach to problem solving. Both believe they are professional and confident in their ability, both work in relatively small "projects" and both do not make full use of the systems and structures available for development.

Associated Industrial Management Services [AIMS] (6.4): This company has now ceased trading under the above name and is now called the Humber Business School operating within the Grimsby College, Lincolnshire. AIMS, as a teaching and training provider on the courses run by the Grimsby College, had in place an extensive employee development programme to support its business objectives. All of the employees interviewed spoke well of the organisation's open policy on communication and self-development. This was an organisation that practiced what it preached by placing great importance on employee development and job satisfaction in order to meet its business

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plan. Its transition into the Humber Business School with a motivated workforce could not have been possible without this open approach and even those employees who left, still felt their time with them had been a worthwhile experience.

The Police Service (6.5): Since the 1990s and in particular the last five years, the police service has undertaken fundamental changes in the way it conducts itself. A number of reports and reviews, high profile claims against the police and the changing needs of society have all contributed to this change process. The actual culture and its approach to policing have been successfully challenged and the service has responded by introducing new working practices and methods. The sheer amount of change has left some police officers disenchanted due in the main to the criticism of their old values and beliefs. The author found this programme of rolling change without a belief in the future direction and a loss of faith in the past was leading to de-motivation and evidence for this was found in a longing for the “old ways” and a “looking forward to retirement.” Not all officers felt this way and some believed the changes would eventually improve the service, but they too agreed criticising “everything” from the past had been the wrong way to proceed. A majority of officers interviewed criticised the promotion procedure and the way support is offered to some (described as favourites) but not to others. The fire service is also unsure of its future direction and its historical values are also under threat. The big challenge for the fire service is to implement change and take its entire people forward in an agreed direction.

The Australian Fire Service (6.6): The amount of change taking place in the Australian Fire Service is at least equal to that which is taking place in the British Police Service. The main difference is the way the change is being approached and introduced. In

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Australia the men and women of the fire service feel they have a part to play in the change process and they are in the majority, in the police service, these people are in the minority. Shared values, pride in the service, good communication links and the common goal of ensuring the service remains the best are all at the forefront of the Australian change process. Nearly all their systems and structures have been challenged, but not from a negative starting point, change only seems to occur if it strengthens them and supports the people who make them work. Vocational development and qualifications have now been accepted as the way ahead for the Australian Fire Service but not without some implementation problems. Users of the system were consulted for suggestions, and necessary improvements were then made. A general pride in being a member of the fire service is evident from the many unofficial fire station websites throughout Australia and a general satisfaction with the working conditions. Most of the Australian working practices are also common to the British Fire Service but the ingredients missing from the wholtime service in the UK is a general pride in the fire service and a flexible approach to problems.

The Royal Navy (6.7): The terminology and traditions of the fire service come from the Royal Navy but they have little in common with each other in the present day. The passing on of traditions and values to a new generation of recruits in the Navy is fundamental to their policy of “continuity through change.” The fire service attaches little importance to this and consequently new recruits attach little importance to it either. The Royal Navy has always adapted to meet current needs and this approach ensures they remain in control of the change. The fire service tends to cling to old systems of working and view change as an “attack on the service” and stubbornly

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defend the status quo; this ultimately means they are not in control of the change process. Individuals in the Navy are encouraged through a forward planning process to take control of their careers with due regard paid to a balanced private and family life. Support is provided through an explicit communication network and all ranks are in a position to speak to a designated person for confidential career advice. The general rule in the fire service is to leave individuals alone, a “sink or swim” policy as one firefighter said to the author during the fire service fieldwork. When a person does apply for promotion in the fire service, it is usually for the rank, with no knowledge of what the role may involve or even where it is to be performed until after the promotion. The Royal Navy and the fire service both train continuously for their operational roles with the Navy ensuring the political context is also explained. Changes within society and anti-social behaviour that fire service personnel often have to deal with at emergency incidents are areas often neglected during training. The naval personnel interviewed did not always agree with the new training methods and the introduction of vocational qualifications, but they at least knew the reasons for their introduction. Even in disagreement, a positive attitude and pride at being a member of the Navy prevailed. The Navy recognises that change may have to go deeper and that management may eventually have to be separated from command. An increase in non-uniformed skilled management academics would be necessary if officers concentrated solely on leadership and command, but the Navy is not afraid to open the debate. The British Fire Service and the Royal Navy no longer have a strong bond, but the links are still there and can be strengthened. The fire service needs to adopt a more flexible approach to its own problems by a reappraisal of how the Royal Navy conducts its working practices.

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The British Retained Fire Service (6.8): The demands and expectations placed upon the retained increase each year without any real development model to support them. The Integrated Personal Development System will go some way to alleviating the generic problems but implementation may take a number of years and not fully address the problem. The fire service needs to recognise the fact that part-time firefighters will never achieve the expertise levels of a wholetime firefighter under these present conditions. The retained perform an essential role in the towns and villages where it is economically impractical to base wholetime crews and this too needs recognising. A retained firefighter spends his/her entire career based at the same fire station unless he/she moves to another station area, unlike a wholetime firefighter, who can be moved to another fire station at short notice. Training and development for a retained firefighter must therefore be different so as to cater for the actual local need. Retained firefighters and their fire engine are also expected to “stand by” at another fire station to provide cover when the need arises. If this crew is then mobilised to an emergency outside their normal station area to an incident they have not been trained for, this may infringe health and safety legislation. The retained are a very cost-effective resource and for this special circumstance, a wholetime officer depending on the situation may need to be mobilised with them to provide support as necessary. The retained study has identified a proud and motivated workforce willing to be flexible but now showing signs of stress due to neglect from not providing them with adequate support over the years. The wholetime workforce appear indifferent to their problems and this circle of misunderstanding manifests itself in a lack of trust between each other and a fear the other party may be after the other person’s firefighting job. This insecurity and a lack of

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belief in the ability of the retained (due to inadequate training) has resulted in the Fire Brigades Union objecting to the mixed crewing of fire engines, even though they work together at large incidents. Some fire stations do have a mix of retained and wholetime fire engines, but generally, mixed crewing does not take place even though both sections appear to get on well with each other. This lack of not being able to mix, apart from large incidents, has compounded the problem resulting in both sections being treated as separate entities not only by the firefighters, but also by the local authority employers. A start to bring the service together needs to be made by stating clearly that both sections are essential to the future well being of the service and the precise criteria that determines a retained and a wholetime fire station.

Analysis of what the retained fire station actually does and the actual experience of individuals should address the local training needs providing due account is taken of the support required when operating out of their area. The question of mixed crewing (on retained fire engines as well as wholetime) needs to be considered in the context of personal development and in times of dire need, such as the keeping of a fire engine “on the run” during periods of sickness.

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7. 1 The Past, Present and Future

After the focussed studies of the previous chapters, an examination of the issues affecting individual development and consequently organisational development is the next requirement. The key to this investigation is whether the accepted general conventions on development are appropriate and practicable for a rank and uniform organisation. The fire service has to change and adapt to keep pace with the society it protects and to recognise the modern technologies and lifestyles adopted by its employees. These social changes are a constant process that affects not only society and the fire service but also business generally and it is now a fact of modern business life. The reasons for changes in society's standards and expectations have been diverse and affect the education, training and development of individuals in different ways. It is therefore reasonable to investigate individual development techniques to determine their currency, relevancy, appropriateness and validity for the present reality. One example would be the expansion of technical innovation resulting in new knowledge requirements for individuals and new application skills. The fire service relies increasingly on science and technology to provide newer and better equipment with a high degree of technical sophistication and reliability. This requires high-performance human inter-actions, but instead of celebrating this progress, employees can treat each new technological innovation with suspicion and see it as a threat. It is only by ensuring human development keeps pace with technology that this irrational attitude can be overcome. Previous fire service studies, reports and reviews have advocated that advances in science should be applied to the context of fire service work if at all possible. Complex emergency situations are dynamic events and can change in

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unforeseeable ways; the application of science can make these events easier to bring under control. The problem with any advance in technology is the possibility of introducing two classes of employee, those that can interpret and use the information and those that cannot or fail to use the information. The essential feature for the fire service is to develop human potential to interpret and use this information in a constant process rather than the intermittent "as and when training" of the past and present.

The building of character, broadening one's outlook and acceptance of social responsibility must have equal importance in this process of knowledge and skill development. The power of judgement and the criteria for making choices will be the real innovations for the fire service of the future. By understanding the history of the fire service these innovations are put into even sharper context and in order to judge the present it is essential to have come to terms with the historical roots of the service. This develops an appreciation of the modern day pressures and provides a sense of belonging by understanding how things have come to be and why. This understanding can develop an individual's intellect and affect behaviour at work with a willingness to cooperate more fully with others. Once these modern day pressures have been recognised, the acceptance of responsibilities emerge, not only at work but responsibility within one's family and social role and more importantly, placing both in perspective and balancing the two. Before improvements can be introduced into the fire service, it is not only essential to have this awareness of the service's past and pressures of modern day life, it is also essential to appreciate the wider development issues. This strategy then determines the suitability of change interventions within the context of a fire service environment. (The work of Field and Drysdale, 1991; Harrison, 1993; Harvey-Jones,

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1988; Mathis and Jackson, 1994; Pearson, 1991 and Storey, 1992 is acknowledged for the background research to this chapter).

7.2 The Fire Service as an Organisation

The issue of professional development within the fire service cannot be addressed until the organisation as an entity has been defined. The word organisation in the business world has been taken to mean the bringing of resources together in an orderly structured manner by a collection of people who have been brought together to achieve a goal. This has been further defined as: *“A group of people working together over a period of time to achieve a common goal or objective”* (Richards, 1991:17). This definition can then be underpinned by a set of beliefs:

- *Each person should receive orders from a superior.*
- *There should be a single chain of command running from the top to the bottom of the organisation for the purposes of communication and coordination.*
- *The number of people reporting to one supervisor must be limited so as to enable effective control and coordination.*
- *There should be a clear distinction between line functions and staff.*
- *Tasks should be differentiated according to different specialists so as to focus expert knowledge and ensure tasks are done efficiently.*
- *Individuals should be given responsibility for certain tasks and the requisite authority to carry these responsibilities out (Armstrong, 1992:48).*

The above definition and set of beliefs are immediately recognisable to those who work for the fire service and confirms that the service does indeed fall within the above set of

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beliefs. The Chief Fire Officer of each brigade has the ultimate liability, accountability, authority and therefore responsibility. Having decided the place of the fire service within the business world, it is then incumbent on those in positions of power in each fire brigade to develop the organisation. This in turn involves a responsibility to develop individuals within each brigade.

7.3 Mission Statements and Organisational Objectives

Before development of individuals can begin, everyone in the organisation must not only understand the overall direction of the organisation; everyone needs to become involved in that chosen direction. Mission statements provide the foundation for shared values and help define the principles of the business plan, so that each section and individuals in the organisation have a place and more importantly; know their place. Fire Brigades, like most businesses have mission statements and during the fieldwork, the opportunity was taken by the author to inspect these. Unfortunately, most of these revealed a “statement of intent” with a number of platitudes to satisfy the requirements of the “best value” plan. A mission statement should be created for everyone in the organisation, not just for a particular group of persons or sections. A properly worded statement becomes a reference point for effective work practices enabling organisational objectives to reflect the values and belief of the service through continuous improvement. *“Mission statements need to be reviewed frequently, to reflect the situation as it is, to improve it, to strengthen it. It renews us, it recommit us to what we believe in, what we stand for”* (Covey, 1992:139). During the fieldwork through observation, discussion and examination of the work practices of fire brigades, it

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became apparent the organisational objectives of each brigade are either not widely understood or communicated in detail to the fire stations. Organisational objectives are critical to the professional development of individuals. Without this communication, the question to ask is how is it possible to develop people if they do not know how to apply and operate to the practicalities of their jobs within organisational objectives? Nearly all of the organisational objectives inspected related to specific aspects of a brigade's work, but none of them explained the rationale behind each objective by the use of a simple statement describing how the objective related to individual performance. Statements can also describe standards of behaviour during activities and these would assist in the analysis of individual performance to enable improvements to be made.

The effectiveness of any strategy for a brigade, set by the senior officers, must include professional development of its human resources. Without such a strategy, the service will find it more difficult to implement change because it is people that make change work. It is for this reason the link between the organisational objectives and human resource development must be specific and explicit.

The strategy must not only set the criteria; it needs to identify the costs, expected time frame, benefits and the likely degree of success and failure of each initiative. Results need to be compared so that a balance between benefits and costs emerge. If this link between the strategy and the objectives is not made clear, individuals and sections will start to work on their own priorities and possibly begin "empire building" – all too evident in many of the structures in the brigades visited by the author. The retained firefighters of each brigade, working in small units in the most remote geographical parts of the brigade area also need to know that they too have as much to contribute as

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anyone else. For this to happen they must not only know what is expected of them, but what they can expect from the organisation.

7.4 Strategic Thinking and the Need to Integrate Strategies

Strategic thinking is long term and the problem now facing the service is the accelerating rate of change, innovation and degree of risk. Charles Handy tells a story of the Peruvian Indians who one day saw some tiny white dots on the ocean horizon and because they had no experience or knowledge of sailing ships, they rationalised the dots away as a freak set of weather conditions. The white dots turned out to be the sails of the Spanish invaders who eventually laid waste to their entire civilisation (Handy, 1989). This sticking blindly and stubbornly to what you know, what you expect to happen and rationalising away factors that change reality, may be comforting in the short term but does not lead to effective strategic thinking in the long term. Strategic thinking in the fire service whilst not as extreme as the Peruvian Indians example is nevertheless locked into a pattern of doing the best possible with limited resources, as identified in the history and literature review chapters.

To cope effectively with the present demands of society and the business environment the service needs to integrate its various functions. People, sections and departments have to work together and deal with problems as common problems, not just viewing it as a difficulty for a specific fire station, section or division. Sections within brigades usually have their own finite yearly internal budgets, their own way of doing things and consequently ignoring or “rationalising away events” that they have no control over or do not concern them. This phenomenon appears to go unnoticed because it is “accepted

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practice” and the author found this to be commonplace throughout the British Fire Service. Each of these sections managing their own zone of responsibility can and do create (quite unintentionally) “poor and rich areas” within each organisation. This point is made because the problems of the British Fire Service are now viewed as national problems but the problem of “brigades operating within brigades” goes unnoticed. Kanter advocates a need for an integration of functions and argues that such integration could help reduce conflict and isolation between organisational units (Kanter, 1983). This crossing of “organisational boundaries” can also improve decision making for the benefit of the whole organisation, not just part of it. Integrated strategies between sections, corporate objectives and the people within the individual brigades must be the next big step for the service. With a more coherent integration of strategies approach, human resource development takes on a greater importance for the achievement of operational goals. Torrington argues that this human resource development planning is an essential feature for every organisation (Torrington, 1991). This is especially important for fire brigades operating over large geographical areas. Planning decisions involve setting the mission, the operational objectives, how to achieve them and development of those who will deliver them. The fire service operating as a public service and mainstream business must ensure all the above foundations are in place before proceeding with the contents of the many reviews it is subjected to.

7.5 Analysis of Development Needs

Conducting an analysis of development needs for the fire service with all its varied activities, functions and diverse roles is a daunting task but a correct analysis will ensure

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individuals and teams will have the full range of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes for each of their many roles (Boydell, 1996). With the introduction of workplace standards and the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), an analysis of needs becomes of prime importance. The first step is to look at the service's current operations with a projection for future requirements including the likely number of persons needed to fulfill these functions. The analysis will need to specify the specific needs of individuals so that they not only reach the required standard of performance in their current and/or future job role (the prime reason for the introduction of the IPDS) it also needs to identify the numbers, ranks and roles of the individuals who may require additional support in order to meet the requirements of the organisational objectives. For the fire service, the analysis has four levels:

- a) At the organisational level where the setting of the strategy and organisational objectives takes place.
- b) At the occupational level relating to the specific needs and requirements of the workplace standards within each job role.
- c) At the team level in the context of how the tasks change and develop with the introduction of new team working practices.
- d) At the individual level where assessments take place as to the level of competency.

By linking the service's occupational standards to the above four analysis levels, four distinct areas impinging on professional development can be identified:

Job analysis. This may appear to be already in place with the advent of the national occupational standards but a generic analysis is not appropriate for individuals either just entering the profession or transferring between roles. The analysis needs to consider

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the nature of the work the individual will have to perform and then relate this back to the person to take account of the physical and mental activities of the job and the qualities and characteristics the individual has or needs to possess.

Task analysis. This is the natural progression and breakdown of the job analysis into a specification for the tasks. The problem here is that what one person may well take for granted may be unknown to others. The validity of job descriptions in describing the actions is crucial to this analysis.

Individual analysis. Once again it is wrong to make assumptions that this is in place when working within workplace standards. Trying to force individuals through standard development programmes to confirm competence will not work if the needs of the individual are not met. This process has two linked themes:

- a) What are the specific training and development needs of the individual?
- b) What is the individual's preferred learning style?

Communication. This is possibly the most important component as it is essential all the partners in the process communicate with each other so that areas of good practice and problems are all identified. The issue of negative attitudes may also have to be confronted. This may only be due to misunderstandings about the terminology and application of the standards, but not all individuals are going to view the IPDS positively and they may require further support.

7.6 Learning Theory

Individuals, if given the choice, prefer to learn and develop in different ways using their own preferred learning style and starting point. Upon recruitment, brigades tend to

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employ only activists and this changes during career development when individuals start to think of their preferred learning style such as that of the reflector, pragmatist and theorist. Thinking about learning as a continuous process is another way to look at how people learn and learning from experience is another way to look at learning as a continuous cycle. The starting point could be an experience such as a demonstration, presentation or work activity (such as attending an emergency incident) followed by a period of reflection and then drawing certain conclusions with a decision about what to do if you experience a similar event in the future. Depending on what actually does happen and during similar events, an individual's perception may be modified by further experiences until satisfactory behaviour or actions takes place (Kolb, 1985). Unfortunately without this awareness of "learning opportunities" people may simply "switch off" during their jobs and ignore the learning process. Other reasons may be the lack of reward incentives or viewing development purely as attendance on training courses. In the past great emphasis was placed on the teaching method rather than how learners acquire understanding, knowledge, and the skills required. This is now known to be misplaced, as training can take place without learning and learning can certainly occur without a trainer. (Honey & Mumford, 1989). An individual therefore needs to identify his/her own preferred leaning style before true learning can really take place as this is a major factor in personal development (Honey & Mumford, 1986). Identifying the different ways in which people learn is not enough; action plans must be implemented to support what has been identified. Learners will also need help in developing clear ideas of the concepts behind what they have learned and the strategies for recognising and analysing the requirements from the new problems encountered.

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Learning is a skill and individuals need to be aware that this too is a process in its own right (Fennell, 1991). The learner must be able to plan and set priorities and deal with the unexpected during learning such as any health and safety implications and the interpersonal and interactive situations that occur when dealing with people, all of these require specific skills.

7.7 Support for Personal Development

The learning environment over recent years has undergone dramatic changes and teaching is no longer seen as imparting information to passive students but rather facilitation of self-directed learning. The old style pre-occupation with how to teach things to people has been replaced with an emphasis on pro-active student responsibility for learning. This is a process the fire service can take great advantage of with individuals working in small teams for the various roles they have to perform. This process is a transition from teacher responsibility for individual learning to self-directed learning supported by a facilitator (Heron, 1989). The fire service has always used an informal support structure for learners with the person under development being looked after by an “experienced older hand,” but this informal system is not without its problems. This is due to the fact that persons not given the “corporate viewpoint” and/or developed to deliver this type of support could hand down bad practice through non-standard supervision. The modern terminology of “mentor” can overcome this possible transfer of bad practice. The word mentor (Holloway, 1994) originally came from Greek mythology when Odysseus, King of Ithaca went to fight in the Trojan War. For the duration of this war (ten years) his son, Telemachus, was looked after and cared for by

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his old and trusted friend Mentor. Over the years, the word mentor has become synonymous with trusted advisor, friend, teacher and wise person. Mentoring is now becoming the accepted way of supporting individuals with career development and with the fire service embracing vocational standards; everything is in place to formalise the present informal system through qualified mentors. Mentoring is not the same as coaching (Parsloe, 1995) and much confusion still revolves around these two terms. A mentor is rarely the learner's line manager and can best be described as someone who acts as a friend and trusted counselor. Mentoring looks for improvements in performance but over longer or less defined time-scales than coaching. For mentoring to work, the learner must accept a number of conditions (Clutterbrook, 1991). They must be committed to their own learning with a flexible approach to the process and willing to accept feedback. They must also demonstrate a willingness to develop a relationship with the mentor, which in some cases may take time. Coaching is usually the responsibility of line managers who have day-to-day accountability for the learner's performance involving clear status and responsibility. Coaching therefore looks for definite improvements in performance over relatively short time-scales.

There may be times when the learner and mentor disagree and in honest and open relationships, this is not a cause for concern. In less honest and open relationships the disagreements may well develop into arguments leading to a split in the relationship (Kindler, 1998). The causes of this type of conflict are varied and may involve inappropriate or incompatible goals, ineffective or unacceptable methods, inaccurate or incomplete information and antagonistic or other negative feelings. Conflict, however trivial, may trigger all manner of resentments. All conflict needs to be confronted and

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resolved before it turns into permanent hostility. The going back to a common ground may be necessary or it may simply be a lack of understanding of the other person's perspective or even a failure to communicate and empathise with each other. Mentoring, if used correctly with both parties aware of possible conflict, can be an extremely powerful development tool for the individual as it empowers the individual to take responsibility for their career development. The establishment of successful mentoring support systems provides not only support for the individual, it is a substantial step in the creation of a learning culture throughout the fire service. The challenge for all brigades is not the motivation of ambitious people who wish to become officers; it is the motivation of firefighters who wish to remain as firefighters - but with a need to be recognised as skilled professionals. Involvement by experienced colleagues performing the role of a mentor not only supports the individual and the organisation; it supports job satisfaction and job enrichment for the mentor.

7.8 Team Development Strategies

Many definitions exist as to what exactly teams are but they all revolve around a central theme: a team is a group of individuals working together to produce a final product that one individual could not produce alone. Examples of fire brigade teams include:

- Individuals grouped together to provide radio communications for the organisation.
- Individuals grouped together as a "Watch" on wholetime fire stations.
- Individuals grouped together as a single fire-fighting unit on retained stations.
- Individuals grouped together to form a divisional command structure.
- Individuals grouped together to form a brigade command structure.

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In addition to formal teams, informal groups may appear in any situations where people have regular contact with each other such as sharing an office, facilities, similar interests or values. These “teams” occur spontaneously and are not under the direct control of management. Managing and leading teams requires specific skills and Armstrong advocates the provision of standards and targets for each individual with a communication of these objectives to the team (Armstrong, 1990). Within this process it is also essential to check progress, provide guidance, adapt tasks where necessary and deal decisively with any problems using the strength of the team to overcome any weaknesses. This team development goes through a number of stages and for teams to be successful work and social relationships need to be catered for in the same way as the task in hand. When individuals first come together there is a natural tendency to be reticent, objectives may be unclear and individuals will sub-consciously probe one another’s attitudes and abilities until the “ground rules” are established. When these rules or conventions are established (Handy, 1985) standards, procedures and rules appear. So too will the social and task issues so that the team can channel all of its energies into performance and it is at this stage a team really becomes effective. Team development is a continuous process due to the constant changes taking place. Experienced members may leave, less experienced join, changes may occur with the tasks, standards, organisational, environmental or legislative changes. Team development must cater and plan for this change rather than react to it. Teamwork is an essential ingredient for the work of the fire service and it is extremely important that the team leaders, senior officers and managers value team members as individuals, identify their specific skills, take time to get to know them and understand what motivates them.

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“Seek first to understand then to be understood” (Covey, 1994:255). To influence the behaviour of individuals you must first understand what influences their behaviour and try to match these needs with that of the organisation. Team development is all about attitude and team leaders have special responsibilities in this area, but sometimes it is the leader who needs the development first. People working together bring a unique cluster of personal skills and the more the leader is aware of the individual strengths and qualities within the team, the better he/she can use them to the groups advantage.

7.9 Assessment of Performance

The British Fire Service has accepted in principle the introduction of workplace standards and assessment of performance as the basis for a vocational qualification. This assessment of competence has become a “matter of judgement” based around certain conditions or rules. One author makes this statement: *“Making an assessment of competence is like making a judgment about most human activities. The fact is that it is impossible to arrive at judgement about most human activities which are 100% certain. Actually such precision is rarely required”* (Black, 1994:37). Much confusion exists in the service and arguments abound as to which is the better system; traditional development and assessment or competence based development and assessment. Traditional development in the fire service is taken to mean any training session away from operational incidents that includes a measure of the practical and cognitive ability by any acceptable assessment method to produce valid and reliable results such as written/oral tests and practical examinations. Competence based development can still include the above but in combination with a person’s ability to perform work-related

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tasks in the working environment. This is still a measure of the practical and cognitive ability but assessed against defined criteria produced by observations, oral and written questions, examination of product evidence and other evidence such as testimonials, peer reports and prior experience. The assessment decisions for the vocational standards within the Integrated Personal Development System now become clearer, they are judgements based on an evaluation of the evidence provided to demonstrate competence against the requirements of the standard. If an assessor is not satisfied with the evidence provided, further questioning can take place or identification of any additional evidence requirements. Feedback is a vital part of the process within assessments as it clarifies the individual's current position, their strengths and any areas for development. A person's mentor should see any deficiencies as opportunities for development and involvement. One of the stronger themes to emerge from the research on vocational assessment practice is its link to learning and the way the assessment process affects the development of the individual being assessed. The effect is not just in the immediate context but well after the learning and assessment experience. The penalties for poorly designed and poorly understood assessments may be long-term and wider ranging than expected. Dale and Iles have documented the consequence of poor assessment techniques. They argue that the way individuals are assessed significantly affects thinking, such as the way they view themselves, their careers and their organisation that carried out the assessment (Dale & Iles, 1992). Conversely, candidates who feel they have been assessed accurately in ways that help them get a better picture of themselves' may even feel a rise in self-esteem. This enhanced sense of well being and greater sense of commitment to the organisation may produce an increased sense of motivation to

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undertake further career training and development. The kind of assessment techniques that candidates are exposed to will increasingly come to play a major part in the modernisation programme the government is now demanding from the service. Boud also supports the concept of assessment being just as important as the process of learning (Boud, 1989). Different forms of assessment will influence learning outcomes and may lead to superficial learning if not applied correctly. Self-assessment by the individual to check his/her progress is another method a mentor or coach could introduce as this encourages a learner to take more control in the learning process.

7.10 Strategies for Effective Evaluation in Training and Development

An effective evaluation strategy confirms the effectiveness of investment in training and development, consequently if brigades build assessment activities into training and development programmes; the first stage of an evaluation strategy has been undertaken. Evaluation in the fire service regards the training and development function is often confused with assessment. Assessment is the process of interpreting learner levels of performance against pre-set criteria to determine their competence and evaluation is the process of gathering information to measure the effectiveness of an intervention against pre-determined requirements or criteria. The evaluation process to confirm effective delivery of professional development programmes within the fire service environment needs to be conducted at three levels:

- a) The Individual level. This is an evaluation of the achieved objectives compared to the identified needs within the resources and levels of support available.

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- b) The Operational level. This is an evaluation of the quality of the service provision compared to the cost and levels of “customer satisfaction” within that service provision.
- c) The Organisational level. This is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the development function to assist the organisation to achieve its objectives and the identification of any improvements. The evaluation should also provide information regards the future numbers and requirements for each rank/role, rate of turnover and skill levels to meet the aims of an emergency fire and rescue service.

7.11 Improvements to Training and Development

Part of the continual change process within the fire service is the accepted use of external audits to confirm continuous development of their personnel. Many brigades now hold the Charter Mark as confirmation of customer care. The principles of “best value,” with their extensive performance indicators, are now mandatory throughout the service and are used to ascertain if standards are being maintained and improved. Similarly, the future trend is for corporate training and development programmes to become highly professional with more active participation by the “student” with the trainers taking on the role of facilitators. Academic qualifications in the form of university degrees, whilst still not the accepted norm, are nevertheless being sought by individuals eager to expand their minds to meet the challenges of their ever more complex roles. The previously mentioned acceptance by the service of workplace standards will affect the design and delivery of training to cater for this anticipated greater accountability and involvement by individuals in the development process. The

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process will require a change in emphasis and culture by senior management, as they will need to demonstrate in audits that the corporate initiatives confirm application and underpinning of the human resource development improvements. Potential improvements to programmes require monitoring, reviewing and evaluating to ensure standards are being maintained and not compromised. Charles Handy in his book, *The Age of Unreason* argues that if you do not do this, problems will surely occur (Handy, 1989). Improvements to training and development should be viewed as a continuous process that operate within defined structures and procedures. In the 1970s these type of organisations became known as “learning organisations” with the concept of self-development and responsibility for career development needs. The problem with this concept was the inflexible organisational structures and lack of recognition for self-development actions that act as real barriers to the people in question. Gradually the suggestion came that organisations need to be more open and attach more value to individual and organisational learning (Burgoyne, 1989). The fire service spends a lot of time, money and effort improving training systems and these internal strategies, when linked to external strategies, can vindicate, validate and confirm the value of such efforts to ensure compliance with the principles of best value. The word training in this process has now become steadily less appropriate in the description of how organisations manage the learning function of individuals. The word development is now slowly replacing training to describe improved performance in individuals.

7.12 Managing and Motivating People

The management and motivation of people has been the Achilles heel of the fire service.

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It still remains one of the most important duties for fire service officers and managers and those in authority need to recognise the complexity of human behaviour and appreciate the nature of motivation. *“Motivation is a positive attitude of mind which cannot be manipulated with money”* (Freemantle, 1985:166).

For a service changing from a disciplined militaristic style to a more democratic style the change has been even harder as no existing management model has been proposed. The “accepted” historical management style by officers is autocratic at emergency incidents (this is still pertinent due to the prevailing dynamic and often dangerous conditions). and a more democratic style on the fire stations. Officers are given basic management skills but still resort to the power of rank if decisions are challenged. It is therefore essential that these officers, who now operate under entirely different conditions and have responsibilities to develop others, must develop themselves first. This requires an understanding of management theory to assist and support them in the development of others. The book “In Search of Excellence” has sold over five million copies but one of the co-authors, Tom Peters, calculates only 100,000 have ever read it from cover to cover (Peters & Waterman, 1982). That is the crux of the problem, managers (including fire officers) are bombarded with management bestsellers and the “gurus” that promote management theory. It is not the intention in this chapter to promote any particular style or theory, but to emphasise that professional development in the fire service requires an understanding and awareness of the basic issues and problems before trying to solve years of neglect. Even the “gurus” dislike the name applied to themselves. Mintzberg is unhappy with the term guru as he believes the term can often destroy the message (Mintzberg, 1980). Kanter rejects the name because it

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implies credibility before substance (Kanter, 1989). Pascale also rejects the name because of the large number of different solutions proposed (Pascale, 1985). So do the gurus have all the answers and is it management theory overload? Without the “gurus” managers would certainly lose a rich source of inspiration but ideas do percolate through best practice and it is often difficult to establish the origin of such work. Fire service officers need to be aware of this and realise that there is no defined way of managing correctly. What is necessary is an appreciation how management styles have developed over the years so that the service can apply a common standard.

The first major figure concerned with the needs of individuals was Robert Owen, 1771 to 1858. He was a textile mill manager and part owner and he introduced social reforms including the first infant school in Britain. At work, he increased the pay of his workers that in turn led to higher productivity. Elton Mayo, 1889 to 1949 was the first major figure to study people’s attitude at work studying the behaviour of small groups at the Western Electrical Hawthorne Plant in Chicago, USA. His work is known as the “Hawthorne Studies” and worthy of study by those in the service trying to develop others. Mayo, identifies a need for organisations to recognise that men and women are social beings, motivated by social needs and that employees often value human group membership and this can be more important than pay or working conditions (Mayo, 1933). Managers need also to recognise the reality of informal groups in the workplace and how these can sometimes be more influential in the regulation of behaviour than management directives. The managers, leaders and officers of the fire service can only be effective when they recognise and respond to these social needs. To motivate people to work willingly and well is not difficult; it requires an understanding of the various

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theories and the application of personal standards and style. Every manager in the fire service has a responsibility to make individuals feel valued and to recognise their achievements and put in place the right conditions for development.

This management of people in the service is often confused with leadership. An example of this could be a dominant firefighter on a Watch who has no legitimate control over the group but nevertheless acts as the informal leader; managers must lead, but leaders are not necessarily managers. The management/leadership role in the fire service is a combination of autocracy at emergency incidents and democracy away from these incidents; the badge of rank can sometimes be used inappropriately to influence behaviour in both settings. Historically this was not a problem, but a change in society has made the previous militaristic style adopted by the fire service for emergency incidents, unsuitable for non-emergency situations. This militaristic “model” for the fire service comes from John Adair and in his book “Training for Leadership” he advocates a functional approach, which he developed whilst serving as a senior lecturer at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst revolving around the needs of the task, team and individual (Adair, 1968). The introduction of workplace standards and vocational qualifications now requires more of a facilitator/advisor approach rather than the leader/manager approach on the fire stations. The two approaches have their place in the fire service; the real skill is in knowing the differences and matching the style to the situation. The functional leadership approach can provide the inexperienced officer with a quick understanding of the basic requirements to lead effectively and the more experienced the basis for further development. There may also be a tendency to abandon different theories or techniques if the individual fails to appreciate the factors that make

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other people behave in certain ways during certain situations. When studying motivation theories, they may appear to be different but all contain a common idea: motivation is a goal directed behaviour. Many of the differences occur because each of the behavioural scientists studied a different segment of the overall motivation process or looked at the same segment but from a different perspective. Professional development requires an understanding of need-satisfaction theories and how they relate to motivation and behaviour, for once these are understood, they become a powerful tool to help other people with their personal goals within the organisational context.

7.13 The Management and Development of Oneself

The organisational structure and culture of the fire service is in a state of continual change due to the political, legislative, technological advances and the needs of society. To meet these needs, fresh strategies are constantly emerging just to maintain one's position and avoid stagnation. The management of oneself is yet another crucial element to apply before attempting to manage and develop others. Managing and organising oneself means not only effective decision making but also the effective planning of regular tasks and of special tasks and projects. Organising cannot be divorced from planning and personal development is crucial in this area; an area that is often neglected by those who have responsibilities for developing others. It is often very difficult to make objective assessments about yourself and it often requires a combination of personal targets, the needs of the organisation and discussions with others. The willingness to undertake personal self-development should be encouraged and supported by the organisation as it recognises the human factor and treats people as individuals

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within a corporate environment. A person's normal working environment usually provides plenty of scope for self-development; the secret is to recognise the opportunities and take full value from them. As with any other type of development, the process should be reviewed and evaluated to confirm the development is appropriate to the needs and is working in the way it was intended and that any changes are identified and implemented. Almost without exception, individuals at all levels in the fire service regularly need to learn something new. That "something new" might be a new work performance skill, organisation of work or improvements to the management and development of oneself. Great personal satisfaction can come from this satisfying of a "need" as each unsatisfied need can have adverse effects on work performance. The exact nature of this self-development depends not only on career development aspirations but also on personal development and organisation requirements within that person's current role. The vital element in the process is the time-scale of achievement. This becomes a self-contract demonstrating an ability to manage oneself effectively.

7.14 Relationships with Others

The former Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, speaking on a BBC 1. Television programme shown on the 4th January 1998, called "How to be a Foreign Secretary," stated personal relationships are crucial in the understanding and dealings with people and without such relationships it is impossible to be successful in whatever you wish to achieve, regardless of your ability (Callaghan, 1998). The cornerstone for all meaningful relationships is trust and the visits to different brigades by the author found this to be lacking and this will be returned to in Chapter Eight.

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Historically, fire brigades have had a traditional approach with their employees, with management making the decisions and any reaction coming through the representative bodies. The service as a whole now tries to involve the employees in the decision making process but retains the right to manage. This unfortunately leads to an adversarial relationship with management exercising legitimate power and the representative bodies exercising their power by challenging each decision. Larry Adams in an occasional paper for the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service generalised about these types of adversarial relationships:

“On a labour-management relationship continuum with cooperation at one end, open warfare at the other and armed truce in the middle, most relationships fall between armed truce and open warfare.” He went on to say: *“With few exceptions employers and representative bodies are content, or resigned, to live within an adversarial system with attempts to improve industrial relationships rarely attempted as a matter of course”* (Adams, 1994: pages not numbered).

The reasons for poor relationships at work can vary and need investigating before they become the “accepted” practice of the organisation. There may be a combination of factors to consider but poor communication is one of the prime reasons for conflict, as individuals will generally base their opinions and actions on the information they are provided with. Kindler in his book “Managing Disagreements Constructively” identifies incompatible goals, ineffective and unacceptable methods as possible reasons for antagonistic and negative feelings (Kindler, 1988). All conflict and the causes of conflict need to be recognised immediately as they can trigger off long-standing resentment and hostility for even the most trivial of reasons This has the possibility of it

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turning into permanent hostility. Covey, on the subject of relationships says: *“Creating the unity necessary to run an effective business or a family or a marriage requires great personal strength and courage. No amount of technical administrative skill in laboring (sic) for the masses can make up for the lack of nobility of personal character in developing relationships. It is at a very essential, one-to-one level, that we live the primary laws of love and life”* (Covey, 1994:202). Covey expresses an ideal that is often forgotten or not even applied in the first place when attempting to create an effective working relationship.

7.15 Managing Change in the Fire Service

All organisations work in the context of continuous change and however tempting it is to think of this as new, it is not, change is a part of life and has always been so. The degree of current change in the fire service is massive with pro-active community safety initiatives taking the lead alongside role maps, vocational development and de-militarisation. This and other physical changes can be seen, audited and therefore catered for. Change can either be creeping such as the gradual replacement of a vehicle fleet to the latest specification, or sudden such as the reaction to a health and safety improvement notice. The real dramatic change though is the change in values brought about through persistent conditioning over a number of years. This change in values does not appear to have a physical manifestation but it is nevertheless the one force all change reacts to. This change in values may provide answers to possible conflict problems on a number of issues when viewed by different people with different perspectives. Personal values held by people is a complex subject matter, worthy of

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research in its own right and brought about by a variety of circumstances that are also subject to change. The fire service undoubtedly reflects these values in society, the drugs culture being one example, with all brigades now having a drugs policy and subjecting their workforce to random checks. Being passive is no longer an option and changing values and the need for appropriate actions should be viewed as “constants” when managing change. Sudden and creeping change both require systems that monitor reviews and plans for change. Roger Plant identifies this process in his book called “Managing Change and Making it Stick.” He argues the pace of change is increasingly dramatic and organisations must respond to this change and invest time and money in the change management process (Plant, 1987).

Change can also be a cause of conflict between people who are unsure of their future roles. This may lead to feelings of inferiority, low morale and high stress levels. Conversely others may look forward to the challenge and see only a better future, more security, more responsibility and better prospects for promotion. Most people though are apprehensive of the unknown and change often comes as a surprise due in the main to inadequate communication. It is crucial to recognise this human factor and communicate the reasons for any proposed changes. If individuals feel threatened by the change, for whatever reason, their initial reaction will be to draw back and seek security in the hope the proposals will eventually go away. Handy contends that the status quo is no longer the best way forward (Handy, 1989). Communication is the real key to the management of change. Those who know the reasons why change is coming waste less effort and time in protecting themselves and are consequently in a better position to use change to their advantage. The assertion of a disciplined and a rank orientated bureaucracy in the

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fire service is slowly changing, but the real fear is that these different approaches may cause lasting damage in some unspecified way. Various consultants over the years along with countless reviews have advocated changes but none of these have been handled sensitively. Rosabeth Moss Kanter in her book "The Change Masters" recognises this viewpoint especially when it is imposed upon individuals. She argues the case for greater communication and openness so that everyone has a chance to contribute to the change (Kanter, 1983).

Mr. Michael Heseltine, (The former President of the Board of Trade) during an interview on a BBC Radio 4 programme in November 1994 argued a case for "*change through continuity.*" He contends government works with change as its normal environment and change is the one constant factor in everyday life. Change for change's sake can be a destructive process though and a waste of time, energy and resources. There has to be a reason for change and this means taking a long hard look at what happens now, so that any potential improvements can be identified and based on clear objectives. Change, as recognised by Heseltine is a continuous process and it can be one so obvious it may be taken for granted. Taking things for granted is not a management skill and the application of a planned analytical approach to the management of change is important for effective management. Effective management is one that recognises the impact of change on individuals so that trauma and stress can be reduced to the absolute minimum to prevent major disruptions to systems and service delivery. Slowly but surely the British Fire Service is being re-branded, the corporate image is still unclear, you need only look at the diversity, colour and styles of uniform throughout the country to appreciate the processes under way. The implications and challenge for the service is

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either one of adapting to the environment the service is now in, or possibly survival for some aspects of the service's beliefs, values and work now taken for granted. The publication of the "Bain Review" on December 16th 2002 on how to deliver a modern fire service provides a dramatic example of this viewpoint.

7.16 The Principles of Effective People Development

This chapter has explored some of the principles of human resource development, the ways in which they either impinge or can be utilised in a fire service environment and the need to ensure a proper foundation is in place before attempting people development. Fire service officers need to recognise the service is also a "business" and in order to meet the needs of its "customers" the organisation must have the right blend of skilled people. They must also recognise a prime function of their role is that of a human resource manager. This continuous need for improvement to skills, knowledge, flexibility and adaptability to meet the future challenges for the service demands very high standards from those in a position to develop others. This takes on a much greater importance with the advent of occupational standards, the general change within the service to much flatter structures and a greater emphasis of devolved responsibility to the workforce operating in small units over large geographical areas. The investigation into professional development within the study takes account of the many books written on the subject and their validity and relationship to the fire service. Armstrong identifies four key principles within this process:

- *People are the most important assets an organisation has and their effective management is the key to success.*

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- *Organisational success is most likely to be achieved if the personnel policies and procedures of the enterprise are closely linked with, and make a major contribution to, the achievement of corporate objectives and strategic plans.*
- *The corporate culture and the values, organisational climate and managerial behaviour emanating from that culture will exert a major influence on the achievement of excellence. This culture must be managed, which means that strong pressure, starting from the very top, needs to be exerted to get the values accepted and acted upon.*
- *Continuous effort is required to encourage all the members of the organisation to work together with a sense of common purpose. It is particularly necessary to secure commitment to change (Armstrong, 1992:18-19).*

Armstrong, with his four principles identifies that effective people development in the present climate requires more than competence in the routine administration and supervision of personnel. Human resource managers therefore need to be aware of these issues and implications. Job descriptions, once considered crucial to both administration and strategy no longer deserve prominence, as they display neither competence nor strategic awareness to the skills now required in the workplace. Strategy and competence may appear to occupy opposite ends of the managerial scale and present different problems: *“Competence can be understood generally as effectiveness in carrying out routine tasks. Strategy is a much vaguer concept, which nevertheless becomes comprehensible as a sequence of definable activities”* (Pearson, 1991:2). Strategic management thus becomes the key to bring people and management together to promote people development.

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This process is a continuous process and consists of three interlocking continuous activities (Johnson & Scholes, 1988):

- Strategic analysis.
- Strategic choice.
- Strategy implementation.

In reality, this is preparation for the future through human resource management. Once it has been recognised that strategy is a continuous process, it becomes easier to think of effective people development as activities within a process of human resource management consisting of data gathering, creative thinking, implementation and evaluation. The process above all requires an understanding of the links between individual and corporate needs and according to Guest, better understanding of the people who work for the organisation (Guest, 1989). Waiting for events to force strategic change is not good enough as it is part of the job of a manager to constantly review changes taking place (Harvey-Jones, 1988). Ansoff contends that corporate strategy may be unnecessary when things are going well, but then notes that things in the business world do not often go well (Ansoff, 1987). "Development of human resources" is generally regarded as worth doing and the main influence for this belief has come from the work of psychologists Hertzberg and McGregor in the 1950s. This development of people can often bring about a fragmented approach, with development being seen as ad hoc or as a drain on funds if not evaluated as a strategy to meet business goals (Harrison, 1992). Employee development has to be a strategic activity with a focus on the needs of the business to help achieve the organisational objectives. A further aim of employee development is the achievement of a learning organisation so

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it is in a position to continuously innovate and able to adapt effectively to all kinds of change. By acting in this fashion, professional development becomes a corporate learning process that influences the choice of decision-makers as well as the business strategy resulting from the decisions. This human resource development then becomes intrinsic to the business strategy of the fire service and a culture in its own right.

7.17 The Future for Professional Development in the Fire Service

On March 31st 1998 the fire service celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Fire Services Act, an Act that created the modern post-war fire service. The management and development of human resources has been made even more challenging by the changing context and complex role of the service amid fears as to its future role and direction. Each human resource activity in the service whether it be a value, policy or practice sends messages to the employees and if these activities are sending conflicting messages, individuals will respond in different and unpredictable ways. These activities need to be coordinated with each other so as to meet the needs of the fire service, its history, its culture, its traditions, its values and most important of all; its changing role to meet the changing needs of society. The fire service must respond to the voices of change but no longer in a fragmented way, as this “way” has undermined the service’s core values and beliefs. The future beliefs and values must be through individual development that will ultimately bring rewards through real modernisation.

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8.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, this thesis has been concerned not just with the specific policies, processes and practice of professional development but with the broader organisational context and culture which affects them. It has proved impossible to focus on the first without drawing in the second and this has sometimes meant addressing very wide questions about the nature of the fire service. In fact, it has been difficult to manage the scope of the topic, since professional development in the fire service has become entangled with a wider range of political, financial, organisational and trade union issues.

The evidence from this and other work on the British Fire Service is that mere recommendations for change in professional development make little impact unless they take account of the existing culture. This is not however to say that they should not try to change that culture, only that they need first to understand it. This final chapter will therefore focus on the underlying conditions for the implementation of real change. If we can understand these, the service may be able to move forward. That, hopefully, is the contribution of this particular piece of research.

The way successful organisations flourish has often been assumed to depend on a rational process involving clear structures and principles (Beach, 1993). The authority, responsibility and necessity for certain actions flowing from the top to the bottom of an organisational hierarchy have long been recognised as the standard for this belief. It is now being conceded that this is not always the case and that different types of organisations require different structures and rules. This is often due to the *“irrational, hypocritical and highly political miniature societies that exist in organisations”*

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(Brown, 1998:xi). It is therefore necessary with the fire service study to not only consider this, but also the unique symbols, rites and rituals of its culture developed over many years from its traditions, values and beliefs. By describing what exists and why, including the reasons why proposed changes have either been accepted or rejected over the years, a way forward can be proposed.

Real modernisation and change in the fire service will only come about with a realisation and acceptance of two facts:

- A realisation that the service of the past did not fail the society it protected.
- An acceptance that new “norms of behaviour” are now required so that it does not fail to protect the present and future societies.

On the 30th June 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published a White Paper entitled “Our Fire and Rescue Service.” The paper describes the government’s vision for the future of the fire service with a commitment to enact legislation to redefine the role of the fire service. The Fire Services Act of 1947 is the last of Clement Atlee’s laws still in force and indicates the neglect the service has had to endure from successive governments, despite six reports dating from 1970 all demanding change. The White Paper also confirms a willingness on behalf of the government to lay the foundations for a modern fire and rescue service and states: *“Not all the proposals in the White Paper can be implemented overnight. Some will be implemented swiftly, while others may take more time. But doing nothing is not an option. Modern society requires modern public services and modern institutions. The way in which the fire service is organised and managed has, for too long and in too many respects, stood still while the world around it has moved on”* (Government White Paper, 2003:11).

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This research has identified a piecemeal approach to long-standing problems preventing modernisation and has confronted this by examining the fire service's history, tradition, culture, values and beliefs. This lack of appreciation and understanding, particularly of the past, is still influencing present working practices. If the conditions for the intended change are not in place, the service may yet fail to deliver the transformation it so desperately needs. Much indecision still remains particularly the argument as to whether the fire service needs to adopt the business practices of the private sector. There is a genuine fear that by *"adopting a private sector language there is a danger that organisations in the public domain will neglect the values inherent in that domain"* (Stewart and Walsh, 1992:516). Oswick and Grant contend that the public sector, by trying to respond to the business values of the private sector has adopted a *"knee-jerk response to financial constraints in the public sector which are due to the political and economic climate"* (Oswick and Grant, 1996:15). Farnham and Horton suggest that the public sector has a new rational style of human resource management which is not driven by the concepts of fairness towards its employees, but effective job performance, high quality output, service to its customers and value for money (Farnham and Horton, 1996:331). The fire service appears to be experiencing a breakdown in fairness, trust and personal relationships and it is a problem that needs to be addressed.

A former Labour Foreign Secretary on a Radio 4 programme said he believes that: *"personal relationships are crucial in the understanding and dealing with people of influence and skill. Without such relationships it is impossible to be successful in what you wish to achieve, regardless of your ability"* (Callaghan, 1998). The Prime Minister in an election speech said *"When you are modernising your values, you are modernising*

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your applications to leave a legacy for future generations” (Blair, 2001). These last two statements go to the heart of the matter in the fire service research. If a suggested system or improvement is forced upon the workforce or if it appears to be unworkable it may be ignored. This chapter therefore brings into focus the conditions that will need to be in place before the British Fire Service embarks upon its new direction.

8.2 The Issue of Trust

Throughout the fire service fieldwork, the issue of trust (or lack of trust) tended to dominate the responses to the author’s questions. Being trusted is extremely important for professional well being and morale so that it becomes a shared value in the development of relationships as the service moves to flatter hierarchies.

Lack of trust manifests itself in many ways and one example taken from the fieldwork is the general mistrust of the promotion system. Professional competence is often viewed as of little significance compared to “being sponsored by a senior officer” through patronage. Officers who have been part of promotion panels confirm the existence of patronage or at the very least favouring a candidate who thinks and acts in the same way as the present officer corps. The current systems and applications in the fire service are also creating cynicism and mistrust. The language of accountability, transparency and audit, whilst there for specific reasons, all lead to a breakdown of trust and personal relationships by the creation of a “blame culture.” The fire service (and the government) is becoming obsessed with targets and short-term fixes resulting in “initiative fatigue.” Dealing with the issues of “today” is in danger of being neglected due to this continual process of thinking about the future. The way the service tends to focus on narrow

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performance targets (some future event) means there is little room to appreciate the skills, judgments and instincts of the workforce in dealing with the realities of the present. In the fire service, this new accountability means a constant supply of memoranda and instructions detailing how the information is to be supplied, the specific targets to be met, the performance indicators and other such controls regulating all aspects of the work. O'Neil, in a series of lectures for Radio 4, contends that: *"The new accountability has quite sharp teeth. Performance is monitored and subjected to quality control and quality assurance. The idea of audit has been exported from its original financial context to cover ever more detailed scrutiny of non-financial processes and systems. Performance indicators are used to measure adequate and inadequate performance with supposed precision."* O'Neil then asks a question: *"Have these instruments for control, regulation, monitoring and enforcement worked? Their effects are certainly pretty evident in the daily lives of conscientious professionals and administrators. Professionals have to work to ever more exacting, if changing, standards of good practice and due process, to meet relentless demands to record and report, and they are subject to regular ranking and restructuring"* (O'Neil, 2002: lecture three). The observations and interviews with all the various practitioners in the fire service confirm a dread of more and more targets and a general lack of understanding or appreciation of the various roles resulting in a breakdown of trust between the ranks.

This lack of a willingness to trust the other person, organisation or even the government is a phenomenon not exclusive to the fire service. An article in the Sunday Times (Elliott and Quaintance, 2003:18) exploring the concept of trust referred to the work on

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this subject by Halpern who had identified that over the last 40 years, trust between individuals in Britain had halved. The article also referred to the work of Putnam [a Harvard University professor] who believed that trust in the 1950s' might have been higher because of the deep bond through the shared experiences of the Second World War. Bobby Duffy, a director of the market research company Mori, was quoted in the article as saying: "*People like and trust people who are like them.*" This conjecture may explain the reasons for the strong bonds between firefighters, other similar groupings and officer patronage. Conversely, it may also explain the distrust that is present between dissimilar groupings. The systems and structures developed in the fire service over the last few years have unfortunately created much suspicion. The service has been told to adopt business practices with the reduction of costs being a prime performance indicator. The massive changes proposed in the Bain Review, and used as the basis for settling the 2002/2003 pay and conditions dispute, has left a legacy of mistrust. People in the service are generally and genuinely unhappy with the changes, especially the rise of the "blame culture" which has risen through the process of audit and accountability. Those in the service who are happy (mostly the officers working on projects that they are interested in) can also become very frustrated when their ideas are either ignored or not appreciated. The issue of trust is a condition that needs to be examined before any of the modernisation proposals can be successfully implemented.

8.3 The Issue of Stress

Fire service personnel are trained to be self-confident when dealing with emergencies by gaining mastery in these and other non-emergency circumstances and situations. An

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inability to help others in distress or gaining mastery in a number of contexts can lead to feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy. If these feelings are repeated in similar situations, they may become exaggerated and even threatening. Away from emergency incidents, feelings of inadequacy can often go unnoticed, especially in the present arena of change and the suspicion of change that often leads to mistrust.

Counseling, whilst trying to help, often presumes there is a problem rather than a natural reaction to some event beyond a person's control. Counseling is usually a one-to-one affair, unstructured and can last over several meetings. Psychological de-briefings can be conducted in preference to counseling in a group setting as there are no pre-conceived presumptions of a problem. Individuals can then talk about events openly within this group, thus providing a forum to express concerns without feeling vulnerable. In the fire service, de-briefings are a regular occurrence after large or traumatic emergency incidents but are seldom performed to bring issues into focus for the more mundane and regular routines. The author, during the research, identified a majority of the interviewees unhappy with the present "routine work" of the fire service and a frustration among various ranks at being unable to express feelings of concern to their more senior officers. These frustrations are due mainly to a lack of faith in the seemingly complicated structures that the firefighters have to work under and the systems of audit that accompany them. The officers are not happy because they have a responsibility not only to ensure that this work is performed to a set standard, but also with a duty to develop the systems even further. Accountability within best value and the evidence gathering process to confirm and reaffirm competence are but two examples of this process. This general unhappiness with the job, resulting in stress,

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appears to go unnoticed because it has become a common feature and is seen more as an individual problem than an organisational problem. People move between posts and roles constantly and it is very easy for these people to become disillusioned quite quickly due to the lack of a formal hand-over from the present incumbent or even written instructions as to what exactly the job entails. Nearly all fire service officers work beyond their job descriptions and it is quite difficult for them to decide what the priorities are, what is important or urgent and what can be left. Consequently, if this is common practice it is not seen as a problem and therefore cannot be catered for. Nevertheless, it is a condition that needs to be rectified prior to the implementation of any further or proposed modernisation.

In a fire service report from the Fire Service Inspectorate in 2000, a number of recommendations were made relating to work related stress. From the author's fieldwork, talking to all the ranks throughout the British Fire Service, the recommendations from this 2000 report are still not being applied. Recommendation 11 states: *"Fire Authorities should have effective systems in place to identify the causes of work related stress."* Recommendation 13 states: *"All Fire Authorities should provide appropriate training for post holders prior to taking up appointments (including temporary appointments) with adequate support and arrangements for mentoring."* Recommendation 19 discusses the need to be fit for the role rather than fit for operational duties (Fire Service Inspectorate, 2000:73 and 75). Many of the interviewees during the research confirmed that the practice of training people for a new role comes only after a promotion and that a "sideways move" to a new working environment seldom comes with a formal hand-over. The recommendations from the Fire Service

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Inspectorate therefore take on a greater significance during the changeover from ranks to roles. The potential for feelings of inadequacy can become stronger if individuals become unsure of their place in the new system whilst having their place in the old hierarchy removed.

Honey contends that the way people feel about a situation will affect the way they think and behave resulting in emotions that may hinder performance (Honey, 2002:7). An example of this is the way firefighters deal with “routine emergency incidents” in a calm professional manner. But if a different working procedure is proposed on a fire station, all manner of turmoil (including stress) can ensue. The service has over a number of years, through neglect, become fragmented and marked differences now exist between the government, the local authority employers, the representative bodies and also between the various ranks in the fire service on how the service should be run. These different viewpoints can mean that regardless of how commendable and valid some modernisation proposals are, if all the various groupings do not support the proposals, those tasked with initiating the changes within the service may become disillusioned and distrusting of the other person’s point of view. This may eventually mean that some will be incapable of developing the proposals resulting in the overloading of those who are deemed to be capable of introducing the new structures and systems. This may also produce role ambiguity with they too becoming de-motivated due to the extra workloads placed upon them. It is these people who are the most vulnerable to stress because their professional pride will not “allow” them to seek help.

The fire service has placed an enormous amount of faith on the success of the Integrated Personal Development System and failure at this level through mistrust between the

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various groupings and induced stress through extra workloads is an issue the fire service needs to be aware of.

8.4 The Issue of Leadership, Militarism and Uniform

Traditionally the fire service has exercised legitimate power through a militaristic approach (Royal Navy style) enforced by rank and the use of uniform. This system works well at emergency incidents with officers giving orders but the approach becomes less suitable on the fire stations and in the various functional roles that officers have to perform. The role of a fire service officer therefore is to provide leadership at emergency incidents so that a goal may be achieved and management for the routine tasks so that results can be achieved through an organisational and planning process. Research by Wofford and Liska suggest that higher job satisfaction can be achieved from employees if their leaders use a supportive leadership style with routine tasks (such as work on a fire station) and a directive style for non-routine tasks (such as the requirements at emergency incidents) (Wofford and Liska, 1993:857-876). Traditionally the use of militarism and uniform plays a key part in both these processes, but this has become clouded in recent years due to the introduction of a more casual style of dress with less importance attached to seniority. This has caused a degree of confusion as officers have become “stripped of their symbolism of power” and firefighters have to come to terms with officers dressing just like them. Officers in functional roles away from the fire stations still wear the old formal uniform and this “new symbolism” suggests an “us and them” approach. In a scoping study by the Fire Service Inspectorate it was concluded that many different styles of leadership exist within the fire service and

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that the Fire Service College *“taught leadership based on principles “borrowed” from other sectors, and particularly the military”* (Fire Service Inspectorate, 2001:35).

The modern fire service requires leaders and managers who can not only communicate the reasons for change but also have an ability to motivate others to cope with the complexities of change. The service may have a problem with this process if officers are unsure on how this is to be achieved with many possibly still using a “command and control” method as a basis for the modernisation strategy. A number of senior officers commented to the author during the fieldwork that they too had recognised this command/management problem and that a standard leadership style and management model needs developing. This takes on greater importance now that the fire service has been told it can no longer operate in isolation from other parts of the public service. The Royal Navy also recognises that they too have a management need and one that is not based upon command. In their strategic plan, they comment that: *“The process of running and developing the Navy may become increasingly separate from the command of operations.”* The document continues: *“The Navy will need to be receptive to new ideas wherever they come from, to encourage innovation and creativity, and to learn from both our own experience and from the best practice of others”* (Naval Strategic Plan: The Next Fifteen Years, 2002:12). The dilemma for the fire service is its attempt to cling on to its militaristic command structure, based on rank, but within the new concept of “roles.” For example, the twelve ranks are being replaced by seven roles but still within a hierarchy that accommodates stepped progression from firefighter to Chief Fire Officer. This new arrangement, tied to the Integrated Personal Development System, ensures that each promotion is achieved step-by-step. The new process may still

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not provide the necessary skilled full-time managers required for the modernisation process, as these managers (officers) will still have command responsibilities at emergency incidents and the ever-increasing administration that accompanies this responsibility. One possible consideration for the fire service is the separation of command from management in order to implement and maintain the government's change agenda. This would prevent the "part-time manager/commander" conflict that is so often attributed to senior officers in the present structure.

A further consideration is the standardisation of uniform throughout the service that is immediately recognisable to the general public for those performing the emergency role. The research has identified that this would receive much support from within the service using a uniform that is based on the colour red. The present image of officers wearing a militaristic uniform and firefighters in polo shirts with a huge variation of styles and colours between the various brigades (including fire kit) is not conducive to harmonious relationships within the service. This national identity would not only confirm who the fire service personnel are at multi-agency emergency incidents but would portray a professional image in non-emergency contacts with the general public. The senior and functional management roles supporting the work of the fire service would not require a uniform or conformity to the IPDS ideology. These people could then be recruited direct from the business world holding the appropriate academic qualifications.

The application of business economics to all the public services in recent years, demanding far greater efficiency and quality of service, have sometimes appeared to overwhelm these institutions. Managers of these public services have not only been encouraged to adopt business principles from the private sector, but also forced to bring

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in management specialists who are not locked into specific or narrow ways of thinking and behaving. Farnham and Horton argue that the public sector: *“Are no longer the model for private sector employers to follow. From being leaders of people management policy and practice, the public services have become followers of what is perceived to be best practice in the private sector”* (Farnham and Horton, 1996:349).

The issue for the fire service to consider is how best to provide this leadership and modern management in order to deliver an effective emergency response in accordance with the government’s vision and the wishes of society it protects.

8.5 The Issue of Culture and Organisational Development

Successive governments, since the Fire Services Act of 1947, have placed financial restrictions upon the fire service including the recent introduction of private sector concepts with the application of specific standards, audits and measures of performance. (See: Dunleavy, 1991; Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Dann, 1996; Glynn and Murphy, 1996). With the ending of the fire service pay and conditions dispute of 2002/2003, the need for radical change has finally caught up with the fire service including a re-think of its core values, beliefs, applications, culture and the way the service is to develop in the future. The very essence of the service, its culture: “the fire brigade way of doing things,” is now being challenged in a number of government reports as not only inappropriate, but also as a restriction on the modernisation process. Thompson contends that: *“Every organisation develops its own unique culture. This culture is, in part, a reflection of the strengths and struggles of its leadership, the environment in which it operates and its response to that environment, the predominant skills that it*

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applies to the situation and the way it recruits in its own image. People are expected to behave in a way that is congruent with the prevailing structure, thus reinforcing it and the behaviours that support it. Some illustrations of this in recent times have been increased competition between departments leading to distrust, not valuing others and not seeking input from other parts of the organisation” (Thompson, 2001:4-5). Cultural change in the fire service within a framework of organisational development will require effective leadership: “The very definition of successful leadership is the ability to bring about sustained culture change” (Allen and Kraft, 1987:87). Brown argues that whilst culture is a shared vision in an organisation, this value is not without variation and can be most notable between the various sub-cultures (Brown, 1998:33). Culture therefore, can sometimes be a barrier to organisational development and Brown further suggests that: “Cultures may also be responsible for promoting and protecting competency traps. This occurs where favourable performance with an inferior procedure leads an organisation to accumulate more experience with it. Under these conditions its replacement with a superior procedure is unlikely because the organisation cannot accumulate sufficient positive experience with the superior procedure to make it rewarding to use” (Brown, 1998:101).

This “organisational memory” is an issue the fire service must cater for as it attempts to modernise its systems and structures. Former senior officers of the service may still have an influence on current decision making due to the workforce still applying the former routines and customs.

Walsh and Ungson suggest that organisational memory is preserved in six ways (Walsh and Ungson, 1991:57-91):

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1. In the memory of individuals.
2. In the culture through symbolism, stories and myths.
3. In procedures such as the selection, socialisation and rules.
4. In the roles that individuals have.
5. In the physical structure of the organisation such as the furniture and layout of its offices and buildings.
6. In archives and people such as former employees and government regulatory bodies.

This failure to appreciate “organisational memory” through its culture, traditions, values and beliefs may prevent the desired organisational development required by central government. The work of Brown and Walsh and Ungson suggests that culture and organisational development are inseparable. It is the fire service’s people, rather than systems, that should be the main consideration for the change proposals if the modernisation agenda is to be delivered. The separation of management from command may become a desirable feature in this process, as the manager’s expertise will not be a product of many years of fire service cultural influence. The senior management role of the fire service, whilst taking account of the command and control culture at emergency incidents and accommodating this value, will no longer have an implicit duty to maintain the present inefficient commander/manager role.

8.6 The Issue of Individual Development

The fire service has placed a great deal of faith in the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) as the way forward for individual development within a qualifications

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structure in the changeover from ranks to roles. The government has now decided the direction and amount of change necessary for the wider modernisation process and the fixing of a series of benchmarks. The IPDS may now have to change to accommodate this thinking as the work of the service adapts to the new working practices. This may also make the accumulation of a range of generic competencies within the IPDS inappropriate to the future needs and circumstances of the service. The need to develop competencies that are more specific to the new approach will be necessary. An example of this is the way the service may have to develop an individual's "free thinking skills" with knowledge gained from the business world through specific secondments to other organisations or through specific degree qualifications.

A further issue for the service to consider is the role harmonisation between the wholetime and retained fire service. This would ensure the service moves forward as one entity. The research has identified a gulf between the two sections and the IPDS has the potential to remove this divide through a common development and qualification structure. All retained personnel who have a responsibility to deliver development through assessing, coaching or mentoring of individuals through the IPDS should be provided with the appropriate training and development award, either locally or through the Fire Service College. This strategy would allow each retained fire station to operate in a similar manner to their wholetime counterparts. In order to achieve full integration between the retained and wholetime fire service it will be necessary for both sections to operate at the same pace of change. Application of the National Occupational Standards and the IPDS could achieve this. At the present time, promotion in the retained service is limited due to the number of ranks available. The change to roles now presents an

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excellent opportunity to address this long-standing problem by promoting individuals within the retained service to roles that have a responsibility to determine the strategy for a group of retained stations, which is undertaken by wholetime officers at present. This will involve the promoted individual being paid not only the appropriate officer rate but even becoming full-time in this role. The principle of former retained personnel performing high-value work on behalf of their colleagues is an ideal worthy of consideration. It also recognises the contribution of the retained service and joins the previous separate career pathways together.

Appraisals have long been a thorn in the side of the fire service. The author during the fieldwork found many examples of good intentions to introduce annual appraisals by the appraisee's line manager. These good intentions have not been successful for a variety of reasons. The main problem is the way the service operates with officers (line managers) constantly moving to new positions, the inability to appraise an individual correctly because of the officer's workloads and even indifference through "*we've tried all this before and it never works*" attitude. IPDS, with its self-directed learning philosophy has the capacity for self-appraisal, peer appraisal and "customer" appraisal. All of these possibilities if used in combination could cultivate an individual culture of self-motivation and self-determination within a competence framework. Brown emphasises that no single programme can change organisational culture and a package of initiatives will be required (Brown, 1998:176). Williams argues that: "*It should not be assumed that culture can be changed simply by the introduction of, say, a new appraisal system, new reward practices or new methods of training. All of these are likely to have an effect on culture and each of them could be a crucial element in a*

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culture change programme. In isolation though, these personal mechanisms are likely to be subordinated to the existing culture. At best, employees will pay lip service to them. At worst, they will be disregarded entirely” (Williams et al., 1993:28).

Individual development may still be a problem for the service, even with the IPDS, as the concept of career development is still: *“A succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered, predictable sequence” (Wilensky, 1960:554).* Management of an individual’s career development will therefore take on great importance and according to Mayo it is *“making sure that the organisation will have the right people with the right skills at the right time” (Mayo, 1992a:37).* Senge argues that: *“The organisations that will truly excel in the future will be the organisations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organisation” (Senge, 1990:4).* A possible problem may also ensue with the amount of cultural change and understanding necessary to apply the IPDS, particularly at the Watch level. Myers and Davids contend that: *“Workers are a resource which has not been well understood by management in the past. Blue-collar workers in particular have been regarded as a static commodity incapable of innovation and self-development. Consequently reservoirs of skill and ability remain untapped” (Myers and Davids, 1992:47).* One of the main designers of the IPDS, Deputy Chief Fire Officer Duffield (Duffield, 2003:28-30), recognises these issues with his assertion that: *“The key to the effective implementation of IPDS is the successful communication of the principles, practices, guidance documents and supporting material.”* Duffield continues: *“The IPDS is the foundation upon which all other fire service initiatives depend.”*

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A key issue for the fire service is that its people must believe in the systems, as it is people that ultimately decide the pace of change.

8.7 The Issue of Modernisation and Conflict

Bain, in the foreword to his report on the fire service stated: *“We were surprised at the extent to which the fire service has fallen behind best practice in the public and private sector. While there are excellent examples of change and new working practices, regrettably they are not widespread. This has resulted from a combination of factors, including an unsatisfactory industrial relations environment, a weak management system, and a lack of any feeling of ownership by those involved in managing the service”* (Bain, 2002c:i).

The Deputy Prime Minister, in his foreword to the White Paper on the modernisation of the service entitled: *“Our Fire and Rescue Service”* said: *“I believe the majority of fire and rescue service staff and their families will see the good sense in these proposals. They provide the basis to transform the service and update laws and procedures – some of which date back over half a century. The fire and rescue service of the future, outlined in the White Paper, will continue to be an essential public service, in which the workforce will play as vital a role as ever”* (Government White Paper, 2003).

Beecham, on behalf of the Local Government Association wrote in an article in the Fire Magazine: *“Everyone’s understanding of modernisation is different. Despite what the FBU might claim, it is not about cuts – either in delivering fire cover and protection or compulsory redundancy. It is about updating and changing a fire service that now needs a radical rethink”* (Beecham, 2003:20-22).

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The President of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association, Jeff Ord, also put pen to paper in a Fire Magazine article:

The decision of the Fire Brigades Union to end the long-running dispute over their pay claim is welcome news for everyone involved with the fire service. The obvious temptation now is for the post mortem to take place to identify how so much damage could have occurred both within and outside the service, especially in terms of public opinion. To dwell on this will simply cause further damage and delay the recovery period which is so vital to the future of the service as we know it.” Ord went on to say: *“The only certainty arising from all that has occurred is that if we do not work together and be tolerant of all stakeholders views and position, then we will not take the service forward”* (Ord, 2003:8).

The General Secretary of the FBU, Andy Gilchrist, then described the union’s vision for modernisation: *“One problem is that modernisation means different things to different people. From the union’s perspective modernisation is investment in improved facilities, new techniques and training to provide an even better service to the public and a safer working environment for our members. For the government, rubber-stamped by Bain, modernisation priorities are cutting levels of fire cover, freezing budgets in real terms and forcing through changes in working practices. It is all part of a larger picture for public services as a whole. This involves introducing private sector solutions, and rolling back trade union influence. In essence it is the antithesis of social partnership and the re-imposition of managerial prerogatives”* (Gilchrist, 2003d:28-29).

All the service’s main stakeholders therefore agreed that modernisation was necessary but each had their own viewpoint on what modernisation should mean.

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Baigent contends that the authority of the FBU has increased as a reaction to change and gives an example of how union power increased with the creation of the London Fire Brigade in 1965 from the amalgamation of eight brigades. In this instance, the firefighters' concerns about lost conditions and under-manning provided the FBU with an opportunity to provide leadership (Baigent, 2001:10).

The potential for conflict over the modernisation proposals, which may take many years to fully implement, is an issue that may dominate strategic thinking due to a lack of appreciation of the various viewpoints, as identified by Ord. The FBU, as the main trade union in the fire service, is actively involved in a number of work practice issues and their officials have received extensive training for their various roles on national committees. The Fire Service Inspectorate has recognised this expertise, particularly in relation to equality and fairness and their contribution to the wider development of policy (Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999:14-15). The potential for using this expertise in the modernisation process is an opportunity waiting to be grasped. The FBU are in a prime position to exert influence on the Watch sub-cultures to embrace meaningful and cohesive change through shared values and one that is based on trust. This form of empowerment can hold the key to cultural change initiatives.

Du Gay and Salaman (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992:625) believe that empowerment: *"Makes meaning for people by encouraging them to believe that they have control over their lives, that no matter what position they may hold within an organisation their contribution is vital, not only to the success of the company, but also the enterprise of their own lives."* The stumbling block to this utopian ideal is the history of conflict between the employers and the employees which is being passed on to the present fire

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service generation mainly through the “organisational memory” of the representative bodies.

One of the foundation stones that constitutes a fire service is a contract of employment with an acceptance of subordination enforced by officers using legitimate power over “lesser ranks.” The present norm of collective bargaining where one group seeks to gain an economic advantage over another is in itself a factor for consideration in the modernisation process due to its narrow aims and conformity to a set of rules. Flanders understanding of collective bargaining goes beyond the “economic function” and describes this as *“essentially a rule making process”* (Flanders, 1968:6). The change from ranks to roles and the development of a greater understanding of the fire service’s early beginnings including the highs and the lows during this journey to the present day, will all contribute to a fuller appreciation of the problems confronting the service.

In the words of Covey: *“ Seek first to understand, then to be understood”* (Covey, 1992:235-260).

The modernisation change process may need to be thought of more as a modernisation exchange process that fully involves all the various groupings. Improvements need to occur for all the parties concerned so that the change is accepted readily. This would have to include pay and conditions, greater flexibility in the application of working practices, job security and enhanced public safety. These “exchanges and understandings” between former adversaries could become the real force behind modernisation and a way forward for the fire service. Openness and trust need to be the first building blocks, once the way forward for the new fire service has been agreed between everyone.

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8.8 A Final Word

In the context of “Professional Development in the British Fire Service,” this thesis is only a beginning. In terms of meeting the requirements of the research questions on pages two and three in Chapter One, this “Final Word” can act as a conclusion.

The journey has been difficult, primarily because little has been written on how culture, values and beliefs affect professional development in this particular context. The text therefore has attempted to determine not only what exists but why. All the chapters have cross-linked themes to illuminate this process and make explicit what in the fire service is often implicit. Interpretations of history and tradition used in a selected piecemeal fashion to promote a certain point of view or to justify change, as so often is the case with a number of fire service reports, only adds to the problems. The service cannot continue the fight with itself based upon past historical conflict, tradition and short-term gains.

Baigent, one of the few researchers to unravel the complexities of the “fire service way of doing things” puts it this way (Baigent, 2001b:35): *“Traditionally most research starts with a scrutiny of the academic research that has gone before about the subject area. Of the fire service there is little to report in this regard. There is no major report on firefighters in the area in which I am working, but the FSC [Fire Service College] library does provide an extensive source of “in-house” dissertations written by students as a requirement to pass their course. It is more likely therefore, that these papers reflect a subjective view specifically for a tutor/examiner. However, these papers do provide background information for this research [Baigent’s thesis]. In academic terms the fire service is a “secret garden” from which a powerful and high profile public*

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group emerge in shiny red fire engines, race to do their work, support their image, then return and shut the doors to retain their privacy.”

Currently, over 1000 recommendations exist (still not acted upon) from a variety of reports on specific issues that go back as far as the Holroyd Report of 1970. The value of this research is that it does not provide further recommendations, but looks at the whole picture to bring into focus the conditions that need to be present for the implementation of these recommendations, and also as a starting point for future research on the fire service. The fire service has not suddenly failed; it is still respected and praised for its often-harrowing work. In recent years, it has been the culture that has been undermined and if the service is to be cherished in the future, this culture needs re-defining. It has to be accepted that modern society has become less tolerant of status and the symbolism that accompanies it and the service now requires a new style of operation that recognises the hard work of its employees in a spirit of mutual respect. The service must grab this opportunity and not the opportunism of winning a particular fight on a particular issue. The British Fire Service since its modern inception in 1947, has never been in a better position of being prepared for the new opportunities now presenting themselves. A fresh start through all the various factions coming together to implement real modernisation is a possibility waiting to be grasped.

The final word must surely go to Hasim Rahman who was described as “lucky” by Lennox Lewis after Rahman took the world heavyweight boxing title off him. Rahman said: *“Luck is all about being prepared when opportunity presents itself”* (BBC 1. Television news interview, 25th April 2001).

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APPENDIX ONE

CONTEXT OF THE FIRE SERVICE INTERVIEWS

To further understand culture and professional development in the fire service, the method and conduct of the interviews needed careful consideration. These considerations resulted in a four-part strategy:

1. Unstructured interviews. This approach was used with firefighters, both wholetime and retained, so that the interview gathered a range of information in a free-flowing manner. This data came in the form of accounts from events, both historic and present, and the underlying attitude that contributed to a particular interpretation from the event. The author responded to these specific accounts by listening and not making judgements in order to develop themes for the more structured interviews. Group and one-to-one interviews took place.
2. Semi-structured interviews. These were mainly used to test a hypothesis against a specific theme or event. Once the interviewees started to talk it was possible to direct the focus back onto the subject matter without interrupting the flow of information. Whilst most of these interviews were used in a pre-determined and agreed interview location, opportunity was also taken to speak to senior officers and officials of the service in a casual setting when opportunity arose. This method was used to great effect in the author's everyday contact with these people during normal work activities and on the fieldwork visits. Group and one-to-one interviews took place.
3. Focus Group interviews. This method enabled the author to facilitate debate on a number of specific issues. The group interviews with the retained are one example of this method. A topic relating to their work and the requirements of the research produced data on issues not previously understood, such as a perception by the wholetime firefighters that retained firefighters are an inferior but cheaper alternative

APPENDIX ONE

CONTEXT OF THE FIRE SERVICE INTERVIEWS

to a wholetime firefighter. Without the use of this focus group method, some data would not have been available as the interaction between the group members helped in the understanding of certain beliefs and behaviour by other sections of the fire service. All of these were group interviews.

4. Structured interviews. Formal one-to-one interviews with 20 senior officers took place to ascertain their views on specific areas of concern identified during the fieldwork with the firefighters and officers up to the assistant divisional officer rank. Due to the formal structure of these interviews, a prescribed time for the interview and the expected duration was agreed with the officer.

The location of the different type of interviews was another consideration so as not to influence the data gathering process. For example, a fire station mess room is also a social meeting place where banter commonly takes place and therefore inappropriate for the type of interview that demands thoughtful reflective answers. Conversely the use of an office that portrays the symbolism of rank and authority may produce responses that the interviewee believes the organisation wants to hear. The time of day for the interviews was a further consideration. Each part of the working day on a fire station is extremely structured and if the questions being asked relate to the activity programmed for that particular time, the responses may reflect the corporate view or even an extreme view at the other end of the scale. For all of the different types of interviews, a judgement had to be made on the appropriateness of the context of the interview in relation to its venue in order to guard against possible bias. Parts of a fire station and a brigade headquarters can involve definitions and meanings for the interviewee(s) through a "symbolic domain" aspect.

APPENDIX ONE

CONTEXT OF THE FIRE SERVICE INTERVIEWS

This awareness also helped with the research in other areas. Behaviour and attitude within these domains could be observed so that pertinent questions could be included in the interviews to ascertain why this “symbolism” was affecting their conduct. The dress code of the author, either in uniform or in a more casual dress became a further consideration so as to prevent feelings of superiority and inferiority from the interviewee. The author also had to take account of his own feelings in this regard. This was due to the large variance of the roles and status of the people being interviewed. These ranged from trainee firefighters to chief fire officers.

Identification of the interviewees employer:

Anonymity for all the interviewees dominated the thinking behind the research strategy. This assurance of anonymity from the author provided a condition of openness and a willingness to talk from all who took part. The combination of interviews that ranged from an opportunity, such as a chance meeting and the pre-planned interviews during the fieldwork ensured a balanced cross-section of ranks from a number of brigades in the British Fire Service. The interviewees came from a total of 25 different brigades:

- Dumfries & Galloway Fire Brigade.
- Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade.
- Strathclyde Fire Brigade.
- Tayside Fire Brigade.
- Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- Cheshire Fire Brigade.
- Cleveland Fire Brigade.

APPENDIX ONE

CONTEXT OF THE FIRE SERVICE INTERVIEWS

- Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Brigade.
- Essex County Fire & Rescue Service.
- Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service.
- Greater Manchester County Fire Service.
- Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- Humberside Fire Brigade.
- Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service.
- Lincolnshire Fire Brigade.
- London Fire Brigade.
- Mid & West Wales Fire Brigade.
- North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- South Wales Fire Service.
- West Midlands Fire Service.
- West Yorkshire Fire Service.
- Fire Service College. (An additional interview venue used during the fieldwork visits).

APPENDIX TWO

THE INTEGRATED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (IPDS)

The aim of the IPDS is to establish a national standard for the continuous professional development of people within the fire service, regardless of an individual's current level of expertise, length of service or role.

The benchmarking of skills is an integral part of the IPDS so that no matter from which fire station, section or brigade the individual is working from, the IPDS performance standard remains the same.

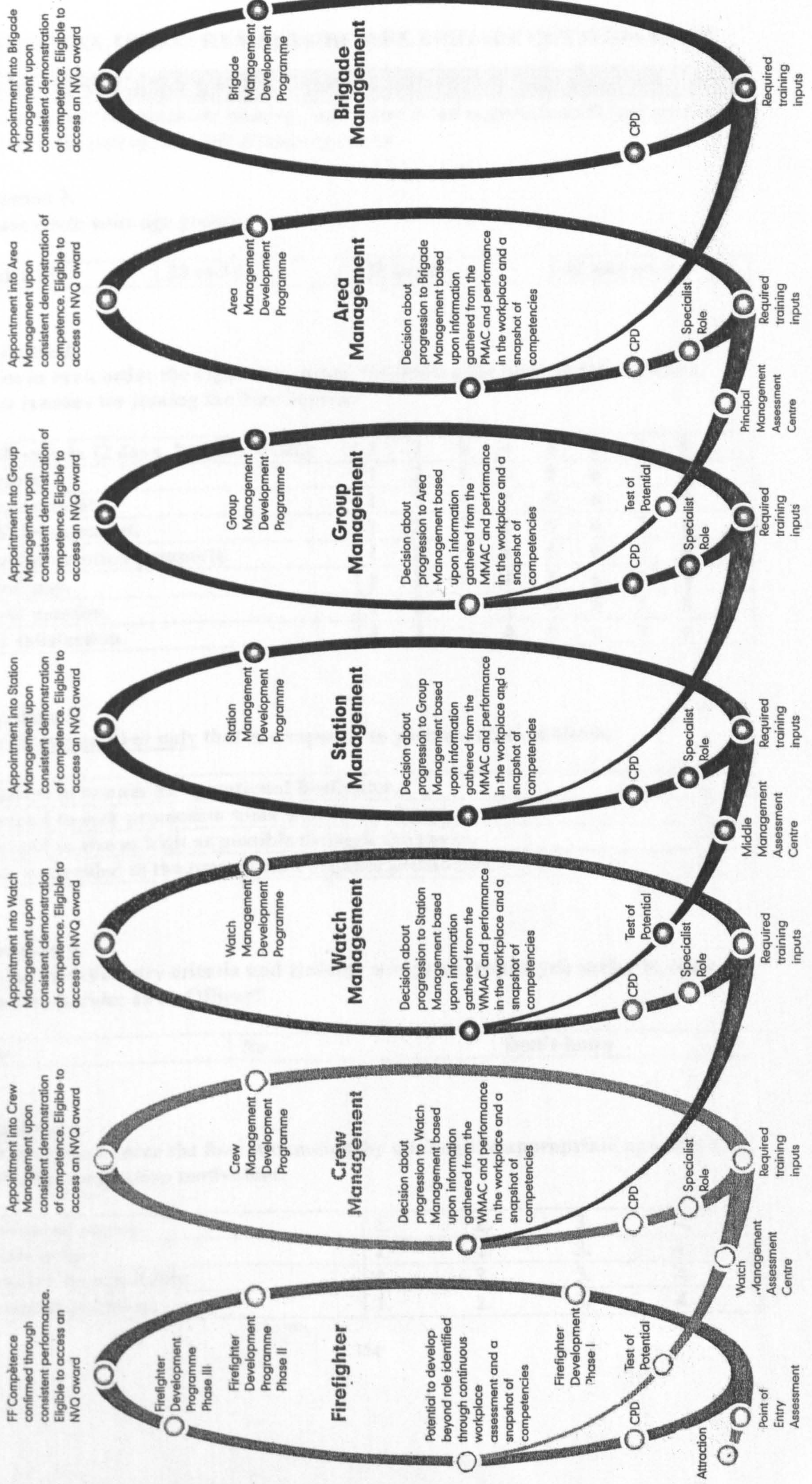
A further intention of this national benchmark is its use in the selection criteria for promotion.

The IPDS when fully implemented has the potential to provide a national career structure instead of each brigade following their own career development path.

"Firefighter" is the only role not to have the term management included in the role description. This is an attempt by the fire service to fuse management and command into every aspect of the fire service's work above the role of firefighter.

The twelve ranks within the service are to be replaced by seven roles. Development within a role will be continuous. Promotion follows a step-by-step approach through the roles, as per the former rank-based system for those with potential.

This development process is depicted by the graph overleaf.



APPENDIX THREE: HUMBERSIDE FIRE BRIGADE QUESTIONNAIRE

CAREER EXPECTATIONS – INITIAL TRAINEES

Please answer the questions honestly, your name is not required and the survey does not form any part of your initial training course.

Question 1.

Please circle your age group:

Under 25	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 and over
----------	----------	----------	-------------

Question 2.

Place in rank order the eight statements, by circling the appropriate number, your reasons for joining the Fire Service:

Shift system (2 days. 2 nights. 4 off.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Security.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Self development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good promotion prospects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good pay.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good pension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Job satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Question 3.

Circle one number only that corresponds to your current ambition:

I intend to remain an operational firefighter.	1.
I intend to seek promotion some time in the future.	2.
I intend to rise as high as possible through the ranks.	3.
I am undecided at the present time regards promotion.	4.

Question 4.

If you met the entry criteria and training was given, would you prefer to enter the Fire Service as an Officer?

Yes	No	Don't know
-----	----	------------

Question 5.

Place in rank order the four statements, by circling the appropriate number, the following promotion motivators:

Enhanced status.	1.	2.	3.	4.
More money.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Greater responsibility.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Personal ambition.	1.	2.	3.	4.

APPENDIX THREE: HUMBERSIDE FIRE BRIGADE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 6.

Do you believe potential for career advancement such as dealing with information and dealing with people should be identified during your initial training course?

Yes	No	Don't know
------------	-----------	-------------------

Question 7.

Should appraisals form part of an annual assessment of your performance?

Yes	No	Don't know
------------	-----------	-------------------

Question 8.

Would you be willing to move anywhere in the Brigade area for a promotion?

Yes	No	Don't know
------------	-----------	-------------------

Question 9.

Place in number order whom you would consult for career advice?

Colleagues.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Watch Commander.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Station Commander.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Training Officer.	1.	2.	3.	4.

Question 10.

Circle how important you rate management qualifications for the following ranks:

Leading Firefighter.	High	Low	Not at all
Watch Commander	High	Low	Not at all
Station Commander	High	Low	Not at all
Divisional Commander	High	Low	Not at all

Question 11.

Please tick any of the statements below you agree with:

The Brigade should provide all the development training during my career.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am willing to develop myself in my own time to obtain qualifications.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic qualifications are important for career development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal development is a partnership between the Brigade and individual.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX THREE: HUMBERSIDE FIRE BRIGADE QUESTIONNAIRE

CAREER EXPECTATIONS – 12 MONTHS SERVICE & OVER

Please answer the questions honestly, your name is not required, the survey is for information purposes only.

Question 1.

Please circle your age group:

Under 25	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 and over
----------	----------	----------	-------------

Question 2.

Place in rank order the eight statements, by circling the appropriate number, your reasons for remaining in the Fire Service:

Shift system (2 days. 2 nights. 4 off.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Security.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Self development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good promotion prospects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good pay.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good pension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Job satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Question 3.

Circle one number only that corresponds to your current ambition:

I intend to remain an operational firefighter.	1.
I intend to seek promotion some time in the future.	2.
I intend to rise as high as possible through the ranks.	3.
I am undecided at the present time regards promotion.	4.

Question 4.

If you met the entry criteria and training was given, would you have preferred to enter the Fire Service as an Officer?

Yes	No	Don't know
-----	----	------------

Question 5.

Place in rank order the four statements, by circling the appropriate number, the following promotion motivators:

Enhanced status.	1.	2.	3.	4.
More money.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Greater responsibility.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Personal ambition.	1.	2.	3.	4.

APPENDIX THREE: HUMBERSIDE FIRE BRIGADE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 6.

Do you believe potential for career advancement such as dealing with information and dealing with people should have been identified during your initial recruit training course?

Yes	No	Don't know
------------	-----------	-------------------

Question 7.

Should appraisals form part of an annual assessment of your performance?

Yes	No	Don't know
------------	-----------	-------------------

Question 8.

Would you be willing to move anywhere in the Brigade area for a promotion?

Yes	No	Don't know
------------	-----------	-------------------

Question 9.

Place in number order whom you would consult for career advice?

Colleagues.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Watch Commander.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Station Commander.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Training Officer.	1.	2.	3.	4.

Question 10.

Circle how important you rate management qualifications for the following ranks:

Leading Firefighter.	High	Low	Not at all
Watch Commander	High	Low	Not at all
Station Commander	High	Low	Not at all
Divisional Commander	High	Low	Not at all

Question 11.

Please tick any of the statements below you agree with:

The Brigade should provide all the development training during my career.	
I am willing to develop myself in my own time to obtain qualifications.	
Academic qualifications are important for career development	
Personal development is a partnership between the Brigade and individual.	

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Humberside Fire Brigade was established in 1974 and in the first 20 years from inception, the brigade regenerated itself with 909 appointments and 715 leavers. A huge recruitment and training task in its own right but achieved by having a dedicated section responsible for such a role. This is only half the picture. A percentage of the recruit appointments were made to cater for the shortfall in the firefighter ranks due to the introduction of a shorter working week, a new duty system, the creation of Green Watch and promotions in other ranks, all creating firefighter vacancies. This in turn results in different development needs for recruits and promotions. By studying this historical information, how this was dealt with at the time and examining the current situation, projections can be made as to the extent of future development requirements and more importantly, who needs them and when. Those who are temporally promoted also have needs, and for the organisation to develop, it is crucial to have a well-planned succession and development strategy. The author compiled the following statistics on succession planning using Humberside Fire Brigade as an example.

Temporary promotions in 2000			
Leading Firefighter:	27	Assistant Divisional Officer:	03
Sub Officer:	18	Divisional Officer (grade 3.)	01
Station Officer:	10	Divisional Officer (grade 1.)	01
Station Officer Flexible Duty:	04	Total temporary Promotions:	64

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Appointments to Humberside Fire Brigade 1990 to 2000											
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	total
09	28	16	16	44	43	00	24	21	22	47	270

Transfers in to Humberside Fire Brigade 1990 to 2000											
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	total
0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	11

Transfers out from Humberside Fire Brigade 1990 to 2000											
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	total
2	1	0	3	1	4	0	1	1	1	4	18

45 years to 54 years

184

25.4%

55 years and over

007

00.9%

Number of promotions each year from 1990 to 2000												
Promoted to:	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	totals
L.Ff	015	012	004	004	030	025	000	015	012	000	024	141
Sub O	011	010	001	006	011	011	007	012	008	000	019	096
Stn O	007	002	000	000	003	008	005	006	005	002	007	045
Stn O flex	000	000	001	000	000	005	005	005	004	002	007	029
ADO	002	003	000	003	000	003	003	002	004	001	006	027
DO 111	001	001	000	005	001	000	002	002	002	001	004	019
DO1	000	000	003	000	000	000	002	001	001	000	003	010
ACO	000	000	001	000	000	001	000	000	000	000	000	002
DCO	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000
CFO	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000
	036	028	010	018	045	053	024	043	036	006	070	369

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Normal age retirements (completion of service)											
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	total
1	2	8	8	9	5	9	8	7	10	8	75

Ill health retirements											
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	total
21	15	29	20	24	17	12	16	10	4	13	182

Number of personnel in each age band and percentage May 2001 - All Ranks		
Under 25 years	026	03.57%
25 years to 34 years	203	28.00%
35 years to 44 years	305	42.00%
45 years to 54 years	184	25.47%
55 years and over	007	00.96%
Totals:	725	100%

Age band and percentage May 2001 – Firefighters		
Under 25 years	026	05.41%
25 years to 34 years	175	36.46%
35 years to 44 years	191	39.80%
45 years to 54 years	088	18.33%
Totals:	480	100%

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Age band and percentage May 2001 - Leading Firefighters		
Under 25 years	00	00.00%
25 years to 34 years	18	22.78%
35 years to 44 years	43	54.44%
45 years to 54 years	17	21.52%
55 years and over	01	01.26%
Totals:	79	100%

Age band and percentage May 2001 – Sub Officers		
Under 25 years	00	00.00%
25 years to 34 years	09	11.25%
35 years to 44 years	42	52.50%
45 to 54 years	29	36.25%
Totals:	80	100%

Age band and percentage May 2001 – Station Officers		
Under 25 years	00	00.00%
25 years to 34 years	01	02.38%
35 years to 44 years	17	40.48%
45 years to 54 years	24	57.14%
Totals:	42	100%

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Age band and percentage May 2001 – Assistant Divisional Officers		
Under 25 years	00	00.00%
25 years to 34 years	00	00.00%
35 years to 44 years	07	35.00%
45 years 54 years	12	60.00%
55 years and over	01	05.00%
Totals:	20	100%

Age band and percentage May 2001 – Divisional Officers (grade 3)		
35 years to 44 years	03	25.00%
45 years to 54 years	08	66.66%
55 years and over	01	08.33%
Totals:	12	100%

Age band and percentage May2001 – Divisional Officers (grade 1)		
35 years to 44 years	01	12.50%
45 years to 54 years	05	62.50%
55 years and over	02	25.00%
Totals:	08	100%

Age band and percentage May 2001 - Divisional Officers (grades 1 and 3)		
35 years to 44 years	04	20.00%
45 years to 54 years	13	65.00%
55 years and over	03	15.00%
Totals:	20	100%

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Age band and percentage May 2001 – Principal Officers		
35 years to 44 years	01	25.00%
45 years to 54 years	01	25.00%
55 years and over	02	50.00%
Totals:	04	100%

The following two tables show “normal” retirements and “ill-health” retirements from

1996 to 2000 for comparison purposes:

Column 1. The year.

Column 2. The number of retirements each year.

Column 3. The average retirement age during that year.

Column 4. The average length of service for those retiring in that year.

Five year profile of “normal” retirements			
1996	09	53.5	24.4
1997	08	53.3	29.5
1998	07	52.5	30.7
1999	10	54.4	28.1
2000	08	55.1	28.5
Totals:	42	53.7	28.2

Five year profile of “ill-health” retirements			
1996	12	42.6	22.7
1997	16	49.5	23.7
1998	10	47.3	21.5
1999	04	45.2	21.0
2000	13	46.1	21.0
Totals:	55	46.1	22.0

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Retirement comparisons			
1996	21 retirements	43.0% normal	57.0% ill-health
1997	24 retirements	33.3% normal	66.6% ill-health
1998	17 retirements	41.0% normal	59.0% ill-health
1999	14 retirements	71.5% normal	28.5% ill-health
2000	21 retirements	38.0% normal	62.0% ill-health
<u>5 year totals:</u>	97 retirements	45.5% normal	54.5% ill-health
(column 2. shows	average age: 49.9	average age: 53.7	average age: 46.1
the averages for	years in service:	years in service:	years in service:
all leavers)	25.1	28.2	22.0

The final statistic relating to age, is to combine the age bands 45 and over, and relate this to the numbers within each rank for comparison to the retirement average of 49.9 years from the period 1996 to 2000 (derived from the normal and ill-health statistics). A reasonably accurate projection can then be made for succession planning over the next five-year period. Succession planning has a number of benefits:

- The numbers and ranks of those leaving and when are known.
- The number of new recruits required and when are known.
- The expected numbers of promotions for each rank are known.
- The numbers who hold the required qualification for each type of promotion are known.
- The anticipated financial cost for all the appointments are known.

The first chart on the next page shows the number of personnel in a “danger zone” over the next five years who will possibly leave due to age. The brigade will then need to take into account the extra numbers required for each of the ranks.

APPENDIX FOUR: SUCCESSION PLANNING RESEARCH

Possible Leavers from Humberside Fire Brigade in the next 5 years		
Firefighter	88 persons	18.33% of the rank
Leading Firefighter	18 persons	22.78% of the rank
Sub Officer	29 persons	36.25% of the rank
Station Officer	24 persons	57.14% of the rank
Ass. Divisional Officer	13 persons	65.00% of the rank
Divisional Officer grade 3.	9 persons	75.00% of the rank
Divisional Officer grade 1.	7 persons	87.50% of the rank
Principal Officers	3 persons	75.00% of the rank
The total numbers at risk of leaving: 191		

When the qualifications chart below is used in conjunction with the above chart, it identifies for the brigade any shortfalls in the number of qualified personnel in relation to the expected vacancies. Not only will the retirements in a particular rank have to be catered for, for example 29 Sub Officers, but also the number of Sub Officers who will be promoted to cater for the movements in the ranks above them. The brigade now has the figures for the expected number of recruits required and the frequency for such courses based upon 24 recruits to each course.

Qualifications held as of May 2001 (numbers and % of that rank)		
Number of firefighters qualified to Leading Firefighter:	226	47.00%
Number of firefighters qualified to Sub Officer:	39	08.12%
Number of firefighters qualified to Station Officer:	2	00.41%
Number of Leading firefighters qualified to Sub Officer	54	68.35%
Number of Leading firefighters qualified to Station Officer:	8	10.12%
Number of Sub Officers qualified to Station Officer:	38	47.50%