



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Proposed Change to Crewing Arrangements

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1. Proposed Changes to NIFRS Crewing Arrangements Consultation

- 1.1 As part of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2012-15 NIFRS completed a community risk profile of Northern Ireland and a review of existing resources.
- 1.2 This review identified options to provide a more equitable distribution of Wholetime resources against identified risk and improve alignment of Wholetime crewing shift times.
- 1.3 Earlier in 2016 NIFRS carried out a Section 75 Screening Consultation with all key stakeholders on the following 'Proposed Changes to NIFRS Crewing Arrangements':
 - a change from Variable Crewing (VC) at 7 stations (Carrickfergus, Portadown, Armagh, Antrim, Newtownards, Omagh and Coleraine) to Day Crewing (DC).
 - the redeployment of Wholetime Firefighters to provide DC at 4 RDS fire stations (Enniskillen, Strabane, Dungannon and Downpatrick).
 - a realignment of the Wholetime Firefighter 2:2:4 day and night shift pattern from 09:00 to 18:00 hours and 18:00 to 09:00 hours to 08:00 to 18:00 hours and 18:00 to 08:00 hours in line with the DC shift pattern.

2. Consultation Process

- 2.1 The proposals were made available to the general public on the consultation section of the website, www.nifrs.org. The consultation team also used Twitter and Facebook to highlight the process.
- 2.2 NIFRS provided a consultation response template and accepted responses via, conventional mail, email, social media and telephone.

2.3 The consultation team provided 68 presentations (Table 1) throughout the 4 territorial commands, Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre and Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters. Approximately 800 NIFRS personnel attended and were given an opportunity to express their personal opinions and ask questions regarding the proposals.

2.4 NIFRS emailed 212 stakeholders in Northern Ireland to inform them of the consultation and individual letters were sent to each Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Council offering a presentation of the proposals.

2.5 Upon request NIFRS delivered a presentation of the proposals to the following Councils:

- Mid Ulster
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
- Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Ards and North Down
- Derry City and Strabane.

3. Summary of Consultation Responses

3.1 NIFRS received 29 written responses to the consultation exercise. Table 1 provides a breakdown of respondents:

Type of Respondent	Respondents
NIFRS Employees	18
Staff Representative Bodies	1
Local Councils	5
Member of the Public	2
Other Interested Parties	3
Total	29

Table 1: Summary of Respondents

3.2 Key responses and NIFRS consideration are summarised under each Proposal.

Proposal 1: Change Antrim, Armagh, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Newtownards, Omagh, and Portadown from VC to DC stations

- Current VC hours: 07:30 to 19:30 hours, 7 days per week
- Proposed DC hours: 08:00 to 18:00 hours, Monday to Friday
- RDS personnel will continue to provide a 24/7 response at each station

Summary of Consultation Responses

The key concerns raised in relation to Proposal 1 were:

- The changes are driven by budget constraints and not risk
- There will be a negative impact on emergency response capability if the hours are reduced in the 7 VC stations
- DC hours do not provide the optimum coverage based on historic emergency incidents
- An increase in response times in the 7 VC stations
- The risk in some VC station areas is significantly higher than in others

There was acknowledgement that

- The new DC crewing model would enhance the spread of Wholetime resources across Northern Ireland and provide improved equity in emergency response cover against identified risk
- The VC model was not the most effective or efficient use of resources

NIFRS Consideration of Responses

NIFRS is committed to providing the appropriate resources to mitigate identified risk levels and the provision of an equitable distribution of resources on the basis of risk.

NIFRS research shows a limited impact on the emergency response time to life risk calls. It also highlights that RDS personnel will continue to provide an emergency response outside of the Wholetime hours.

The introduction of DC will provide enhanced response times in the 4 identified RDS station areas.

Risk analysis indicates that emergency response provision alone cannot reduce the volume of incidents or the level of risk. The introduction of DC hours will provide an increased opportunity to engage with businesses, schools and vulnerable groups across more of Northern Ireland. This will support NIFRS focus on reducing incidents from occurring through prevention and protection activities.

NIFRS acknowledge that there is a variation in the risk levels across the 7 VC stations, with some station areas significantly higher than others.

Proposal 2: Upgrade Downpatrick, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Strabane from Retained to DC stations

- Introduce DC hours: 08:00 to 18:00 hours, Monday to Friday
- RDS personnel will continue to provide a 24/7 response at each station
- Enniskillen is currently operating a DC Pilot

Summary of Consultation Responses

There was widespread support for the introduction of DC at the 4 RDS stations with many Wholetime employees expressing an interest in working at the new DC stations.

Concern was raised regarding the impact on RDS personnel:

- Reduction in operational activity affecting experience
- Reduction in Community Engagement
- Reduced earnings

NIFRS Consideration of Responses

NIFRS welcomes the support for this proposal and remains committed to the provision of a sustainable, effective and efficient fire and rescue service for the people of Northern Ireland with the right resources in the right place at the right time.

NIFRS acknowledge that Wholetime personnel will have additional opportunity and capacity to engage with the local community and drive down risk. The use of Wholetime personnel for community engagement provides a more economic use of existing resources. As a consequence RDS personnel are likely to see some reduction in the number of emergency incidents attended and level of community engagement.

Proposal 3: Realign the start and finish times of the Wholetime 2,2,4 shift with the DC hours

- Current Wholetime 2-2-4 shifts: 09:00 to 18:00 hours and 18:00 to 09:00 hours
- Proposed Wholetime 2-2-4 shifts: 08:00 to 1800 hours and 18:00 to 08:00 hours

Summary of Consultation Responses

No significant comments or references were made on this proposal with the majority of respondents accepting the change. Some individuals felt the change would affect their commute times with both positive and negative impacts recorded dependent upon individual circumstances.

NIFRS Consideration of Responses

NIFRS realignment of the 2,2,4 Wholetime shift times with the DC shifts will enhance the capacity to complete non-emergency service activity and enable NIFRS to redeploy resources more readily to match risk.

4. Outcome of the Consultation

- 4.1 Following extensive public consultation, no significant adverse equality impacts were identified for any of the Section 75 groups, over and above those already identified at Section 14 of the consultation document. The Section 75 screening report on the Proposed Changes to Crewing Arrangements is available on NIFRS website <https://www.nifrs.org/>
- 4.2 The NIFRS Board has approved the implementation of the following changes in order to improve the effectiveness of service delivery based on risk:
- The introduction of Day Crewing to Stations in the towns of Dungannon, Strabane and Downpatrick. The Day Crewing pilot currently running in Enniskillen Station will be made permanent within this financial year. With the exception of Enniskillen, the upgrade to Day Crewing will be implemented in 2017/18.

- The Variable Crewing Stations based in Carrickfergus, Portadown, Armagh, Newtownards, Omagh and Coleraine, where full time Firefighters work a 12 hour shift every day of the week, will change to Day Crewing*. These changes are anticipated to take place within this financial year, 2016/17.
- NIFRS will change the respective 2:2:4 day and night shifts from 09:00 to 18:00 hours and 18:00 to 09:00 hours to 08:00 to 18:00 hours and 18:00 to 08:00 hours across all relevant Stations. This change has no impact on emergency response provision to the public and will commence 1 January 2017.

**Day Crewing will provide full time Firefighters between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday. As well as having this full time resource, additional Retained Firefighters who provide an on call service are available 24 hours a day.*

- 4.3 Antrim Station has the highest level of risk across the existing VC Stations and NIFRS has therefore decided to maintain existing VC arrangements and will continue to monitor risk in this area.
- 4.4 NIFRS will continue to analyse risk and monitor crewing arrangements across all stations to ensure emergency response remains proportionate to local risk.