

Consultancy Management Assignment

On Call Firefighter Attraction & Recruitment

ASSIGNMENT COVER PAGE ONLY

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Executive Summary

This report has been commissioned by the Executive Board of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) to identify challenges in attracting and recruiting On Call Firefighters. The report clearly defines a strategy and methodology aimed at implementing improvements to the way that attraction and recruitment activities are delivered which in turn will ensure a sustainable On Call sector.

Slaymaker Consultancy Services have over twenty years sector experience and have a proven track record of delivering strong, effective and robust programmes for change.

This report has been subject to extensive research both within the sector as well as externally. Slaymaker Consultancy Services have benchmarked against other UK Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) as well as organisations such as the RNLI who face similar challenges with recruitment.

Analysis of data arising from this report suggest that employee satisfaction currently working within the On Call sector is high and that the role meets the requirements of a modern workforce. New entrants to the role are likely to predominantly originate from Millennials and Generation Z and the resulting recommendations are focused on making the role more appealing to these cohorts.

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1.0 Introduction

On Call (OC) Firefighters typically have other primary employment but are able to respond to emergency incidents from their homes or workplaces provided that they live or work within a 10 minute response time to their station. They attend emergency incidents, scheduled training or exercising events as well as weekly drill periods. They are remunerated pro rata for time spent 'at work' and a small nationally agreed fee for making themselves available during standby periods.

The contribution provided by the commitment and competence of Fire-fighters conditioned to the On Call (OC) duty system is, and will continue to be, a factor in providing safer communities within MAWWFRS. This contribution becomes even more apparent considering 86% of its frontline fire appliances are crewed by OC personnel and 74% of stations providing operational cover utilise OC staff or Volunteers. However, attraction and recruitment continues to be an issue for the Service due to sociological and financial factors, along with labour market and employment trends.

National Conditions of Service constrain the ability of FRS's to establish more flexible contractual agreements with OC employees, other than when through local arrangements. OC firefighters currently have an option to commit to one of two contracts, a full contract which requires over 120 hours a week commitment and a 75% contract which requires a minimum of 90 hours per week.

MAWWFRS have establishment levels of 748 OC firefighters but are currently experiencing shortfalls of 123 employees across the Service area. The resulting impact of this under resourcing can be seen by the Services front line appliance availability which currently operates at 92% availability.

Attraction initiatives are developed on a pan Wales basis with responsibility for promoting available career opportunities being restricted solely to the Services Corporate Communications and Business Development department. Recruitment of interested applicants is coordinated by the Human Resources department who monitor and process applications throughout the pre- employment stage.

2.0 Aim and Objectives

2.1 Aim

The aim of this report is to identify a suite of attraction and recruitment considerations for implementation which will be designed to aid with improving the current On Call Emergency Response provision.

2.2 Objectives

- a) Identify strategies that may serve to increase attraction to the role of an On Call Firefighter.
- b) Explore opportunities to improve On Call recruitment strategies.
- c) Explore alternative crewing models that will appeal to cross sections of the community for whom the role of an On Call Firefighter is currently inaccessible.
- d) Consider MAWWFRS' role with regards to engaging with primary employers of potential On Call Firefighters.

3.0 Business Case

3.1 Literature Review

The Fire and Rescue Services Act places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to make provision for responding to emergencies in its area (Anon, 2004), for the purposes of MAWWFRS this consist of two thirds of the land mass of Wales and extends from Port Talbot and Crickhowell to its eastern flank, St Davids to the west and north to Machynlleth and Llanfair Caereinion, this is illustrated in *Fig. 1*.



Fig 1. Operational Area of MAWWFRS. (MAWWFRS, 2017)

Competition for wholetime employment within the Service is fierce with over 3000 applicants during the last intake for 12 Firefighter vacancies representing a 0.04% yield ratio. However, this is not the case for the OC sector where applicants for positions is low, and subject to meeting entry requirements yield ratio is 100% (MAWWFRS, 2017).

Given the low financial reward for working the OC system this report will in part consider the motivation factors in line with those of volunteers. The UK Civil Society (Anon, 2016) identifies that the primary motivators for volunteering are: wanting to improve things in the community, the cause being important, having spare time to do it and wanting to meet people. Conversely the reasons for stopping were: change in circumstances (not enough time), health problems or old age and having to look after children.

Data from the Services Human Resources department suggest that the average age of applicants to the On Call sector is currently 24 years old. This falls well within the millennial generation (1979 – 1999) and incorporates generation Z (after 1999). In considering attraction it is important to consider the motivating factors for these cohorts. (Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2013) found that millennials do not subscribe to the notion that productivity should be measured by the number of hours worked but rather by output. This suggests that a more flexible approach is valued which is supported by (Lucky Attitude, 2018) who found that millennials value flexible working over the stable 9 – 5.

(Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2017) suggest within their Workforce of the Future report that organisations should be focusing on employee mindsets looking towards 2030. This report explains that 74% of employees are ready to learn new skills or to retrain, whilst 37% are worried about automation putting jobs at risk. MAWWFRS have an opportunity to allay these concerns when promoting opportunities within the OC sector as the role is both long term with development opportunities as well as being physical in nature and not one that can be readily replaced by automation.

3.2 Academic Theory

3.2.1 Maslow Hierarchy of Needs

(David, 2014) discusses Maslow's Theory and suggest that while people need to meet basic needs, they also seek to meet successively higher needs illustrated by the pyramid in *Fig. 2*



Fig. 2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (David, 2014)

This is of relevance to this report for two reasons, the first is that as an organisation MAWWFRS must strive to meet its core duty of ensuring the safety and well-being of members of its community from fire and other emergencies; to achieve this MAWWFRS need a fully staffed workforce to ensure appliance availability. Secondly, the opportunity to become an OC Firefighter serving the community and 'making the difference' should be promoted to prospective applicants as it will serve to provide self actualization through promotion of morality and problem solving.

3.2.2 Herzbergs Motivation - Hygiene Theory

(Mind Tools, 2018) considers Herzbergs Motivation – Hygiene theory in the context of employee motivation and concluded that factors for satisfaction include achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement. These are all factors that can be achieved within a role as an OC Firefighter.

Conversely, factors for dissatisfaction include company policies, work conditions, salary and security. (NetMBA, 2010) explains that Herzberg argued that job enrichment is required for intrinsic motivation, and that it is a continuous management duty. These factors will be considered with the context of this report.

4.0 Project Design

4.1 Research Methodology

The foundation of research for this project will focus on deductive research which (Wilson, 2010) suggests is concerned with “developing a hypothesis (or hypotheses) based on existing theory, and then designing a research strategy to test the hypothesis; the deductive method is considered a top down methodology where sources of information are abundant, time available is limited and risk is generally avoided (Anon, 2013). Additionally, the research is designed to be conclusive in nature as opposed to exploratory.

The principle of research will be the applied route as this report aims to find a solution for an immediate and specific problem (Dudovskiy, 2017). The justification for this approach is that the client has set easily identifiable boundaries to the report with deadlines which within the scope of the PID are inflexible.

Sources of information are drawn from both primary and secondary sources to enrich the research validity. Sources of primary research include stakeholder analysis, competitor analysis, questionnaires to existing OC employees as well as questionnaires to members of the public who may consider becoming OC Firefighters. Primary research also includes an Appreciative Inquiry Strength Based approach to identify excellent practice at those rare OC Stations who are fully staffed and have a waiting list of applicants. Externally, this report contains primary research obtained from interviews with the RNLI and other UK Fire and Rescue Services who are experiencing similar challenges in terms of recruitment of volunteers.

Secondary sources of information include existing OC sector surveys undertaken by Representative Bodies, analysis of demographic trends and incident activity and internal MAWWFRS documents containing information relating to the OC sector.

A blended approach has been undertaken with regards to qualitative and quantitative information sources to ensure an accurate picture of the challenge and subsequent solutions can be achieved. (DeFranzo, 2011) explains that qualitative research is primarily used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and

motivations and in terms of the research for this report includes the individual interviews with external stakeholders. Quantitative research in the context of this report will include the questionnaires and surveys as well as analysis of statistical data to identify trends.

4.2 Research Implementation

The majority of the research has been undertaken solely by employees of Slaymaker Consultancy Services, however a stakeholder analysis identified that the OC sector featured in the High Interest / Low Power quadrant of the tool and were key to the detail of the project. To ensure effective engagement across this sector within the limited time available the project enrolled the assistance of Station Champions from each OC station to facilitate and collate survey responses.

5.0 Research Findings

5.1 Primary Research

5.1.1 Competitor Analysis

Analysis of other organisations competing for employees for other voluntary / OC Firefighter roles was undertaken across a range of agencies. Questionnaires were distributed to 4 organisations with a 100% response rate. These questions were aimed specifically towards identifying challenges and solutions regarding attraction and recruitment.

From the responses received it is apparent that as an organisation MAWWFRS availability of front line resources compares favourably to other organisations where the nearest competitor availability of 88% (RNLI) is still lower than MAWWFRS (93%). Interestingly MAWWFRS appliance availability is 16 percentage points better than the next nearest Fire Service who achieve a 77% appliance availability.

Two of the four organisations have however seen a significant increase in the application rate over the past 3 years which evidence suggests is directly attributable to changes in their approach to attraction. Of the Fire Services analysed two had utilised demographic data to target attraction activities and both had enlisted their existing OC employees to engage in attraction and recruitment strategies. Further to this both these FRS had deviated from the current Conditions of Service and negotiated local arrangements with the representative bodies to enable implementation of more flexible working arrangements.

Fig. 3 outlines the questions within the questionnaire and summarises the responses.

Question	MAWWFRS	RNLI	FRS 1	FRS 2	FRS 3
1.What is your current frontline emergency response vehicle availability.	93%	88%	74%	77%	71%
2. What is your % employees against establishment	84%	90%	84%	89%	72%
3. How has this fluctuated over the past 3 years	- 3%	+8%	-2%	+7%	+1%
4. In case of increase to Q3 what do you attribute this to	N/A	Narrative	N/A	Narrative	Narrative

Fig. 3 Summary of responses – Competitor Analysis

5.1.2 Questionnaire - On Call Sector

Questionnaires were distributed electronically to all 54 On Call Stations with a request for managers to promote completion by every OC individual. This approach was augmented by development of a network of Station Champions who are passionate individuals from each Station engaged with positive organisational progress. These local Champions encouraged completion and collated responses for onwards delivery to Slaymaker Consultancy Services. The rate of response was 34% which is in line with expectations from an internal survey (Fryrear, 2015).

The questionnaires explored the reasons that motivated them to join the OC sector and what should be done to improve attraction and recruitment of future Firefighters. Whilst the results were wide ranging there were clear themes that emerged that were consistent across the whole of the MAWWFRS area. A summary of common themes is shown in *Fig. 4*.

What motivated you to become an On Call Firefighter?	What should be done to increase the attraction of being an On Call Firefighter?
Opportunity to work flexibly A chance to do something for the community Supplement my income Learn new skills See the role as exciting and challenging Push my comfort boundaries Pride being recognised as a FF in my community	Change the minimum commitment level – it's too much Let us be more involved in recruitment – we know our communities Make us more visible in the community – apart from calls no one sees us Get rid of the myths – this is a role for anyone not superheroes.

Fig. 4 On Call questionnaire – Summary of common themes

5.1.3 Questionnaire – Public

During the annual Spring Open Day at MAWWFRS HQ, an opportunity was taken to engage with visiting members of the public to evaluate their perception of the On Call sector and to identify perceived barriers to accessing employment within the sector. The questionnaire explored how well the respondents understood the role of an OC Firefighter, whether they were aware of the location of their nearest Station and what barriers there were to them being interested in applying. 29 individuals were engaged with and a summary of responses is shown in *Fig. 5*.

How much do you know about the role of an <u>On Call</u> Firefighter?	Are you aware of where your nearest On Call Station is?	What prevents you from applying to be an OC Firefighter?
Of the 29 respondents 15 knew what the role entailed. Most were partners or friends of current or retired OC Firefighters. 3 had heard of OC Firefighters but didn't realise there were any in Wales 11 had never heard of OC Firefighters and thought they were all full time.	Of the 29 respondents 14 knew where their nearest On Call station was. 10 knew where their local Station was but didn't know how it was crewed 5 did not know where the nearest Station was.	Too much time commitment Didn't know opportunity existed I have a 9 – 5 <u>job</u> Not strong enough Never really considered it I've heard it's almost impossible to get in <u>Have to</u> take the kids to school and collect them I'm in college/university

Fig. 5 Public questionnaire – Summary of common themes

5.1.4 Appreciative Inquiry

As part of the research phase the top ten performing Stations with regards to employee establishment and appliance availability were contacted with a request for them to complete a survey. At the closure of a two week window for submission no responses were received. However, during follow up phone calls to the managers of these Stations it transpired that significant local effort was being undertaken which sat outside of MAWWFRS guidance; the managers were reluctant to respond to the questionnaire but 4 managers agreed to participate in an informal telephone interview.

The outcome of the interviews evidenced that a significant local effort was being made to engage in attraction and recruitment activities outside of the general Service wide approach. Potential applicants were identified and proactively approached. This type of behaviour is classified by (Shaked, 2014) as 'positive deviancy', ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Other activities that the participants reported as being key to successful recruitment were, facilitation of family days for the crew and their families so the role became more

than a job. Social events were coordinated with other Blue Light agencies to increase the OC Firefighters visibility within the community and development pathways were identified and tailored for each new crew member.

5.2 Secondary Research

5.2.1 Representative Body Survey

During September 2016, a Firefighters Representative body conducted a survey of the OC staff in order to maximise understanding within the sector. 209 submissions were received, representing 26.8% of the OC staff. The results extracted from this survey suggested a trend of feeling valued and inspired within the role. However, the sector experienced difficulties with being released from primary employment and a lack of pay and contract types. The survey summarised that a lack of local recruitment campaigns and inflexible contracts as being the primary barriers to attraction and recruitment (RFU, 2016).

5.2.2 Demographic Profiling

The demographic profile in terms of age within the MAWWFRS area shown in *Fig. 6* demonstrates that a large proportion of the population are within the target age range for employability within the OC sector. However, it is noteworthy that population projections from the Office for National Statistics illustrated in *Fig. 7* indicates that the projection for future population age profiling will see a significant shift to an increase in those over 75 years old which may lead to an increased demand on Services with greater numbers of vulnerable people living independently; this reinforces the case for ensuring the availability of front line services.

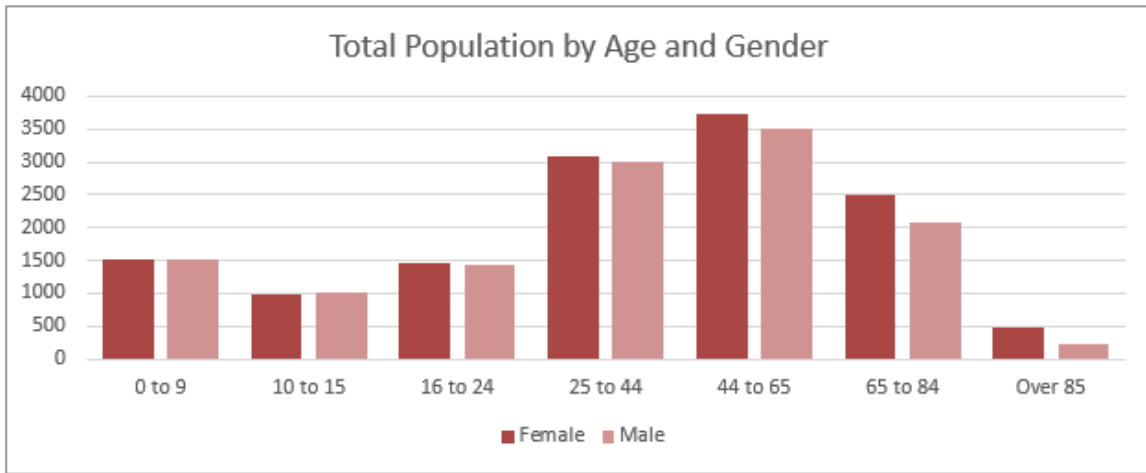


Fig 6. Total Population within MAWWFRS area. (MAWWFRS, 2016)

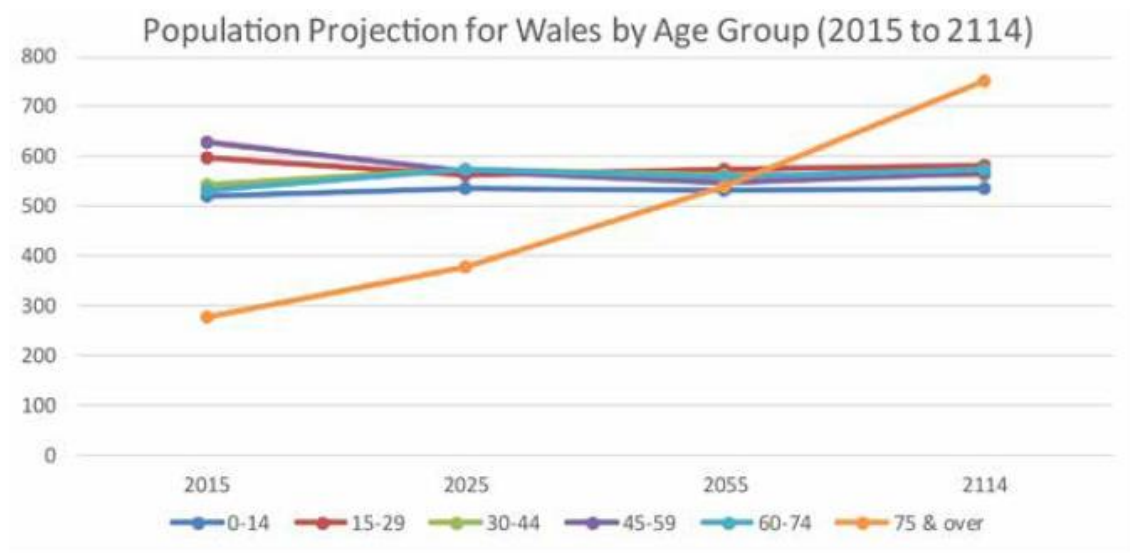


Fig. 7 Projected Population Growth (MAWWFRS, 2017)

Finally, in terms of the employment rate, data sourced from the Welsh Government Analysis of Labour Force Survey (Fig. 8) indicates that Wales as a whole remains to languish behind the UK as a whole in terms of employment rate. This data will be considered in line with the UK Governments 'benefits to work' scheme for the unemployed (UK Government, 2018).

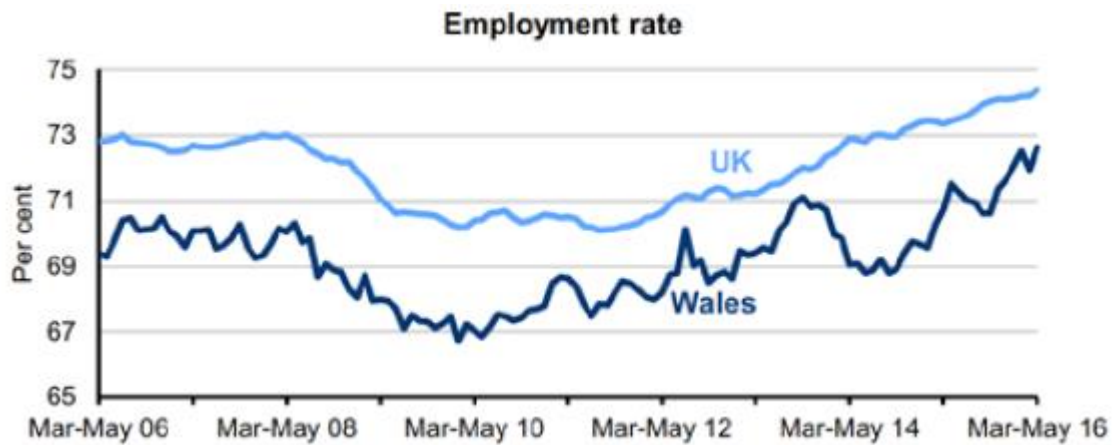


Fig. 8 UK/Wales Employment Rate (MAWWFRS, 2017)

5.2.3 Incident Activity Heatmap

The heatmap in Fig. 9 illustrates that the majority of emergency response incidents occur between the hours of 9am and 8pm. This information will be considered when analysing research.

Day	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
Mon	5	2	2	4	2	0	0	3	5	8	12	8	6	9	7	11	12	11	17	10	9	8	5	5	161
Tue	4	1	0	2	1	4	4	1	4	7	7	7	13	7	5	9	10	11	7	16	6	3	8	3	140
Wed	2	1	3	2	0	0	2	7	6	12	11	7	5	10	8	12	12	14	11	4	9	4	8	3	153
Thu	4	5	4	1	1	2	1	2	10	11	8	4	9	7	8	7	9	10	12	12	7	9	5	4	152
Fri	5	0	5	0	2	4	4	3	8	11	9	7	15	8	16	14	6	17	12	6	7	7	6	6	178
Sat	6	2	2	3	2	0	3	3	2	8	9	9	12	10	6	13	11	6	4	12	5	6	2	7	143
Sun	7	2	5	0	3	2	2	0	4	9	8	6	9	5	8	7	7	3	9	7	4	7	8	6	128

Fig. 9 Heatmap of incident activity (MAWWFRS, 2017)

6.0 Discussion

The information collated has originated from a broad range of sources both from within MAWWFRs and externally, it includes benchmarking data from other UK Fire and Rescue Services, statistical sources and examples of best practice currently taking place.

Some external organisations with similar challenges have recognised the urgency required and have been quick to act. They have implemented targeted activities within their area of operations to increase their organisational profile with those individuals that they are seeking to attract. The RNLI now undertake local recruitment campaigns utilising serving volunteers to raise awareness of the role of a RNLI volunteer, this has enabled potential applicants to understand first hand what the role involves and what the rewards (non financial) and commitment requirements consist of.

Those Fire and Rescue Services who have seen an increase in the recruitment rate have undertaken a multi faceted approach. They have in the first instance devolved the primary responsibility for recruitment to local Stations with central support being provided by their respective HR departments, this has had the effect of ensuring that Stations feel responsible for managing their own resource availability whilst also providing additional earning capacity for those individuals who engage in attraction and recruitment activities. In parallel with this, these organisations whilst remaining engaged with National Recruitment campaigns, have developed local campaigns for utilisation via Station social media accounts and promotion via local radio stations and newspapers. Finally, some of these Services have negotiated local amendments to National Conditions of Service allowing potential OC applicants to commit to less than the minimum 90 hours per week cover.

Both the OC questionnaire and that undertaken with members of the public provide stark similarities in terms of identifying areas for action. The OC are fiercely proud of the role that they undertake but experience challenges in terms of the time commitment under current contractual arrangements. They are passionate about ensuring maintenance of availability and are eager to become involved in the recruitment process and to engage with prospective applicants. The OC articulate that they are best placed to explain to applicants what the role really involves and what the benefits of being part of the team will be.

The public are generally poorly informed about the role of an OC Firefighter as well as the entry requirements, time commitments and even their awareness of the location of their local Station; MAWWFRS has some significant work to raise its profile in order to address these findings.

The Stations engaged with as part of the Appreciative Inquiry process not only have a full complement of Firefighters but also have waiting lists for entry to the role. Much could be gained by replicating the strategies that these have proactively engaged with. These stations have sought to engage with their communities and raise their profiles making the role of OC Firefighters visible and appealing.

A staff survey commissioned by a National Representative Body has identified that satisfaction within the role is high with employees feeling valued. However, the report identifies challenges with primary employers not having an understanding of the role of an OC Firefighter and the value that is added to the community. Primary employers are an important stakeholder to MAWWFRS in terms of its OC sector but they do not appear to be as engaged with as would be most beneficial to the Service. There are numerous transferable skills that being an OC Firefighter can cross map into primary employment and greater engagement should be considered with these stakeholders. The survey replicated previous research outcomes which pointed towards barriers being a lack of engagement with potential applicants at a local level and inflexibility with contractual commitments.

Demographic profiling of the MAWWFRS area shows that the available labour force should support the vacancies currently available. The unemployment rate suggests that there are opportunities for MAWWFRS to recruit effectively whilst contributing to closing the gap for unemployment figures across the UK as a whole. The population projection indicates that future population growth is likely to result in significant increase in the number of people living for longer, this has the potential to increase the incident activity for the Fire and Rescue Service and effective recruitment to address this is imperative.

The heatmap of incident activity demonstrates that the vast majority of emergency response incidents occur between the hours of 0800hrs and 2000hrs. This peak demand period is not aligned to current commitment requirements where a minimum

of 90 hours a week must be provided but with little consideration given to when these hours are provided. Given the flexibility demanded by generations Y and Z it may be of greater value to incorporate a degree of flexibility to the time demand, placing a greater focus on when resources are required.

7.0 Conclusions

MAWWFRS currently enjoys an enviable position within the wider arena of UK Fire and Rescue Service in terms of appliance availability. It features among the very highest in terms of current performance, although there remains a shortfall from the public expectation of 100% availability. However, the organisation should be mindful not to stray into the realms of complacency as the current trend for recruitment of OC Firefighters is a diminishing one which risks having a catastrophic effect on future levels of availability.

The outcomes of this report indicate that the Service may well be on the precipice of rapid and significant shortfalls in its ability to fill OC vacancies and that immediate and targeted action is required. The analysis of the research identifies several consistent themes that should be explored, however time is of the essence.

There are proven models in place within other organisations which have in some part addressed the challenge of achieving a more effective attraction and recruitment strategy, however it is unlikely that introduction of individual elements of these models will suffice to fully address the requirements of the Service. MAWWFRS should consider a holistic review of its attraction and recruitment process across its full range of departments.

Such a significant change to existing practices is likely to encounter resistance and scepticism from those who are engaged in the current attraction and recruitment strategy. In addressing these issues MAWWFRS should consider utilisation of a recognised change management process such as Kotters eight steps to change illustrated in *Fig. 10* (Kotter, 2015).

Slaymaker Consultancy Services are experienced in change management consultancy and are available to support MAWWFRS through this process if required.



Fig. 10 Kotters 8 step change process (Kotter, 2015)

8.0 Recommendations

This report identifies several recommendations for improvement to attraction and recruitment within the OC sector in MAWWFRS. The size of the task to be undertaken is significant and it is unlikely that individual elements would prove fruitful if addressed in isolation. It is also likely to be beyond the capacity of individual departments to address these issues against the backdrop of routine business. It is therefore the principal recommendation of this report that an internal project team be developed to holistically address the recommendations. *Fig. 11* proposes a structure and cost for the project team.

Role	Salary 18/19	Allowances	Total	Pension	NI	Total
Station Manager	48,862	8,772	52,634	7,526	6,144	66,304
Project Coordinator	23,343	Nil	23,343	3,291	2,102	28,736
						95,040

Fig. 11 Proposed structure and cost of Project Team

Due to establishment vacancies within the OC sector there is currently an underspend of £492,000 against salary cost. The cost for this team can be offset against the underspend resulting in no detriment to overall budget spend.

The role of this team would be to deliver against the recommendations illustrated in *Fig.12* of which each will form a Key Task Area.

Key Task Area (KTA)	Recommendation
KTA 1	Engage with representative bodies to negotiate local amendments to minimum commitment requirements. This will make the role more accessible to a wider cross section of potential applicants and appeal to those seeking more flexible working arrangements.
KTA 2	Develop attraction strategies to target underrepresented groups who can provide operational cover during the peak demand periods and in line with individual requirements. This might include reduced commitment contracts for parents with children at school and for students during self guided learning periods.
KTA 3	Engage more effectively with primary employers to promote the value of having an OC Firefighter within their workforce.
KTA 4	Develop a structured process that devolves responsibility for attraction and recruitment of OC Firefighters to the OC sector itself.
KTA 5	Develop flexible working arrangements for OC Firefighters to work in a more agile manner and to enable individuals to provide operational cover across a range of Stations as opposed to the one Station model that currently exists.
KTA 6	Develop local recruitment packages aimed at raising awareness of vacancies in specific target areas as opposed to a blanket National approach.
KTA 7	Promote OC Firefighters to visibly engage in local community events to raise their profile within that community.

Fig. 12 Key Task Areas - Recommendations

9.0 Referencing

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10.0 Appendices

(i) Competitor Analysis



MBA Comp Analysis
.pdf

(ii) On Call Questionnaire



MBA OC Quest
.pdf

(iii) Public Questionnaire



MBA Pub Quest
.pdf

(iv) Representative Body Survey Document



RFU Survey
.pdf