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## All Station/Brigade Reps – Briefing Note 01/17

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### RFU Circular Position Statement - Wholetime Recruitment

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The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) of 2010 was the start of the budget squeeze for Fire Authorities up and down the country. The effect of these grant reductions led to a decrease in the establishment numbers for Wholetime firefighters, those who retired from the service were not replaced, with services choosing to utilise alternative Wholetime crewing models that used smaller watch numbers and/or to increase the use of On-Call firefighters.

Fast forward to today and we are now seeing more and more services undertake recruitment campaigns for Wholetime firefighters as establishment levels begin to level out.

This provides an opportunity for current On-Call firefighters and members of the public to apply for what is still deemed to be an attractive career prospect. However, we are aware that a number of services are choosing to use a recruitment process that takes no account of the skills, qualifications, experience and dedication that their own On-Call employees could offer a full-time position.

Ignoring the attributes of their own On-Call staff has led to a number of these competent operational firefighters 'failing' the assessment tests to become full-time firefighters. We believe that such a situation, whereby a process concludes that a fully trained, competent, experienced operational firefighter is not deemed to be suitable to become a fully trained, competent, experienced operational firefighter is completely nonsensical.

Strangely enough there doesn't appear to be a similar process for a Wholetime firefighter who wishes to join the same service as an On-Call firefighter.

While the RFU does not claim that On-Call firefighters should automatically be successful in their application for a full-time role, we do believe that there does need to be some common sense applied to the recruitment process that overcomes such ridiculous situations. We are also aware of examples of competent On-Call firefighters who are successful in their application to become Wholetime firefighters, and are then expected to undertake a 13-week new recruits course to teach them how to be a firefighter, in the same service!

#### RFU Position

In our view, such practices confirm that even in 2017, there are high profile officers and elected members who take the view that On-Call firefighters are somehow inferior to their full-time colleagues and that the two-tier system of competence is very much alive in some areas. How do we genuinely expect to remove barriers to recruitment for females and

minority groups if services are still discriminating against people depending on the duty system that they work?

The RFU will continue to challenge any service that treats On-Call firefighters with such contempt and disrespect that it belittles their contribution to public safety as a whole. In contrast there are examples where fire services and their leaders recognise the valuable contribution On-Call firefighters provide to local communities and have a local recruitment process in place that acknowledges individual attributes and skills accordingly. At this present time these employers are in the minority, so we will continue to lobby other organisations until all fire & rescue services treat On-Call staff on a par with their Wholetime colleagues and treat them with the respect that they deserve.

If you require further advice on this matter please contact RFU HQ.

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