

Fitting-in:

a cultural audit of recruitment, training and integration in the fire service.

Part one: The first 14 weeks.



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with

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Executive Summary one page

Terms of reference: The research follows five trainees through their training at Petersfield Training Centre. There are a number of short-term aims to this research, but in the longer-term it intends to add to the debate about equality and cultural diversity, improve the employment of so far underrepresented groups and to look for levers for change.

1. Trainees received a very high standard of training on the drill ground and as a result they are proficient in the use of their equipment.
2. The details in this report highlight a considerable amount of (institutional) behaviour, which the fire service takes so much for granted that it goes unnoticed and unquestioned.
3. Each of the trainees recruited by CFRS has their own personality. However, their attitudes about the fire service parallel those of the current workforce in that they want to help the public, fit-in with their colleagues and prove this by being good firefighters.
4. Trainees' aspiration to be firefighters is so great that they arrive at PTC with an urgent desire to fit-in and please. PTC increases that desire to a point of vulnerability.
5. Instructors' desire to reflect their own image in the new trainees can result in alternative agendas (from those of their Chief Officer) to be passed to trainees.
6. The use of formal authority and discipline is not always transparent.
7. Instructor's ability to operate purges in the name of self-discipline verges on bullying and needs investigation.
8. Instructors' innocent emphasis on team building has the potential to encourage group behaviour to such an extent that bonding can develop amongst the trainees 'for its own sake'.
9. Team building encourages the development of informal peer group leaders and informal hierarchies in and around the accommodation.
10. Once established, informal hierarchies will police themselves and some firefighters will fit-in just to avoid drawing the attention of the group.
11. In closed environments such as PTC (or a firestation), informal cultures are difficult to avoid and many individuals, especially those with experience of such hierarchies will hide their diversity and give up (some) individuality to the group.
12. Groups that bond around informal agendas may colonise fire service culture, but are not necessarily loyal to formal policy.
13. Some of the findings are disturbing and it is clear that in outcome they negatively effect, if not circumvent, new agendas in the fire service; it is also possible for some trainees to be 'damaged' by what has been found.
14. Trainees' experience at PTC not only prepares them to fit-in with the formal agendas that they are offered by experienced firefighters on the watch, it also makes them vulnerable to the (informal) cultural agendas that peer group leaders will offer.
15. Equal opportunities training is a missing element on the course, its provision will empower some trainees, disempower others and lay down boundaries; it will also help the instructors.
16. Once trainees' expectations fit-in with informal and negative cultures, at each step of their career path most trainees become further entrenched in that culture and will in turn go on to replicate it: an influence that will be in place for up to 30 years.
17. Only by acting to make changes to the recruitment policy, initial training and then by supporting the new firefighters in the workplace (and by seeking to provide a first posting where negative agendas are controlled), will the fire service actually change its current cultural belief that the best firefighters are white males and that firefighting is the main element of The(ir) Job.
18. It is necessary to put in place standing audits to ensure changes are not only affected but that any new agendas are recognised and acted upon.
19. There needs to be continuing research to follow these trainees and any new entrants to the CFRS.
20. Discussions need to take place as to how the contents of this report are going to be delivered, developed and acted upon. The Fire Service Research & Training Unit at APU is available to take part in those discussions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOUR PAGES

Terms of reference

The research follows five trainees through their training at Petersfield Training Centre. There are a number of short-term aims to this research, but in the longer-term it intends to add to the debate about equality and cultural diversity, improve the employment of so far underrepresented groups and to look for levers for change.

The Methodology

- Qualitative research involving 70 taped interviews, 4 visits to the PTC (including two overnight stays) and numerous less formal observations and discussions.
- Cheryl Rolph, Director of Management Services, has been actively involved in the research. I have reported back to her frequently and she also participated during observations at the PTC.
- This research has been action based, requiring the researcher to gather data and provide advice to trainees. In outcome, this has affected the experience of trainees and may have prevented discrimination.
- The report will indicate that amongst the very many positive things that are happening at PTC there are areas of concern. It is these areas of concern that are concentrated on.

Recruitment process

- CFRS have selected applicants with similar ideals to the existing workforce.
- To be accepted applicants have to prove a real desire to join the fire service; waiting for a career for the 18 months it takes to join is a sign of this desire.
- Trainees go to PTC with the goal of becoming a *good firefighter* and in the knowledge that they must fit-in.

Recommendation/Analysis

- The five trainees may have similar aspirations, but they are all different characters and the fire service has affected them in different ways.
- The fire service has a high public profile and it celebrates this. In particular, this message supports the view amongst the public that firefighters are in some way a special person.
- Those who traditionally **do not join** the fire service
 - Are less likely to prove a desire to join the fire service to the interviewer.
 - Are potentially looking for employment and **choosing from a range of jobs**; they are unlikely to wait around during an 18 month recruitment process.
 - May not apply because they see the fire service as recruiting a special type of person.
- To change its culture the fire service should actively consider recruiting those who believe they are not capable of being firefighters. This may be done by reducing the extent to which firefighters are seen as special people and promoting **CFS as the operational role** of the fire service.

Petersfield Training Centre (PTC)

- The accommodation provides a pleasant, light and spacious work environment during the day.
- Trainees *live* three to a room and are responsible for the cleanliness of large areas of the accommodation.
- Informal hierarchies develop amongst the trainees.

Recommendation/Analysis

- Single rooms would provide personal space and avoid negative group pressures.
- Trainees should not be responsible for cleaning, even less subject to discipline for failing to achieve arbitrarily 'required' standards.
- The DO's office should provide a view onto the drill yard and be connected to the instructors' office.

Training, Fitness, injury and perceptions

- All the trainees considered that they were fit before attending PTC.
- The immediate requirement to drill for long periods wearing unfamiliar and sometimes ill-fitting equipment places a strain on many trainees.
- Three out of five CFRS trainees received injuries requiring professional medical attention. One was recoured.

Recommendation/Analysis

- Injuries may be little to do with fitness per se, but more to do with avoidable situations concerning personal equipment and the rush to test trainees physically.
- Physical work should be phased in.
- The value of 'Hose Thursday' should be reconsidered and if essential there should be risk assessment.
- Instructors' attitudes to female firefighters suggest that they are being either patronising or discriminatory by expecting the women to prove themselves in circumstances when similar men are not. This is an urgent training need.

Teaching the trainees

- There are 50 study papers taught in rote fashion for 35 examinations
- Teaching is exam based, leading to a system whereby answers are anticipated (if not provided during lectures), written on flashcards to be learnt parrot fashion, tested in groups, reproduced for examinations and then ‘forgotten’.

Recommendation/Analysis

- Answers that come reactively from the gut can wrongly be seen as instinctive/natural: a situation that could encourage firefighters to believe their hands on (masculine) skills are instinctive/natural. Belief in natural skills adversely effect equality and cultural diversity.
- Trainees’ preference for proving themselves during hands on tests leads to ‘teaching’ becoming a necessary evil, almost a punishment and a hardship that trainees have to overcome, as opposed to a truly positive time when trainees are encouraged to *think* about their future work and build themselves as individuals.
- Firefighters can feel threatened by any learning process that is not directly hands on (longer term this could influence firefighters against further study and taking promotion examinations).
 - Being threatened by ‘academic’ learning can encourage firefighters to take defensive measures to separate themselves from those who do pass examinations and work behind a desk.
 - Fear/dislike/marginalisation of paperwork can litigate against support for CFS.
- The move from the (directive) drill ground to the (instructive) classroom can be difficult for both trainee and instructor.
- Use uniformed instructors for teaching drill, hand other elements to professional instructors or teachers.

Pass rates/Weak trainees

- Only 19 out of 828 trainees have not completed the course since April 1997.
- Some trainees get 100% marks in written tests.
- Those that fail get several opportunities to re-sit.

Recommendation/Analysis

- High pass rates may be a sign of an effective training process.
- High pass rates can also be a sign that **becoming a firefighter is not actually that difficult**.
- Hose-Thursdays may only prove trainees are prepared to try hard – **not a test but a rite of passage**.
- Examinations at PTC should be reviewed to identify if they serve the required outcomes.
- The net affect of group bonding could mean that the fire service becomes so good at looking after its own, that it keeps some firefighters who should be let go.
- Support for those who are failing may only extend to the male firefighters; **a similarly situated woman may be allowed to fail** (the view may be that “she was never really one of us anyway”).
- The possibility that women have to prove themselves more often makes it more likely that they will fail. The constant spotlight can also make **women question if they are good enough**.

Standby time

- Trainees stand-down at 1730, but they are expected to continue studying and this develops into a group activity.
- After 1730 instructors’ presence is limited or non-existent. This vacuum allows the space for peer group leaders, with no formal authority, to develop power and police the group.

Recommendation/Analysis

- It became the norm to accept bad behaviour from more disruptive trainees during the stand-down period, although each trainee had a different view on this.
- Group activity can become negative, and support and prepare trainees for informal agendas.
- Informal agendas can involve a colonisation of fire service culture that is not always loyal to formal policy.
- In such a closed environment, if a trainee tries to take time out for themselves after 1730 their actions may be **interpreted as acting against the group** (e.g. damaging the group’s ability to act as a team on the fire ground).
- Groups can act against individuals (who do not always join in) to bring them back into line, or at least accept that peer group leaders will do so.

Fitting-in

- All trainees wish to prove they will fit-in with fire service culture.
- To do this some firefighters willingly gave up some free-will, others were more reluctant.

Recommendation/Analysis

- Trainees with a desire to prove they can fit-in are vulnerable to negative as well as positive agendas.
- Without careful consideration of the rights of the individual to be different, cultural pressures can exert negative agendas and outcomes in the name of team building.

- Instructor's **emphasis on bonding often appears as if it was for its own sake.** This is innocently allowing space for bullies/harassers to develop and equality/diversity training should concentrate on this.
- **Groups that bond around informal agendas may colonise fire service culture, but are not necessarily loyal to formal policy.**
- If a trainee does not feel empowered enough to resist the group, or to speak out when they are being disturbed late at night, then they are tomorrow's victims. **Those leading the group are the potential bullies/harassers of tomorrow's fire service.**

Equal opportunities/Institutional behaviour

- Trainees had little or no knowledge of equality and cultural diversity – it was a mystery to them.
- There is little or no equal opportunities or diversity training provided at PTC.
- **Instructors lacked any real understanding of equality and diversity agendas.**
- There is little evidence of deliberate direct discrimination at PTC. However, **there is considerable evidence of institutional behaviour that may discriminate against anyone who is seen as different.**
- **Trainees were unlikely to share any diversity difficulties with, or to complain to, instructors, because they feared repercussions.**

Recommendation/Analysis

- **Instructors either have not been given the tools to understand equality agendas or they are ignoring them** to the extent they do not recognise their own institutional behaviour; this is an urgent training need.
- Equal opportunities training is a necessary part of the course to **empower some trainees, disempower others and lay down boundaries;** it will also help the instructors.
- **Labelling, as Mr Miss Mrs should stop;** it highlights difference between those not in uniform and firefighters, spotlights individuals and points to the superiority of instructors. Trainees are all firefighters from day one and the use of first names should be considered.
- Institutional discrimination may occur because instructors have a clear idea of the type of trainee they want to see, the type of firefighter they want to produce and the steps they can take to achieve this (including the passing of subliminal messages).
- The idea that **'Sub O knows best'** is noble sentiment that can produce good firefighters. It can also **produce good white male heterosexual firefighters** (or firefighters who follow their ways by fitting-in with their agendas).
- It may be that each level in the fire service that individuals know what is best for the service officers and do their utmost to implement their beliefs, can lead to a variety of fire service cultures.
- Current training methods reproduce what has gone before.
- The possibility that (eventually, sometimes by the use of discipline) most trainees fit-in with their instructors' beliefs is a constant theme of this report and particularly worthy of further investigation/discussion.

Discipline

- All five trainees anticipated that they would **enjoy the discipline** at PTC.
- Trainees appeared to be looking forward to a structured, orderly and **fair** lifestyle to prepare them for taking orders on the fireground: a place where they saw life or death depended on them being able to follow orders.
- Away from drill the trainees experienced purges: a method by which disciplined organisations arbitrarily make some areas important to prove or reassert control. At PTC this took the form of "Teaching self-discipline."
- Instances such as sudden purges on room tidiness and dust, blaming the group for an individual's misdemeanour and an overreaction to damage upset four out of the five trainees. It also made the trainees more aware of their vulnerability and the potential for the instructors to always be able to find something wrong, and to punish them for this by rebuke, notes for file, keeping them late on Fridays and punishment M1's.
- In a strange sense of irony, closely associated to the idea that 'Sub O knows best', instructors argued that discipline was slipping and yet **lacked discipline in not supporting the official policy of the Petersfield Fire Service on equality, recruitment and CFS.** Alarming on one occasion, instructors manipulated trainees into challenging the DO's decision and then stood back whilst trainees were told off for their behaviour.

Recommendation/Analysis

- It is as if the trainees saw **discipline as a ritual hardship, which they could prove themselves as capable of overcoming;** a test they had to pass and the harder it was the better they may think of themselves.
- Trainees should be given the tools to recognise what discipline actually is and when it is being abused.
- The whole question of how discipline is administered at PTC needs investigating.
- **All disciplinary measures need to be transparent.**
- Consideration should be given to investigating how non-uniformed organisations operate their residential training courses i.e. how does a bank or mountain rescue team train.

Community Fire Safety

- Before training started the women were more positive than the men about CFS.

Recommendation/Analysis

- It is important for CFRS to **encourage and build on these five firefighters' positive attitude towards CFS.**
- If trainees' positive views about CFS are not supported, then as the new person at the station they will not want to be seen as different to the rest of the watch.
- Trainees desire to fit-in can mean they are vulnerable to being singled out for CFS as opposed to the 'real' established firefighters. Trainee's support for CFS is then likely to be short lived.

Family friendly

Recommendation/Analysis

- It would be unfair to use harsher words, but residential training is not family friendly and is **less likely to attract single parents or women.**
- Trainees should be told how their training is likely to marginalise those at home.
- Partners should be considered during the initial induction period, perhaps by setting up a support group.

Other areas

- There are different BA safety procedures taught at PTC and CFRS.
- Not all the instructors taught the same ways of working on the drill ground. Punishments were given out for the resulting confusions.
- Difficulties over uniform are regrettable and highlighted women as different.

Final Conclusions

All trainees are well trained in the practical use of their equipment. Trainees were also prepared to fit-in with and continue institutional practices in the fire service.

Once trainees' expectations fit-in with informal and negative cultures, at each step of their career path most trainees become further entrenched in that culture and will in turn go on to replicate it: an influence that puts in place an informal hierarchy which hands down to the next cohort of firefighters the views of its elders.

Only by acting to make changes to the recruitment policy, initial training and then by supporting the new firefighters in the workplace (and by seeking to provide a first posting where negative agendas are controlled), will the fire service actually change its current cultural belief that the best firefighters are white males and that being a firefighter is about suppression rather than prevention.

It is necessary to put in place standing audits to ensure changes are not only affected but that any new agendas are recognised and acted upon.

Discussions need to take place as to how the contents of this report are going to be delivered, developed and acted upon, and the Fire Service Research & Training Unit at APU would like to be part of those discussions.

There needs to be continuing research to follow these trainees and any new entrants to the CFRS.

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PREFACE: FIRE SERVICE CULTURE

Fire service culture has no physical presence, it is not hands on and cannot be seen, touched or smelt. Fire service culture is a phenomenon, existing only in the mind of those individual firefighters who believe in it. Nonetheless, when individual firefighters come together this phenomenon appears to have authority over them. Consequently, the term ‘fire service culture’ has become a catchall phrase for group behaviour in the fire service. As a result, it is often the culture rather than individuals that gets the blame for behaviour in the fire service. Those that use the term ‘fire service culture’ in such a way are in danger of losing sight of the probability that group behaviour in the fire service is something about which firefighters have some choice. Firefighters can choose to follow cultural values or not, it is up to them. However, the conditions under which firefighters make those choices can appear restrictive. Choice for firefighters can be limited by the formal and informal structures around them. For trainees the choice is even more limited and as this report is mainly about how they impact with fire service structures it will focus on how an institutionally conservative fire service helps trainees to make their choices.

This report will also support the possibility that there is not just one fire service culture, but many cultures. Some of these cultures are official and organised by Chief Officers. But there are also other cultures and these can be unofficially organised by individual groups throughout the fire service. The result is the possibility that many in the fire service may refer to ‘fire service culture’ as if it were a common entity. However, the understandings these individuals have about the values associated with their view of fire service culture can be put into practice in a variety of ways. Take for instance the fire services’ *professional ethos: to provide an efficient service for the public*, which is a common understanding in the fire service. Firefighters believe that providing an efficient fire service is their number one cultural value. However, in practice, depending on the level at which these values are implemented, an efficient fire service can be interpreted in different ways. ‘Efficiency’, for senior officers can relate to a cost effective fire service in wide ranging terms; their views can also involve having an efficient policy on Health and Safety, Equality and Community Fire Safety. Efficiency can also involve getting firefighters to do as they are told. On the other hand, firefighters can see ‘efficiency’ as a value focusing entirely on point of delivery: a time when *good firefighters* get-in at a job and put the fire out. This gap between how officers and firefighters interpret their common understandings about ‘The Job’ points to at least two cultures. First a formal culture and second an informal one. Nonetheless, both lay claim to a common cultural understanding about values in the fire service. Given that both groups have the potential to identify fire service values in different ways, it is not difficult to understand that in practice the intended outcomes can also be different.

However, formal cultural values in one fire service can differ from another. Each Chief Officer is likely to adopt a slightly different approach to setting the formal values that provide their efficient fire service. Officers lower down the hierarchy are then responsible for implementing these values and without any attempt at conspiracy, each officer can put into practice their Chief Officer’s values in a slightly different way. Add to this possibility the probability that at firestations (where the emphasis is on waiting for a fire to occur and then reacting to it ‘efficiently’) each watch can put into practice their own (informal) understandings in the shadow of the official view and the scale of the difficulty becomes clearer. However this is not the end of the problems about understanding fire service culture. As an example, tradition in the fire service points to the possibility that all firefighters seek to achieve the label *good firefighter*. And this is certainly true of those trainees that I have interviewed. However, again, at watch level, there are many interpretations of the attributes of a ‘good firefighter’. Some watches can believe that their speed at getting-in to put the fire out is important. Other watches may choose more reasoned approaches to firefighting, whereby a good firefighter is someone who takes a slightly slower approach to *getting-in* involving an increased emphasis on dynamic risk assessment. For others, good firefighters may require different attributes relating to agendas that appear to have nothing to do with firefighting. In this respect, some in the fire service question the ability of black, female or gay firefighters to do

The Job. These types of prejudices can extend to the ludicrous point where watch members may consider that *their* black firefighter can meet their standards, but this will not stop them from believing that all other black people are unlikely to meet their standards for becoming good firefighters. Therefore, it is possible to argue that whenever a group of firefighters get together to discuss their work (in particular when they stay together for a long time) that they will form a fire service culture. The real difficulty is that like officers they believe that their fire service culture is *the* fire service culture. The subsequent (mis)use of the word culture as if it had one meaning, can then lead to difficulties for those trying to improve the fire service. Such a complicated situation is made harder because each group thinks that their values are common, right and natural. The result being that anyone who tries to change one group's view of their culture is seen as a traitor to common values.

Following this research, it is clear that one area having difficulty with fire service culture is the training centre. Chief Officers can make clear their wish for trainee firefighters to gain particular skills and to adopt new agendas. However, it is possible for instructors to marginalise some agendas and replace them with others that they believe are right for The(ir) Job. This unofficial interpretation of a Chief Officer's intentions can result in instructors arguing that they know best the type of firefighter that the station expects. The outcome is that instructors fit trainees in with a model not entirely chosen by their Chief Officer and one that also includes their (innocently) accepting the informal agendas firefighters on the station expect.

Differences between the legitimate requirements of senior managers and the outcome at point of delivery are increasingly causing concern in a fire service. Chief Officers seeking to comply with government's efficiency agendas are not always successful. In particular, recruitment targets for ethnic minorities and women are not being met. On many watches the concept of equality and diversity (fairness for all) is not something that sits easily within a predominantly white, working class, heterosexual, male fire service. As suggested earlier, attempts to improve the representation of women and minority ethnic groups has led to different opinions about who can and cannot achieve the standards for a *good firefighter*. Firefighters are also uncomfortable with the Government's agenda for firefighters to become more active in the community to prevent fires before they start. To an extent, both of these new agendas are linked because they challenge the view by many firefighters that their job (and identity) is about proving yourself in the action side of The Job; little to do with equality or community fire safety.

The structure of the fire service in itself legislates against change. There are over 3000 watches in the UK fire service. Each watch bonds very closely around a peer group led hierarchy that defines watch culture i.e. the nature of their work, the attributes of a *good firefighter* and the level of resistance to their senior officers. Given that each watch hierarchy forms up on a time served basis and that firefighters can serve on the same watch for up to 30 years, the power these hierarchies can wield is considerable. Largely, firefighters are not aware of their different approaches to The Job. The(*ir*) Job as they see it is a shared value that they would define under the all embracing term 'fire service culture'. But, to emphasise an earlier view, this is not the case. There is not just one fire service culture. Nor, when you include the unofficial fire service culture are their just two cultures. In the fire service, the potential exists to have a different culture on each watch. Each of these cultures has no physical presence; it is in effect the combined view of a bonded group forming up in a hierarchy under one or two peer group leaders.

However, irrespective of the differing interpretations firefighters have for fire service culture, where it is defined and the fact that fire service cultures exist only because people are persuaded to join them, nothing yet in the fire service has been successful in diverting the authority that individuals and the groups they form give to *their* fire service culture. Looking at trainees as they leave the training centre it appears that they have natural attributes that allow them to bond together. Yet this bonded group will divide and in turn fit-in with the cultural beliefs of the watch they are posted to. However, that which appears natural is not natural at all. These trainees have been taught a set of values by their instructors, which they recognise as fire service culture. And their

practical skills apart, foremost amongst the values these trainees have been taught is the need to fit-in. But instructors cannot take full credit for providing firefighters who will fit-in on the watch. As applicants, these trainees had to prove that they really wanted to be firefighters (in similar terms) to those who interview them. The fact that they have been able to do this suggests that they have drawn on their earlier experiences of group working. This experience will include the recognition that to join a group you may (in the short term) have to bend to the will of leaders (official or unofficial) rather than stand apart and be seen as different. In the longer term of course applicants recognise that they will gain in influence in the group and in turn enjoy the power it wields. Instructors may “groom” trainees to act as someone that instructors would be “*willing to go out there and ride on the back of fire appliances with.*” However, they are more able to do this because of the type of person the fire service employs.

Trainees therefore leave the training centre with a considerable belief that they must fit-in with the views of the watch they are about to join. This then makes them vulnerable to peer group leaders, who have no official power in the organisation, but are able to project their own agendas onto trainees (in similar fashion as the instructors did). This is not unexpected, because with so much emphasis on teamwork, firefighters are trained to act as teams *and for the good of the team*. Training has denied their ability to be individuals, except to point to differences that need to be corrected for the good of the team. Nor has training provided an ability to recognise the boundaries between official and unofficial policy. *Newly prepared to fit-into the system*, trainees do not recognise that often they can have a choice about what areas they must fit-in with and where they can legitimately stand apart.

Having argued that culture has no power, except for an individual’s belief in its existence (and importance), is not to argue that some in the fire service are not aware of their ability to influence the culture within which they operate. In the case of Chief Officers, this represents legitimate authority. Chief Officers may for example persuade officers to support equal opportunities. Nevertheless, this does not mean that individually all the officers support equal opportunities. However, because senior officers loyalty is to the Chief Officer this takes precedence over their own beliefs. However, at some point in the hierarchy, loyalty to the Chief Officer and the ability to recognise if official policy is being followed diminishes. The training centre may be one example of where this happens. Instructors may implement the letter but not the spirit of the equality message – “they treat everyone the same.” It is also possible that instructors will believe they know better than their Chief Officer does. Instructors can then set out to deliberately and covertly divert their Chief Officer’s instructions by offering alternative agendas in the shadow of official policy.

The watch too can behave in a similar fashion. Despite the Chief Officer’s views on equality and the possibility that a majority of the watch are not sexist, a sexist peer leader may hold sufficient sway over the watch to uphold sexist agendas. Informal peer group leaders (or instructors) may lack legitimacy, but this is not so apparent when you are new in an organisation. This is a complicated matter but being complicated does not mean it is beyond understanding. Chief Officers, who wish to ensure that their values are implemented, may be more successful if they recognise the authority that peer group leaders wield. Rather than confronting such groups with rules and regulations that can only apply whilst they are being overseen, it may be better to influence informal authority at the point where values are put into practice. The aim should be to employ individuals who know when to fit-in and when not to and to ensure they retain this ability once they arrive at the station. To do this, Chief Officers will need to understand that their views are not law and that without winning hearts and minds the informal hierarchy will continue to influence the definition of The(ir) Job, the attributes of a good firefighter and how a fire service, station or watch is efficient. Such is fire service culture; it is based on a traditional belief in shared values, yet organised in an arena where formal and informal leaders vie for power to create a multitude of cultures.

1. INTRODUCTION

Chief Fire Officer Carroll of the Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service commissioned this research in strategic partnership with the Fire Service Research and Training Unit at APU. In part, it is a response to new requirements by government for the fire service to change its traditional image and to become more representative of the community by:

1. Acting to prevent not only respond to emergencies.
2. Employing a workforce that reflects the general population

Throughout this research, government's agenda to change the fire service's approach to reducing emergencies, equality, cultural diversity and Community Fire Safety (CFS) have been a focus. This has resulted in research that looks for the structural impediments to change and then makes recommendations that may assist with removing them.

In simple terms there is a question that all Chief Officers should be asking:

Do current recruitment and training methods actually provide firefighters who can achieve their Chief Officer's visions on community fire safety, equality, cultural diversity and firefighting, or do they only prepare firefighters to fit-in with existing models that are not necessarily intent on providing the fire service for the 21st Century that government requires?

The report, which essentially includes a verbal presentation to highlight the evidence that cannot be produced in writing, will contribute to the debate on this question.

1.1 Terms of reference

The research will be based around an account of how trainees experience training at Petersfield Training Centre. There are a number of short term aims.

1. To identify the expectations and experiences of trainees entering the fire service, including:
 - i) why they joined the fire service;
 - ii) their expectations of the fire service;
 - iii) their experience of the recruitment process;
 - iv) their experience of training.
2. To identify how those expectations may change over the period of training
3. To identify the trainees highs and lows
4. To provide a pro-active listening service for trainees aimed at easing any difficulties (should they arise)
5. To provide recommendations on the training process
6. To provide a basis for discussions about ways forward (particularly regarding equality and cultural diversity).
7. To provide recommendations as to how 'new' firefighters can best be integrated into the Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service.

Longer term aims

To add to the debate about equality and cultural diversity in the fire service by focusing on a number of considerations.

1. Recruitment processes and procedures.
2. The ability to target under represented groups within the fire service.
3. The trainees' experience of initial training.
4. Improving retention.
5. Improving the integration into the fire service of trainees.
6. To preserve the ability of individuals to retain their individuality.
7. Improving equality and cultural diversity in the fire service.

8. To add to the understanding of the cultural processes at work in the fire service.

Income generation and the longer term view

1. In particular, it may be that other fire services may be interested in the findings of the research.
2. Dissemination of the research findings may become a collaborative project by the Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) and Anglia Polytechnic University (APU).
3. The model for research may be something that APU and CFRS may wish to market as a collaborative project.
4. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister may have an interest in the findings of this research.
5. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister may have an interest in funding extensions to this research.
6. There may be other parties not directly associated with the fire service who may wish to fund further research.

1.2 Recognising the difficulties

Trainees received a very high standard of training on the drill ground and as a result they are proficient in the use of their equipment. Therefore, it will be one view that the training methods at Petersfield Training Centre (PTC) are “just what The Job needs.” An alternative view may suggest that training methods aimed at producing *good firefighters*, are outdated for today’s fire service. If firefighters voted on which of the two views were right, then undoubtedly the first view would prevail. But there is to be no vote. As stated above the government requires that the fire service become more representative of the community by:

1. Acting to prevent not only respond to emergencies.
2. Employing a workforce that reflects the general population
(currently amongst the 33,499 wholtime firefighters only 285 are women, 324 black and 56 Asian (HMCIFS 2001).

To reinforce this requirement for change the government has set targets (Straw 2000; Whitehead 2002). In respect to recruitment, David Blunkett¹ is upbeat about success (Home Office 2001). However, in this benchmark year the Minister’s focus has yet to recognise that the fire service will not meet his targets for recruitment. In regard to a reduction in fires, the more proactive approach required by Officer of the Deputy Prime Minister is not yet evaluated.

Success in both these areas is likely to be contingent on the reaction of informal hierarchies in the fire service (particularly at watch level). In simple terms **for the fire service to change then firefighters’ views have to change** and this may only be achieved by taking a number of measures. This report is one of those measures and its findings on recruitment and training suggest that current recruitment continues to provide **trainees who are keen to prove they can fight fires and do hands on emergency work, but are unlikely to help change agendas in the fire service.** Evidence from this research indicates that trainees join the fire service to become good firefighters and, not knowing how to do this, they are vulnerable to suggestion by those they recognise as having these skills. The first of these people that trainees meet are the instructors at training centre. As a role model for what will occur in the future, not only do the instructors teach a formal agenda, they also provide the added value of informally acculturating these keen and ambitious new trainees. Patterns for behaviour are established in these early weeks that prepare to fit trainees in with the beliefs of those who have authority over them. It is hard for the trainee to recognise that sometimes the instructors are teaching them formal understandings and at other times informal ones. This situation then repeats itself on the watch where trainees join an informal hierarchy and **by the time most trainees realise the difference between a formal and informal cultural understanding they are already climbing in the hierarchy and are therefore prepared to**

¹ Reporting for the Home Office and the DLGR (now the ODPM) on recruitment.

defend it. The report that follows (more so when supported by the presentation and workshop) will provide argument to support this analysis and draw attention to how **little space there is for firefighters to develop the individual diversity, which the fire service requires to promote the dynamic for change.**

1.3 The report and the way forward

There has been, rightly, a considerable pressure from CFRS to provide not just a report that points out what may be wrong, but also provides recommendations to help achieve change. The report therefore goes to considerable lengths to provide recommendations. However, these recommendations are made with the proviso that there is no easy or necessarily right answer. Nor in response to these recommendations should the fire service use an axe, because separating the stitches holding together fire service culture in such a manner could risk cutting away the positive features along with the negative ones. This report therefore should be read not as an answer to any difficulties, but rather that it provides:

- An overview of what is happening.
- The reason why the fire service should look at what has been discovered.
- Some positive recommendations that should be seen as pointers for discussion on the way forward.

It is also recommended that the next step should be to form a working group to discuss the findings. Ideally this should comprise fire service officers, representative bodies and members of the Fire Service Research & Training Unit at APU.

Further considerations may be to:

- Offer this report to Petersfield Fire Service.
- To include Petersfield Fire Service in the discussion.
- Offer a full cultural audit to the Petersfield Fire Service.
- Offer this report to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, representative bodies and CACFOA.

The report is written to allow those trainees who provided the evidence with as much anonymity as possible. To protect trainee's anonymity some crucial evidence is not reported. Those quotes that do appear are given different names to preserve anonymity (I did meet with one of the trainees to gain permission to use some of their quotes). Any verbal presentations provided may include further evidence, because in that environment it is less likely that identities will be revealed.

Whatever the outcome it must be considered that **once trainees' expectations fit-in with informal and negative cultures, at each step of their career path most trainees become further entrenched in that culture and will in turn go on to replicate it: an influence that will be in place for up to 30 years.**

2. THE METHODOLOGY

This research has been a qualitative study involving:

- 70 taped interviews.
- 4 visits to the PTC (including two overnight stays).
- Numerous less formal discussions.
- 1 day at Huntingdon during induction.

Cheryl Rolph, Director of Management Services, has been actively involved in the research.

- Cheryl also participated during observations at the PTC.
- Cheryl has received frequent updates.

The report will indicate that amongst the very many positive things that are happening at PTC there are areas of concern. **It is these areas of concern that are concentrated on.**

2.1 Listening but safe ear

Action based research allows the researcher to gather data and provide advice. Each week of their training trainees were given an opportunity to talk through their experiences with a researcher who knew about the fire service and cared, yet was safe in regard that they would not be making notes on official files about them. In outcome, this has affected the experience of trainees (what sociologists call the 'observer affect').

All trainees considered the whole research process was a considerable asset to them. Whilst details of the help provided are confidential, it is possible to refer to this listening service in general terms. At times I was just an ear at the end of a telephone and I frequently recognised trainees unburdening their anxieties just by being to talk to me about them. On other occasions, the trainees were happy to share their successes with me as someone who knew what it meant to wear a BA set or pitch a ladder successfully. More specifically I was able to help with:

- Occasions when trainees lacked confidence in their own ability.
- Deficiencies in uniform.
- Two disciplinary difficulties.
- Several 'domestic' problems.
- Difficulties with instructors or colleagues.

As such, these 'problems' never developed into more serious situations.

I was also able to help two students (on three occasions) with more serious problems:

- Regarding their treatment at PTC.

Both students had different experiences, but had I acted as a detached observer (rather than a sympathetic listener) then all three incidents may have developed into potentially serious cases of harassment/bullying.

It must also be considered that just the fact that trainees had someone to talk to (and that instructors knew they had this ability) will have provided an extra element of security for the trainees. The observer affect was therefore significant. Had I not been there it is possible to theorise alternative outcomes.

2.2 Academic rigour

The academic rigour, which APU provides to support this research, is in itself worthy of comment. This paper was verbally presented to the Vice Dean LSS, heads of Politics, Sociology, and Gender Studies, Readers in Public Policy and Research and fellow academics. The paper was then amended and sent out for further comments. This review process involves a considerable added value to the research.

2.3 Qualitative research

The value of qualitative research is sometimes underestimated – the ability of an academic review process can equally be underestimated – the same can be said for the professional researcher's ability to stand back and watch an organisation, to collect data and then analyse it through a stranger's eyes. When these three skills are combined, the report produced often **reveals information that an organisation will recognise immediately, but is so used to seeing that it has never previously questioned.** Equally as important, if the data is allowed to speak for itself, as in the verbal presentation, then the organisation can actually recognise how that analysis was arrived at.

As an example of how this process works, it is possible to suggest that during the data collection, despite a few difficulties, PTC appeared a safe environment for trainees. This I judge as being due to my familiarity with training centres. Like all visitors from the fire service I was at home and comfortable within the surroundings. Trained researchers though collect data in a very

objective manner and this includes the way the data is actually recorded. Then, when the data is actually reviewed in the cold light of the office, it is possible to see things that were not immediately obvious at the time. The report writing then becomes a reflexive process that combines the researcher's knowledge of their field and the data to make an analysis. This reflexive process caused me to review my first judgement, which wrongly suggested that:

All five trainees want to become good firefighters and to fit-in. This coincides with the instructors' wishes and therefore at first it appears that assimilation occurs without any pressure.

I am now aware that within all that I (and probably serving fire service officers) found comfortable at PTC, there exists a serious potential for harassment and bullying to take place. For some trainees their assimilation was not the comfortable process it first appears.

2.4 Incidents yet to be revealed

Qualitative research is the best medium for cultural auditing, but even this type of research has its limitations. Despite my developing a trusting relationship with the trainees, there will be some things that the trainee will have been reluctant to report. Mostly, these will relate to the trainee doing something wrong (or at least thinking they may be blamed for what occurred), but occasionally trainees' reluctance will be because they are concerned of the consequences of making something public. This is not an uncommon situation and **the most publicised examples of this are those that involve bullying or sexual harassment by someone in authority** (see Clayton 1996). This report contains evidence of how trainees are unlikely to trust their instructors with personal information or complain to people in authority, particularly when they are colleagues of the person they are complaining about **because they fear repercussions** (see 7.2). In serious cases, trainees may be reluctant to reveal any details because they were concerned that their complaint, particularly if it is about a highly respected individual, will not be believed, may be marginalised, could cause a backlash from other instructors and could cause the person to be sacked or break up their partnership. **The extent to which these types of pressure will prevent trainees from questioning instructor's behaviour cannot be overemphasised. This is particularly true because trainees are aware that negative behaviour by one instructor is witnessed by other instructors (who in effect are then giving tacit support). During further research (after the trainee are away from the training centre and have the time to reflect on their experience), trainees are likely to discuss incidents that they have previously hidden or had not recognised.**

3. WHO AND WHY

The CFRS has employed five white firefighters, three married men (with retained experience) and two single women.

- Their ages range between 21- 27.
- Three firefighters (one woman and two men) had an almost **life long ambition to join the fire service.**
- The other two came to this decision later
 - One, because they had failed to achieve their early ambition to join the Royal Marines.
 - One had been thinking about the fire service since their teens.
- All five wish to serve the public in a 'hands on job' that they expected would allow them to test themselves against new (physical not written) challenges each day.

Tracy: Its something I had thought about for quite a long time or needed a career where I could help people and do things and that was quite a hands on job. Something that would really sort of push me I think. Its always different everyday you not going to have 2 days the same I like the idea of that definitely.

I know there is: going to be paperwork and things to do with the fire brigade but I had been told by quite a few people that its not as hands on as it used to be.

- Trevor: I always wanted to be a fireman, from day one I always new I wanted to do it, but to get into it was hard I found ...
- I have always thought its such a good job helping people and they so, I just get a real good buzz out of it.
- it's a dangerous job but I am willing to do it and I want to do it.
- Ian: Yes I do. I don't know it just gives you a buzz, a sense of achievement really. When I jumped on the appliance for retained, your hearts racing away and you don't know what you are going to and whatever incident, you not sure until you get to the station and you just so buzzed up ready to get going and I am just so proud of being a fire fighter because you feel as if everyone is looking up to you. ... people having a bit of respect for you.
- Its been a good few years since I wanted to be a fire fighter.
- John: I was that little boy that always wanted to do it from when I was knee high. I enjoy helping other people. I get a buzz out of it.
- Kathy: My life, my entire life. I get into tears just thinking about it because its something that I always wanted to do when I was little ... its very impressive and they save all of these lives and they go into all these buildings when people are running out of. Everybody looks at a firefighter and just goes wow. ... you get such a great response from people and you can just .. yunnoo, its dangerous.

Analysis/Recommendation

Whilst the fire service employs people who have these thoughts, then the current culture, which is constructed by people with similar ideals, is likely to be replicated.

3.1 Diversity

The five trainees may have similar aspirations, but they are all different characters and the fire service has affected them in different ways: They all went to PTC with the intention of fitting-in and:

- Three trainees were comfortable fitting-in with almost all the agendas and bonding processes at PTC. However, one of these trainees had several scrapes as a result and both of the other two had times when they were in conflict with some of the cultures that they supported.
- The remaining two trainees fitted-in with most of the formal cultures but some of the informal cultural attitudes they resisted, but rarely head on.

- Tom: I was getting a bit fed up with it sometimes all the mucking around and stuff. I just kept thinking you are only here for 13 weeks, do this and then you can go.

Analysis/Recommendation

This analysis is tentative, but there may be an indication at this early stage of whom:

- May and may not have difficulty fitting-in with informal agendas on the watch.
- Will fit-in, even vi for a position as an informal peer group leader.
- May (try to) avoid fitting-in with informal cultural agendas.

Even more tentatively, this research may provide an indication of who may not fit-in with informal watch agendas to such an extent that they leave the watch as soon as possible to move sideways or seek promotion (see Baigent 2001 Chapter 5).

4. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The recruitment process took 18 months and it is a sign of how much the five trainees wanted to be firefighter that they put their future on hold whilst they waited to be offered a job.

Analysis/Recommendation

Putting your career on hold for 18 months whilst the fire service decides if it wants to employ does prove how much these applicants wanted to be a firefighter. However, **this traditional view may only encourage applications from those who are (already) dedicated to the fire service (and are prepared for a long wait before they know if they are going to be offered a job).**

If the fire service wishes to increase the employment of those underrepresented groups who traditionally do not apply, it should consider if anyone choosing from a range of jobs would be prepared to put their career on hold for the 18 months it takes to recruit a firefighter.

Underrepresented groups in the fire service may see a long recruitment process as an additional barrier to their application.

Look at data of those who opt out during the recruitment process, to see if there are any patterns involved.

5. PETERSFIELD TRAINING CENTRE (PTC)

PTC has provided the trainees with a sound basic knowledge on how to be a firefighter. Mostly the trainees enjoyed the process. Generally the upsets reported were quickly **forgotten as trainees became more and more acculturated** into the ways of the fire service. Now they are at the station they rarely mention any of the difficulties they had. However, **many of the negative effects will not be so easily shaken off.**

5.1 Management and accommodation.

The Divisional Officer directly responsible for the training centre is part of the tradition, but not a traditionalist. He supports the new agendas facing the fire service and whilst this report recommends changes, it also suggests that he is probably the person to implement these.

The accommodation provides a pleasant, light and spacious work environment. Exceptions being that:

- Because trainees *live* three to a room (for five days and nights) that there is little personal space.
- Lack of space can facilitate negative group pressures.
- Trainees should not be responsible for cleaning, even less subject to discipline for not achieving required standards.
- The DO's office is detached from the instructors and the drill yard. This situation may allow unsupported practices to flourish.

6. TRAINING, FITNESS, INJURY AND PERCEPTIONS

All the trainees considered that they were fit before attending PTC. However, the requirement to drill for long periods wearing unfamiliar and sometimes ill fitting equipment, placed strain on all trainees. Three of the CFRS trainees received injuries requiring professional medical attention:

- One woman was re-coursed due to an ankle injury.
- One woman was unable to drill for two days due to a leg strain.
- One man, hurt his foot and missed ½ a day waiting for an x-ray.

Injuries to the legs were surprising because:

- Both women had professional fitness backgrounds.
- One woman had run 6 marathons.
- One woman regularly ran 6 to 12 miles for relaxation.

- A third woman (not CFRS), a body builder, also received leg injuries and was re-coursed.
- The man who was injured had previously trained twice a week for football.

Analysis/Recommendation

These injuries may be little to do with fitness per se, but more to do with avoidable situations concerning personal equipment and the rush to test trainees physically.

6.1 Small injuries

Injuries are almost inevitable, and two Sub O's provide a first point of reference for initial assessment:

- This amounts to an informal sports' injury clinic;
- Attendance is voluntary, but in the training environment 'voluntary' has little meaning;
- 'Initial assessment' clearly extends to a more hands on approach including massage and I am not in a position to judge if this is appropriate;

Carole: Sub O **** did some massage on it and when he put his finger on the spot she nearly shot the roof and the next day .. that night .. we were all told to take some Ibuprofen.

Analysis/Recommendation

Firefighters are re-coursed if they miss 3 days on the drill yard. Trainees' desire to get on with the 'real' job at the station leads to some injuries being covered up. Many 'reported' injuries are not officially recorded.

6.2 Hose-Thursday

Hose Thursday takes place on the third day of the course and **the appendix provides a considerable description and further comment on this process.**

Hose-Thursday:

- Trainees ran-out, under-run and made-up 40 lengths of hose between 1411 and 1715 hours.
- Breaks of 30 seconds were allowed between the last person finishing and the start of the next drill.
- There was a stand-easy at the midpoint.
- For many trainees it is the first time that they have worn their firegear, particularly their boots and leggings.
- Adding to the stress of the event, some trainees are competing with those who have retained experience.

All five trainees from Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service were positive about the outcome; this includes one trainee who took it twice because they were re-coursed.

The PTC's view is that Hose-Thursday is not a test of endurance. However, an instructor's comment of "welcome to the fire service" to a group of exhausted trainees at the end of the day (and the trainees' response) is typical of comments made that do not support this argument. The backlash (see appendix) by the middle course against the junior course for, "**having an easy Hose-Thursday and therefore not having proved themselves**" is a further significant pointer that trainees see Hose-Thursday as a test.

Chris: Thursday was like the initiation test to see if you are going to be part of .. accepted or not. You just run out hoses for fucking hours .. that's why I am aching so much today because yesterday this hose run. We all did so well and like as we run out there because like .. **the other courses that are there are told they are not allowed to associate with us until we have done Hose Thursday** because its like make or break kind of time.

Analysis/Recommendation

When it is considered that for many trainees **Hose Thursday is the first time they have worn** their gloves, boots, leggings, tunic and helmet and **that they have to run out, under-run and make-up 40 lengths of hose**, it is not surprising the some injuries occur.

More attention should be given to the correct fitting of uniform, time to become familiar with all equipment and a progressive phasing in of ‘new’ physical activity.

As a sociologist, I argue that Hose-Thursday has far deeper meanings concerning the ritual of becoming a firefighter:

- Hose-Thursday appears as a test – but ironically this test is run at the rate of the slowest firefighter and therefore it is not a test but a rite of passage.
- Some trainees really struggle and to them it is a marathon, but for those trainees experienced at hose running, who set the pace, it is an easy event.
- Trainees considered Hose-Thursday as an “initiation” into the fire service (a world where the instructors are the role models who trainees must prove themselves to).
- Trainees believe they have proved themselves (to the instructors, other courses and themselves) when they pass.

The tradition surrounding Hose-Thursday should stop. Whilst such a test may have its place later in the course, it should be justified and risk assessed; if it is a test then its outcomes should be transparent and it should be a *real test*.

6.3 Perceptions about women

The fire service has almost an obsession that *women are not strong enough to do The Job* and in particular that “women lack upper body strength.” The PTC was no different in this regard. Nonetheless, all the injuries reported to me were to the lower body.

All three women on the course were taken off the drill yard at one period due to injury, I only had access to two of these women, but they were clearly distressed at the thought of being re-coursed. There was some suggestion by both women that instructors may not want them on the course and both of them were angry with the instructors for the way they were treated:

Jo: Got very emotional on the Thursday I thought I was getting backcoursed made an enormous scene .. I felt a bit like I was pulled out, there was quite a few people that were injured and some of them were a lot worst than mine. I think it was just the way occupational health said you are not carrying on. ... I have a sports background I know my muscles I know my body and I know what I am like when I am injured, its fine.

He doesn't want any girls on his course. Friday I had it, Monday Tracy had it .. luckily neither of us were in ***** group today. But he just gives the girls so much grief ... there are other people who are injured he could have pulled other people off the course today, off the drill yard and he didn't and that is what upset me .. it wasn't just us three I was doing everything all the drills pulling my weight doing my job and there were other people who were yunnoo just as bad as us and they were taking it easy .. well not taking it easy but yunnoo ... it was just like it was just a case of why do you pick on us three why not get some of the lads off it. John knows what I am on about he is not very well, one of his quads as well. It was just a bit upsetting. Tracy fine because she cannot walk. Gloria ok she was crying but she is not used to it she has bad shin splints and bad quads .. me I am ok, you could see I was limping a little.

Fuck knows I have told them I am ok I am fine. I was running the drills yesterday .. didn't have a problem in my leg. Been on the drill yard today .. not a problem. They have gone and got occupational health out today and turned

round and said to me I am not to carry on until I have seen a doctor and physio.
They are going to backcourse me.

Kathy was so distressed that she rang me on several occasions to explain how she was being picked on. The service I was able to provide proved successful in that she was able to vent her feelings on me. It is difficult to judge what may have been the outcome if she did not have me to talk to, **but Kathy was so keen to succeed that she may have put up with anything to do so.**

It may even be Kathy's keenness to succeed was the cause of the difficulty with the instructors. **But**, Kathy believed that she was being unfairly treated and for her it was true. Providing some support for her argument was the possibility that instructors were trying to re-course Kathy to make domestic arrangements easier.

Kathy: They have already mentioned to me about "being the only girl left and how does that make me feel .. and wouldn't it be nicer thing to come back because I am going to be the only girl here."

Adding to the possibility that women are treated differently were comments given to one of them by the instructors during her midcourse review:

Instructor: When you first arrived the instructors thought you were a little bit small, and probably a little bit weak and got completely the wrong attitude for the job. The last seven weeks you have done nothing but prove us all wrong.

The trainee saw these comments as a positive outcome, but 5 weeks earlier when the instructors required Kathy to **prove herself** she did not see it in such terms. There must be considerable reservations about such views – it appears that the instructors were expecting her to fail and the consequent focus on her could make it more likely she would fail. Another woman perhaps sums up the a male view:

Di: Its expectations I think .. they expect less of you. ... They **don't** want you to prove them wrong.

By the end of the course, these thoughts were history.

Analysis/Recommendation

What one woman saw as a positive outcome was far from this; rather it highlights the way instructors stereotype women and point to their difference; something that women have to prove they can overcome and an **extra test** they must pass before they fit-in.

The idea that women have to prove they can do something that a similar man is expected to be able to do it without proving his ability is powerful amongst men – and in the fire service. Rather than direct discrimination to marginalise women, it may be that instructors are adopting an overly protective positioning towards female trainees. Either way this should not happen at a training centre. **This is an urgent training need.**

7. TEACHING THE TRAINEES

7.1 The process

As firefighters come into the room they say “Sir, SO, Sub” presumably to show respect. Often the instructor does not answer them, **which highlights his importance**.

- There are 50 study papers and 35 examinations.
- Each lecture is delivered alongside the study papers.
- Trainees soon learn to create lists on flashcards from the areas instructors emphasise. They then test each other mechanically in the evening.
- Often trainees do not recognise the relevance of what they are learning, for example they are required to name the parts of a pump or a hydrant, but argue that there is no conceivable time when they would be allowed to undo a single bolt.

Four of the trainees had a prior-concern to how they would cope with written examinations.

All five trainees wanted to *improve* their hands on skills, and physical tests were preferred to written ones:

The lectures were delivered, followed by intensive revision and then an examination.

Sid: We had three tests today not big papers, we were given two of the lessons on Thursday morning and hose running in the afternoon, and then up late revising for the exams.

Colin: Been a hectic week so much on ... seventh week assessment, guide line assessment ... 5 exams on the Friday ... two exams on the Monday ... been hectic ... mentally hard this week.

Cramming, out of hours, sometimes up to 2330, was the accepted norm (particularly at the start of the course) and trainees wrote out flash cards to revise and then to test each other. Those trainees with previous fire service experience found the process easier.

Maureen: It's rushed through and the retained answers the questions and they take it into more detail and it goes straight over your head. Getting used to the lingo and stuff .. exams each week, pumps were a bit more difficult.

Pete: A lot to take in mentally knackered as well.

Tom: Its nice to know the theory but.

Dave: I would rather be out there on the drill ground.

Ted: You need to know what is inside the pump but if it breaks you cant mend it ... you cant take a nut off even.

Trainees were provided with notes for each lecture and most lecturers followed the notes adding details to make them more hands on. However, trainees were quickly able to recognise how the notes related to questions in the examinations and once this was done the pressure to study into the late hours reduced. Some instructors gave more than actual hints:

Susan: Say [ing] these are the important bits to learn and you go through and highlight them bits ... you get used to which bits are going to be the questions anyway. There are only so many things they can ask questions on anyway and it's normally lists and characteristics and that sort of thing.

They always tell you what they are looking for on the exam

Trevor: A typical question: list three points about care and maintenance of hose.

Some firefighters regularly got high marks, up to 100%, however, they believed the marks reflected the amount of time they were prepared to cram in the evenings (see below how peer pressure to go to the pub increasingly put pressure on individuals to fit-in, reduced marks in examinations and set other agendas in train).

Firefighters doubted if they would remember anything about a subject after the examination.

Paul: All the written stuff you don't really learn it. You just learn it to pass the exams and you put it in your short term memory because you have got so much to cram in. I am going through my cue cards now so when I go to my station it is all fresh in my mind, but I can't remember hardly any of it. Can't remember hardly any of the exams we done, the written stuff, it was just a case of trying to remember it whatever. At least now I have got two years to remember it in my own pace. Learning it on paper is different to learning it practically ... I have learnt a lot, I have come away with a lot of knowledge but I haven't memorised a lot of knowledge I have been taught.

Michelle: Quite boring day really because we spent the whole day in the classroom.

7.2 An example of a different approach

During one visit to PTC I was given the opportunity to present some of my work on equality in the fire service. This I did in the traditional interactive format that I use for equal opportunities training. Later that evening, at the request of trainees, I spent two hours discussing equality issues with nine of them. This session indicated:

- The lack of understanding trainees had about equality issues.
- Their thirst for knowledge and their ability to reflexively analyse.
- That instructors (and officers) were unlikely to be trusted in certain areas (particularly those involving harassment or bullying, when the person you complain to is likely to be a colleague of the person you are complaining about because trainees feared repercussions).

Analysis/Recommendation

Learning by rote is no longer a preferred approach by educationalists. It does not develop the mind of individuals, nor provide real insight. Trainees are left with little if any real understanding about what they have 'learnt'. Rote learning develops the ability to provide reactive (gut) answers (as in a dart player who can 'score' instinctively, but who has little comprehension of mathematics).

Answers that come reactively from the gut can also be seen as natural. This is very close to the way some firefighters believe that their 'hands on' (masculine) skills are instinctive/natural and such thoughts adversely affect equality and cultural diversity.

Analysis/Recommendation

Trainees experience in the classroom does little to warm them towards the process of learning, which became:

- a necessary evil, almost a punishment.
- a hardship that they have to overcome.

Rather than a truly positive time when they are actually able to **think independently** about their future work, trainees learn to dislike written (academic) activities. In the longer term, the idea that learning is purely about passing an examination may increase the way that firefighters can feel

threatened by any learning process that is not directly hands on (promotion examinations in particular). Unhappy experiences in the classroom may also encourage firefighters to:

- Look down on those who choose to pass promotion examinations and work behind a desk rather than with their hands.
- Resist CFS because of the paperwork involved.

The fact that trainees can often score 100% marks does suggest a great level of achievement. However, given that all five students believe that they have forgotten most of what they have learnt, it is equally possible to argue **the system may pass the test but that the outcome does not.**

7.2 Instructors/teachers

Instructors' roles are varied and they can move directly from the drill yard to the classroom. Although discipline travels this move very well, disciplined classroom environments legislate against learning.

Analysis/Recommendation

To raise interest, understanding and *independent* reflexive ability amongst trainees, consideration should be given to using teachers to deliver the classroom work. This could ease the (reported) difficulty in getting instructors (reducing what must be a possible temptation to accept some instructors who are not of the required standard).

Using teachers may introduce a new perspective into the PTC and encourage change.

In the light of the contents of the whole of this report, further discussion should take place into restricting uniformed instructors responsibility to the drill yard and to giving all other training aspects over to non-uniformed personnel.

8. DISCIPLINE

All five trainees expected the training centre to be disciplined. They appeared to be looking forward to:

- a structured, orderly and **fair** lifestyle.
- being prepared for taking orders on the fireground.
- a place where they saw (their) life or death depended on them being able to follow orders.

Instructors add weight to this potentially overdramatic picture of the fire service, which calls on worst-case scenarios to indicate what it is like to be a firefighter. In real life dramas firefighters are encouraged to avoid life or death situation and if they were to occur **their training is not to *blindly* follow orders.**

Trainees were disappointed at the lack of discipline. But it is hard to identify what exactly trainees mean by a 'lack of discipline'. Trainees:

- Were regimented and shouted at.
- Parade each morning.
- Sprung to attention when an officer approached.
- Addressed instructors by their rank.
- Were not given any fire service status being addressed as Mr or Miss.
- Gave up personality to the group.
- Bullied their shoes.
- Kept their clothing smart and tidy.
- Kept their rooms spotless up to the point of bullshit.
- Responsible for cleanliness in public areas such as showers, garages, kitchens.
- Had to fill out reports and write explanations for a lack of discipline.
- Were submitted to group blame when individuals (invariably) did not own up to 'misdemeanours'.

- Recognised that instructors could always find something wrong (even if this involved instructors moving a bed to find dust on the central heating pipes or reaching onto lockers).

Tom: First two weeks I took it quite personal whereas now its just like ‘yeah whatever, just get on with it’. Before I used to be absolutely terrified of one of the instructors, he used to just look at me and I started shaking.

Sid: On a station you are expected to keep clean but on a station you’re not there for five days [and nights].

Bill: We are trying to study and they come in and say this is untidy and you have to do a 250 word report, time is precious enough as it is.

Carole: I got a daily today because under my bed was untidy ... they reckon it should be in the cupboard ... my cupboard is full enough already.

Analysis/Recommendation

It is surprising that trainees did not recognise the list of things they submitted to as discipline. Few if any of these practices would be employed in non-uniformed training centres (banking or mountaineering).

It is as if the trainees saw **discipline as a ritual hardship**, which they could prove themselves as capable of overcoming: **a test they had to pass to prove they could take it – the harder it was the better they may think of themselves.**

8.1 Self-discipline

What the trainees did experience though was the purge: **a method by which disciplined organisations arbitrarily make some areas important to prove or reassert control. At PTC this took the form of, “teaching self-discipline.”**

Analysis/Recommendation

Trainees were confused at the **arbitrary way instructors made something important**. Confusion as to the logic of why instructors would look for dust on pipes behind a bed or on lockers increased trainees’ sense of vulnerability – that is until they recognised it was easier to make sure everything complied with any of the instructors’ possible wishes, regardless of consistency or fairness of these. Sudden purges on room tidiness and dust, blaming the group for an individual’s misdemeanour, an overreaction to damage, not only upset four out of five of the trainees, it also made them more aware of their vulnerability to the potentially always present gaze of the instructors to:

- Always be able to find something wrong.
- Hand out punishments.
- Public Rebukes.
- Notes for file.
- Punishment essays.
- Keeping them late on Fridays.
- Forcing apologies.
- Abuse trainee’s honesty.
- Overreact to damage during formal interviews.
- Threaten dismissal.
- Take away the silver axe.

Examples of instructor’s reactions also taught the trainees not to trust the instructors. Two of the trainees eventually turned this into a game in which they tried to outfox the instructors, the other three were less sure as to its motive – **but they all learnt it was easier to comply than resist.**

8.2 Salute and execute

The main argument that the fire service makes for needing discipline, one that they obviously convinced those preparing the 3C's report about is that of, "*salute and execute*" (CCC, 1999). In my role as a researcher I am always being told that, "*at fires people have got to do what they are told, there is no time for meetings, lives are at risk.*" However, during my 30 years as a firefighter I cannot remember any incident where orders were issued that had to be instantly obeyed without question (in fact 'dynamic risk assessment' legislates against that happening). A trained watch:

- Rarely need to be given *orders*.
- Work with a minimum of words.
- Arrange protocols for firefighting, which provides their efficiency *and safety*.

Teams are so well trained and used to working together, and in identifying what needs doing, all it takes at most is a gentle suggestion from *anyone* in the team, for the team to respond (see Baigent 2001). **The thought that firefighters may not want to obey a life saving instruction** is as inconceivable as is the idea that discipline installed in firefighters will make them react without thought on such occasions. The fire service are not the Brigade of Guards and when firefighters **talk about discipline in such terms it is more to promote the public image of their work than any reality.**

The whole subject of what exactly the term discipline means and where it should start and stop requires further investigation and discussion. Trainees only want to please and **operating 'barracks style' can disorientate** them to the extent that they become more **dependent/reliant/vulnerable on those further up the hierarchy**. Operating 'barracks style' also **works against developing the type of individual who will help to change fire service culture when they arrive on the watch.**

9. STANDBY TIME

The formal teaching programme ends at 1730 and students are in affect stood down. During this time:

- Trainees are expected to study, but there are no laid down activities (similar to firestations).
- Most trainees (particularly the junior course) continue to revise late into the evening.
- The duty instructor is available to provide extra tuition/drills up until 2030.
- At 2030 the uniformed fire service presence at PTC ends.
- The doors to the complex are locked at 2359.
- Informal cultures and peer group leaders take control:
 - for one group this had a considerable negative effect.
 - for the other group a considerable positive effect.

9.1 Teambuilding/Studying in the evening

Bedrooms containing three trainees are located on a central corridor and are used for revising in small groups using flashcards. One trainee with experience of studying was prepared to study alone, but this requires a conscious decision to work away from the group. For two of the trainees it became the norm to accept bad behaviour from more disruptive trainees banging on their door or entering their room during this time.

9.2 Late night behaviour/informal agendas

Because I stayed overnight (after instructors left PTC at around 2030) I was afforded an insight into how potential difficulties can occur during this area of trust. Examples found concerned:

- Boisterous behaviour.
- Noise after midnight.
- Late night discussions in the mess developing into a malicious act against the junior course.

Some of this behaviour may be alcohol related and I visited the pub at 2230 on Thursday night. This is 'free' time, but 50 firefighters and alcohol may be a potential time bomb. This is an area where the continual encouragement of group behaviour can become negative for trainees who:

- Wish to spend time alone.
- Wish to study.
- Do not drink for a religious conviction.
- Are uncomfortable in male drinking groups.
- Are short of money.

William: It was not too bad last night ... When you are tired and stay in to get a quiet night, and they come back late and wake you up it spoils the reason why you have stayed in.

Colin: About 12 o'clock .. I am not sure because I am generally asleep and sometimes they wake you up ... I do not take a lot of notice of the time really .. on the limit .. there is quite a few on our floor who have been annoyed by the noise and everything .. some of them just acting a bit kiddish ... I am baring up with it.

No more prancing about it was getting a bit silly .. I was getting a bit fed up with it sometimes all the mucking around and stuff .. I just kept thinking you are only here for 13 weeks do this and then you can go.

Jack: They were all going out and I said "no we have exams and I want to study" and because I said it a few others said it too. It weren't so much a disagreement it was just .. bit tried to pressgang me into it .. but I stood me ground and said "no I aint going" ... there was a little bit of piss taking, but I stood me ground.

But a circle of harassment has begun to form around Jack:

Its been nice to have the week off .. one or two rub me up the wrong way .. I said to you about the messing about late at night and one of them .. the way he is during the day he has always got to be right whether he is right or wrong .. there is two or three of them, they always back each other up and they wont have anything bad said about the other one. I try and let it fly over my head most of the time. I will never see them again I have only got three weeks left .. **** and his sidekick **** he is alright when he is away from the clique ... Its just them two I am glad I will never have to see them again.

Monday night it was 2 o'clock before I got to sleep.

It finished about 1.15 but I don't get to sleep so well. they came back about 12 o'clock last Monday banging doors.

Obviously we all went Thursday, I left fairly earlyish and all three of us in the room locked the door and we were away ... they all try and chastise and peer pressure us but it is not going to happen.

Ian: Week 10 They are going on about going out most Mondays now.

Brian: Week 12 Went out Thursday night and few of us got a bit tipsy ... no damage done we learnt from the last time.

Analysis/Recommendation

Drinking may be a (masculine) bonding activity, but this has nothing to do with firefighting and is unlikely to prove trust on the fireground. There is an extreme likelihood that many of those who

went drinking did so because of a compulsion to join the group just to *fit-in*, or so they do not miss a group activity.

It may also be unwise for instructors to take part in the celebrations that trainees hold as each stage of their course is completed. It may even be that instructors are sponsoring these drinking sessions and this should stop immediately because the conflict of interest on such occasions are difficult. **It can only be a matter of time before a serious incident is reported from such activities.**

One view would explain all this behaviour as high spirits, as “boys being boys.” **And it is!** The outcome of this type of behaviour is to put in place the very male hierarchy that works for and against the fire service:

- For, in that it provides team-bonding.
- Against, because teams that bond around informal agendas, may colonise fire service culture but are not necessarily loyal to formal policy.

When a group’s main bond becomes their ‘loyalty to the group’, this can lead to a situation where the informal group will:

- Support some formal policy, for instance providing an efficient fire service.
- However, the efficient fire service that they provide may be to varying degrees at odds with official policy.

Later it will be explained that instructors are reacting against recruitment policy and CFS because they think their Chief Officer is wrong. These instructors provided an example of how firefighters can operate an informal agenda (against their Chief Officer’s wishes) and yet can argue that they are serving the fire service (and the public). At these times firefighters may be seen as serving themselves and their own ideas and beliefs (and **setting** rather than following **public expectations**).

9.3 Encouragement of informal bonding

Group bonding does not just occur - instructors believe it is their job to emphasis group loyalty and trust:

- Trainees have a proven desire to fit-in and the formal team events are sufficient to promote the necessary understanding of the teamwork a *good firefighter* requires.
- When instructors encourage bonding through a number of symbolic *and informal* group bonding activities **off the drill ground** they may be unwittingly encouraging informal hierarchies.

Analysis/Recommendation

It may be that instructors’ behaviour is well meaning, but paying fines (towards the end of course drinking session) for not having a cork in your pocket at all times can have hidden outcomes:

- From the trainees’ viewpoint, instructors’ actions are official policy and unlikely to be challenged.
- Trainees whose pleasures (or religious beliefs) do not lie in consuming large amounts of alcohol amongst groups of men must either comply with behaviour they do not support or spotlight themselves as different.

All 5 trainees **‘chose’ to pay the ‘fines’** without any dissent. Yet, for two, if not three, of the trainees this meant that they joined in on informal activities they earlier suggested they would resist. Such evidence is a clear indication of the **vulnerability of trainees to group pressure in an area unrelated to firefighting. It is areas unrelated to the work of a firefighter that negative informal pressures and activities take place, both in training and on the watch.**

Such empirical evidence is a solid example of how innocently fire service informal cultures and negative agendas are perpetuated from generation to generation. PTC is more than supporting such behaviour it is leading it. Instructors (however innocently) are encouraging:

- Activities that have little or nothing to do with becoming a *good firefighter* (in the terms that official policy would support).
- Informal agendas, which in turn prepare trainees to accept other informal agendas that will be thrust at them at the station.
- Informal group bonding, which can elevate the importance of team activity to the point where any trainee who does not join in is seen as working against the group.

At times bonding in this closed environment can lead to the group finding it hard to believe that anyone they work with has any right to be different. Commonly, this reaction to differences highlights itself through racism, sexism or homophobia. However, given the intimate nature of this research, I am able to suggest something easily ignored (because it is so obvious). **Informal bonding in closed environments may be an underpinning mechanism at the root of negative behaviour in the fire service.** What the fire service may yet need to fully recognise is that:

- Firefighters are so encouraged to bond at training centre that informal hierarchies form within each course.
- Peer group leaders can create and perpetuate positive or negative agendas (one group I followed was more negative and the other was more positive).
- Some firefighters will follow the group because they support the agendas.
- Some firefighters do not support the hierarchy's agendas but are prepared to join in to avoid the potential harassment involved in being seen as different.
- Early acceptance of informal hierarchies prepares firefighters for the watch at the station where similar informal arrangements exist.
- Informal hierarchies on a watch set informal agendas to provide an *efficient* fire service and *good firefighters*.
- The *efficient* fire service and *good firefighters* that the informal hierarchies encourage and bond around may involve a colonisation of fire service culture that is not necessarily loyal to formal policy.
- Informal hierarchies can extend their agendas to such a point that they control large areas of 'fire service culture.'

In such a closed environment this can lead to a succession of events:

1. Trainees who stand away from their group can be seen as acting against the group.
2. This individuality can be seen by the group as damaging the group's ability to work as a team on the fireground.
3. The group are then almost bound then to act against this individual, or at least accept that peer group leaders will, to bring them back into the team.

10. FITTING-IN

Given trainees experience from training centre, where there are little if any individual rights to be different, there are cultural pressures to fit trainees in – under the name of team building – even when this involves negative agendas and outcomes. This research points to the possibility that:

- Unofficial peer group leaders emerge at PTC.
- Peer group leader's agendas can be positive and negative.
- Any resistance to joining in with group behaviour, even when it is not directly associated with The(ir) Job, is seen as working against the group.

The potential result is that at the training centre (as on the firestation), resistance to group behaviour, is taken as a challenge to peer group leaders (self-appointed) authority (in exactly the same way, an instructor/officer is likely to see any resistance to their beliefs as a challenge to be overcome).

It is possible to support this argument by referring to the situation surrounding whether or not trainees go drinking at PTC. Those trainees, who **went along with group pressures** when they did not want to, and **those who refused but were not empowered enough speak out** when they are

being disturbed late at night, are the potential **victims in tomorrow's fire service**. **Those leading the group are the next generation of peer group leaders/bullies**. Such a situation is being perpetuated, *innocently*, by the instructors and the structural arrangements at PTC.

Fitting-in is especially difficult for trainees because they want to prove that they belong and yet they have little idea of how to distinguish between positive and negative agendas when they do so. Instructors' considerable emphasis on bonding (almost for its own sake) not only ensures that vulnerable trainees become compliant, but that they **learn to rely on their leaders**. However, leaders in the fire service are not always part of the official hierarchy, nor do they always comply with their Chief Officer's wishes. Therefore, **trainees are being prepared to accept informal as well as formal agendas**. This can be particularly relevant when first joining a watch, because trainees must get their skills from the experienced firefighters who are guardians of firefighting skills *and* watch culture. Access to firefighting skills can then become contingent on trainees proving to the group that they can be trusted to fit-in with all the watch's understandings.

11. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/ INSTITUTIONAL BEHAVIOUR

11.1 Instructors' views

From a focus group with instructors (tape recorded and attended by Cheryl Rolph) it became clear that instructor's knowledge of equality agendas were limited. Nor had instructors been given (or they were choosing not to use) the tools required to recognise their own institutional behaviour. Instructors have considerable reservations about:

- The "*type of people*" that the fire service is currently employing.
- The emphasis on diversity, which fails to provide them with the "*best people*" and was being thrust on them by officers "*who had forgotten what it was like on a station.*"
- CFS which was not really firefighters' job: "*that's our problem, spending too much time .. out there .. that could have been done by someone else.*"

There was also one blatant act of resistance by instructors when they not only sponsored the trainees to collect a petition against a decision by the Divisional Officer, but also organised a demonstration by trainees in direct opposition to his instruction.

Instructors have a good idea about what the fire service needs. One training officer told me that his mission was:

to try to turn out people who I would be willing to go out there and ride on the back of fire appliances with em .. to be well trained, well groomed .. if I weren't be prepared to work with em, I wouldn't like to put them on anybody else.

Analysis/Recommendation

The noble sentiments of instructors can reproduce far more than good firefighters, they can produce good white male heterosexual firefighters (or firefighters who follow their ways).

The fact that there were **pin-ups in the training office**, speaks volumes about instructors' real beliefs.

Instructors also provided the advice to students that led to them giving their instructor a personal dance in a local topless club as an end of course present.

In a strange sense of irony, closely associated to the idea that 'Sub O knows best' these instructors argued discipline was slipping and at the same time lacked discipline in not supporting the official policy of the Petersfield Fire Service on equality, recruitment and CFS.

The thought that '**Sub O knows best**' can lead to difficulties. These difficulties can be especially noticeable if the instructors are not fully aware (or supportive) of their Chief Officer's aims. What

then occurs is that the instructors fit the next cohort of firefighters in with a way of life that previous cohorts have accepted. For formal training outcomes, such as how you pitch a ladder, this is correct. However, in the shadow of what is obviously policy it is also possible to pass informal messages to trainees.

11.2 Subliminal messages

Evidence of how subliminal messages are passed on in the fire service is clearly available at PTC. I was told that:

- There is no requirement for trainees to bull their shoes.
- But all trainees have bulled shoes.
- Trainees are not required to stand at attention for officers.
- But all trainees stand ramrod at attention as an officer approaches.

Analysis/Recommendation

There are numerous examples of just how powerful a position the instructors are in. Although experienced firefighters argue that “discipline is nothing like it used to be,” contextually it is the same. The gap between the ways of training non-uniformed workers and those in the fire service remains as large as ever.

Instructors use of discipline:

- Elevates the power of instructors;
- Confuses trainees;
- Make trainees vulnerable;
- Puts instructors into a position where they learn to accept that ‘Sub O’s know best’.

Discipline is necessary on the drill yard, but when it travels to the classroom it is at best misguided and in other locations **allows instructors to provide agendas that they think are right, but which may not follow official policy.**

11.3 Titles

Instructors address the trainees as “Mr” and “Miss”; their argument is that this sets the title ‘firefighter’ as a challenge an accolade that the trainees must prove they are worth.

Analysis/Recommendation

Trainees need no encouragement to become firefighters – it is their desire to do so that put them into the PTC in the first place (potentially making trainees vulnerable to accepting a form of address they are unused to).

There is a lot of power provided to those who are able to affix labels to other people. Notwithstanding that three of the CFRS trainees were already (retained) firefighters, labelling is unfair to the point that it also disorients people and can spotlight their (inferior) status. Labelling, as it occurs at PTC, points out differences between those who are accepted as firefighters and those who are in training. Potentially, this **labelling starts a practice of believing that firefighters are someone special:** a process repeated at stations where ‘real’ firefighters set themselves apart from the ‘others’ (the Mr, Miss and Mrs who firefighters help when they are in trouble). **Trainees are bound to remember their rite of passage to ‘firefighter’** and join in with their colleagues in **setting themselves apart from those that firefighters call ‘civvies’** – those **who are different and cannot do The Job (often because current firefighters will not let them).** This is part of the process through which the fire service encourages their public image as an elite (*firefighting force*).

Labelling not only sets firefighters apart from those not in uniform, it also sets the spotlight firmly on female firefighters by overcoming the generic term firefighter; reaffirming women as different to the majority male trainee. It may be that some women would want to resist the label “Miss” and yet

at PTC they would have to accept their powerlessness in this situation (or draw the spotlight firmly on them as being difficult by ‘trying to break another tradition’). It is advised that:

- Labelling as “Mr, Miss” or “Mrs” should stop.
- Trainees should be called firefighters from day one.
- The use of first names should be discussed.

In an interesting example of how instructors actually abuse their authority over trainees, at two consecutive pass out parades and after the title firefighter had been awarded, I witnessed one instructor formally call the trainees to attention in front of all their families by referring loudly to all the trainees, during the formal ceremony, as “*you lot.*” The instructor thought this was funny, but one sociologist in the audience did not.

11.4 Institutional Behaviour

There is little evidence of deliberate discrimination by staff at PTC. However, there is considerable evidence of institutional behaviour that may discriminate against anyone who is recognised as ‘different’. In particular this institutional discrimination occurs as trainees are fitted-in by instructors who have a clear idea of:

- The type of trainee they want to see.
- The type of firefighter they want to produce.
- The steps they can take to achieve this.

It appears at each level, those in charge (both formally and informally):

- Know what is best for the fire service.
- Do their utmost to implement their thoughts.

The difficulty is that instructors stray from their official job of teaching trainees how to use fire service equipment “to be well trained” and offer additional services in the belief it is their duty to produce “well groomed” firefighters.

‘Well groomed’ can be interpreted in a number of ways, but it is my view the instructors believe the next generation must be in their image and a similar process is likely to occur at the station. Unravelling this process became a major part of this research and led to the cultural auditor asking if instructors were only preparing firefighters for their work as their Chief Officer saw it, or were they **preparing firefighters for how the instructors want to see their work?** My judgement is that it is a mixture of the two.

Helping the instructors to fashion firefighters in their own image is their ability to discipline trainees and, in the closed environment at PTC, ‘discipline’ can promote a vulnerability/reliance in trainees (**a situation that may be further exploited once trainees arrive on the watch**). ‘Grooming’ new firefighters (particularly on the watch) can lead to a **variety of fire service cultures hidden in the shadow of the official culture.**

Not *fitting-in* with **unofficial tests** can lead to a circle of harassment to drive trainees to fit-in or leave. Kate’s explanation, which follows, gives a real insight to how men expect women to fail and may test and spotlight them:

Kate: When it started off I was the one that was getting noticed for the first three or four weeks but I proved myself. I wasn’t having problems with anything, I was just weaker than the rest of them or less confident when it comes to drills and stuff. But the more they hammered at me the more I bit back and I thought ‘I am going to show you’ and I showed them. And because I proved myself to them they really chilled out on me. Cos like on my seven week interview they said to me “when you first got here we thought you had got the wrong attitude; didn’t think you had the strength, yunno your small and you did nothing but prove us wrong keep it going”. And today in the interview with ***** he said

“I am going to be honest with you now, you have pleasantly surprised me in the way that your strength, you have got strength there, you are pulling people out and your doing it your not having difficulties with anything.

In this case Kate thought, “*I am going to show you*”, and the instructor admitted that she had done “*nothing but prove us wrong.*” The question remains as to if a similar man would have been spotlighted in a similar fashion.

Analysis/Recommendation

In outcome PTC reproduces what has gone before. The fact that (eventually) most trainees are ‘groomed’ to fit-in with their instructors’ beliefs and hide their diversity is a constant theme of this report.

Group bonding in particular hides difference and the ability of instructors to promote conformity has already been highlighted.

Training centre staff should have a *real understanding* of equality agendas. The equality and cultural diversity message is clearly not getting through and does not have the whole hearted support of the instructors (the same may be true for Community Fire Safety). This is an urgent training need and is particularly worthy of further investigation/discussion.

11.5 The trainees

Before starting their training, all five trainees had a very basic awareness of equality issues, this is reflected in such statements as, “*everybody’s treated the same ... treated fairly.*”

Male trainees spoke as though they had no difficulty with the idea that women were becoming firefighters, but again their approach was traditional:

I believe that if women can do the job then fair enough let them in. Same as anybody, if they can do the job.

As long as they are good enough for the job and their heart is in it.

People say you women or blacks shouldn’t be here, but as long as you are physically capable of doing the job it shouldn’t matter.

Little was done during the training to improve the firefighters understanding of equality and if anything their thoughts were reinforced.

PTC understands that equality training is provided in the trainees’ own brigade. Consequently:

- Trainees on one course I followed had no direct input or examinations on this subject.
- The second course I followed did have some very rudimentary input and an examination.

Lack of equality training can result in trainees not knowing where to draw the boundaries between right and wrong behaviour:

Toni: We all have a good giggle and then it goes too far and they say “you are in a male environment and if you don’t like it stick your fingers in your ears”...They thought the problem was with the ‘c’ word, but when it slips out they apologise, OK. ... but when they talk about women they have been down on and what it looks like, I don’t want to hear the graphic detail.

I have to put up with it in the pub and in the locker room but not in the classroom.

This situation developed into a typical example of how some firefighters will use this type of conversation to remind women of their place. I was able to support Toni through what became a difficult part of her training and this **overt sexual harassment** was stopped.

Whilst at PTC I provided a 'guest spot' equality and cultural diversity lecture. This proved to be so popular that the students invited me to speak with them again that evening. This discussion was tape recorded and attended by Cheryl Rolph and indicates that:

- Trainee's knowledge of equality and cultural diversity agendas is frequently wrong and undeveloped.
- Trainees are unlikely to reveal any difficulties about bullying or harassment to instructors/officers because they feared repercussions.

Analysis/Recommendation

The lack of equality training is a serious omission. **Equality training will empower some trainees, disempower others and lay down boundaries; it will also help the instructors.**

12. COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

By the end of initial training the trainees were

- Keen to be involved in fire prevention.
- Aware that as the new member on the watch they may be expected to be more CFS active than the remainder of the watch.

In a potentially significant finding during initial interviews:

- the two women thought that CFS would be an equal part of The Job to the operational side;
- the three men emphasised the operational role.

Kathy: To educate people, to educate people into preventing fires .. obviously children, maybe the elderly .. obviously to attend incidents and hopefully minimise the affects. Helping people in general.

Analysis/Recommendation

Whilst always seeking to highlight how much a matter of choice our behaviour is, it is possible to hypothesise that **the different gender roles that society currently offers to men and women could lead to women who join the fire service being more caring, and therefore more amenable to saving life by prevention.** An opposite affect could apply to **men who have been brought up in a society that encourages their physical abilities: such men who join the fire service looking to prove themselves physically by becoming good firefighters.** It may also be that those men who have been brought up in a less macho environment than those currently applying successfully for the fire service would also share women's view that saving life before the fire should have a higher profile in a firefighters' job. This possibility should be further researched.

One factor influencing the masculine attitude displayed by the male trainees could be that they had already been retained firefighters and subject to the influence of the fire service. It appears that only firefighters enjoy fires; serving the public has its limitations for many firefighters. Despite the current emphasis on prevention rather than cure and the recognition that CFS is likely to save life, money and unhappiness, firefighters still see The Job as the action involved in proving yourself by *getting-in* at a fire (Baigent 2001; see also Shawcross 2001).

As the fire service now wishes to act to:

- Become more active in preventing fires.
- Change its culture.
- Employ more women.

The potential link between these three targets should be further tested.

CFRS should encourage and build on these five firefighters' positive attitude towards CFS and not let them be marginalised at the station where firefighters may prefer to wait for the fire to come along.

It is important to remember that trainees, as the new person on the block, will not want to be seen as different to the rest of the watch. Probationers will be setting out to fit-in and if they are singled out for CFS whilst the 'real' established firefighters are not, then their support for CFS is likely to be short lived.

13. PASS RATES

PTC's have a considerable pass-rate, since 1997 out of 828 trainees only 19 have not completed the course (did not suit them, dismissed, medical etc.). Such a situation can appear as a positive indication:

- Of how good PTC is.
- How much the workforce enjoy being in the fire service (very few firefighters ever resign from the fire service).
- How the fire service (family) looks after *its own*.

For example, when one trainee was having difficulties in keeping up the group rallied round to help out and considered that it was their failure to support him which caused him to be re-coursed. **This admirable sentiment denied any possibility that he might not be capable of doing The Job.**

Analysis/Recommendation

High pass and retention rates can be a sign of an effective process or a good employer. **But it may also be a sign that becoming a firefighter is not actually that difficult and that The(ir) Job provides firefighters with more than just wages.**

However, it is possible to view such high pass rates differently and suggest that the net affect of group bonding could provide a fire service that may be so good at looking after its own that it keeps some firefighters who should be let go.

Looking at the primary reason for resignation from the fire service, it is clear that statistically more women resign than men. This statistic can be misleading because there are so few women firefighters, but it may be that the group will support men who are failing, but may be prepared to allow similar women to fail. As this report indicates, women have to have to prove themselves more often than men and are therefore are more likely to doubt their own abilities, with the result that rather than reassuring her men may take the view that "*she was never really one of us anyway.*" A case of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

14. FAMILY FRIENDLY

One difficulty with training away from home is that family members are left behind. This is especially true when the firefighter is part of a living in partnership. For 13 weeks the trainee is fully occupied with the fire service, when they return at weekends they:

- Are tired.
- Only want to talk about The Job.
- Read their notes.
- Are hardly able to get back quick enough on Sunday.

Being away from home also means that it is difficult to provide support for a partner.

There were at least five situations during the course when I was told about ‘difficulties at home’ and despite my reinforcing David Evan’s welfare message (that he was there to support them) trainees chose not to follow this avenue. It was notable that one trainee who was having domestic difficulties was pressed on this subject and felt completely unable to confide in the instructors.

Analysis/Recommendation

There is clear evidence that trainees are unlikely to trust instructors with personal problems. This may be because trainees want to prove themselves self-sufficient (a situation that can be found repeating itself in the arguments by firefighters against counselling for PTSD).

Residential training almost prepares firefighters and their partners for a relationship where often The Job will take preference – not so much by an anti-social duty system, but by some of the group activities away from the station.

There are few ways a residential course can be made family friendly, but courses may be arranged to avoid holiday breaks and thus reduce the span of time the course cover.

CFRS may wish to include partners during the initial induction period, perhaps by setting up a support group.

It may also be worth talking to trainees about how their training is likely to marginalise their home life.

15. OTHER AREAS

15.1 Breathing apparatus

It was not part of my brief to observe training per se, but I did report one difficulty (direct to the Chief Officer in writing) regarding how flashover training is taught in PTC and how it is practiced in CFRS. It was necessary for me to re-iterate this warning during the Huntingdon post training induction, so as to make clear the differences, which had not been made clear to the instructor. Without my presence, trainees may have arrived at a station with a practice that could have had fatal outcomes.

15.2 Inconsistency

Occasionally on the drill ground different instructors teach different ways of doing things. This is confusing to the trainee and can result in verbal and written warnings. On one occasion, I was able to help prevent a ‘safety-critical’ being put on a student’s file over this type of confusion. Had I not had this access a different result would have occurred **despite the trainee ringing CFRS.**

15.3 Uniform

There is little positive to say about the supply of uniform to trainees and I know CFRS have taken steps to rectify this. CFRS may wish to be aware of:

- The disappointment their trainees experienced because of their lack of uniform;
- The health and safety implications of not providing the correct uniform.
- The possibility that because **women firefighters were the more likely victims of ill fitting uniform that this has the affect of pointing out their difference.**

15.4 Promotion

In the course of the interviews the trainees made comment on their promotion expectations. These are worth reporting because they indicate that trainees are interested in promotion but at the same time acknowledge their preference for hands on work.

Sonia: I had a chat with someone and they said that in the first, when you are doing your first bit of training you could actually take your leading fire fighter exams so that when a position comes up you are ready to apply for it. So I am hoping

to do that .. but really I just want to **get stuck in there first** and see how it goes from there.

Bill: I will see how I am getting on ... **I want to learn a bit first** ... I am considering doing the lfs because I am already into the swing of doing the training and I haven't got kids at the moment but once they come ... **I have always said I want to stay operational. ... I want to go on calls** and I am keen to go on courses. **once you get to sdo rank you miss he calls and I like the calls.**

Joan: Let me get promoted first and then get married ... Definitely, top, definitely, got to get to the top.

Peter: On the station, you know, have a station **but obviously be called out to fires as well**. That's were I would like to end up I think. I don't think I would be able to cope , i am not going to put myself down like that, but I think once I get into the brigade and go for promotion, whether i am, eh, should i say good enough for the job as chief. I don't think I would want that job actually. **I want to go out**, the thing with me, the way I think now is that I want to be at the jobs, **I want to get my hands mucky** should I say getting on.

No but they go on the fire scenes a lot and they are like the senior fire officer, I don't want to be the one standing there pointing but I would like to be should I say in charge. I would like to have some responsibility I think. I would like to have a white helmet one day, lets just say that, with how many stripes I don't know.

No, I am not going to be chief 1 day. I want to be a sub, LF sub and I would like to be station officer.

John: I was on the flash over course and there was a couple of whole time lads there from ***** and when we were chatting to each other they came out and said **I haven't got a lot of respect for people who have just been in the service for 5 years or a couple of years and jumped the ranks up to sub-officer already.**

Yes. I want the fire service as a career. I intend on going up the ranks, I intend by next September time applying for LF and working my way up. Obviously **I want some experience on the fire ground first** I don't want to jump straight up and not have any experience. I want some experience and then but I still want to go through the ranks as well.

It will be interesting to watch how their careers develop; in particular to see if the one person who showed some potential to fit-in with some of my findings about officers (Baigent 2001) actually gains considerable rank.

15.5 Retained/wholetime-retained/union.

Three of the firefighters joined the FBU, but two did not because of they were aware that the FBU would not accept them as they intend to carryout whole-time retained duties. I am sure CFRS are very clear about how wholetime-retained duties splits its workforce and that there are some difficulties between the wholetime and retained fire service. Evidence suggests that on occasions whole-timers take advantage of the retained service by expecting them to act as labourers at incidents.

16. REPRODUCING A CULTURE: SOME THEORY AND ANALYSIS

Potentially the biggest problem at PTC, and one repeated throughout the fire service, is the overemphasis on fitting-in. Not only are trainees quite rightly taught how to work together, more controversially they are taught to fit-in with their instructors' image of a good firefighter – someone who *“I would be willing to go out there and ride on the back of fire appliances with.”* At least three dynamics support the instructors' ability to do this:

- The trainees' eagerness to please.
- The instructors early location as role models.
- The authority the instructors have over trainees.

These three dynamics allow instructors to groom the trainees for their life on a station and whilst there is a real requirement for firefighters to work in teams, as hierarchies develop, **the constant emphasis on working together can allow the group dynamic to increasingly influence, if not overwhelm, some individuals. Once this point is reached, fitting-in with the instructor or the group can become more important than the actual work in hand: a situation that becomes increasingly negative if the trainee cannot differentiate between the official and unofficial agendas they are being offered by the hierarchy they join.**

Men, and increasingly many women (particularly those who have a desire to join the fire service), already know about masculine hierarchies. Moreover, most of those with no understanding of male hierarchies quickly learn that it is often easier to comply with the group than resist it. As an example, on the first course I followed revising became increasingly difficult, as did getting to sleep early, because visits to the pub became progressively more important to the majority of the course. Those who did not want to go drinking were marginalised and when this failed to persuade them to join in, they were woken up deliberately as peer group leaders returned. As a result it became easier to go to the pub than stay back at the training centre. Such lessons are not forgotten.

The types of hierarchies that develop at PTC operate with a similar dynamic to those on the watches where the trainees will be posted. Trainees join a hierarchy that is influenced by experience going back to the longest serving member (who in turn can draw on the experiences handed down to them). This hierarchy acts as custodian for watch culture and it is hardly surprising that newcomers on the watch quickly join in to defend *Their* Job against change. Given the close integration of firefighters, and that they often play and work together, the adage suggested by Doyle that, “You may take the man out of the Fire Service, but you can't take the Fire Service out of the man” (1996: 13) has more than an element of truth. It is even possible to theorise that the watch becomes a **primary reference group through which firefighters understand the world:** a place where **firefighters construct their identity by acting in the image of how they and the hierarchies they join (as well as the public) see themselves at work** (Baigent 2001).

16.1 Images of the fire service

Given that the watch is a primary reference group through which firefighters see themselves and understand the outside world, and that most firefighters currently join to be part of an organisation with a specific public image, it is necessary to look at the imagery surrounding the fire service.

The fire service has a high profile and popular public image. The fire service earns this image through the publicity firefighters get when they attend major incidents and the result is that in the public eye at least firefighters are a heroic group of workers whose support is always there when all else fails. Whilst the public's view is based on reality, it is also possible for the public to associate the image of firefighters at major incidents to every time they see (or even hear) a fire appliance. By relating the popular image of firefighters to these more routine occasions, the public can then believe that firefighters are constantly performing heroic deeds. What is hidden in this imagery is that firefighters rarely have to act heroically and more often, firefighters' emergency work is routine to them. Firefighters are well trained, very experienced at doing what they do and they are able act

at (what they see as) routine incidents (and what other people see as major personal disasters) in a very professional way. The result being that to the public at least **firefighters are someone special**.

16.2 Masculinity/a good firefighter /a good bloke

In common sense terms, the fire service is an image of proletarian masculinity. Its workforce is predominantly white, working class, heterosexual and male, and the aggressive art of firefighting is the bread and butter of fire service culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that the target set for all trainees is to become a *good firefighter*.

Into this working class white collective have entered two new types of firefighter. One has a different skin colour and the other belongs to a different sex. From the way that some white men have reacted to these new firefighters it has been recognised that the fire service is not always caring, because women and those with a different skin colour have been made particularly unwelcome. Notwithstanding this institutional behaviour, **both these minority groups in the fire service have shown that given the right support, anyone putting in the effort can achieve the (official) standards of a good firefighter**. When people do fail, it is more likely because they cannot achieve the informal standards that the white collective impose. In effect, both new groups have highlighted something that the fire service never wanted to recognise, that it was institutionally sexist and racist (Baigent 1996; HMCIFS 1999). Firefighters' behaviour has not only proved lacking to minority groups in the fire service, but also to its 'own kind'. The fire service's desire to encourage new cohorts of firefighters to fit-in with their elders can extend to harassing anyone who disagrees with firefighters' image of themselves and The(ir) Job. Almost in defence of the fire service it has also been argued that **this behaviour may not be predominantly born out of racism or sexism but more to do with institutional conservatism** (Baigent 2001).

PTC is a clear example of the fire services' (institutional) conservatism. It has provided the trainees with the practical skills to become firefighters and at the same time it has installed in them **the image that the fire service is a special job done by special people**. All that is left for trainees to do (once they leave PTC) is to get on the station and prove to their colleagues (and themselves) that they can put their newfound skills into practice. At the station, as at PTC, they will find that this involves a series of informal and formal understandings, but providing they fit-in the experience they will be given will allow them to get watch approval as a *good firefighter*.

16.4 Good firefighters and the outcome of this cultural belief

There is some sense of irony in an earlier suggestion that "only firefighters enjoy a fire." Nevertheless, it is clear that deeply ingrained in the culture of the fire service is the understanding that firefighters actually look forward to fires. Whilst claiming their prime aim is to protect the public, most firefighters prefer to serve where they will get the opportunity to **prove themselves** and their skills: on a busy station. Stations with more calls provide firefighters with a greater opportunity:

- To prove themselves;
- To test themselves against the standards of a *good firefighter*.

One trainee who had never been to a fire told me that it is firefighters that "go into buildings when people are running out." When firefighters *get-in*:

- They prove to themselves that they are different from the 'civvie' who they pass running out of burning buildings;
- They prove to the civvie, who is standing outside the fire watching, just how special they are;
- They prove to their colleagues (and themselves) that by *getting-in* they can do The Job.

'The Job' is firefighting and the test is for firefighters to prove to themselves, their peer group and the public that they are worthy of the status and imagery of the accolade good firefighter.

In part the reality is somewhat different, the experience necessary to be seen as a good firefighter relates more to 'time-served' than operational experience. Study of statistical evidence from the LFB over 4 years, indicates that on the busiest station a firefighter will attend 100 fires (warranting an FDR1) per year and on the quietest station only 12. Probably a similar situation exists in Cambridgeshire. Therefore, when firefighters talk about experience, 'time-in' is potentially more important than the amount of calls that they have attended and this can lead to judgements about who is a good firefighter involving other agendas. It is even possible to suggest that calling someone **a good firefighter may be another way of saying someone is "a good bloke"** – someone who can keep a cool head at a fire and *get-in* – but **it may be equally as important that a good bloke accepts the informal agendas and judgements the watch make about how a newcomer should fit-in.** Such a process of peer group approval requires the **trainee to accept the authority of the informal hierarchy and having done this they are only a few steps from fashioning their lives around the views and attitudes of the watch.** The watch in effect becomes their primary reference group for understanding the *outside world* and those people not in uniform who firefighters refer to as 'civilians or civvies' who have to call on firefighters to get them out of trouble.

17. LOOKING FORWARD

The evidence provided by this research indicates just how short a step it is for trainees to fit-in with those peer group leaders who hold the rites of passage to the label *good firefighter*. Each step of their training process has taken place under the watchful eye of their instructors. Trainees have learnt how to obey *and anticipate* orders/expectations. For 13 weeks despite all the changes the fire service has made, contextually a situation remains whereby trainees have lived in a world of 'stick and carrot'. The self-discipline that trainees have learnt is to comply with their instructors' requirements - from how to climb a ladder to dusting their lockers and the pipes behind their beds. Therefore, on arrival at the station the potential is that the trainees will continue to comply and will fit-in with experienced firefighters. Making it even more likely that trainees will do this is the understanding that they have got that to access the skills to become *good firefighters* they must learn these from those who are already doing The Job. Moreover, the experienced firefighter who holds these skills will be more than willing to pass them on, because, in most cases, the trainee has learnt at training centre to fit-in with the image that they expect; someone who respects their skills and is prepared to learn from them. However, as in the training centre, some agendas will be about firefighting and others about informal beliefs. This is watch culture; each watch will have its own ideas about the way they organise informally under the umbrella of official culture to provide an efficient fire service. Some things the trainee will learn are positive, others not so.

17.1 Achieving change?

Although most trainees will fit in easily, **there is a significant minority who will find it more difficult. Most of these individuals have the commonsense to accept the practices imposed on them and bide their time until they are able to express their own views. It is likely that these individuals may become the formal and informal leaders of tomorrow's fire service (see Baigent 2001).** Amongst this group will be some **who joined the fire service to save life by being caring before the fire as well as after.**

However, many caring people would not wish to relinquish their individuality to the extent that trainees choose to do and once they recognise that this behaviour is implicit in becoming a firefighter then they are less likely to join the current service. **It may also be that many in the community do not apply because they believe they are unable to achieve the standards for the 'special' job of being a firefighter.**

The fire service, understandably, does little to avoid their special image and it is used to good effect in promoting their service. Evidence indicates that successful applicants have joined the fire service to become part of a highly disciplined respected group of the type that fits-in with the '*salute and execute*' argument (CCC 2000: 21; see Archer 1999: 94) and the '*can do*' service that HMCIFS (2001) promotes. Wishing to belong may also account for why trainees were prepared to

wait 18 months for a job and accept their treatment/socialisation at PTC – almost as if it proves they are worthy. It is also possible that by the time these firefighters may reasonably be expected to recognise that the service they have joined is not so special, they are fully socialised into the informal hierarchy and it is in their interest to perpetuate the image that the fire service presents to the public.

Certainly there is nothing special about the standards required to pass the training course. Evidence suggests that:

1. Considerable quantities of the learning is not understood but learnt by rote and quickly forgotten;
2. Some of the learning is almost irrelevant;
3. The assessments (rites of passage) are not exacting in professional terms;
4. Some trainees are ‘assisted’ to pass by being allowed to retake examinations several times;
5. Marks up to 100% are achieved in examinations;
6. There is an almost 100% pass rate.

The suggestion from this evidence is that training is not that difficult at all - at least not to the point as to make trainees into special people who are now worthy enough to give up ‘**ordinary status**’ as Mr Mrs or Miss and be elevated to “firefighters.”

The story could have been different if these trainees were **not so socialised into fitting-in with the wishes of their instructors** and if steps were taken to preserve their individuality at the station.

In short the findings of this research suggest that the **Fire service is unlikely to achieve any significant cultural change without active intervention to ensure that their Chief Officers’ message is the one trainees adopt and not that of the current informal culture.**

Such an exercise would involve **Chief Officers recognising that control** in their ‘*salute and execute*’ organisation (CCC 2000: 21; see Archer 1999: 94) and a ‘*can do*’ service (HMCIFS 2001) **is currently conditional on informal cultural hierarchies being prepared to co-operate.** Therefore, fire service culture is unlikely to change until informal peer leaders are convinced either change is to their advantage, or they are displaced by colleagues who are prepared to change.

One intervention may be that the fire service would benefit from employing those **who currently do not apply because they believe they cannot do The Job.** This group would include those who believe that they:

- Will have to give up too much of their individuality to become a firefighter;
- Do not have the special qualities that firefighters require.

One approach worthy of discussion would be to avoid the current proletarian masculine operational image of the fire service and encourage an image of the fire service as a caring agency. This could be done by promoting CFS to the extent that **proactive caring for the community becomes the operational role of the fire service** and then only as a last resort, when the fire service has failed to get its message across, does The Job become reactive.

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

Changing a culture is, as the fire service already recognises, not an easy task. You cannot order a culture to change. Change is made particularly difficult because many in the fire service argue they have a prime purpose, to fight fires and render humanitarian services. However, this institutional conservatism largely hides the fact that the fire service has other roles than reacting to emergencies. Equality, Health and Safety and CFS are perhaps three examples of change that despite their importance are seen as secondary by informal and extremely powerful pressures in the workforce. This research aims at helping the fire service to change its culture by helping to make the environment more welcoming to those currently underrepresented in today’s fire service that may pull on the levers for change to provide:

1. A more representative fire service;
2. An increasing emphasis on Health and Safety at Work;
3. An educational program that can improve the safety of the community at large
4. A reduction of fire losses and deaths;
5. A true service to the community.

Without discussion around the issues highlighted in this report it is unlikely that the fire service will achieve any significant change in its culture. Almost all the evidence promotes a view that the fire service will need to cultivate new agendas at least as far back as the training centre to ensure trainees develop their skills as team workers with the ability to recognise and resist negative cultural pressures wherever they are applied. The fire service may even wish to look at making changes to the extent of only employing people who have a strong desire and ability to deliver the fire safety message in addition to the motivation to serve the public by firefighting – **people who may previously have believed that the fire service was too controlling or employed such special people that they could not possibly come up to the required standard.**

To achieve Change in the fire service it is my recommendation that:

- 1. The CFRS should change its public profile and operational role so that it appears as a preventative service rather than a reactive one.**
- 2. The CFRS takes advantage of high application rates to employ an individual who proves that they have wider skills than those currently sought. This will mean that physical standards remain the same and applicants should also:**
 - 2.1. Recognise CFS as the operational role;
 - 2.2. Prove they can deliver the CFS message;
 - 2.3. Have a proven ability to be able to involve themselves in the increasingly technical side of the fire service;
 - 2.4. Have a proven ability to be able to involve themselves in applying the increasing legislation that affect the fire service;
 - 2.5. Have a proven ability to learn and reflect on their learning;
 - 2.6. Have considerable understanding of equality and cultural diversity agendas;
 - 2.7. Have a strong enough personality to withstand informal group pressures.
- 3. The CFRS should consider changing a cycle of training, which prepares each new cohort of trainees to fit-in once they arrive at the station.**
 - 3.1 The aim should be to train individuals who can fit into teams when required, but do not get so involved in bonding that it occurs for its own sake.
 - 3.2 Training should be undertaken with the prime motive of retaining the original reasons why the trainee was employed.
- 4. At PTC this would mean improving the amount of personal space allowed for trainees. The intention would be to:**
 - 5.1. Stop the development of informal peer group leaders and hierarchies in and around the accommodation.
 - 5.2. Stop trainees having to sleep, shower, eat, train and live together for five days and nights with little space to develop as individuals;
 - 5.3. Reduce the amount of trainees who actually live-in at PTC, by allowing those that can to go home;
 - 5.4. Provide trainees with single rooms;
 - 5.5. Remove the responsibility that trainees have for the cleaning (especially general areas such as toilets, showers, garages etc);
 - 5.6. Stop all forms of ‘bullshit’;
 - 5.7. Only use discipline on the drill ground;
 - 5.8. Seriously curtailing the right of instructors to apply sanctions;

- 5.9. Ensure that any sanctions are transparent and audited;
- 5.10. Ensure the whole learning process becomes a reflexive rather than 'instinctive';
- 5.11. Hand over responsibility for large areas of the training to non-uniformed instructors;
- 5.12. Improve instructors' understanding of their Chief Officers requirements for training and ensure they comply with them;
- 5.13. Ensure all instructors emphasise their Chief Officer's agendas on CFS;
- 5.14. Improve equal opportunities and diversity training to empower some trainees, disempower others and lay down boundaries'

6. Instructors at PTC should stop believing it is their duty to install group thinking into trainees to such an extent that any requirement for individual space can be seen as working against the group. The intention should be to give the trainees an ability to:

- 6.1. Develop a team spirit without overemphasising the need to be in the team all the time;
- 6.2. Understand that off the drill ground each one of them is an individual with diverse needs;
- 6.3. Understand that whilst they work together they do not always need to be together nor agree about everything;
- 6.4. Understand the difficulties involved in group dynamics and bonding;
- 6.5. Recognise the negative processes and agendas that have little or nothing to do with the fire service.

7. Training should always be subject to an ongoing training and audit program to ensure that instructors do not develop their own agendas in parallel with those of their Chief Officer.

8. Given that in a short period CFRS is to change 10% of its personnel, it may be that this can provide a big enough dynamic to promote a new cultural understanding. I have already made some suggestions on this during my discussions with officers in CFRS. At this stage my recommendations are based on a belief that as trainees leave PTC they should be put into a situation where their willingness to learn is focused according to official policy and not where it can be colonised by unofficial cultures.

9. CFRS may wish to consider posting all trainees to appointed watches staffed by people who support the vision of their Chief Officer. This may not be as difficult a task to achieve as it first appears, because the training watch could also be used for the continuing professional development of all officers and potential officers. CFRS could then put in place the support on this watch to encourage staff in following official policies (these ideas have also been further developed in discussions with officers in the CFRS).

10. CFRS should at an early stage involve the FBU. Given that the aims of CFRS and the government are to a large extent those of the FBU this report could be used as evidence to support the change being introduced is to provide a more efficient, safe and representative fire service.

11. More radically, it may be possible to rearrange training completely. Discussions should commence that consider if it were possible for trainees to:

- 11.1 Be given their basic training within CFRS (say 6 weeks);
- 11.2 Then be posted to a training watch;
- 11.3 Follow a programme of professional development that is phased in gradually, rather than the current 14 week training period;
- 11.4 The intention would be to develop a program for CPD to provide professional employees.

Such an approach may remove many of the problems associated with residential training and at the same time encourage new cultures in the fire service.

19. NEXT STEPS

The details in this report have highlighted a considerable amount of **institutional behaviour that the fire service so takes for granted that it does not notice or question**. Some of the findings are disturbing and it is clear that in outcome they negatively effect, if not circumvent, new agendas in the fire service; it is also possible that firefighters are damaged by the training process. The extent to which CFRS has not noticed these events is compounded by the fact that during the research **principal, senior and welfare officers have spent in effect at least nine working days at PTC; they have also interviewed all the trainees on several occasions**. That they have not noticed the difficulties this report highlights, is a clear sign that as ‘insiders’ of an organisation they take for granted and do not question much of its behaviour. This comment is not meant in any negative way, it is made just to explain how an ‘outsider’ with research expertise can make the invisible visible.

Insomuch as is possible at this stage, the report has made recommendations that will help to improve the training of CFRS firefighters. Almost from today onwards it may no longer be right for CFRS officers to attend PTC and just put a tick in the box. The outcomes from this report in effect have set an agenda. Now is the time to consider the ramifications of what has been found and the concluding suggestions are that this report should become the subject of meetings between interested parties. In the first instance, the strategic partnership between Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service and the Fire Service Research & Training Unit at APU should form up under the direction of the Chief Officer to use this report to best effect.

Early consideration should also be given to continuing this research by following the five trainees during their first year of service.

There are a number of possible other ways to use this research. The report could be:

1. Presented verbally and then sold to PTC;
2. Be a package in which the strategic partnership of CFRS and FSRTU offer further research and training at PTC;
3. CFRS may wish to use the strategic partnership to offer this type of cultural auditing service to other training establishments in the UK and even wider;
4. CACFOA and the FBU may have an interest in hearing the outcomes of this research;
5. The ODPM could be approached for an opportunity to present this report at ministerial level;
6. The Equality and Cultural Change Advisory Board could be approached for an opportunity to present this report;
7. Working parties looking at equality, cultural diversity, CFS, standards for entry and other associated areas may have an interest in hearing about this ground breaking work.

CFRS now has an opportunity to improve the standards of training for its firefighters and to make an impact in the development of the fire service for the 21st century. This opportunity must not be missed!

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APPENDIX ONE

HOSE-THURSDAY

Hose-Thursday is a firmly established event in the folklore of Petersfield Fire Service and potentially in a far wider field. Because of this I had timed my second visit to view this event. It is argued by managers at Petersfield Training Centre that Hose-Thursday was not a test of endurance, where the instructors set out to prove who was in charge or break and test the trainees. I was told it was an attempt to teach the trainees how to run out hose, to help them to learn something about themselves and to help them to understand their limitations. I admit to being sceptical about this and when the Divisional Officer came out on the drill yard with me I was concerned that things were going to be different because of my visit.

All five trainees from Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service were positive about the outcome; this includes one trainee who took it twice because they were re-coursed.

Bill: I have enjoyed the drills, learning the new ways, it is hard work hose Thursday was absolutely, it was unbelievable what we did .. the team spirit .. it was good fun at the same time .. we were laughing at the end of it because we were chanting each other on .. I enjoyed it.

Hose running was hard, I didn't think we would do that much actually but something dragged me along. How we did it I don't know we must have done 30 or 40 lengths and I don't know how we did it.

Its fantastic, I expected it to be a lot harder to be honest. I expected everything to be a lot harder .. everyone was telling me hose Thursday, everyone throwing up and passing out

Michelle: Hose Thursday, wound up by other teams , first time we actually put our firefighting kit on. we were formed up and went out and all the other courses were there with cheers and whistles ... Made you feel really welcome ... All afternoon from 1.30 to 4.45 .. just cheered us out and clapped and cheered us back in again .. bit stiff today in the legs and shoulders.

It was hard work, it was harder than I remembered it ...we did a few ones a few twos and threes and fours and after our tea break we partnered up .. em we did running two hoses out and joining them up and bringing them back in and we did that a few times .. about three times and we did a couple of threes and one four at the end of that and then we did one single one at the end to finish off I think ... the first half wasn't too bad but the second half ...all afternoon ... a warm up in the sports hall a circuit training warm up ... I think that was to try and prevent injuries and stuff but it was a bit of a harsh one considering what we were going to be doing .. that started at half one so we got out in the yard at quarter to two had a tea break in the middle somewhere and it finished about five quarter past five ish we were just about up and ready for dinner at half five. ... The other course cheered us out and cheered us back in at tea break and at the end.. which was nice.. and they had all the tea ready for us and that good ... we had a lad go over on his ankle, but luckily he is alright he had the rest of the week off of practical .. he was alright fit ready on Monday ... there was another lad on my course who had been backcoursed for the same injury as me and his was aching and playing up that night and he had one day off the drill

yard and he was alright ... my ankle was a bit achy that night a couple of neurofems and fingers crossed

Silvia: Thursday was like the initiation test to see if you are going to be part of accepted or not. hose thursday. You just run out hoses for fucking hours .. that's why I am aching so much today because yesterday this hose run. We all did so well and like as we run out there because like .. the other courses that are there are told they are not allowed to associate with us until we have done hose Thursday because its like make or break kind of time. Hose Thursday is the hardest .. until you do BA. But we are all stood there formed up and as you start running out onto the drill all the other courses are there whistling and cheering it was brilliant. ... single hose then two hoses and come back then in couples ... it was hard work some people were throwing up some were passing out. ... Its not as hard as I thought it was going to be. I expected the hoserunning to be harder I expected the running to be harder I expected it all to be harder.

Ted: I have really enjoyed it. The hose running was .. when you finished it so self satisfaction to know you have passed out. The other courses they all clapped you in and said now your one of us, because you have done that, it was really nice.

A few comments on the hose-running today about not being able to clap them out .. we did work harder ... they had it easier than we did .. do you need to run out hose for four hours until you drop ... there are some people who say it is not fair ... first we were told we could stand out there but we were not allowed to say nothing but then we were told we could not stand out there at all ... for me it was one hell of an adreniline boost .. we put in a petition saying it was a bad idea not having it

You have got to have teams, one of the main things in the fire service, no good having individuals, if you have a task you have got to pull together

Tim: Very hard they do, push to the limits on that but at the end of it you have got a sense of achievement. Definitely. *We have actually been told by the top course that they have got more respect for us now than the middle course because the middle course missed a lot of the hose-running out. They have actually got a sub officer who actually doesn't believe in too much of the hose-running and they didn't actually get such a beating as what we did.* But it really brought us together and we were cheering each other on and we were all shouting the course and we have had a few people remark on how well we have gelled.

Each trainee clearly thought that they had proved something to themselves by completing Hose-Thursday. They also thought they had gained the respect of their peers and the comments (italicised) may be especially pertinent later in the report.

Tradition

There is something ritualistic about Hose-Thursday. Trainees start preparing the day before by ensuring they only eat the right types of food in the 24 hours before. After a light lunch the afternoon starts at 1330 when the trainees spend 30 minutes in the gym warming up (before my first visit trainees went straight out onto the drill yard to start their drills and I raised concerns about this to which Petersfield Training Centre appear to have reacted to). Trainees then rig in their fire gear and jog out, in single file, carrying their length of hose.

It is tradition that trainees' entrance onto the drill ground is accompanied by the yells, whistles and support of the two senior courses. The five CFRS trainees thought this 'welcome' gave them a boost for what they saw as a do or die event in which they were to be tested to their

limit. This practise was stopped in the week we visited because it was the view of the Divisional Officer that it may intimidate the trainees. Whilst it would be easy to jump to conclusions that things changed because of our visit this is not my view. It is more likely that there were special circumstances surrounding one person being tested on this day and I believe the Divisional Officer was (commendably) responding to their needs and not trying to change events for me.

Sponsored backlash

There was though a significant backlash to the Divisional Officer's action. The firefighters on the two senior courses sent in a petition asking permission to demonstrate their solidarity and support for the junior course. When this was refused, they planned to stand at the entrance to the drill yard with a large banner on which was painted a message of support. This silent salute of their colleagues abruptly ended when the station officer came through the door first and they were firmly spoken to and dismissed. Interestingly, the sub officers did not appear to share the station officers' view and they were, earlier, observed photographing the trainees with their banner. It is unlikely that without the support of the course sub officers that the trainees would have either prepared the petition or attempted the silent salute.

Emma: Sub O **** said what are you doing and we had been encouraged by a couple of subs to do it .. So we said we were going to stand out there and come to attention ... S.O. ** said no, but we had the ok from the subs, he just sort of said no!

Instructors, encouraging the middle course to react to preserve tradition, may have also encouraged a conversation they had with me that evening and the more extreme follow-on action, which resulted in a note being put under some doors the next morning accusing the junior course of having an easy time on Hose-Thursday (reported below).

The actual events

In the bright sun of this spring afternoon the trainees looked somewhat surreal, (for the first time) fully kitted up in their firegear and jogging out with their lengths of hose. The six instructors who were waiting for them had an air of the sinister. Dressed in full firegear with their visors down over sunglasses, one trainee described them as "looking like terminators." The trainees lined up with their hose in front of them as they were shown how to run-out, under-run and roll-up a length of hose. For some of them this was not only the first time they had worn their uniform it was (almost) the first time they had held a length of hose (the only other time would have been during their entry test). The drill started slowly, with individual trainees running-out, under-running and making-up their hose. As the trainees got more confident with the equipment, the instructors increased the numbers of trainees who were running at any one time until 50% of them running together. From this point, half the group started 30 seconds or so in front of the other half of the group so that at times all the trainees were running at once. Gradually the amount of hose before a break was increased so having done it several times once, they repeated the procedure but doing it twice then three times without a break. Once they had completed each session the trainees were allowed a breather but those who finished first got the longest recovery time. This arrangement rewards the fittest and more experienced trainee, and punishes the less experienced who takes longer, has less time to recover and consequently starts out again more out of breath.

There was a considerable amount of shouting involved – the instructors shouting orders/encouragement, the trainees supporting their colleagues who lagged behind and the numbering-off after each session. During the early stages, the trainees were constantly calling out their course number, presumably as encouragement of the collective will of the course. But as the afternoon wore on the regularity and level of the trainees shouting reduced – possibly shouting support takes more breath than it provides adrenalin. The instructors throughout were encouraging the trainees. However, the line between encouragement and threat is difficult to draw on such

occasions; as in so many of these circumstances, the perception is very much in the eye of the beholder.

From where I was observing it was noticeable that one trainee was having a particular difficulty. It was my judgement that his tunic was too tight, causing him to bend awkwardly and possibly even interfere with his breathing. Because none of the instructors noticed this I told the Divisional Officer and he intervened. When the trainee was given the opportunity to unzip his tunic, his difficulties reduced (it was an ill-fitting tunic not the trainees lack of fitness that was at fault). Stand-easy came none to soon for those trainees who were showing real signs of difficulty. After stand-easy the trainees started again, progressing to a point where they formed up in pairs to run-out two lengths of hose.

Although my counting was not entirely accurate, due to my attention being drawn to particular events on the drill yard, my records suggest hose running started at 1411, by 1516 trainees had run-out, under-run and rolled-up 20 lengths of hose. Between 1610 and 1715 it is my estimate that they ran-out another 20 lengths of hose. During this time some trainees were under considerable duress. Others, probably the retained firefighters and those more capable of adapting to the difficult position, were finishing much earlier and therefore getting longer to rest. By the time the drill was complete, at 1715, some trainees had been sick and others were physically exhausted. They were though in high spirits and at the start of the debrief they all appreciated the instructors accolade “welcome to the fire service.” In fire service terms morale was *high*.

At the request of Petersfield

I was provided with the opportunity to talk to trainees who had just completed Hose-Thursday. I took up this opportunity and at 1830 held a tape-recorded focus group of 50% of the course who had on that day completed their hose runs. In return for this opportunity, I provided Petersfield Training Centre with the following report.

“As the Sub O said “welcome to the fire service”

Brief example of the comments by the trainees at 1830 on hose Thursday. Whilst some analysis is contained within the remainder of the next paragraph, it is possible to provide a far more extensive analysis on ‘Hose-Thursday’. This further analysis would only be available after the consent of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service.

These comments are typical, for the most part positive and suggest that the trainees consider they had learnt something about themselves, and had gained the respect of the instructors, their fellow course members and the other courses. In addition to recognising they had gained respect within the training centre, these trainees also thought that ‘passing’ Hose Thursday was a symbol, recognised throughout the informal culture of the Petersfield Fire Service (if not nationally), that they had what it takes to become a trusted member of the fire service. It is also likely that these trainees now looked at themselves through the eyes of these ‘other’ groups and respected themselves as a consequence.

Although Hose-Thursday is seen as something to be got over it emphasis we are all together.

Accepted into it

The other courses cheering us in meant we were part of it.

Make or break.

An initiation (positively said)

They have all done it and we are not going to get anywhere until we have done it
you have got to do it

But these are people who have been in the job 20-25 years and they still talk about it

Part of the team

Good grounding to work in with the other members

An emotional experience

One individual was lagging and we cheered to him ... you could hear him growling ... and he dug

in ... he had tears in his eyes

Gives us some pride.

It was our first chance of turning from a civvie into a firefighter.

Earned the right to wear the uniform

Sort of job you tried so hard to get into .. you were not going to give in.

The only way I would have left the drill yard would be on a stretcher.

If someone failed their bleep test, then we were sorry for them, but it was a competition for a job .. but after being together on the team building we cared about each other.

You have got the rest of the team looking at you

If everyone keeps focus on the fact that you are going to be relied upon to do your job and your career, you are going to be relied upon and you are going to rely on all the people who are basically your family your living with to some do some dangerous things and you have got to work together

When you are out on a job if you drop the ball then someone is going to die ultimately aren't they

Like when we finished they said welcome to the family, it is like an extended family the whole fire service

People you work with and socialise with

Everyone likes the idea of being a firefighter but only us lot here really want to be want to be a firefighter .. otherwise we wouldn't have got through today .. they like the idea of it but they wouldn't go for it.

The instructors were shouting "do you want to be a firefighter" and we were shouting "yeah"

It sharpened our listening skills.

For all their shouting the Sub O's were fair.

It would be wrong if they were to be breathing down our necks.

I thought they have been fair on us today.

That was tougher than half a marathon

If you were doing it in tshirt and shorts and a nice pair of instructors ...

You have got your helmet on

You have got your lid on ... we have never worn that before

You have got rigid fire boots that have not broken in

Ever since people have known we were coming here they have spoken to us about hose Thursday.

We had a pre-meeting to work out some rules .. to get some sort of understanding.

Different abilities .. but keep up

The break was too long .. I began to get cold.

The break was the right amount of time.

Some of our gloves were so tight they were difficult to work in.

Only the first time they had worn fire gear ... new boots.

Confused about what to eat/drink.

Some vomiting by trainees (2 reported that they had been sick).

I did not want to bark with everyone watching me so I ran really quick and run past the hose, left it threw up and came back and carried on.

Everyone dreads it so much

We got a lot of tips from the other courses

We had a meeting last night ... look out for people who are slower
It was in the back of our minds that we all had different degrees of experience

No one saw it as a negative process
Only three had experience of hose-running

Later that night

However, it was interesting to note how, later that night, a group of firefighters mainly from the middle course spoke with me about the junior course's Hose-Thursday experience. They believed that this particular Hose-Thursday had been different (I am reminded that I was also sceptical that events may change because I was there). However, what started as a matter of fact answer to a question to me by one of the trainees "what did you think about today's Hose-Thursday experience" to which I replied "I was collecting evidence not making any judgements," quickly turned into the group providing me with their thoughts on the day's events. Such thoughts were in stark contrast to those I had collected earlier from the junior course, a representative sample of which appear in the report above. The comments below were not recorded, so they are not a transcript. However, they are representative of a group who believed this particular course had been given an easy time.

What do you think about the hose running?

DB: I just watch.

Well we watched and they had an easy time.

One of the instructors said it was like 'a walk in the park'.

The instructors were not in their face, like they were with us.

It was easier because of one individual who had come back for a retest.

When we did it, the other squads said we were now part of the real fire service. We had earned their respect .. we had passed the test .. we could be trusted.

If you go into a fire then you need to know you can trust the person you are with .. they earn that trust by doing Hose-Thursday.. everyone in the fire service knows they are working with someone who has been pushed to their limits.

We know that when we think we are finished that we can give that little bit more .. they have not been given that opportunity.

It gave us a chance to recognise our limitations.

They had an easy time and have not proved themselves.

There was another course three back that had an easy time .. the other two squads never respected them..

We were prevented from wishing them luck

When we went out it was like you had to succeed

They were not making as much noise as us

Hose-Thursday makes all three squads as if they were one

We were all together but they are not one of us.

There was real vehemence in the voice of these trainees, who believed that after 5 weeks in the training centre that they were able to judge who would and would not be *good firefighters*.

In a similar response to the one italicised above about an earlier course these firefighters were making judgements that they were ill equipped to make. I wanted to intervene and tried to remain the impartial observer, but as the group increased their momentum and their cynicism I took a more active approach. I avoided the direct confrontation of pointing out that the trainees lack of experience was unlikely to provide the expertise from which they were making judgements about future fireground behaviour. I did however, make the point repeatedly that I had never taken part in a Hose-Thursday and therefore according to their standards, I also could not be trusted on the fireground. To this suggestion they insisted on telling me that I must have passed other tests. Where but from the instructors could this type of response have come?

An example of how culture gets passed down

This behaviour provides considerable insight into how fire service culture is organised and passed on. Trainees' expectations, even before joining, is that fire service is a family. From the time they enter Petersfield Training Centre this view is encouraged. Nevertheless, before they can actually join the family, the trainees (the Mr's and Miss's) have to prove themselves as capable of passing a number of tests. One of these tests is Hose-Thursday and that sits alongside the requirement to be disciplined, have a common identity. **To an extent the trainee is pushing and the instructors are pulling individuals into the group.** Individuals are choosing to give up some of their individuality. Parading in the morning, carrying corks, paying fines, taking shared responsibility for blame, suffering for others who are ill disciplined, going to the pub together, all become potentially negative ways in which trainees are taught to prove they *fit-in*. In a similar argument to the one made by Tony (italicised above), this course were pointing to how their Hose-Thursday experience allowed them a greater respect. Some instructors who wish to maintain standards likely sponsor this argument. Hose-Thursday is a first bench mark for *fitting-in* and an introduction to what a *good firefighters* is: tough, hands on and practical. And in so doing I saw how this group effect grew into an elitism that none of these trainees had earned. Five weeks into their course these trainees were displaying the very same elitism that experienced firefighters display. They were also acting with considerable unanimity of purpose and belief: almost as a pack rather than a bonded group. I was glad that none of the junior course witnessed this behaviour or were there to argue their case. What I experienced in that evening discussion was the negative affect of fire service culture.

Backlash

The following morning the junior course woke up to find a poster pushed under their doors saying "did you enjoy your walk in the park yesterday." This prompted a response from a Station Officer at parade, "*you have undone the good that was done yesterday.*" Unaware of how the firefighters in the middle course had the night before viewed the 'walk in the park' the Station Officer anticipated someone would own up. All that day increasing pressure was applied to the firefighters in anticipation that this would bring about the sort of peer pressure that would get someone to own up. No one owned up.

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