# A Firefighters Survey, for Firefighters, by Firefighters

The following survey results are based on a personal initiative and are not endorsed or sanctioned by Wicklow Fire Service and Wicklow County Council. This survey is intended solely for informational and personal development purposes. The opinions and feedback expressed herein are those of the individual participants and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Wicklow Fire Service and Wicklow County Council.

This survey is not an official representation of the workplace, and the findings should be interpreted with that understanding. It is not intended to cause harm or offense to any individual or the organization.

By sharing these results, I do not intend to challenge or question the official practices, policies, or opinions of Wicklow Fire Service and Wicklow County Council. This survey is a private initiative, and any resemblance to official surveys or initiatives is purely coincidental.

I appreciate your participation and encourage open dialogue within the bounds of respect and professionalism.

Thank you for your understanding.

# Survey Response

The survey was administered to 87 Retained Firefighters in Wicklow

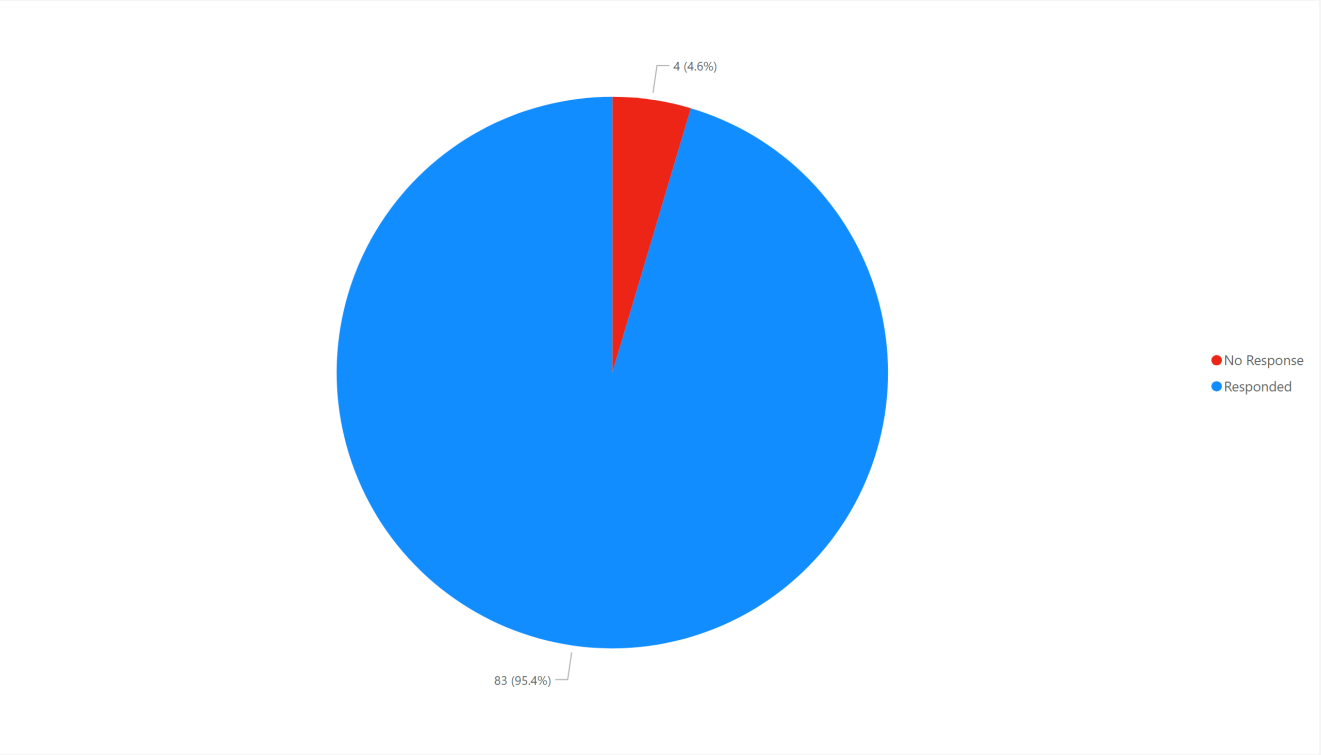
It was conducted between October 18th and October 22nd, 2023.

83 Retained Firefighters responded.

4 Retained Firefighters did not respond.

The survey was managed through Google Forms. This allowed the survey be conducted online.

All completed surveys are anonymous.



# Timeline for Leaving

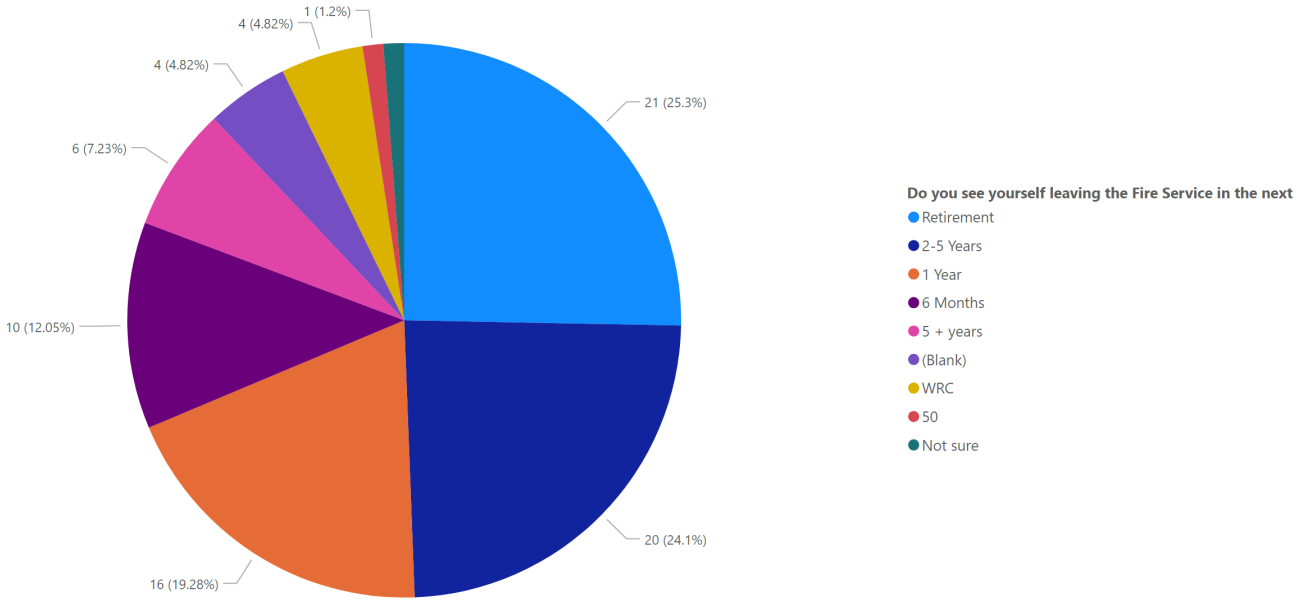
Retention being a major issue nationally in the strike action, it is clear to be an issue locally also

31.33% of RFF intend to leave within the next 12 months.

That means that in 12 months we will be down to 61 RFF across the county.

There will be a requirement for  39 new RFF just to bring the number up to full compliment before the WRC agreement is considered.

Implementing a strategy to improve morale and allow for time off will stop this from becoming reality



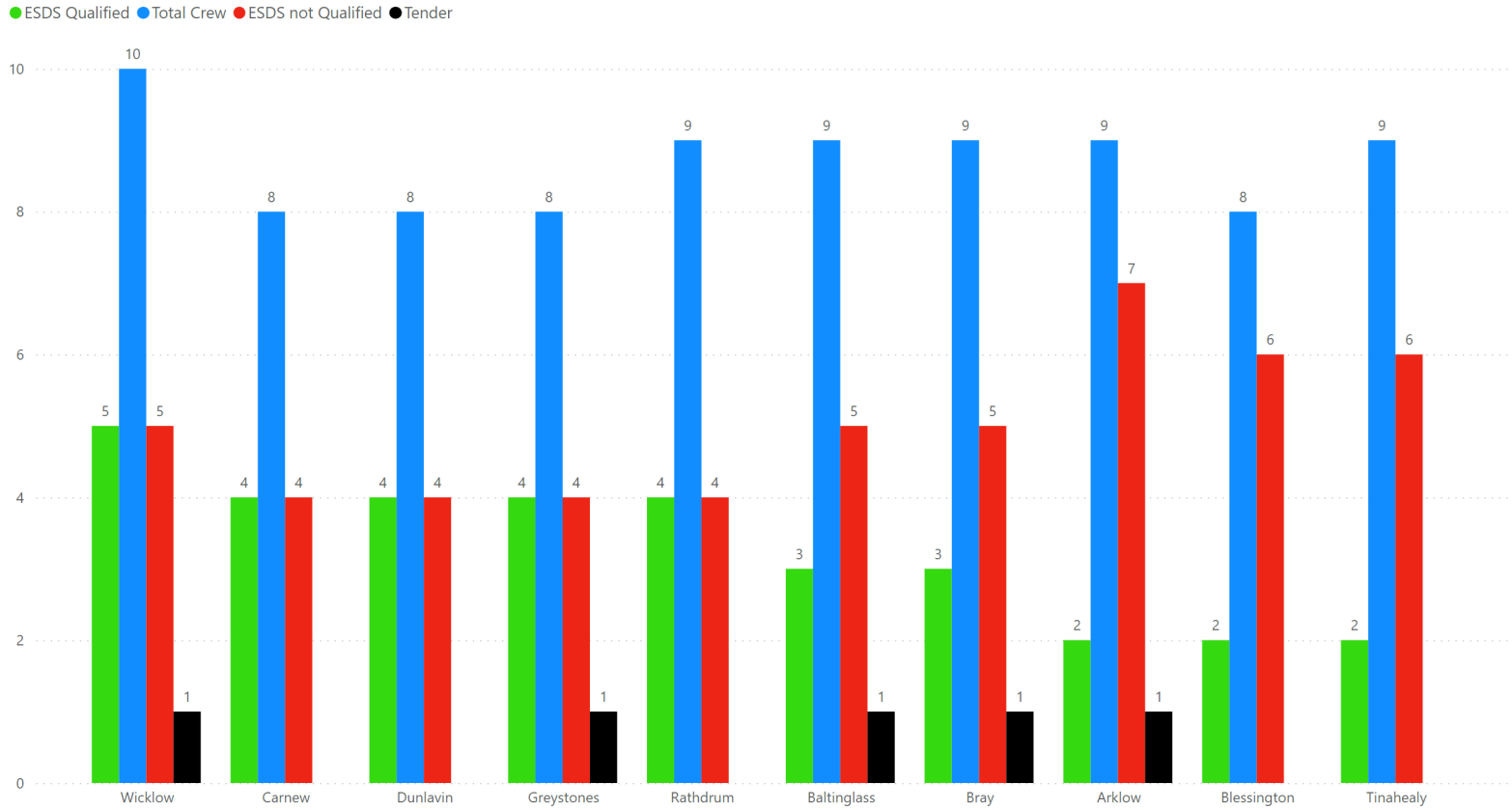
# ESDS Qualified by Station

This graph illustrates ESDS qualified Drivers per station against the total crew numbers per station.

It is required in a Retained Fire Fighters contract to be available to complete your C Licence in 2 years

When assessing this information you must consider that the Station Officer (SO) and the Sub Station Officer (SSO) is qualified and therefore reduces the available drivers per station by 2.

In addition to ESDS qualified drivers some stations have special tenders effectively requiring further drivers to be available.



# Breathing Apparatus Qualified by Station

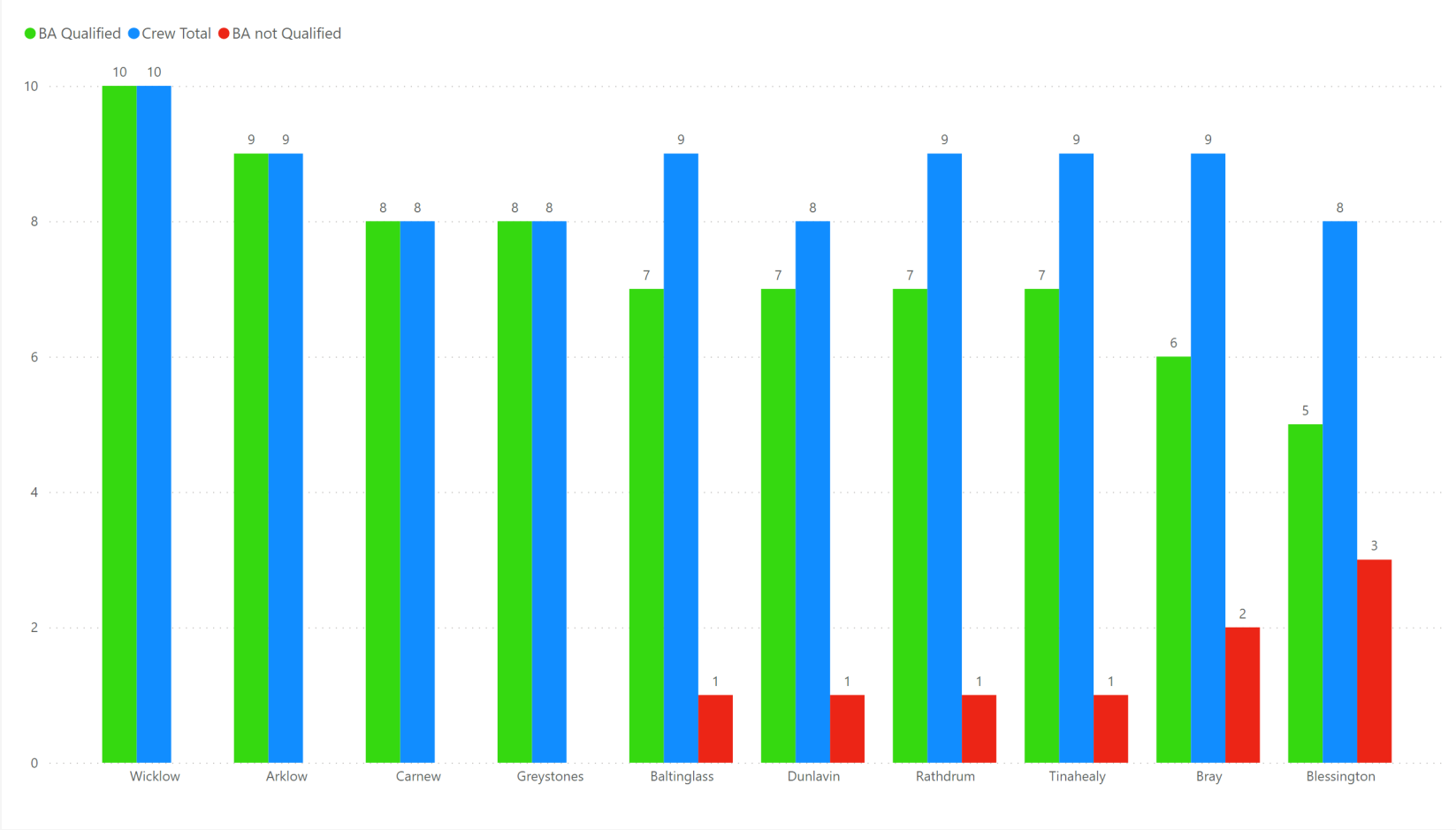
This Graph illustrates BA wearers per station.

Like the previous graph you need to consider that the SO and SSO along with the driver will not be wearing BA.

This means that some stations will effectively put qualified RFF under more pressure to stay on call.

Training up of RFF is critical. It impacts on a stations ability to deliver a safe and functioning service.

Training from Recruits to BA, EFR, ESDS and other courses need to be more strategic and efficient



# Reasons for Leaving

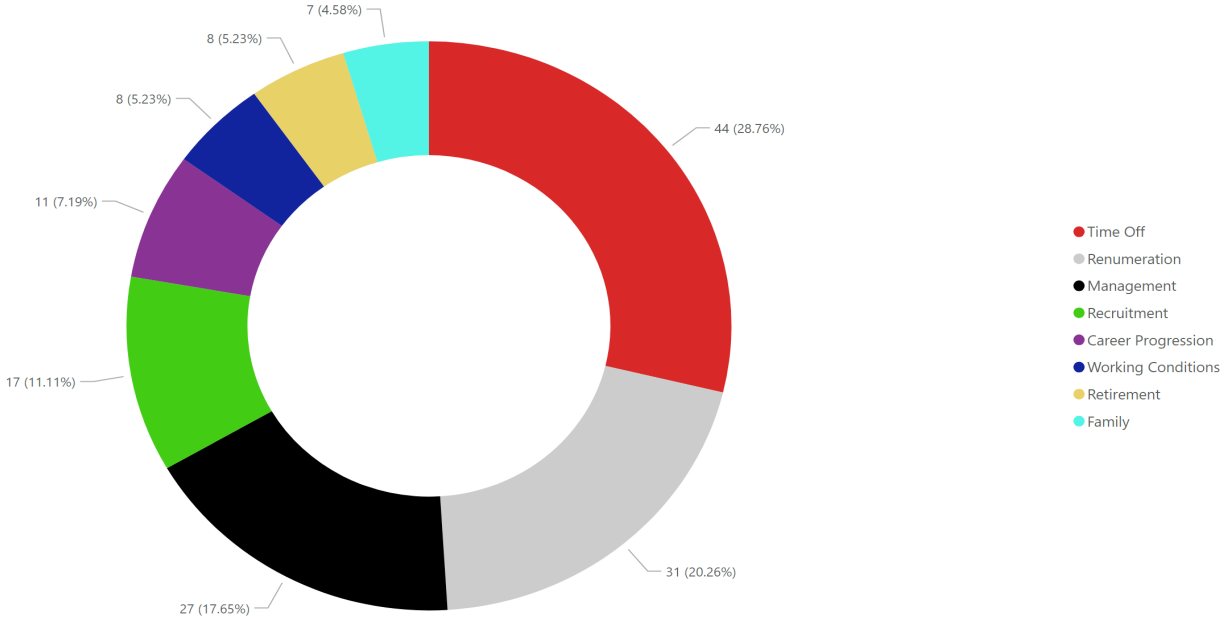
Reasons for leaving as set out by the RFF in the survey.

This is a key slide to understand how you can future proof the retention of RFF in our county.

Time Off and Recruitment can almost be grouped together as they directly affect each other. This represents 45.87%, clearly the most difficult issue facing our colleagues.

Renumeration is next with 20.26%. This can largely be stated as fixed based on the implementation of the WRC. Assuming payroll deliver on what has been stated, renumeration becomes less of an issue.

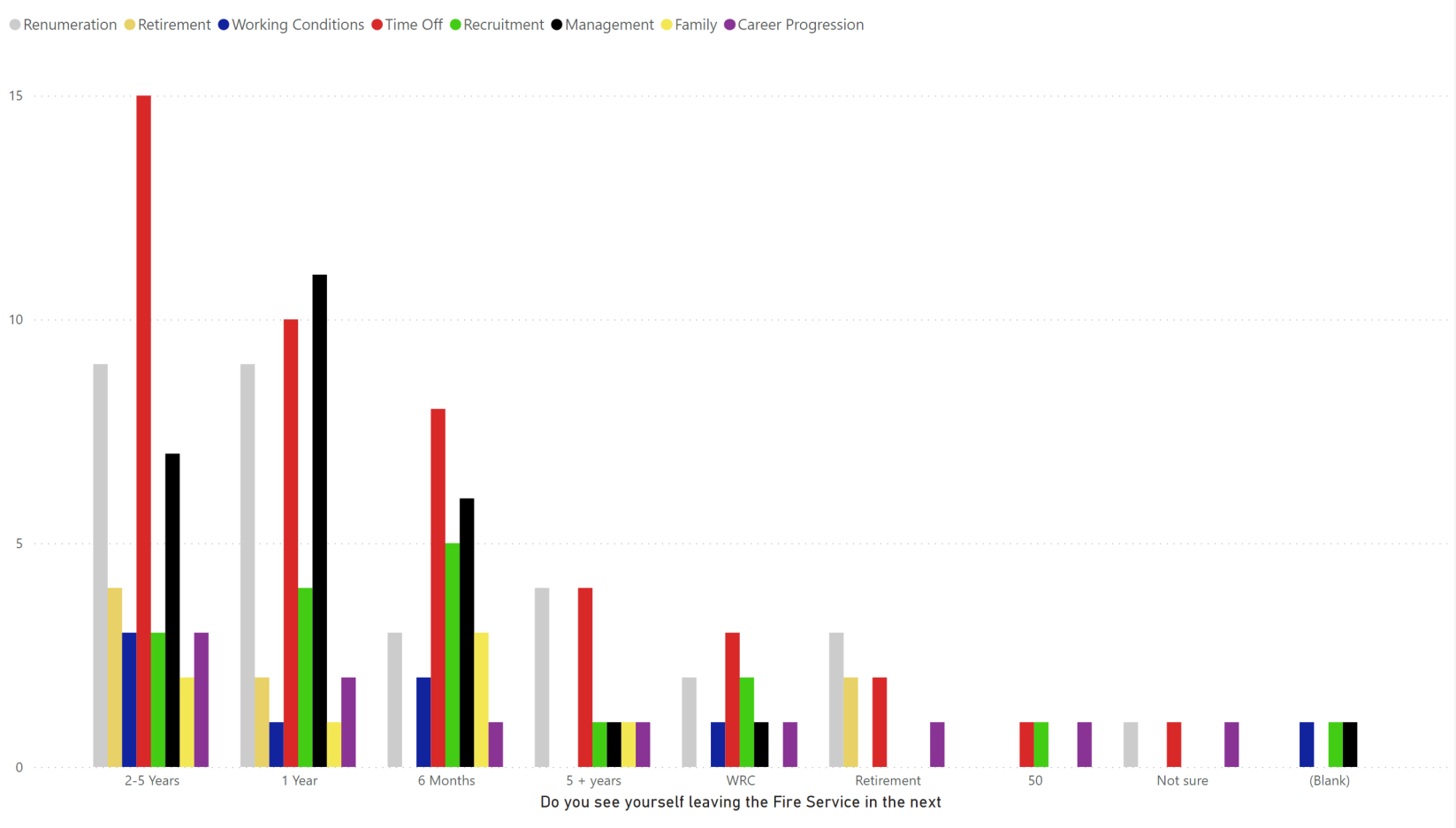
Management issues represents 17.65%. Clearly there needs to be a plan to help improve this sentiment on the ground. WCC have stated that they wish to be more active and present with RFF, this might be a good start to improving relationships.



# Timeline + Reasons for Leaving

This graph allows you consider the importance of each issue against the stated timeline stated by RFF for leavings.

Again, time off and recruitment are serious issues that are being illustrated through this survey.



# Summary

As hard hitting as this is, having information allows for informed choices.

There is a clear frustration that has built within the service that is being played out by RFF in all stations. If all stake holders are willing to take the opportunity to make some effective change, most of these issues will not be borne out.

Retention of existing RFF is key to a Fire Service that wishes to provide the best emergency service available. Experience in the job cannot be underestimated. This survey illustrates that retention is still an issue, the WRC document maybe agreed upon but it is not implemented yet.

The most critical issue for retaining our firefighters in the short term is recruitment. Recruitment must be more efficient than it has been.

Communication back out to SO, SSO and RFF needs to be more effective. **Sharing recruitment plans and timelines will improve morale.**

# Comments from Survey

1. Recruitment is too slow
2. Restricted Time Off
3. Family not happy with level of commitment

Time off, lack of respect from management and lack of progression

Lack of money. Lack of time off. No job progression

No extension

Commitment required, pay, senior management

I will leave because I find the commitment to much I am waiting for the week on week off. But no sign of it yet. Even do other county's are advertising.

"Recruitment is a major issue. Taking to long for fire fighters to be replaced "

Wages

The lack of management and oversight within the fire service is disgraceful. They have been fully aware of major issues and have chosen todo nothing about it leading to crew members leaving, this results in even more restrictions on time off.

# Comments from Survey

Money, time off, lost interest

"Horrible job and conditions. Snr managers are a disgrace"

"No time off Lack of calls Money"

Almost no timeoff and no respect by management

Indequate station numbers, sufficient pay and time off

Structured time off, decent living wage, better pension etc

"Time off, Pay"

Time off is essential and not optional, management have chosen to ignore this for too long and the responsibility has fallen on firefighters not management which is completely unacceptable.
The lack of management and oversight within the fire service is disgraceful. They have been fully aware of major issues and have chosen todo nothing about it leading to crew members leaving, this results in even more restrictions on time off.
The complete lack of respect and consideration to upgrade the service has shown how little they care about the firefighters doing the job and has led to people feeling forced out of the service.

# Comments from Survey

"Pay,Time off"

Crew numbers, false promises, unhealthy working environment with current cfo

1.Lack of clarification on courses and when and where they will happen.
2. The failure so far in advertising for new recruits in order to help implement the week on week off roster.
3. The difficulty in getting out of stock supplies weather that be PPE/clothing or items that need to be restocked on the appliance, lastly the need to upgrade secondary station vehicles which are not fit for purpose.

"If directions in deal we were promised aren't going being followed and implemented If higher management don't make an effort to work with Fireighters "

Time off ,pay ,bad treatment during strike from senior officers

"Lack of numbers,our station has been down on full quota for many years. This in turn leads to lack of time off another reason to contemplate leaving the service Needs to be a clear pathway for new recruits I'm terms of scheduled necessary course, ie BA,CFR/EFR,ESDS drivers training all in a certain time frame"

Time away, poor pay, anti social hours

# Comments from Survey

The pressure which is put on the firefighters from management has gotten so bad it's the main reason why there is so many firefighters leaving the service. Management expects a full time service from a retained service which puts so many pressures on firefighters who hold down a full time job. I myself have a full time job and I find it hard to have a work life balance with two young kids and my wife also working. My family are suffering from the pressure the fire service has put on me and all firefighters. Most of my holidays from my full time job is going on fire training which means most of the time I have no time to take a family holiday. I myself have been a firefighter for 16 years in which I have seen a massive decline in moral. The lack of PPE and upgrading of appliances. In my station we have a ET which is not fit for purpose the turbo has gone on it for the last 2 years

no confidence in the service! voted on a deal that looks like it will never be delivered eg week on week off, recruitment! just too much to handle, too much pressure

# Comments from Survey

Only if things anit fulfilled from proposal

Structure of fire service, contract ends at 58, pay and time off

Management refusing to improve or update the service, calls reduced and little or no moral in the service, being held back because of strike action and no confidence in the Chief fire officer

1, family reasons;
2, money reasons;
3,issues with time off

"Retainer is to low Scheduled time off Taking too long to get my trainings"

Pay time off lack of management support

Too much commitment not enough gratuity for lifetime of service no pension worth talking about

Money extremely bad , Areas incorrectly divided for call outs , not enough time off

# Comments from Survey

"To slow with Recruitment been 6/7 weeks since the vote and still haven't advertised for new recruits.
Come up to almost 10 years in service and the longest we have ever had a full crew is 6 months No extra pay for doing the extra work when numbers are short if there is a crew of 8 and it is meant to be 9 the retainer that is not been spent on the 9th person should be split amongst the rest of the crew"

Barriers of progression within the service

I will be up for retirement

"Lack of time off which has led to many missed events and family moments. Unstable income is unsustainable especially when trying to establish savings and pay rent. Extremely restrictive nature of the job makes a work life balance impossible and there seems to be an unwillingness to fix the retained system which leads me to believe the current issues will not be addressed for years."

# Comments from Survey

"1. Income not being increased to match cost of living.
2. Lack of promotional positions and current positions being filled based on time served rather than knowledge and ability.
3. Lack of calls or not being mobilised to 999 calls ."

No structured time off. Pay not up to the living wage. The way we get treated from the chief

"1.Working locally with chiefs and SACFOs and the atmosphere it creates in our station when they are walking around eyeballing people.
2. Lack of time off and money is rubbish for what we are expected to do. We train like marines and are treated lower than rubbish.
3. No promotional opportunities, and if you don't lick managements arse you won't get any instructing jobs"

# Comments from Survey

Money.....recruitment.....time off.....lack of service personally.....calls being vetted? Not getting the calls especially when aware of them.....

"1.Transparency and lies from senior management
2.The lack of movement in recruitment and lack of progression from the strike result
3.Time off"

"1. The time I put into staying around for the money I get out of it
2. Not having a full crew leading to me not having enough time off
3. Every penny I earn on the Fire brigade is haves because I have a full-time job but I put in the same amount of hours as a firefighter that is unemployed very unfair"

# Comments from Survey

"Inadequate leadership by the management, displaying disregard for firefighters' working hours, resulting in an unjust exploitation of the workforce. Unreasonable imposition of a 24/7/365 commitment, causing personal and family life, as well as secondary job opportunities, to take a backseat. No other service or company in the state demands this level of commitment. The undue responsibility placed on firefighters to manage staffing issues, while the Fire Service neglects its duty to promptly recruit or implement a structured working hours system, which falls under the purview of management.  All of this results in no time off. "

"1. Money is brutal for all we are expected to do.
2. Haven’t any time off and our numbers are too low.
3. I Feel like we are treated like shit by our chief and our government."

# Comments from Survey

"Lack of respect and communication from management.Low staff levels , meaning little time off.Wages"

"If directions in the deal offered aren't being implemented If higher management don't work with Firefighters on real issues within stations. Time off being offered other county's/stations isn't implemented in Bray"

Not getting enough calls. Pay does not help to get a mortgage. No time off as the station does not have enough staff

Being held back from progress from being a better firefighter

I'm totally disillusioned with the fire brigade. We went on strike just to make conditions better. More time to spend with our families and main job. Since the strike it's got worse no new numbers and we are now down numbers and still no sign of getting in anyone. Everyday counts, but it's now months.

"I would leave for retirement. If I was passed over on a promotion "

# Comments from Survey

Time off money and way we are treated

Lack of opportunities for advancement, unhappy working environment.

Low retainer, massive commitment, no respect from the council/government

"No time for myself or family life. No areas/opportunities for to promote your career in the fire service. Always on constant alert and no down time."

Getting more crew in station sorted,make sure that the week on/off is adhered to, and promotional post are advertised fairly

"Bad management from the top in brayNo proper structure time offThe money we get doesn't reflect the work we do"