

From 2SL/CNH

Making Change Work

We find ourselves in an exciting era of change, but what seems to be constant upheaval in the way we go about our business can create uncertainty. This is why it's so important not to overlook that the Royal Navy and Royal Marines offer secure and challenging careers, with expanding roles to fill, excellent training, responsibility, job satisfaction and very good pay and conditions of service.

In the personnel world I am determined that we make change work for us. There are a number of ways we can use it to achieve lasting improvements which can be woven into modern and effective terms of service for the next Century.

By reacting positively to change

Unavoidable change is not necessarily for the worse; we have little to fear from the increased fairness and equity provided by new social and employment legislation.

By looking ahead, being proactive

We are keeping a close eye on social trends, so we can think about adopting those which are appropriate to us, such as the recognition of entitled partners.

By listening and responding to feedback

New policies must take account of peoples' concerns and I am proud of the number of avenues which are available for our people to make their views known. My Personnel Liaison Team visits each year; the Continuous Attitude Survey, together with a similar survey for spouses, each consult 2000 people every 6 months; a notice-giving questionnaire goes to everyone who decides to leave the Service, and of course we have the forum provided by the Divisional System.

By keeping up with lifestyle aspirations

The Navy's Freedom of Choice policies acknowledge that spouses have careers too, and that our people want to

live in their own homes whenever possible. We recognise that they want, and deserve, modern living accommodation, with privacy, and that they expect to have modern IT and Communication facilities to keep in touch with home when deployed. My job is to find ways of meeting these aspirations.

By providing a fair, tolerant workplace

Our policy towards drugs, misuse of alcohol, bullying and any other form of harassment is one of zero tolerance. New confidential telephone support lines provide a safety net to complement the Divisional System and, most importantly, any complaints are dealt with swiftly and without compromise.

By using modern career management techniques

We have introduced a new, streamlined officer career structure and fairer and more flexible promotion systems. We are replacing rating promotion rosters with arrangements based entirely on merit, and we are also modernising our elderly, closed and, frankly, bureaucratic reporting procedures, and the new Short Engagement (Seaman) will help to ease the pressures of gapping. These are all policies which enable us to make better use of really valuable resources - people.

By encouraging achievement

Personal Development Records provide a way for everyone to build a portfolio of skills and civilian-recognised qualifications to take away when they eventually leave the Service. In addition to this, the SDR has provided funding for everyone to achieve NVQ2 within the first three years of service, and enhanced the Individual Refund Scheme.

These are all ways of managing change, to modernise, to make progress and, as a direct consequence, to improve quality of life, morale and efficiency.

CAREER MANAGEMENT FOR RATINGS

By Commander Derek Hart, Staff of Commo

*T*here is something of a revolution underway in the Naval Manning Agency - a clear drive towards better career management of the rating corps. The drive follows the reports of Sir Michael Bell's Independent Review and the Rating Corps Study Group, supported by feedback from the Continuous Attitude Survey and Second Sea Lord's Personnel Liaison Team, which all suggested that efforts should be made to narrow the gap between the career management of officers and ratings.

Early investigations concluded that a sudden big bang change to "appointing" ratings was probably neither necessary nor needed and an open-minded, open-ended strategy was devised to bring about gradual, controlled change. A package of measures was brought together: some were small, low cost improvements which could be introduced quickly, some require further work to refine them and obtain the necessary resources, whilst others, for the moment, must remain on hold. The advantage of this approach is that some improvements can be introduced immediately; the main disadvantage being that the more radical changes cannot happen as quickly as some would like.

A number of small, but nevertheless important changes have already happened - Commodore Naval Drafting has reorganised his staff to provide a "Career Management" focus, and a list of forthcoming "job vacancies" appeared for the first time in the June edition of "Navy News." Ratings qualified for promotion to Warrant Officer have, since April, been offered written assessments of their promotion prospects and a detailed comparison of drafting practices for RN ratings and RAF airmen was carried out in June. Already we have

seen some benefits from these early attempts to make career management more open and accessible to individual ratings.

Improvements will continue, with the opening of a Local Drafting Office in Devonport in April 1999 for a trial period initially. This is not a return to the old days of "Base Port drafting," but it will enable Devonport ratings to have direct access to drafting representatives who can offer first hand advice and guidance. Greater contact between individuals and their drafters is being investigated across the board and we will also soon see the introduction of new ratings' report forms and the abolition of advancement rosters, in favour of selective promotion at all levels. This will enable the very best and most ambitious ratings to be promoted quickly to the highest levels.

The next couple of years will see many minor changes and some very major ones

In the longer term, giving drafters full access to ratings' reports would make the selection of "round pegs" for "round holes" much easier and more efficient; it seems a logical step but the resource and manpower implications need to be fully investigated first.

The ideas don't stop there: the next couple of years will see many minor changes and some very major ones. The important point is that we are determined not just to change - but to change for the better. We must also not lose sight of the fact that, although career management is essential for the motivation and retention of our people, the primary aim is to meet the needs of the Service by filling complement billets at sea and ashore.



ETHNIC MINORITY RECRUITING

By Commander Keith Manchanda DNR

The Navy together with the other Armed Services is committed to improving diversity within our work force. As a service we are all familiar with initiatives for increasing the number of women at all levels within the Navy. However, over recent months it has become clear that we also need to improve ethnic minority representation.

Currently members of minority groups represent 6.7% of the British population. In the Naval service we have less than 1% visible ethnic representation. We are clearly not representative of the whole society we exist to defend and we are missing out on able people we cannot afford to be without. Continuing this undesirable situation will lead to charges of elitism and discrimination which do nothing to enhance our standing in the public eye as a whole and erode morale. As important, perceptions of bullying and racism, which are widely held by some members of the general public, act as barriers to recruitment as a whole while

exacerbating our inability to attract very able recruits from the growing ethnic minority population.

A wide variety of initiatives are in place to improve our recruitment in this area. We have a bespoke advertising campaign in specialist newspapers and on ethnic radio and cable TV. We offer visits to ships and establishments and sponsor events of interest to minority communities, such as major support for the first ever Asian Mega Mela (Festival of culture) at the Birmingham NEC in November, and a float in the Notting Hill Carnival. With strong representation by careers staff and the Ethnic Minorities Liaison Team at Asian and African-Caribbean careers and other fairs, we are raising awareness and interacting directly with school leavers. Additionally, in an attempt to improve the application rate of ethnic minority enquirers, the Navy, uniquely among the services, is piloting personal development courses for potential recruits. These courses, or PDCs, are a

vehicle for introducing people young to the service. They also help to boost self confidence and overcome perceptions that the Navy is exclusively white.

We have had some recruiting success and the number of ethnic minority entrants is rising. Not fast, but there is a marked improvement since monitoring began in 1996. In FY 1997/8, 0.9% of our combined officer and rating intake had an ethnic minority background, a 50% improvement on the previous year. Our target for FY 1998/9 is 2.0%. This will be a challenge, as it is taking time to change perceptions. However, views are shifting as the more adventurous school leavers seek to integrate with wider British society. As ethnic minority representation slowly builds, the role models we need to confirm our diversity will become obvious. In the process we will become more representative of British society and public concern over our employment practices should subside.

Introduction

For the MOD Family Quarter (FQ) Estate, 1996 was the year of the "Big Bang". In April of that year, The Defence Housing Executive (DHE) formally took control of MOD housing in the UK and this was followed in November by the sale of the 55,000 FQs in England and Wales to Anningtons Homes Ltd (AHL) and their immediate lease back by DHE. These changes were designed to bring greater professionalism and accountability to the management of a huge and diverse MOD asset and, in swelling Treasury coffers, provide some much needed funds for an upgrade programme. The terms of the sale also included a requirement for DHE to return at least 700 surplus FQs per year to AHL to be sold or let on the open market. This article looks at the effects of these important changes two years downstream.

Management of the Housing stock.

From the outset DHE has concentrated on two parallel processes. Firstly to gauge the overall requirement for FQs, identify those that are empty, retain a management margin and release those permanently surplus to requirements. Secondly to survey the retained stock and upgrade them as required.

The Requirement.

Recent reductions in manpower and a slow downward trend in FQ uptake have reduced the overall requirement. Currently over 13000 FQs are empty, 4000 of which are considered to be available for disposal and on each of which DHE pays AHL an annual rent of £2000. Of course they also fall under the envious gaze of developers, local councils and the empty homes agencies. Although the release programme has been slowed by uncertainties surrounding the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) nearly 1000 FQs will be released to AHL this year and the process will gather pace with over 2000 disposals planned in each of the next two years. Unfortunately these empty FQs do not always appear in discrete bundles at the edge of estates which will increase the number of mid tour moves. Furthermore a global surplus does not mean that there are no shortages areas. For instance there are significant shortfalls in officer's FQs in

Portsmouth and Abbey Wood with no building firmly programmed.

The Upgrade.

The Treasury allocated the MOD £100m from the £1.6Bn received from AHL and this has been added to some £370M to fund an upgrade programme. A full stock condition survey has been completed and DHE aim to upgrade and modernise the total retained FQ estate to modern building and energy saving standards by November 2003. For the RN this programme has begun with a £16.5m upgrade for over 630 FQs at Faslane; the first of which was handed over by Chief Executive/DHE to its proud new occupant on 1 June 1998. Other upgrade programmes are planned at Stamshaw in Portsmouth, Taranto Hill in Yeovilton and Northwood. However, just as is the case with the disposals programme, the price of upgrading poor estates may be an increase in mid tour moves for occupants in houses which are being upgraded.

Creating a Customer Focus.

The DHE operates under two potentially conflicting pressures. It answers to Ministers for the maintenance and efficient running of the FQ estate, the reduction in the large number of voids and the release of surplus FQs. At the same time it must satisfy an increasingly demanding set of Service customers for whom good housing is a very important entitlement and condition of service. The secret of success must be good

communication at all levels. To this end there is a tri-service liaison cell at DHE head office and CE/DHE has established a Customer focused communications system to ensure that their voice is heard at all levels. At the same time, in response to widespread criticism of the quality control of contracted repairs and upgrades, a system of Work Service managers and a national schedule of rates (which has already saved some 20% on the repairs budget) have been established to ensure a quick, high quality and efficient service.

Has the FQ occupant been greatly affected by all this? Largely the answer to this question is "no, not yet". The Armed Forces Pay Review Body still sets FQ rents which are neither related to the cost of maintaining the estate nor are they paid to DHE. The services still retain control of housing policy through sponsorship of the tri-service Housing Regulations and in many areas the same staff work for DHE as manned the offices previously. Unfortunately the upgrade programme and a more hard nosed approach to wastage may combine to mean that, for occupants, the most significant initial affect of the FQ "big bang" will be an increase in mid tour moves. It may take some time for the benefits of the upgrade programme and the improvements and cultural changes promised in the DHE Customers' Charter to work their way through the system, but although slow they will arrive.

AFLOAT

ACCOMMODATION

In recent years new ships have entered service with complements that are considerably smaller than in previous years. At the same time the size of frigates and destroyers has grown. In effect there is more internal volume that can be utilised for accommodation. However, in many cases this has not led to marked improvements in the quality, size and standard of accommodation. In this context accommodation covers the size, scale, layout, equipment, furniture and use of materials for officers, ratings and other ranks sleeping and recreation facilities together with those of the heads, bathrooms and dining halls.

Most ships have Junior Ratings (JRs) accommodated in messdecks. One notable exception is HMS SCOTT where every officer and rating is accommodated in a single cabin which has ensuite facilities. Whilst she is unique in having the space to allow this there should be scope for exploiting her layout in future designs. For ships with male and female personnel, large messdecks are a very inflexible arrangement which causes the Naval Drafting Authority considerable difficulty to ensure that the mix of male/female ratings fits the available accommodation.

Ships that are on the drawing board today will start being accepted into service towards the end of the next decade and likely to be still operating in the 2030s. People joining the Navy in the next century will expect higher quality accommodation. They will not put up with a cramped sleeping and living space which offers little privacy and minimal recreation facilities. The standard of accommodation afloat is already a feature of dissatisfaction and this is likely to become more prominent putting retention under strain. In the future our people who are being given greater responsibility will expect a higher standard of accommodation.

Therefore, it is planned that future surface ships will have cabin accommodation for all personnel together with other improvements such as larger bunks, more space, bigger lockers, carpeted accommodation and heads and showers adjacent to cabin complexes. Regrettably, and despite their size and relatively small ship's companies, none of the new amphibious ships will have cabin accommodation for JRs. This was due in part to the design being cost capped. It is recognised that this move could increase through life costs, in the form of recruiting and training, if dissatisfaction with accommodation standards leads to an increase in premature voluntary release. However, this should not be repeated in the Common New Generation Frigate (CNGF), due to replace the Type 42 Destroyers in the next decade, and the subsequent Future Surface Combatant where cabin accommodation will be used

SINGLE LIVING ACCOMMODATION

The standard of Single Living Accommodation (SLA) throughout the Navy ranges from excellent, and very comfortable, to extremely poor and particularly unattractive, and too much

of our accommodation falls at the lower end of this range. This is due to under resourcing and the conflicting demands for limited resources from other, higher priority, areas. To the Navy's credit this has been highlighted and, like the other services, work is in hand to identify the exact scale of the problem to establish a base line from which to coordinate improvements.

There is strong support for this initiative from the Secretary of State himself who supports the need to identify where improvements are required, and this Ministerial imperative is set against comprehensive evidence from the Continuous Attitude Survey, those leaving the service, the SDR Liaison Team and the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, that providing a good standard of SLA has a clear bearing on retention.

The Navy Board welcomes the attention accommodation is receiving and the Directorate of Naval Service Conditions is working towards the provision of single, ensuite accommodation for all. Of course there are many factors that are likely to impinge on this aspiration, such as cost, location, and, in the event of major refurbishment programmes of current accommodation, its suitability to undergo extensive internal restructuring. However such factors while important, have to be measured against the imperative to ensure that any SLA improvement taking place today caters for the needs and expectations of our personnel for at least the next 25 years.

It is policy that when personnel are required to occupy non - Service accommodation, such as in a hotel when on detached duty, single ensuite rooms are to be used. Therefore, it follows that when the service is providing SLA it should be to the same standard.