



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE



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Introduction

1. This audit has been carried out in line with the Training and Development Departmental Service Plan as approved by Training Management Board with the intention that the audit findings and recommendations support improvements in performance management.
2. This report contains observations and recommendations of SM Steve Kelly (Station Training Support and Performance Team) resulting from an audit of Brigade Control Training Department (BCTD) and specifically the Fire Survival training course.
3. Whilst BCTD do not come under the auspices of the Training and Development Department (T & D) the audit systems applied are the same as those applied to T & D courses.
3. The audit's focus was on the quality management systems employed by BCTD to determine and manage training course standards and performance. The Fire Survival training course was used as a sample course with which to test current systems.
4. Information was gathered in the following ways:
 - Structured interview with BCTD senior management
 - Observation of the Fire Survival training course
 - Discussions with BCTD trainers
 - Provision of supporting evidence

Course overview

5. Definition: A "fire survival" call is a call made to Brigade Control by a member of public who is trapped by fire and in danger. In such circumstances it is desirable for Fire Control Officers to be able to provide constructive advice to minimise the hazard to the caller, in addition to provide general reassurance.
6. The Fire Survival training course is designed to provide candidates (Fire Control Officers/Team Leaders) with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil the above function.
7. The course content is based upon a number of standards:
 - Fire Service Circular 10/1993: Training for Fire Control Staff (FSC 10/93)
 - Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document
 - Fire Service Circular 54-2004 : Emergency Call Management (FSC 54/04)
8. The Fire Survival training course is delivered by BCTD currently situated at Brigade Control, Greenwich View Place.

Course content management

9. The BCTD is a small team including 5 full-time trainers, all of whom have carried out the role of Brigade Control Officer. This team is required to deliver all Brigade Control specific training. Adherence of course content to standards is managed internally and in some cases is delivered by the content managers.
10. The Fire Survival training course content is clearly governed by documented standards; however there is an obvious need for the content to be contextualised for a London Fire Brigade environment. This contextualisation has not resulted in any apparent movement away from the requirements of the standards documented in para. 7.
11. It is pleasing to note that all staff interviewed had an awareness of the governing standards.
12. The key document for guiding content and delivery of the Fire Survival course is the Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document. This is the national training document however the version offered for review held no national branding and was only available in hard copy format. Its appearance as a key training guidance document for Brigade Control staff is somewhat outdated and unprofessional, appearing to be a 2nd generation photocopy version. Whilst much of its content is still current some terminology and pictorial representations require updating.
13. Notwithstanding the above, course content which has been driven by the Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document is delivered in a mainly verbal and aural medium being supported by Powerpoint presentations and flip chart work. These methods of content delivery have been seen as conforming to what the brigade would expect from one of its training teams.
14. Supporting Powerpoint slides were seen to be effective and conforming to authority guidelines of colour use of text and backgrounds, font sizes and types.
15. **Recommendations**
 - **Update the training document: Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance.**

Course observation

16. Course observation was carried out as follows;
1 day course (GVP) Trainers: Chris Sharp, Amelia Reynolds, Steve Willet (Fire Safety)

Reception and introduction

17. As candidates were current control officers formal reception and initial introduction was not required. Current control officers are fully aware of the location of the training suite and the identity of training staff. The three course candidates arrived on time at the correct location with training commencing at approx 08:40 hrs.
18. An introductory briefing was delivered providing details of the house keeping necessities, course content and scheduling. Due to candidate/trainer familiarity there was no requirement for any "ice breaker" type sessions.

19. Candidates are provided with a comprehensive course handout booklet which includes a Level 2 (Acquisition of learning) assessment. However this assessment is an optional self-check tool. It would be of value to trainers and candidates alike that candidates are required to undertake this assessment in a non-threatening way as part of the course introduction. This would provide some measure of current understanding of the key requirements of fire survival call management. Pre-assessments such as this also have the effect of focussing candidates on the key learning outcomes required for the course.

20. **Recommendations**

- **Implement a pre-course Level 2 knowledge assessment to establish current levels of competence and understanding.**

Trainer performance and content delivery

21. Chris Sharp and Amelia Reynolds are both fairly experienced trainers and it was quickly apparent that they were comfortable in a training environment providing contrasting styles of training yet ensuring support was provided to each other. Both were seen to have sufficient depth of knowledge around the subject comfortably answering all questions posed by candidates throughout the period of observation.
22. Training commenced with a trainer facilitated discussion that revealed early on that all candidates had previously dealt with fire survival calls. Trainers placed a great deal of emphasis upon the need to obtain immediate support from their work colleagues during a fire survival call situation.
23. This discussion also revealed that since the fire incident at Lakanal House, Camberwell (03.07.09) there appears to be real concerns from candidates surrounding their legal accountability with regard to requirements placed upon them when dealing with this type of call. Trainers emphasised that adherence to FSC 10/93 and the Fire Survival course content provided the necessary legal robustness that candidates required. This appeared to placate candidates although some further action by Brigade Control management in terms of allaying the fears of staff may prove fruitful.
24. The morning session continued with an input covering Call Handling Techniques with the required learning outcomes being clearly stated.
25. This session covered a variety of call handling techniques, communication styles and incorporated the subject of transactional analysis. This session was supplemented by flip chart work, and real life and demonstration recordings of fire survival type calls to prompt discussion. A failure of the CD player required to play recordings, whilst unwelcome and unusual, was quickly replaced without greatly affecting the training delivery.
26. Candidates were seen to be fully engaged with this session with the trainers effectively facilitating discussion by a number of thought provoking questions to candidates.
27. This session was effectively summarised and fully met the requirements of the Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document.
28. The next session, Introduction to Fire and Fire Behaviour, was delivered by WM Steve Willet from the Fire Safety Training Team (FSTT). The required learning outcomes were clearly stated and the presentation met authority guidelines.
29. This session covered basic fire science, human behaviour in fire, together with building construction, fire safety concepts, evacuation strategies and how they are designed to protect people. The session was supplemented by graphical and video support for the topics discussed. This again fully met the requirements of the Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document.

30. WM Willet was seen to be an engaging trainer who delivered the content to a high standard.
31. Candidates were very interested in the subject matter asking numerous questions of the trainer. They commented on how the session put their role into context and greatly improved their understanding of how advice they could provide to callers could have potentially major effects.
32. Candidates asked for handouts on the subjects covered however none were available. Whilst WM Willet assured candidates that they would receive some supporting documentation it would be preferable that such documentation was available on the day.
33. Candidates were then given a suitable lunch break.
34. The afternoon session began by covering the provision of advice to fire survival callers in line with documented standards. Historical evidence was provided indicating events that had driven the writing of standards and developing training. Emphasis was placed on the fact that aide memoires to assist staff were available on the brigade control system and should be adhered to. This was further supported by a link to the aide memoire from a Powerpoint slide.
35. Once again real life recordings were used to support learning. Each specific area of a recorded fire survival call was broken down, examined, discussed, and omissions and good practice identified.
36. Candidates were active in these discussions with trainers only requiring to facilitate and summarise the session. It was apparent at this stage that the observed candidates had a good underpinning knowledge of the full requirements of a Control Officer during a fire survival call and were by this stage using personal anecdotes to support their own learning.
37. **Recommendations**
 - **Consider management action to allay Control Officers concerns regarding their legal position when providing advice during a fire survival call.**
 - **Liaise with the Fire Safety Training Team to obtain suitable candidate handouts/reference documents to support the fire safety training sessions.**

Assessment and results recording

38. The final session of the day was practical role play. Again this session meets the requirements of the Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document.
39. During this session candidates are required to deal with a simulated fire survival call using the facilities provided in the training suite. These facilities mirror those provided at normal control officer positions. Each candidate undergoes one fire survival call simulation. The "caller" role play is provided by one trainer external to the training suite. The second trainer adopts a support/assessor role. The other two candidates provide a supporting role as they would should a real fire survival call be received.
40. Each candidate is exposed to a single and fairly simple fire survival call for duration of approximately 90 secs to 2 minutes during which their performance is monitored.
41. Whilst the assessor does provide some measure of performance assessment of candidates during this role play it is carried out in a very informal manner. There is no documented list of expected actions/behaviours against which candidate's performance should be measured, nor are any records of performance documented at the time or after the role play. This may potentially expose the brigade should such records wish to be scrutinised at a later date.

42. Furthermore, candidates are exposed to only one role play scenario. Whilst there are limitations on the course in terms of time, it should be recognised that such role plays provide candidates opportunity to a) demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of the course, and to b) demonstrate under controlled conditions their current level of performance. As such every effort should be made to ensure that candidates are given the fullest opportunity to demonstrate both a) & b) and that suitable records of achievement are being kept.
43. Observed candidates have commented that the role plays they undertook were "fairly straight forward" and "not particularly challenging".
44. Opportunity therefore exists to strengthen the performance assessment element of the course. This may include:
- lengthening the course to provide candidates with more exposure to role play scenarios
 - building a robust expected actions and behaviours assessment recording sheet
 - providing extra assessors during the role play elements
 - improving training performance recording
45. **Recommendations**
- **Review the role play element of the course and ensure that a robust assessment and recording process is implemented.**

Systems for performance management

Planning of training

46. In order to maintain high levels of quality in any training department adequate planning of training must be carried out. Whilst some training delivered by BCTD is somewhat reactive, driven by e.g. a requirement for new entrants, or a software upgrade to Brigade Control systems, some of the delivered training, including the Fire Survival course, is not.
47. It appears that adequate long term planning of the regularly delivered elements of the BCTD curriculum is not being carried out. This may account for the fact that the delivery of Fire Survival continuation training to observed candidates fell outside the parameters of recommendations found in the Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document, i.e. 12 monthly.
48. However Brigade Control principal management have stated that once the current tranche of Fire Survival training is completed it is planned for all staff to receive a full course every 24 months with 12 monthly interim training being delivered via a computer-based training solution.
49. Notwithstanding the above it is vitally important that adequate training planning systems are implemented for all courses including appropriate training records that support the cyclical training planning process.
50. **Recommendations:**
- **Implement adequate training planning and recording systems**

Management of Level 1 (Reaction and opinion) information

51. BCTD does not come under the auspices of T & D and as such has not been part of the quarterly evaluation reporting process undertaken by the Station Training Support & Performance Team (STSP). STSP manage the Course Evaluation Management System (CEMS) however to date no BCTD course have been activated for automatic Level 1 evaluation via this system.
52. However BCTD do operate an internal Level 1 process. Evidence has been viewed of some Level 1 data collation, analysis and action planning where appropriate. Further evidence has been provided where identified risk critical issues have been reacted to in a timely and appropriate manner.
53. A full evaluation of the Fire Survival training course is planned for August 2010 of which the Level 1 data will form a part.
54. **Recommendations:**
 - **Liase with the Station Training Support and Performance Team to establish potential improvements in Level 1 evaluation by using CEMS to support the Level 1 process.**

Management of Level 2 (Acquisition of learning) information

55. The Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance training document states that role play should be assessed, however little detail is provided as to how that assessment should be conducted. As stated in paras. 38 – 44 the Fire Survival course does not incorporate a robust assessment element. Knowledge assessment is optional and practical assessment is informal with performance results going unrecorded.
56. As a result measurement of candidate performance is dependant upon trainers identifying issues which may need addressing without any specific supporting assessment process or standard measurement document. This may deprive candidates of a full opportunity to identify their learning needs and undermine future development requirements.
57. Furthermore, without the implementation of a robust assessment process the achievement of all course learning outcomes remains unconfirmed and therefore leaves the value of the Fire Survival course open to challenge.
58. **Recommendations:**
 - **See Para. 45**

Management of Level 3 (Application in the workplace) information

59. Brigade Control Team Leaders and Operations Managers undertake performance monitoring as part of their role. This responsibility is supported by the physical parameters of the control room where these staff can undertake close-in monitoring of workplace performance (Level 3) effectively.
60. Information on workplace performance and training is a standard agenda item during monthly management meetings with the Senior Operations Manager, and both Watch and Training based Operations Managers.

61. One of the key roles of Control Officers is their communication with frontline appliances. This communication is critical during a response to a fire survival type call. It may therefore be of value to identify further Level 3 information that may be obtained from Service Delivery surrounding operational staff's perception of such communication with a view to further improving performance and training.

62. **Recommendations:**

- **Identify methods to obtain Level 3 data from Service Delivery**

Quality Management and Assurance

63. Any overarching quality management plan should document how the quality of training is reviewed, maintained and managed. BCTD does not have such a plan.

64. However Brigade Control does have a number of quality assurance systems in place. One of the key processes is the close-in monitoring of staff performance and subsequent managerial discussion as referred to in paras. 59 - 60.

65. Evidence has been produced of a regular content review of the New Entrants course being conducted and a full review and update of the Fire Survival course following the events of the Lakanal House incident, July 2009.

66. Brigade Control also use an IT system known as Call Coach to monitor, review and document staff performance. Call Coach allows recorded emergency calls and the receiving control officer's responses to be imported as recorded audio files into the Call Coach software for formal review at a later date.

67. Control Officers and Team Leaders are subject to a monthly review by line managers using the Call Coach system. A confidential assessment of performance is conducted against set criteria on a one-to-one basis using the imported audio files to support discussion and feedback. This provides for a very effective workplace assessment of staff.

68. It should be noted that Brigade Control staff have been integral in the development of the performance criteria used in Call Coach. Such criteria would be critical to meeting the requirement of the recommendation stated in para. 45.

69. **Recommendations:**

- **Review the Call Coach performance criteria and implement appropriate elements of these criteria to any subsequent role play assessment process.**

Summary

70. This audit provides recommendations for action to improve the performance management systems of the Brigade Control Training Department based upon the sample course observations, structured interview responses and evidence provision.
71. Whilst BCTD has never come under the management of T & D this does not appear to have been largely detrimental to the department.
72. Staff appear motivated and committed with management clearly demonstrating a recognition of how, with the necessary support, improvements can be achieved.
73. Some work is required in improving assessment methods and the training recording and planning processes and it is in these areas that greater liaison with T & D may prove useful. These improvements would enhance management ability to review performance and adhere to national standards where required.
74. The development of a formal Quality Management Plan would provide a robust framework to effectively manage all aspects of Brigade Control training
75. The Call Coach system appears to be an effective tool for managing staff performance in terms of their response to emergency calls. This system also could provide the basis for performance measurement on training courses where a clear measure of ability is required.
76. In the case of the sampled Fire Survival training course, the required national standards referred to in para. 7 are currently being met.
77. However these standards, whilst making reference to "assessment", do not stipulate how, or to what degree, this assessment should be undertaken. It is therefore incumbent upon Brigade Control management to define for themselves to what degree staff performance should be measured and recorded.
78. It is noticeable that the Lakanal House incident has had great affect upon how staff at all levels perceive their role both personally and professionally. This fact provides great opportunity to build upon the quality management processes already in place and drive through the necessary changes and improvements to the quality management of the BCTD training curriculum.

Recommendations summary

1. **Update the training document: Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Fire Survival Guidance.**
2. **Implement a pre-course Level 2 knowledge assessment to establish current levels of competence and understanding.**
3. **Consider management action to allay Control Officers concerns regarding their legal position when providing advice during a fire survival call.**
4. **Liaise with the Fire Safety Training Team to obtain suitable candidate handouts/reference documents to support the fire safety training sessions.**
5. **Review the role play element of the course and ensure that a robust assessment process is implemented.**
6. **Implement adequate training planning and recording systems.**
7. **Liaise with the Station Training Support and Performance Team to establish potential improvements in Level 1 evaluation by using CEMS to support the Level 1 process.**
8. **Identify methods to obtain Level 3 data from Service Delivery.**
9. **Review the Call Coach performance criteria and implement appropriate elements of these criteria to any subsequent role play assessment process.**