

REGIONALWHOLETIME RECRUITMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

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REGIONAL FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As part of the modernisation agenda and strategy for regional collaboration, the Regional Management Board has approved a proposal to undertake wholetime recruitment & selection on a regional basis. The method of undertaking this is to employ a regional manager responsible for managing, administering & operating both (1) Wholetime Recruitment & Selection and (2) Assessment & Development Centres (ADCs). Both processes would be co-ordinated centrally on behalf of the 5 services within the region, calling on resources from each FRS.

1.2 The intended benefits of this procedure are to deliver:

- Efficiencies by undertaking wholetime recruitment on a regional basis, managed, administered and operated centrally
- Consistency by introducing a common recruitment process and common minimum standards & requirements for candidates across the region
- An enhanced professional image of the service to candidates by introducing consistency and integration across the East Midlands region
- An improved ability to integrate other employment policies regionally; a regional recruitment process facilitates the future integration of induction, probation, equalities issues including reasonable adjustments to be made under the DDA, workforce planning processes etc
- An improved ability to implement an integrated regional e-recruitment process
- Compliance with forthcoming national guidance, introduced in the ODPM “National Firefighter Selection Process” document

1.3 The regional efficiencies promised above will be delivered by the undertaking of recruitment and selection campaigns on a regional basis on behalf of all authorities within the region. This centrally managed process will provide:

- Avoidance of multiple applications by candidates for more than 1 FRS within the East Midlands region
- More effective, consistent and cost-efficient advertising
- Enhanced efficiencies in respect of the administration and operation of the process; the centrally managed process will free-up resources that are currently used less efficiently undertaking recruitment at Fire & Rescue Service level
- A wider pool of “pre-tested” candidates, encouraged to be more flexible in their choice of Fire & Rescue Service
- An enhanced regional workforce planning process, allowing the “pre-approved” pool to be reduced yet enhancing the forecasting of vacancies and the ability to fill them quickly. This will allow the timing and size of campaigns to be more closely linked to the region’s forecasted recruitment needs

1.4 Advertising and response-handling will be managed by one host Fire & Rescue Service, alternating with each campaign. The location of each selection test will

also be arranged by and held within that Fire & Rescue Service's geographical area. The initial sift of returned application forms, through to the final selection test, will be undertaken by the team of trained personnel consisting of equal representation from each Fire & Rescue Service.

- 1.5 Although the whole process will be managed centrally, the recruitment administration and physical location of tests (the "Host FRS") will alternate with each campaign to remain fair to candidates and the 5 FRSs.

REGIONAL FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT & SELECTION PROCEDURE

2. THE RECRUITMENT CYCLE

- 2.1 The right hand column within Appendix 3 details the cycle of the integrated elements that make up the recruitment process including a regionally-consistent Positive Action programme, the local consideration of Transfer-in requests, Workforce Planning etc.
- 2.2 Although the trigger points for stepping from one element to another will remain constant eg Positive Action must finish prior to a recruitment advertisement being published, the length of each element needs to vary depending on the number of vacancies to be filled. This is to allow the matching of resources to the number of forecast candidates at each stage of the selection process.
- 2.3 The time periods contained in Appendix 3 for the selection stages ie advertisement to Interview stages are therefore indicative and will be finalised as part of the Workforce Planning discussions for each campaign.

3. POSITIVE ACTION PROGRAMME

- 3.1 At the time of writing this policy, discussions are being finalised on how Positive Action will be delivered to provide a consistent message to candidates across the region, using similar literature and equipment and frequency of delivery.
- 3.2 It is envisaged that the content would include the opportunity to experience the physical Point of Entry Selection Tests and an explanation of the Firefighter role map, Personal Qualities & Attributes and the remaining selection tests.
- 3.3 Due to the need to impose a quota on the number of application forms issued (this enables the matching of resources to vacancy-need, as detailed in paragraph 1.3), the application process and means of applying should also be explained in detail as part of the presentation.
- 3.4 25% of the application form quota will be ring-fenced for distribution to members of the community under Positive Action initiatives. Each FRS will use local discretion to manage this process, ensuring the 25% quota is not exceeded. FRSs must decide locally how best to maintain details of such candidates and maintain their awareness of forthcoming recruitment opportunities prior to application forms being available for issue. Due regard must be paid to the recording, monitoring and control of application forms issued via Positive Action as detailed in Section 8. Application forms must only be issued via Positive Action at the same time as the opening of the recruitment phone line.
- 3.4 As FRSs will be unaware of application form quota levels at Awareness Days or other Positive Action initiatives held early in the cycle, attendees should be informed when vacancies are going to be advertised, referred to the relevant FRS

website for up to date information and informed of the media where the recruitment advertisement will be published. This will ensure candidates not issued with forms under the 25% ring-fencing arrangement will still have the opportunity to seek an application.

- 3.5 In order to be fair & equitable to all groups of the community and ensure positive action ends immediately prior to the point of application, application forms should not be issued via any route other than that detailed above or the designated recruitment line operated by the host FRS.

4. CONSIDERATION OF TRANSFER-IN REQUESTS

- 4.1 Applications from existing Firefighters to transfer in to an FRS within the East Midlands region are not covered by this policy or process. Transfer-request candidates should be excepted from the full application form sift process.

- 4.2 Such requests should be dealt with locally, separate from this policy and process. Each FRSs will consider its own rules on any maximum % of transfers being considered each year and will exhaust this avenue for filling vacancies **prior** to assessing the number of vacancies that would need filling via the regional process. By the time of the annual workforce planning meeting to agree on the number of vacancies to be filled by the region, any transfers-in will already have been considered and firm offers of employment made. Additionally, each FRS will consider whether the current fire-related knowledge of transferees is tested within its local process.

5. WORKFORCE PLANNING – VACANCY FORECASTING

- 5.1 The process for assessing and forecasting the number of wholetime firefighter vacancies over a rolling 12 month period is detailed in Appendix 3 Flowchart 1, Box 1 and Appendix 1. This process allows each Fire & Rescue Service to assess the likely positive impact of factors including:

- retirements at normal retirement age
- potential ill health retirements / dismissals / redeployments
- voluntary retirements ie on or before 30 years service but before normal retirement age
- voluntary resignations
- organisational change (eg IRMP)

- 5.2 This process also determines the negative impact of factors on external recruitment needs including:

- organisational change (eg IRMP)
- numbers of pre-approved candidates remaining from previous recruitment campaigns

- 5.3 When assessing potential voluntary retirements, 80% of the potential should be classed as future vacancies. This % relates to data from the last 3 years and could

simply be indicative of resistance to change and individual's perceptions of the modernisation agenda ie the rate could be far less in the future. Continuous review is required over the next 2 years to ensure the rate set remains valid. (this has been assessed on DFRS, NFRS and Leicestershire data-only and needs further analysis of historic data from the other 2 FRSs to ensure this % is a safe forecast of average propensity to retire voluntarily.)

- 5.4 When assessing potential ability to recruit from any pool of pre-approved candidates from previous recruitment campaigns, a variance of 10% should be set to allow for matching candidates to their preferred FRS. The rate of variance must be reviewed after each campaign to assess whether it has been set appropriately, with any proposed changes being submitted for Regional HR Practitioners' Forum approval.
- 5.5 It must be borne in mind that the maximum currency of the pre-approved "ticket" is 6 months up to the closing date of an external advert. If no external advert is to be placed, then the effective date is 1 month after the Vacancy Forecast has been approved. This length of currency has been nationally-set but is currently merely guidance rather than prescription.
- 5.6 As it is envisaged that a regional campaign will be undertaken annually, candidates' "tickets" will be valid at the start of the next campaign. Whilst the national system remains purely guidance, a decision will be made at each regional Workforce Planning meeting on whether the entire list of pre-approved candidates should be exhausted before any vacancies in excess of this are advertised externally.
- 5.7 Alternatively, a decision may be made to only offer employment to those pre-approved candidates who scored above a certain point and externally advertise for any remaining vacancies. This decision would be based on a number of factors including:
 - the distribution of scores for the pre-approved candidates ie there may be concern that a large proportion of ticket holders scored the bare minimum pass-mark and re-advertising would produce a pool of candidates with far greater potential
 - if exhausting the list of pre-approved candidates would still necessitate an external advertisement for a very small number of vacancies eg if an external advertisement is required simply to fill 5 remaining vacancies then consideration should be given to advertising for 15 in the likelihood that the extra 10 recruited externally may show greater potential than the bottom scoring 10 of the previous campaign
 - alternatively, if the number of pre-approved candidates exceeds the number of vacancies it may be felt prudent to save resources, fill all vacancies with these candidates and delay an external campaign until the following year
 - When making these assessments, due regard should be given to the means of choosing successful applicants as detailed in Section 12

- 5.8 A number of FRSs in other parts of the country have been early-implementers of Role-map based training frameworks and have been able to **formally** assess operational personnel on the Retained duty system as fully-competent. Such candidates when applying for posts within this region may be exempted from the initial application stage, simply submitting an expression of interest and **step on to the process at the PQA interview stage.**
- 5.9 All other RDS candidates will be required to complete a simple Expression of Interest form rather than the standard PQA based form and step-on at the Written Test stage.
- 5.10 The regional recruitment manager must undertake this annual vacancy forecasting process on a 6 monthly basis using data provided by and in liaison with each Fire & Rescue Service, making appropriate revisions using trend analysis. The regional recruitment manager will use this annual vacancy forecast to propose the size of campaigns & the number of weeks required for selection exercise and submit this, along with the Annual Recruitment Plan if external advertising is required (see below), 6 monthly for Regional HR Forum approval.

6. **WORKFORCE PLANNING – ANNUAL RECRUITMENT PLAN**

- 6.1 If the Wholetime Vacancy Forecast shows that there will be a need to advertise for external candidates (ie vacancy demand exceeds internal supply of pre-approved candidates), the regional recruitment manager, in liaison with each FRS must determine the Annual Wholetime Recruitment Plan as detailed in Appendix 2, and Flowchart 1 (boxes 2-4).
- 6.2 This stage of the process determines the number of candidates required at each stage of the recruitment & selection process in order to arrive at the required number of appointable candidates. Appendix 3 shows the spreadsheet that must be completed to arrive at the indicative answer. This spreadsheet has been programmed so that the number of recruits required (as set by the Vacancy Forecasting process) is entered at line 3. Once this box is completed, the numbers required for each stage is automatically forecast in each subsequent box.
- 6.3 Use of this spreadsheet allows the region to firstly set the quota for the maximum number of application forms to be issued. Further data provided by the spreadsheet allows the team to assess the actual number of candidates reaching each stage against the figure previously forecast. This allows the team to benchmark progress at each stage against historic data, allowing the opportunity for remedial action part-way through a recruitment campaign. (the drop-off % at each stage of the process has been assessed using DFRS and LFRS data from the 2006 pilots)
- 6.4 The regional team must continuously review the validity of the drop-off % rates using trend analysis, proposing amendments to the % rates where appropriate. This should ensure that at the end of the pilot period, all calculations used to

forecast vacancies and numbers required at each stage of the process are valid and effective.

7. RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

- 7.1 Appendix 7 details draft copy relating to the application form quota and the regional management of this process that may be used for advertisements, flyers, posters, targeted leaflet drops etc. The full contents of advertising copy will be agreed at the regional Workforce Planning meeting prior to each campaign.
- 7.2 Similar wording to that contained in appendix 7 relating to the application form quota must always be included in order to highlight the need for candidates to contact the recruitment line as soon as possible and so that candidates understand the reasons for implementing a quota.
- 7.3 Although artwork and copy will be agreed regionally, the advertisements will then be placed by each FRS within their own county. This will allow local discretion to use alternative media including radio, posters etc.

8. ISSUING AND CONTROL OF APPLICATION FORMS

- 8.1 The application form to be used is contained in Appendix 4. This is the national version which complies with DCLG guidance as detailed in the (then ODPM) document “Implementing the National Firefighter Selection Process”, amended to facilitate the undertaking of CRB checks and the expression of candidates’ preference for location within the region.
- 8.2 As detailed previously, a quota for the number of application forms to be issued will be implemented in each campaign as part of the Workforce Planning exercise (Section 6).
- 8.3 Due to this, the return of application forms will be monitored by the host FRS to ensure they have been returned by the same person as requested them, both from the recruitment line or from the ring-fenced Positive Action route. To facilitate this, a database will be maintained by the host FRS, recording the details of the person requesting an application form. Following the cross-matching of those returned, any anomalies will be investigated by the host FRS who will make a decision on whether to accept the application. This is to deter and police the obtaining of application forms from candidates via unauthorised routes.
- 8.4 At the end of each campaign, the updated database will be submitted for the retention of the regional recruitment manager. This will allow future trend analysis to assess advertising effectiveness, the validity of selection tests compared to performance in role, equality & diversity analysis etc. If necessary, it will also allow the identification of candidates who repeatedly fail to return the application, fail selection tests or do not attend. If it appears an appropriately significant problem, this can be addressed in future reviews of this policy.

9. RECRUITMENT TELEPHONE LINE SLOTS

- 9.1 To ensure all groups of the community have an equal opportunity to obtain application forms, the recruitment lines will open only during specific slots. Any recruitment advertising method used will make the full contents of this section of the policy clear to candidates and a recorded message on the recruitment line will inform callers of this when rung outside of these slots.
- 9.2 The quota will be divided equally over the number of slots and when the quota for that particular slot is exhausted, the phone lines will be closed and the appropriate recorded message activated.
- 9.3 The times, length and frequency of slots will be agreed at the regional Workforce Planning meeting and will obviously depend on the size of the application form quota. In order to be equitable, the slots must as a minimum include the following criteria:
- be equal in length
 - a reasonable proportion of weekend, early morning and evening slots
 - weekday half-day slots equally mixed between morning and afternoon
- 9.4 Candidates will be asked their first 2 location preferences to enable a continuous assessment of the ability to fill all vacancies within each FRS. Any envisaged problems must be raised with the regional recruitment manager. The regional recruitment manager will consider remedial action including increasing the application form quota accordingly.

10. SELECTION PROCESS

- 10.1 Appendix 3, Flowchart 2 details the range of sifting and selection tests used, culminating in a PQA based interview. For reasons of confidentiality, examples of sifting criteria and marking criteria for written tests & interviews have not been included in this policy. The regional recruitment manager and the recruitment lead in each FRS will be responsible for maintaining the availability & currency of these documents as well as for protecting their security.
- 10.2 Flowchart 2 details the process to be followed in administering the selection process and highlights the responsibilities of the regional recruitment manager, the host FRS and the equal contribution of resources from the 5 FRSs to assess the tests.
- 10.3 Appendices 5 and 6 detail the physical Point of Entry Selection Tests and the equipment to be used.
- 10.4 At the end of each selection stage, the regional recruitment manager will undertake an integration exercise to ensure consistency of marking between assessors and investigate any anomalies, implementing remedial action where necessary.

11. SELECTION TEST ASSESSORS

11.1 To be equitable, the raft of sifting stages and selection tests require an equal representation of personnel from each FRS within the region. These assessors need to be trained / qualified as follows:

Test	Requirement
Application form sift	Knowledge of F/F PQAs eg ADC Assessor; qualified HR professional; internally trained and experienced in R&S, cascade-trained in PQAs by ADC Assessor or Water for Fish
Psychological Tests	BPS Level A Certificate of Competence in Psychometric Use – this is required to provide 1 to 1 feedback if required As the marking is undertaken automatically by software provided by DCLG, no other qualified personnel are required
POESTs	Possess the competencies to instruct candidates on how to undertake the test and time them in accordance with parameters set by DCLG. Additionally to be able to assess whether a candidate is risking harm to themselves or others by continuing to undertake a test. POESTs could therefore be managed by any member of staff who is operationally competent. 20% of the assessment team may be non-operational but experienced selection staff, working under the co-ordination of an easily-accessible operational member
PQA Interview	The Interviewer must have received training specific to this stage, either directly from Water for Fish or cascaded. The note-taker must either satisfy the above criterion or be an ADC Assessor

11.2 These requirements will be reviewed by the regional recruitment manager as part of an ongoing review of the process immediately following the completion of campaign 1. The 2 main factors affecting this will be further guidance / prescription from the DCLG and the effect of changing the requirements would be on the availability of resources from the 5 FRSs.

12. MATCHING OF CANDIDATES TO FRSs

12.1 Following the results of the interviews being known, the regional recruitment manager will meet with the 5 FRS recruitment leads to match successful candidates to the vacancies within each FRS for attendance on either the first or subsequent courses planned for the following 12 months. At this stage, the candidates' success will be subject to awaiting CRB and medical clearance (see box 31, Flowchart 3).

12.2 Wherever possible, each candidate will be matched to their preferred FRS but due regard will be given to ensuring high scorers are not lost due to all vacancies being filled in their first or second choice of FRS.

- 12.3 The list of remaining passed candidates in excess of the identified vacancies will be held on a list maintained by the regional recruitment manager. Candidates on this list will be a regional resource. If any candidates allocated to a specific FRS subsequently fail CRB / Medical, then this regional reserve list will be the FRS's first route of remedy.
- 12.4 If the regional list has already been exhausted, the second route will be contacting FRSs to consider any candidates already allocated to a FRS but not yet allocated to a training course and given a contract / offer of employment. It is for this reason (amongst others) that offers of employment should only be made by FRSs immediately prior to the appropriate training course rather than eg 6 months in advance of the next course.
- 12.5 It is intended that this flexibility will mainly apply to filling roles due to failed CRB / Medical checks, candidates obtaining alternative employment or in **very exceptional circumstances** due to unforeseen vacancies that are identified after the campaign has begun. It is the regional recruitment manager's decision as to whether the reserve list is used in this eventuality, otherwise there is no incentive for FRSs to undertake their workforce planning with any degree of accuracy.
- 12.6 Candidates from the "reserve" list should be initially contacted in order of their score rather than in order of their preference for FRSs and given the opportunity of considering employment with an FRS not previously highlighted. This will protect the region from criticism that a candidate was chosen on any criterion other than score.

13. **CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU DISCLOSURE**

- 13.1 Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act Exceptions Order (1975) there are some exceptions to the general principle regarding the declaration of spent convictions. Certain posts within each Fire & Rescue Service are excepted from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, which means that all convictions (whether spent or unspent), cautions, reprimands and final warnings need to be disclosed.
- 13.2 It is accepted that all Firefighter roles within the region require satisfactory Standard CRB disclosure before an offer of employment will be made. Those FRSs using DFRS as an umbrella body need to refer to the regional CRB policy to understand their responsibilities and administer the CRB documentation in compliance with this.
- 13.3 DFRS acts as the Umbrella Body for some FRSs within the region for the undertaking of CRB disclosures and will process applications accordingly.