



**Welcome to the fourth edition of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) News produced by the Defence Fire & Rescue Service. This issue explains the new National Firefighter Selection (NFS) process, outlines how the DFRS intend to implement it and reports on the trials completed so far.**

### **Historic Recruitment**

Defence Fire & Rescue Service (DFRS) and Contract/Agency Fire & Rescue Services have historically recruited firefighters at station level, conducting a recruitment process as and when needed. Although recruitment was included within MOD Fire Service Personnel Directive 1/2004 (Recruitment and Operational Fitness Standards for Firefighters Employed on the MOD Estate) individual stations naturally interpret the requirements in slightly different ways. Additionally the recruitment system is not legally defensible or cost effective.

### **National Firefighter Selection**

The NFS process has been designed to test whether people have the potential to work as firefighters. The NFS process involves participants taking part in a variety of role related and job simulation exercises respectively whilst being observed by a team of trained assessors. Interviews, psychometric tests and written exercises are also used. Extensive research has shown this approach to be the most objective and accurate method of assessing an individual's potential to perform safely and effectively in any particular role. The process will also help to ensure that recruitment is relevant to the role, open and fair and reflects the FRS core values as expressed in the National Framework.

### **NFS Stages**

The NFS process consists of 4 main stages:

- Application form (PQA based)
- Psychometric tests
- Physical tests
- Interview (PQA based)

Additionally successful candidates will be required to pass a medical examination, security clearance and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks before being offered a firm appointment.

### **Stage 1 - Application Form**

A national application form, for use by all fire & rescue services, has been produced and only the information provided on it will be used in deciding whether applicants proceed to the second stage of the process. Previous applications and/or prior knowledge will not be taken into account nor will information provided on Curriculum Vitae (CV). Incomplete application forms will not be considered nor will applications received within 3 months of a previous application. The application form consists of 5 main sections:

- Personal Details
- Assessment of PQA
- References
- Our Values
- Declaration

There are also 2 pre-application checklists, 1 covering the type of work a firefighter will be involved in and 1 covering the basic requirements (health etc) of a Firefighter, and an Equal Opportunities Monitoring questionnaire which is used for data gathering purposes only.

Applicants will also receive a DVD with the application form which will give them an insight into both the role of a Firefighter and the tests they will be required to undertake.

### **Section 1 - Personal Details**

Section 1 of the application form requires basic details from the candidate - name, address, age etc, along with nationality details, basic medical information, previous fire service employment and a declaration of offences.

### **Section 2 - Assessment of PQAs**

Section 2 of the application form asks candidates to describe their experience in 6 of the PQA areas using

a maximum of 150 words for each. The areas covered are:

- Working with people of different ages, backgrounds or gender
- Building working relationships and working as a supportive team member
- Taking steps to improve my skills and learn new things
- Staying calm, confident and in control during difficult or stressful situations
- Completing an activity on my own according to guidelines
- Being open to change & actively supporting it

Applicants are also asked to outline why they think they are suitable to be a firefighter and are given 3 prompts to help answer the question:

- Why would you be good in the role of a Firefighter?
- What skills or experience do you have that you believe are relevant to the role of a Firefighter?
- What have you done to find out what Firefighters do?

### **Section 3 - Referees**

Section 3 of the application form asks candidates to provide details of at least 1, and preferably 2, referees who can confirm the information provided in Section 2. Referees may not be relatives and where the applicant is employed the referee should be the employer.

### **Section 4 - Our Values**

Section 4 of the application form sets out the Fire & Rescue Service Values concerning:

- Service to the community
- People
- Diversity
- Improvement

Applicants are required to confirm they will practise and actively promote the values.

### **Section 5 - Declaration**

Section 5 of the application form includes a Data Protection Act (DPA) Statement, requiring candidates to accept that the information provided will be used in the application process; and requires them to sign the form confirming that it is complete and that the information provided is correct to the best of their knowledge.

Section 5 also contains a warning that approaching FRS personnel to promote an application or deliberately providing false or misleading information will disqualify them from appointment.

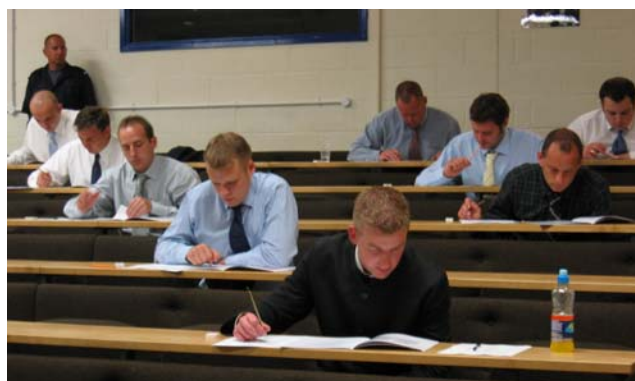
## **Stage 2 - Psychometric Testing**

Applicants who are successful in Stage 1 will be invited to attend for Stage 2.

Stage 2 consists of 3 National Firefighter Ability (NFA) tests and a National Firefighter Questionnaire (NFQ). All tests are subjective (ie multiple choice).

The NFA tests are:

- Working with Numbers
- Understanding Information
- Situational Awareness and Problem Solving



***Personnel undergoing Psychometric Testing at the Training School***

All NFA questions are related to the role of a firefighter and have been designed to be completed by people with no previous fire & rescue service knowledge or experience. Each of the tests provides scenarios which are followed by a number of questions all of which should be answered.

The NFA tests are all timed and allow 45 minutes for Working with Numbers, 30 minutes for Understanding Information and 35 minutes for Situational Awareness and Problem Solving.

The NFQ is designed to provide information about personal style and behaviour. The NFQ is not timed but applicants are told that they should be able to complete it in 40 minutes.

## **Stage 3 - Physical Testing**

Applicants who are successful in the Psychometric Tests will be invited to attend the Practical Tests. There are currently 6 practical tests which are designed to assess the level of fitness, suitability and manual dexterity of applicants. The tests are:

- Enclosed Space
- Ladder Climb
- Casualty Evacuation
- Ladder Lift and Lower simulation
- Equipment Assembly
- Equipment Carry

### **Enclosed Space**

The enclosed space test is designed to test for claustrophobia. It is conducted in a BA crawl and walk way and requires applicants to follow a pre-determined route whilst wearing PPE and a BA facemask. Half of the test is conducted with clear vision and half with obscured vision. There is a time limit for this test.



***An applicant undertaking the Casualty Evacuation test***

### **Ladder Climb**

The ladder climb test is designed to test for confidence at heights. It requires applicants to climb approximately two thirds of the way up a 13.5m ladder and take a leg lock. They are then required to lean back, look down and identify a symbol at ground level before descending the ladder. There is no time limit for this test.



***An applicant undertaking the Ladder Climb test***

### **Casualty Evacuation**

The casualty evacuation is designed to test muscular strength and stamina. Applicants are required to drag a 55kg casualty whilst walking backwards around a 30m course. Applicants are guided around the course for safety. There is a time limit for this test.



***An applicant undertaking the Casualty Evacuation test***

### **Ladder Lift and Lower Simulation**

The ladder lift and lower simulation is designed to test muscular strength, particularly upper body strength. Applicants are required to lift the ladder simulation device from a position 75cm above the ground to 180cm above the ground and then back to the starting position. The test is repeated using weights from 5 to 15kg to simulate the different type of ladder in use with the FRS. There is no time limit for this test.



***An applicant undertaking the Ladder Lift and Lower Simulation***

## Equipment Assembly

The equipment assembly is designed to test manual dexterity. Applicants are required to assemble and dis-assemble part of a set of hydraulic rescue equipment following a set of diagrams or photographs. There is a time limit for this test.



**An applicant undertaking the Equipment Assembly test**

## Equipment Carry

The equipment carry test is designed to test aerobic fitness, muscle strength and stamina. Applicants are required to carry a variety of FRS equipment over a 25m course:

- Run out an appliance hosereel and jog back
- Carry 2 lengths of coiled 70mm hose for 4 lengths of the course (100m)
- Carry 1 length of coiled 70mm hose at chest height for 1 length of the course
- Jog 3 lengths of the course (75m)
- Carry a suction hose and basket strainer for 4 lengths of the course (100m)
- Jog 4 lengths of the course (100m)
- Carry a barbell (simulating  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the weight of an LPP) for 4 lengths of the course (100m)



**An applicant undertaking the Equipment Carry test**

Applicants will be prompted if necessary but must complete the test in the correct order. There is a time limit for this test.

## Stage 4 - Interview

Applicants who are successful in the physical tests will be invited for interview. The interview is designed to test the applicants experience in relation to 5 of the Firefighters PQAs:

- Working with others
- Commitment to excellence
- Commitment to development
- Commitment to diversity and integrity
- Communicating effectively

The interview lasts for approximately 1 hour and will be conducted by personnel who have received suitable training.

## Medicals, Security and CRB Checks

Applicants who are successful at all stages of the selection process and are offered permanent employment will be required to satisfactorily complete a medical examination, security clearance and CRB checks before being offered a firm appointment.

## DFRS Recruitment

From 4 Sep 06 all DFRS recruitment will be managed centrally by DFRS HQ (HRD) and will utilise the National Firefighter Selection (NFS) Testing process issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

It is intended that recruitment will be conducted on an annual basis within each of the UK Groups although where anticipated recruit numbers are low or Groups are small (eg the South East Group) they may be merged for recruitment purposes. Applicants will be informed where vacancies are anticipated and will be asked to specify their preference on their application form.

Application forms will be sent out from and returned to HQ. The psychometric tests will be conducted at one or more locations within the Group and physical tests will either take place at the Training School or a suitable location within the Group.

Personnel from HQ HRD and the IPDS Centre will conduct the recruitment process with assistance from the regional trainers and station based personnel where the process takes place within a Group.

Two trials of the psychometric and physical tests have been conducted at the Training School, with a trial of the psychometric tests at a location within a Group and practical tests at the Training School being carried out in September. A full trial of the system tests will be conducted in the North East/North West Groups in October or November.

**Look out for the next issue of IPDS News which will be published shortly**