

Circular number	<b>77/2009</b>	Date issued	<b>22 December 2009</b>
This circular is	<b>For information</b>	No response required	
This circular is	<b>Relevant to the National Framework</b>		
Status	<b>This Circular notifies Fire and Rescue Services about the publication of the National Firefighter Selection Process Technical Manuals, Validation and Review Reports</b>		

# National Firefighter Selection Process Technical Manuals, Validation and Review Reports

## Issued by:

Linda Hurford  
Fire & Rescue Service Development Division

## Addressed to:

The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Chief Executive of the County Council  
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority  
London Fire Commissioner  
The Chief Fire Officer

## Please forward to:

Heads of Human Resources  
Heads of Recruitment

## Summary

On 15 December 2009, we published technical documentation which provides detailed information on the development of the National Firefighter Selection (NFS) process, and the research reports of a further third party review of the process carried out by QinetiQ in early 2008. Both sets of documents are published for the purpose of completing the record.

## For further information, contact:

Linda Hurford  
FRS Development Division  
Zone 3/D1 Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Direct line **0303 944 2936**  
Fax **0303 444 2403**  
E-mail [Linda.hurford@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Linda.hurford@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

Website [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The standards for a new National Firefighter Selection (NFS) Process were agreed in December 2005. Whilst identifying a pool of candidates with the necessary potential to fulfil the role across all duty systems, the process would also be legally defensible and would support the aim of increasing diversity within the operational workforce. A formal review process was established, including an assessment of the impact on ethnic minority and women candidates, with changes made to the process if necessary.
- 1.2 In January 2002, two companies were contracted to assist with the work: Optimal Performance Ltd were contracted to develop the NFS physical tests, while Water for Fish Ltd were contracted to develop the psychological elements of the NFS process, which included the application form, written tests and interview. The design of each of the components contained within the process was based on the demands of the firefighter role and involved significant input and practical support from Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) across the UK.
- 1.3 Water for Fish Ltd also carried out a validation study on the process in practice in order to assess whether the tests are a good predictor of performance in the job. However, the draft report, received in June 2007, was inconclusive in its findings and, therefore, QinetiQ were engaged in early 2008 to carry out an independent study of the psychological elements covering:
- i) A review of the process, including benchmarking it against best practice
  - ii) An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to determine whether the tests had an adverse impact on the success rate of any group; and
  - iii) A validation study continuing the work done by Water for Fish Ltd on the relationship between performance in the selection tests and performance after three months in post

### 2.0 Findings

- 2.1 The findings of the three QinetiQ studies concluded that:
- The NFS process has been well designed and best professional practice has been adopted in its development, with much of the development work being completed to a high standard
  - The NFS process is likely to be fair and legally defensible if challenged
  - There is no evidence of Adverse Impact for gender on any of the selection elements assessed
  - There is some evidence of Adverse Impact for ethnicity on two of the written tests but this does not necessarily indicate unfair discrimination as the tests can be demonstrated to be job related (this can be demonstrated for the NFS process as a whole)
  - The predictive validity of the NFS process is currently inconclusive and further investigation is recommended once some of the issues in respect of the lack of a standard measure and data for the assessment of job performance have been addressed

- There is some evidence that the National Firefighter Questionnaire (NFQ) does not significantly contribute to the selection decision

These findings have been discussed with the Practitioners Forum and the NFS Forum.

### 3.0 Next Steps

3.1 We are currently inviting tenders from consultants for a project to carry out further research into the following areas, which QinetiQ identified as requiring further work in their recommendations:

- A detailed investigation into the adverse impact in the written tests upon applicants from a black and ethnic minority background and the development of measures to reduce this impact. This is to be based on initial investigative work that has been done by the Research and Statistics Division in the Fire and Resilience Directorate
- An evaluation of the impact of removing the NFQ from the NFS process and recommendations on how this should be managed

3.2 In response to requests from FRSs, the research will also include extending the Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQA) Interview question bank.

3.3 The intended outcomes of this work are:

- a reduction in the level of adverse impact observed in the written tests
- a legally defensible rationale for the removal of the NFQ from the process
- an enlarged pool of interview questions for use during the PQA interview

3.4 In order for this work to be successful, we will require assistance from Fire and Rescue Services, and we welcome contact with any FRS which is planning to run a recruitment exercise during 2010 using the NFS process, and who would be willing to assist with this work.

### 4.0 Migration of Firefighter Recruitment and Careers Information to Skills for Justice

4.1 FRS Circular 22/09 set out the new arrangements for the support and maintenance of the Integrated Personal Development Plan (IPDS) system by Skills for Justice. IPDS materials have been transferred to the Skills for Justice website ([www.skillsforjustice-ipds.com](http://www.skillsforjustice-ipds.com)) and we are making arrangements for Assessment Development Centre (ADC) and NFS guidance to also be relocated. We will be writing to Chief Fire Officers separately about the process for accessing the confidential NFS and ADC material. In the meantime, if you require this material, please contact Christina Machado at: [christina.machado@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:christina.machado@communities.gsi.gov.uk) for the NFS guidance and Sheila Ramsamy at [sheila.ramsamy@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sheila.ramsamy@communities.gsi.gov.uk) for the ADC guidance.

### 5.0 Reports

5.1 The documents which have been published are:

#### Physical Test Reports

8/2009 Development and Validation of National Firefighter Selection Tests:

Physical Tests

9/2009 Comparison of Firefighter Physical Fitness Tests

#### Psychometric Reports

7/2009 Development of National Firefighter Selection (NFS) Tests:

Psychological Report

10/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process Self Selection Questionnaire (SSQ) Technical Manual

14/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process Application Form Technical Manual

11/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process National Firefighter Questionnaire (NFQ) Technical Manual

12/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process National Firefighter Ability (NFA) Tests Technical Manual

13/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process Firefighter PQA Interview Technical Manual

#### Process Reviews

Fire Report 87 National Firefighter Selection Process Review – Summary Report

17/2009 Review of the National Firefighter Selection Process

16/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process Review – Adverse Impact Study

15/2009 National Firefighter Selection Process Review – Validation Study

5.2 The full reports can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/researchandstatistics/researchpublications/fulltechnicalreports/>

**Linda Hurford**

**Fire & Rescue Service Development Division**