



Circular number	<b>20-2005</b>	Date issued	<b>07 June 2005</b>
This circular is	<b>For information</b>		
This circular is	<b>Relevant to the National Framework</b>		
Status	<b>Guidance in this circular may be used by fire and rescue authorities in assessing staff for development for a new role within the Integrated Personal Development System.</b>		

## *Integrated Personal Development System: interim toolkit for managerial-level Assessment Development Centres*

### Issued by:

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### Addressed to:

**The Chief Executive to the County Council**  
**The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority**  
**The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority**  
**The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority**  
**The Chief Fire Officer**

### Please forward to:

**HR Managers**  
**Training and Development Managers**  
**IPDS Co-ordinators**  
**Internal Communications Managers**

### Summary

This circular informs fire and rescue authorities of the availability of an interim Assessment Development Centre (ADC) process toolkit which they may use to assess staff's potential for development for a new role under the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). The toolkit includes a package of guidance together with an application questionnaire and a structured interview. These are designed to test candidates against the national Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs) Framework and provide them with feedback for development purposes.

This circular and the toolkit it describes should not be confused with the National ADC toolkits which the IPDS Hub has been developing and about which consultation is ongoing.

### For further information, contact:

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 FSC 51/2004 provided guidance on the Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs) framework, which now forms the basis of selection for development programmes within IPDS. This circular provides details of an interim process which fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) may use to test candidates against the PQA framework.
- 1.2 FRAs should also be aware of work underway at the IPDS Hub where a set of National ADC toolkits are being developed and about which consultation is underway.

### 2.0 What is the toolkit?

- 2.1 The toolkit consists of PQA-based application forms, model interviews, feedback forms and supporting guidance. It provides a process through which FRAs can assess potential for development for managerial-level positions within the IPDS role structure and provide feedback to all candidates.
- 2.2 For each of the three levels, the toolkit consists of six sets of documents:
- a model Candidate Information Pack which explains the process for applicants
  - a PQA based application questionnaire which provides the sift (initial test of potential) stage of the process. (Annex A gives details of exemptions from the sift process that are permitted under DCOL 4/2003.)
  - guidance on assessing the application questionnaire and a form for providing feedback to applicants
  - a set of guidance notes for those conducting and evaluating the interview. This includes an overview of the process, advice on preparing for, conducting, evaluating and recording the interview and the structured interview itself
  - an interview report form for recording and evaluating interview evidence
  - forms and guidance for making a recommendation about suitability for development and providing PQA based feedback about interview performance.
- 2.3 Use of the toolkit is not mandatory. However, it is provided to FRAs as a package. If FRAs decide to use it, they are advised to do so in its entirety as set out in this circular and in the toolkit documents. The one exception to this is the model candidate information pack which has been specifically designed for local adaptation.
- 2.4 FRAs are no longer legally required to move people through roles sequentially. However, it is recommended that whilst ADC processes are first 'bedding in' within the organisation, sequential progression may provide authorities with an additional safeguard.

### **3.0 How can I obtain a copy of the toolkit?**

- 3.1 The toolkit will not be published but the IPDS Hub will make relevant parts of it available on request to HR managers and others who have a professional requirement to use it.
- 3.2 People provided with the toolkit will be asked to note that it is a confidential document and FRAs will need to consider how best to safeguard confidentiality within the organisation.

### **4.0 How will this process affect workforce planning issues?**

- 4.1 The toolkit provides a structured way of assessing potential and a clear framework for recording the assessment outcomes. Roughly speaking, it is expected that candidates will fall into three broad categories:
- some candidates will demonstrate potential very strongly so that, using the toolkit, assessors will give them an automatic recommendation for the relevant development programme
  - some candidates will demonstrate significant development needs and will be unsuitable for the development programme at this point in their careers
  - some candidates will show potential whilst also demonstrating some development needs. It will be for FRAs to determine the proportion of this third category of candidates who should be developed for the next role, taking into account their workforce planning requirements and other relevant local issues.

FRAs are advised to ensure that the selection of candidates for development reflects the assessment recommendations made.

- 4.2 In accordance with the fundamental importance of diversity and integrity within the Fire and Rescue Service, this toolkit requires that where candidates do not adequately demonstrate the "Commitment to Diversity and Integrity" PQA, they become ineligible for the development programme.

### **5.0 Managing ADC and selection processes**

- 5.1 Whilst management of the overall process is a matter for FRAs, the following points should be taken into account:
- whilst the toolkit has been designed to make PQA based assessment as simple as possible, ODPM strongly advises FRAs to ensure that those conducting interviews are appropriately trained and competent. Annex A sets out the type of development that authorities may wish to consider for those involved in selection interviewing
  - given that this is an interim toolkit and that some FRAs may be holding only a small number of interviews at any level, authorities are encouraged to collaborate with each other, perhaps on a regional basis

- in planning the interview programme, interviewers will need to allow adequate time to write up the interviews (1-1½ hours per interview)
- FRAs will wish to consider their expected requirement in terms of workforce numbers and manage ADC/selection processes accordingly
- FRAs are advised that the sift process will be more robust, in terms of consistency and fairness, if it is verified (e.g. once papers have been sifted, they could be reviewed by someone who had not already sifted)
- line managers of applicants are not involved in the sifting process but should be sent copies of feedback forms on a confidential basis
- FRAs will need to consider whether their existing appeals processes are adequate for use with the toolkit, or whether they need to be adapted
- FRAs will need to determine the division of responsibilities within their own organisation, e.g. identifying staff to be responsible for retaining interviewer records.

## **6.0 Queries**

- 6.1 If you require part of the tool-kit or have any queries about this circular or any related IPDS issues, please speak to your usual contact at the Hub or e-mail [ipdsreception@fireservicecollege.ac.uk](mailto:ipdsreception@fireservicecollege.ac.uk).

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## Annex A

### FSEB examinations: transitional arrangements within IPDS Assessment Development Centre Processes

#### Background

1. Dear Chief Officer Letter (DCOL) 4/2003 made clear that people who have passed all written papers of the FSEB promotion examinations would be given recognition at the sift stage of the IPDS Assessment Development Centre (ADC) process.

#### FSEB Examinations within the Interim ADC Process

2. As set out in the model Candidate Information Pack, under the interim process you are recommended to take the following approach to give recognition to FSEB examinations.

People holding passes in all written examinations should be exempt from the sift (which constitutes the initial test of potential within the interim process) as follows.

- Leading Firefighters Part 1 Written – Supervisory Management ADC (Crew Manager role only).
- Sub-Officers Part 1 Written – Supervisory Management ADC (Watch Manager role only).
- Station Officer Written Examination – Middle Management (Station Manager role only).

Partial passes should not qualify applicants for exemption from the sift/initial test of potential stage.

Those without these examinations will need to achieve a satisfactory level in the initial sift – the application questionnaire.

**Annex B**

**Assessing personnel against the PQA framework – identifying training needs**

**Background**

Whilst workshops have been held on the interim ADC tool-kit including use of the structured interview, these workshops were not designed to provide training in interview skills. A level of prior knowledge and skill is essential on the part of any interviewer using either the structured interview within the tool-kit or an FRA’s own assessment and selection processes. Others involved in the selection process will also have particular knowledge and skill requirements. The following table indicates the areas of knowledge and skills that would be expected of a competent interviewer and others within the human resource function who are involved in the processes of assessment and selection.

FRAs are invited to consider these areas and review whether any knowledge or skill gap exists among people who will be expected to assess people's potential to fulfill a role using the PQA framework. Where a knowledge or skill-gap is apparent, FRAs will wish to consider how to address this. One option may be additional training or development - possibly through independent or external trainers - to address identified learning needs. (Typically for interview skills of the sort which would be required to use the structured interview model within the interim ADC tool-kit, this might take the form of a 2 day course.) Please note that a small number of appropriately trained people who interview on a regular basis are likely to offer greater competence than a larger number of less frequent interviewers.

FRAs will, of course, have different approaches to organising the range of responsibilities set out in the table below. This annex is intended to help you consider training and development needs rather than prescribe or limit the way you organise your selection processes.

<b>Knowledge and Skill Areas</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Description</b>
Overview of IPDS system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness and understanding of the assessment system being used within the FRA and of the wider IPDS approach.</li> </ul>
Legislation/ Tribunal cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of key elements of relevant law: Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Disability Discrimination Act, Data Protection Act.</li> <li>Awareness of relevant industrial tribunals arising from alleged inappropriate recruitment/interview practice.</li> </ul>
Advertising procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of process which the FRA is using to advertise relevant opportunities.</li> </ul>
Interview approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of issues relating to interview design and implementation:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationale for structured interviews (where these are being used) - validity and reliability issues.</li> <li>• Approaches to questioning: open, closed, probing, multiple, etc.; the importance of standardisation.</li> <li>• Active and effective listening.</li> <li>• Interviewer biases and how to overcome them.</li> <li>• Dealing with specific problems e.g. evasive, excessive talkers etc.</li> <li>• Recording information during the interview.</li> <li>• Evaluating evidence against criteria.</li> <li>• Using marking system consistently and appropriately.</li> </ul>
Practical application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of using interview system with role players prior to live interviews – demonstration of doing so fairly, accurately and consistently.</li> <li>• Experience of assessing/evaluating using interview system – demonstration of doing so fairly, accurately and consistently.</li> </ul>
Managing administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-tabling of interviews.</li> <li>• Venue management.</li> <li>• Managing candidate disabilities/needs.</li> </ul>
Candidate feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing clear, accurate, supportive and constructive feedback to candidates.</li> </ul>
Ethical considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting candidates – pre-assessment, during assessment and post-assessment.</li> <li>• Security of materials.</li> <li>• Access to materials.</li> <li>• Lifespan of information.</li> <li>• Data protection.</li> </ul>
Quality assurance/ Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of quality assurance/monitoring process:</li> <li>• Ensuring interview quality is achieved and maintained through monitoring, feedback and guidance to interview panels.</li> <li>• Reviewing and addressing assessment outcomes in terms of equalities and diversity.</li> <li>• Statistical evaluation of score profiles.</li> </ul>
Process appeal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of process (if relevant).</li> </ul>