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This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	The outcome of consultation on the document 'Towards a National Workforce Development Strategy for England'		

Towards a National Workforce Development Strategy for England

Issued by:

Marie Winckler
Head of Fire Service Effectiveness Division

Addressed to:

Chief Executives of County Councils
Clerks and Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities
**The Commissioner of the London Fire and
Emergency Planning Authority**
All Chief Fire Officers

Please forward to:

**Human Resources / Training & Development
Managers**

Summary

Consultation on the document *Towards a National Workforce Development Strategy for England* closed on 22 October. This Circular includes a summary of responses and explains the next steps.

For further information, contact:

Richard Twyman
Fire Service Effectiveness Division
ODPM
18D Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5LP

Direct line **020 7944 6192**

E-mail Richard.Twyman@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

General helpline **020 7944 8194**

Website www.odpm.gov.uk

1.0 **Response to *Towards a National Workforce Development Strategy for England***

- 1.1 The consultation document *Towards a National Workforce Development Strategy for England* was published in July. The document sought to address the need identified by the White Paper and National Framework for a strategic approach to training and development for the FRS as a means of ensuring that resources are targeted efficiently and effectively.
- 1.2 Consultation closed on 22 October; 51 responses were received. A summary of those responses has now been drawn up and appears at the end of this Circular. A full list of responses is available on request to fsed3@odpm.gsi.gov.uk
- 1.3 The consultation indicated that although there was general support for a strategic approach to FRS training and development, further consultation was needed on how the aims and objectives of a strategic approach might be achieved. The main issues identified as needing further consideration were:
- The need to make the strategy more inclusive of all Fire and Rescue Service staff, whatever aspect of the service they delivered
 - To recognise the investment already made by the Service in training facilities, expertise and quality assurance
 - The potential conflict between maintaining national standards for the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) - through a system of quality assurance and accreditation - and giving Fire and Rescue Authorities flexibility in their choice of training provider
 - The establishment of a Centre of Excellence and the future role of the Fire Service College.

2.0 Next steps

- 2.1 The summary of comments received in the consultation process also includes our initial response. Most of the issues raised will be dealt with by work currently underway to consider how the aims and objectives of a strategic approach to training and development might be achieved. Clive Norris, FRSD Director, wrote to members of the Practitioners' Forum and representatives of the Business and Community Safety Forum on 6 December to introduce this work. Mark Mason, Head of the new Fire Service College Policy Unit has also written to representatives of the key stakeholders to establish an informal advisory group to provide the necessary advice and direction. It is intended to consult on a draft strategy during the summer, with the aim of having a final strategy agreed by October 2005. This strategy will also look ahead to links between training and development in the Service and for the wider industry. These issues will be discussed with the Business and Community Safety Forum and the Practitioners' Forum in due course.

3.0 Summary of responses

Reference	Comment	ODPM response
<p>General comments and Introduction (Paragraphs 1 - 10)</p>	<p>Support National Workforce Development Strategy (NWDS) but this consultation document is too narrow and prescriptive. It should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise progress already made; • link into wider Government workforce development / skills strategy, particularly for local authorities • give the Fire and Rescue Service more flexibility in meeting training and development needs <p>No acknowledgement of challenges for staff on a retained duty system, for example attendance at residential courses at the FSC</p> <p>Difficult to make link between NWDS/IPDS and IRMPs, which will determine shape and skills requirement of future workforce</p> <p>The document should be more inclusive of non-firefighting / support staff</p> <p>NWDS lacks detail on how it will be delivered i.e. specific goals, targets and timescales for achievement or indication as to how overall aims will be achieved and success measured and definition of 'regional' training</p> <p>Support Centre of Excellence concept but more detail and stakeholder involvement required. Fire Service College (FSC) is an important component but there needs to be clear separation from its role as training provider</p> <p>Stakeholders should be more involved in redrafting final NWDS</p> <p>Welcome NWDS emphasis on National Occupational Standards and IPDS but insufficient weight is given to NVQs & SVQs as a measure of competence; these should be embedded in the Strategy</p> <p>NWDS does not recognise investment already made by FRAs in training facilities, local quality assurance etc.</p> <p>Revised NWDS should be timed to reflect development of a national training strategy</p>	<p>Accepted. These issues will be dealt with in the development of a revised strategy</p> <p>Welcome support for Centre of Excellence, which is being developed with stakeholders via the Practitioners' Forum</p> <p>Agree that further debate with employers on the issue of VQs would be helpful</p> <p>Accepted. These issues will be dealt with in</p>

	<p>Equality of opportunity must be at top of the agenda</p> <p>Lack of good quality data – where is evidence for ‘degree of over-provision’?</p>	<p>developing a revised strategy</p>
<p>Section 2: The Future and getting there (Paras 11-16)</p>	<p>Command and Control is still important, and critical to safe systems of work at (major) incidents; portrayal as something that can be ‘taken down off the shelf’ when needed is simplistic</p> <p>Core values cannot be imposed; they must mean something to staff</p> <p>Inadequate emphasis on fire protection</p> <p>Accept IPDS principles but assessment centres must be capable of recognising other legitimate professional development models</p>	<p>Accept that there are skills specific to the FRS of which the strategy needs to take account, whilst continuing to reflect the principle of multi-level entry</p>
<p>Section 3: IPDS (Paras 17 – 21)</p>	<p>Full impact assessment of IPDS implementation required. How will it work in the future; who will manage it; what will it cost and how will it be resourced?</p> <p>Recognise IPDS is essential to culture change but until PQAs have been agreed and adopted FRAs should refrain from doing anything on an ad hoc basis; robust mechanisms for reviewing systems are essential</p> <p>Role maps for ‘non-operational’ staff long overdue</p>	<p>The IPDS Project Board will be considering many of these issues in the coming months</p> <p>CFOA has work underway on ‘non-operational’ role maps</p>
<p>Section 4: NWDS (Paras 22 – 29)</p>	<p>NWDS implies monopoly role for FSC which conflicts with Best Value, regional delivery and local flexibility</p> <p>IPDS is ‘owned’ by Fire and Rescue Service and IPR should be vested in a suitable body representing them e.g. CFOA</p> <p>Importance of IPR over-stated; bulk of product derives from Government’s wider skills strategy; little is sector specific</p> <p>Essential that the responsibility to pay [for IPDS] be accompanied by the right to choose what to buy and from whom</p> <p>Concern at FSC taking on QA role; core specification may be set centrally but need for robust QA systems is at the local level where</p>	<p>The FSC has traditionally been seen as having a monopoly of FRS training, but it now has the remit to take a wider facilitation role. The training strategy will address potential for conflict of interest in this wider role.</p> <p>The strategy will</p>

	<p>they are already well established in most FRSs</p> <p>Trade Unions should be involved at all levels, not just nationally. FBU Learning Project may be able to assist in development of WDS</p> <p>IPDS will fail if it is seen to be market driven; QA system must be open, transparent and accountable</p> <p>New responsibilities under FRS Act will add costs to any training and development strategy</p> <p>Final document needs more realistic consideration of future costs. Much work needs to be completed before FRAs are in a position to support implementation of IPDS, and many components will subsequently need to be updated to maintain their currency. This is a function which should be owned (and resourced) by the centre</p> <p>Can the FSC guarantee VfM – final Strategy should include cost benefit analysis comparing FSC with regional / local delivery</p>	<p>consider the quality assurance needs of IPDS and how these can best be safeguarded.</p> <p>The inter-relationship between this central structure and local arrangements will be explored in the development of a revised strategy</p>
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<p>Section 5: Future roles and responsibilities of the different tiers (Paras 30 – 33)</p>	<p>Major concerns about proposed FSC role in designing and delivering trainer training and ADCs; already NVQ / other academic qualifications for trainers.</p> <p>Scottish FSC has a lead partner from the Scottish FE sector for the delivery of development programmes linked to nationally recognised awards; inherent QA criteria of the Awarding Bodies needs to be taken into account by FSC when considering approach for England</p> <p>Clarification required on what constitutes a ‘trainer’. Especially relevant in relation to staff on the retained duty system who train colleagues</p> <p>If FSC is to be the Centre of Excellence, greater stakeholder involvement is needed; not just at the high level but also by users</p> <p>Excellent incident ground facilities at the FSC - but also need to recognise investment (including PFI) in facilities elsewhere and acknowledge role for tailored software simulation systems that may offer better opportunity for controlled experiential learning</p> <p>Bronze command training facilities at FSC good but little or no capability for Silver & Gold</p>	<p>Accept that any new QA arrangements need to align with the arrangements of the awarding bodies</p> <p>Welcome recognition of FSC facilities and progress made in responding to customers’ needs. Work on revising the strategy will help position the FSC where it can be</p>
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	<p>FSC to be congratulated on its efforts to become more customer-focused and to institute cultural change, although more work and investment is needed</p> <p>Proposed regional approach to FRS HR strategy mirrored in development of Workforce Development Plans for wider local authority sector enshrined in ODPM/EO Pay and Workforce Strategy; opportunities for shared practice</p> <p>No evidence is presented for the presumption that ‘the greatest synergies and efficiencies’ can be achieved at a regional level</p> <p>NWDS overlooks role HE/FE providers could play in delivery; already close collaboration between FRSs and local Learning & Skills Councils</p>	<p>most effective in support of national, regional and local training</p> <p>Accept need to link into other providers</p>
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<p>Section 6: Quality Assurance of the IPDS (Paras 34 – 54)</p>	<p>More detail of QA proposal: what would it cost; how would FSC QA'd?</p> <p>There would be a conflict of interest between the accreditation/licensing and the training delivery roles of FSC</p> <p>Potential conflict between FSC service delivery and QA roles could be resolved by involving professional bodies and/or establishing network of regional training partners (e.g. the Police)</p> <p>In Scotland the SFSC is the focus for IPDS QA but this is clearly separated from training role by establishing IPDS team managed by Scottish Executive and working with Awarding Bodies</p> <p>Agree QA system is needed, but why the FSC? Already well established QA function delivered by QCA, ABs, ALI etc.</p> <p>Have already made considerable contribution to IPDS development pot. Unhappy if expected to pay again for accreditation by FSC</p> <p>Well established arrangements between SCFS/SE and SQA re quality assuring and awarding SVQs – for FRS personnel transferability essential that there is synergy between these and FSC arrangements</p> <p>Who will set up, run and pay for ADCs?</p> <p>Role Orientation programmes should be</p>	<p>Accepted. The strategy will consider what arrangements need to be made to ensure that there is no conflict of interest in any future role for the FSC. Future QA arrangements will be developed in consultation with the Service.</p> <p>Comments noted. The IPDS Project Board will be considering</p>
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	<p>delivered locally to meet local needs</p> <p>How will any funds generated by licensing and accreditation be used?</p> <p>Adoption of NVQs should remain a local decision</p> <p>Welcome development of standard procedure for accrediting APL/APEL; important for CPA process issues</p> <p>FRSs already employ a range of recognised quality assessors; not explained what FSC would provide other than duplication</p> <p>Suggestion that only FSC would be able to licence/approve specific development products with other providers restricted to generic products conflicts with Best Value</p> <p>Accept need for trainers to meet national standards but do not agree FSC should initially undertake their training – FRAs should be able to continue to train locally via e.g. NVQ. CPA or external awarding body will assess quality</p> <p>QA criteria and process should be developed in consultation with the Service</p> <p>IPDS was developed by the Service so any copyrighting should not preclude access; IPR should be held by ODPM <u>not</u> FSC</p> <p>FSC incapable of role suggested by NWDS if remains centred on Moreton – need for outreach responsive to local needs</p> <p>Support need for FSC role in strategic management ADC but more localised approach might suit those from non-service backgrounds</p> <p>Support move towards system based on competencies but should not lose sight of merits of professional qualifications, which also aid multi-level entry</p> <p>Who will oversee QA process – IPDS Project Board?</p> <p>Concerned that no IPDS QA mechanisms are yet in place – need interim evaluation of development, implementation and operational phases of IPDS to confirm FRS needs are being met</p>	<p>many of these issues in the coming months</p> <p>Recognise the importance of giving FRAs flexibility in meeting their local training and development needs, within a framework that maintains the integrity of IPDS and the principle of transferability.</p>
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Section 7: E-learning and record keeping (Paras 55 – 56)	Many FRSs have developed or are developing PDRs; a national recording system could have many benefits but also cost and compatibility concerns IT-based learning and development should build on work already done elsewhere e.g. Scotland not duplicate	Accepted
Annex A	CIPFA Stats incomplete or incorrect e.g. East Midlands; Buckinghamshire	

Marie Winckler
Head of Fire Service Effectiveness Division