

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF FIREFIGHTERS AND THE PROGRESSION OF OPERATIONAL AND CONTROL MANAGERS IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Reference	Comments	ODPM Response
Introduction & Summary	Strong support and welcome for the consultation proposals and goals.	Welcome this support.
Status of the New Processes	<p>Very strong support for the benefits ODPM suggested would follow from a consistent national approach to NFS and ADC processes. But do want to see appropriate central support and robust governance and quality assurance arrangements.</p> <p>General agreement on the proposed quality standards or principles.</p>	<p>Welcome the recognition of the benefits which will follow from consistent national processes which will meet quality standards or principles. Agree that quality assurance and strong stake-holder involvement is crucial.</p>
	<p>Most respondees favoured Option One (consistent national processes) with a small number preferring Options Two or Three or a hybrid option. Respondees generally keen to see close monitoring of the new processes and some respondees were concerned about making the processes national prior to more validation.</p>	<p>The 2006/8 National Framework makes clear Government's expectation that FRAs will begin to use the national processes as soon as possible and in any event by April 2007. We will continue to monitor and review the processes and up-date FRAs on this. In order to achieve an effective review of the processes it will of course be necessary for FRAs to use them and to collect the relevant data for review.</p>

Reference	Comments	ODPM Response
	A small number of respondents were keen to see flexibility in the NFS process to allow for additional sifting or assessment processes	To ensure consistency it is the Government's expectation that the NFS will be operated as designed. However it is recognised that some FRAs receive particularly large numbers of applications, guidance on appropriate methods of managing these numbers will be included in the documentation to be issued on 16 May 2006.
	A number of respondents raised issues relating to the flexibility of the NFS proposals and the recruitment of Retained Duty System staff. Respondees generally keen for procedure to be subject to specific piloting to assess impact on RDS recruitment.	The Government recognises concerns raised with regard to RDS recruitment. Some aspects of the process e.g. the re tests policy have been modified to support RDS recruitment however in addition this aspect of the NFS process will be subject to specific assessment over the coming months. A report on the findings of this assessment (and other aspects of the process) will be issued prior to April 2007.
	Some respondents suggested that physical standards were required for direct entrants at managerial levels.	This issue was outside the scope of the NFS project but has been discussed by the NFS Steering Group and will be considered as part of work related to multi level entry.
Maintenance and Renewal	The vast majority of respondents thought that all the tasks listed in relation to maintenance and renewal (pages 17 & 18 of the consultation document), should be co-ordinated at national level.	ODPM will support the further development required to prepare for the management of these tasks at national level.

Reference	Comments	ODPM Response
	Where respondents commented on how any national work should be carried out, a range of suggestions were put forward. It is clear that FRAs/RMBs/ Practitioners are keen to have very close involvement in the national maintenance and renewal tasks.	Current arrangements for stake-holder involvement and reporting both to ODPM and the IPDS Project Board are expected to continue in 2006/7. For the longer-term, it is expected that consultation on a proposed FRS Centre of Excellence (CoE) later in the year will consider whether this work should sit within that CoE.
Costs	A number of respondents thought that the new processes would be more expensive to run than their existing procedures (especially in terms of people's time) although data on existing costs was not generally put forward. A number of respondents also recognised that the outcome in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of FRAs justified the investment required from more modern processes.	Respondants comments on ADC costs related to the pilot ADC process. The ADC processes have since been stream-lined and the amount of time they require from participants and assessors has been reduced. The processes will continue to be monitored and improved in line with feedback received from FRAs and RMBs.
	Questions were asked about what will happen to the top-sliced grant that supported the Fire Service Examinations Board	2006/7 is the last year when funding for the FSEB will be top-sliced. Thereafter this money will go directly to FRAs.
Additional Considerations	Opinion was divided as to whether there should be open access to ADCs. Some respondents suggested that open access should be phased in.	The ADC Tools and Toolkits have been designed for use with external applicants. However, further work is being undertaken around this issue and additional guidance will follow.
	Strong agreement that participants applying for any role should attend the full ADC for that level (as well as the relevant role interview, if appropriate).	The additional guidance will reflect this.

Reference	Comments	ODPM Response
	Only a handful of respondents commented on whether this requirement should be immediate or deferred. Of those, most thought it should be immediate.	The additional guidance will reflect this.
	Respondees largely considered that ADC results should be valid in any FRA provided that robust quality assurance systems were in place.	Quality assurance arrangements will be drawn up in consultation with stake-holders. We would expect the guidance to state that, from April 2007, results should be transferable.
	Nearly all respondents agreed that, under Option 1, there should be a national system to control multiple applications.	A national system to control multiple applications will now be worked up.
	On balance, respondents agreed that minimum scores for ADC & NFS tests should be set nationally and reviewed annually. However, some respondents had concerns that this may make it difficult to fill posts and suggested that local flexibility about “pass marks”, especially in relation to staff working the RDS, would be helpful.	Minimum scores will be set nationally. In setting minimum scores, workforce planning needs will be taken into account alongside other issues including safety. The issue of flexibility of pass marks with regard to the NFS was discussed by the Practitioners' Forum in December 2005 and it was agreed that flexibility would compromise the notion of national consistency and was not consistent with the notion of a standard firefighter role irrespective of duty system
	A number of respondents flagged the importance of having robust systems for developing and managing those who are newly recruited into FRS management roles to ensure that neither the individual nor the organisation was unreasonably exposed to risk.	ODPM agrees that ADC and NFS processes will help provide the workforce required by the Service <u>only</u> if those processes are followed by effective development programmes for individuals. This applies whether or not people have an FRS background.

