

Circular number	<b>21/2008</b>	Date issued	<b>6 May 2008</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 informs you of the publication of the summary of responses to the consultation paper 'A Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service'.</b>		

# A Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service – Summary of Responses

## Issued by:

**Brian Nash**

**Fire and 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  
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:

## Summary

This Circular informs recipients of the publication on 6 May 2008 of the summary of responses to the consultation document 'A Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service'. The summary of responses document can be accessed from the Communities and Local Government website.

## For further information, contact:

**Richard Davis or Brian Nash**  
1/B3 Ashdown House  
123 Victoria Street  
London SW1E 6DE

Direct line **020 7944 5307 or 5620**  
Fax **020 7944 5599**  
E-mail [richard.davis@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:richard.davis@communities.gsi.gov.uk)  
[brian.nash@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:brian.nash@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

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

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 26 October 2007, the Government issued a consultation paper on proposals for establishing a Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service (CoE). The consultation ended on 31 January 2008. This Circular informs you that the Summary of Responses to the consultation document is published today (6 May 2008).
- 1.2 The consultation paper set out options for the role, functions, status and governance of a CoE and associated costs and possible funding arrangements. The consultation paper made clear that a CoE would only be established if it had the support, including financial support, of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and other key stakeholders.
- 1.3 A total of 76 responses were received from a range of public and private sector bodies and organisations. 39 FRAs in England responded to the consultation.
- 1.4 The majority of respondents supported, in principle, the establishment of a CoE but this support was, in most cases, qualified by underlying concerns. FRAs in particular were unwilling to commit themselves to the formal establishment of a CoE until they were satisfied that their concerns, including funding arrangements and the CoE's remit, were resolved.
- 1.5 As the consultation outcome is not conclusive with regards to FRA commitment and support, Communities and Local Government will not be taking action to establish a CoE at the current time. But we do not rule out the possibility of establishing a new body for the FRS in the future. How functions are delivered in the longer term will depend on how circumstances evolve.
- 1.6 The functions identified for early inclusion in a CoE in the consultation document will, for the time being, remain being delivered by their current delivery bodies i.e. Communities and Local Government or the Fire Service College (FSC). However, we will continue to build on the work undertaken on developing proposals for a CoE and explore how best to take forward issues identified in the consultation responses. In particular, we will be looking at how we can improve our arrangements for securing the engagement and influence of stakeholders in the services Communities and Local Government, the FSC and Firebuy deliver to support FRA operations.
- 1.7 Functions identified for possible later inclusion in a CoE – resilience and procurement - will also remain being delivered as at present. But we are looking at the issue of future ownership of resilience assets and working to identify how operational support functions should be delivered once FireControl and Firelink reach steady state. Proposals for New Dimension are already well developed.

- 1.8 Central to the successful delivery of all the functions identified above will be the relationship between Communities and Local Government, FRAs and other stakeholders. Alternative options for improving stakeholder engagement and streamlining the current ad hoc project board and steering group arrangements are now being urgently considered. These options will be progressed in discussion with the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association.
- 1.9 A copy of the Summary of Responses document can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/publications/consultations>.

**Brian Nash**

**Fire and Rescue Service Development Division**