

Our Fire and Rescue Service Practitioners' Forum

Forum Date: 18th April 2007

Item No 07/23

Report: Development of National Fitness Standards for the FRS

Presented by: S Evans

For Information or Decision: Information

Contribution to the strategic aims of the Practitioners' Forum¹

This activity indirectly supports all the Aims of the Practitioners' Forum and specifically addresses 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Recommendation

That the Practitioners' Forum endorse the proposed activities and agree the milestones set out in the paper.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Practitioners' Forum of the proposed activities of the FireFit Task and Finish Group which will lead to the proposal of nationally agreed fitness standards for the FRS.

2. Background

- 2.1 The work to devise the new National Fire Fighter Selection Tests was the first detailed research undertaken into the fitness requirements of the role of a Fire Fighter. The new tests have been devised to meet the occupational requirements of the role and to identify those with the potential to be developed into Fire Fighters. This work highlighted the fact that there are no agreed standards of fitness for serving Fire Fighters. A Task and Finish Group has been set up by CFOA under the HR Director to extend the work undertaken in the course of development of the NFS and to make recommendations on the standards of fitness required for serving staff.

¹ The Practitioners Forum exists to advise Ministers. How does this report contribute to the overall strategic aims of the Practitioners' Forum? Aims are listed:-

1. To develop Quality Assurance Programme to ensure that agreed policies e.g. Core Values and Diversity, develop from policy outputs to service outcomes.
2. To build-up a robust advice service to Ministers and their Officials.
3. To review and upgrade the task sub groups remit to enhance local engagement, goodwill and trust.
4. To generate an issues list/agenda to help to develop the Fire Service's Vision and analytical framework e.g. CPA.
5. To develop the Quality Assurance Forum and build-up the performance management system.
6. To build-up the Practitioners' Forum's visibility through publicising its successes, widening and intensifying its networks, and being called upon for Ministerial briefings.

Our Fire and Rescue Service Practitioners' Forum

The group is led by Graeme Smith (DCFO Bedfordshire/CFOA) and Sue Evans (Head of the National Assessment Unit). Membership includes Fire Service Fitness Advisers, ALAMA, Occupational Health Professionals and the NAU.

3. Financial Implications²

- 3.1 There are no direct costs associated with this paper except for a one off cost of around £5,000 to access Consultancy to validate the proposed standard. This funding has been agreed by CFOA.

4. Risk Implications³

- 4.1 The requirement for agreed national fitness standards for the FRS is immediate and until this work is completed FRAs may be exposed to challenge in using current, varied tests which have not been researched and validated.

² What are the financial implications of adopting, or not adopting, this paper?

³ What are the risk implications of adopting, or not adopting, this paper?

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Appendix A

THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT UNIT

Supporting assessment for development and selection across the FRS

National Standards for Firefighter Fitness

An update on the work of the CFOA/FireFit Task and Finish Group

Introduction

The work to devise the new National Fire Fighter Selection Tests (NFST) was the first detailed research undertaken into the fitness requirements of the role of a Fire Fighter. The new tests have been devised to meet the occupational requirements of the role and to identify those with the potential to be developed into Fire Fighters. This work highlighted the fact that there are no agreed standards of fitness for serving Fire Fighters.

A Task and Finish Group has been set up by CFOA under the HR Director to extend the work undertaken in the course of development of the NFST and to make recommendations on the standards of fitness required for serving staff. The group is led by Graeme Smith (DCFO Bedfordshire/CFOA) and Sue Evans (Head of the National Assessment Unit). Membership includes Fire Service Fitness Advisers, ALAMA, Occupational Health Professionals, Representative Bodies and the NAU.

The FireFit Group has already begun work on recommendations for Annual Fitness Assessments based on research by Optimal Performance Limited and existing good practice across the FRS. This Task and finish Group will extend this work to produce a report and recommendations for an agreed national standard of fitness for serving Fire Fighters

Key Issues

- There is a need to link the NFST to annual fitness tests to ensure a that the level required matches the occupational requirements of the role and ensures that staff are fit for the duties of their role.
- Any tests recommended must be based on research into the actual occupational requirements of the role and provide the FRS with the means to assess individuals who cannot meet this standard.
- There is a need to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the NFST in terms of the performance of those individuals recruited via these processes in the workplace. Data collection is underway and early reports indicate that the tests are delivering as intended. The Output tests provide data which assist in validating the tests.
- There is a need to ensure that Phase One training programmes are designed to equip individual for the work place and that the physical demands are aligned the those within the role.
- There is a need to recognise that individuals can be given specific and targeted development in physical fitness for role in the same way that IPDS principles are applied to competency for role and that this can be between recruitment and beginning a training course as well as more generally as part of a general approach to fitness in the workplace.

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Key Activities and Milestones

ACTIVITY	Key Milestones	Target Date
To produce recommended standards of fitness, in line with the research based on the occupational requirements of the role	Collate existing research	End Mar 07
To consult CFOA Board on the Guidance Document	Presentation to CFOA Board	End March
To gain external advice on application of the existing research to identify the required fitness standard	Report from OPL Ltd	End April 07
To recommend a range of tests which the FRS can apply to serving staff.	Produce proposals for a range of tests for approval by the Practitioners' Forum	End May 07
To produce a guidance document for the FRS in applying the standards to serving staff	Produce a guidance document for approval by the Practitioners' Forum	End Jun 07
To deliver a series of briefing sessions for staff implementing the standards across the FRS	Initial sessions with practitioners to inform the work of the group and share good practice	April – May 07
To raise awareness and seek practitioner feedback	Deliver a session at the FireFit Conference	July 07

Conclusion

The work currently underway can deliver a set of recommended standards for the assessment of fitness in serving staff. This will be determined by research into the occupational requirements of the role and review of existing good practice across the FRS. This paper sets out a clear but tight timetable for delivery of a set of standards and guidance.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Practitioners' Forum endorse the proposed activity and milestones set out in the paper.

Graeme Smith CFOA

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