



Report title

Firefighter Recruitment – Outcome of 2015 and 2016 Campaigns and Proposals for 2017

Meeting

Resources Committee

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Report by

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Summary

This report provides an update on the firefighter recruitment campaigns run in 2015 and 2016, and outlines proposals for changes to the firefighter recruitment process to start in January 2017.

The number of firefighter applicants, and as a consequence the number of trainee recruits, has been lower than anticipated in 2015 and 2016, and the report shows the impact on the establishment if this low level of recruitment continues. In the last few months a full review of firefighter recruitment has taken place, including looking at the current eligibility criteria, and engaging external consultants to review the firefighter assessment process and to undertake market research. The overall aim of the recommendations below is to significantly increase the volume of firefighter recruitment, and to improve the diversity and quality of our firefighter trainee recruits, over the next two years.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Notes the information contained in this report and appendices A-E.
2. Confirms the London residency eligibility criterion as a means of improving diversity in the operational workforce, and approves its reduction to a period of 12 months (see paragraphs 12-17).
3. Approves the introduction of a new application and sift process, and for the purchase of the A&DC suite of tests for this purpose (see paragraphs 27-30)
4. Approves the replacement of the academic qualifications eligibility criteria with online aptitude testing (see appendix D, and paragraphs 18-19 and 31)
5. Approves changes to the firefighter assessment process (see appendix D, and paragraphs 27-28 and 32-33)

6. Approves the marketing and recruitment strategy (see paragraphs 39-44).
7. Approves open recruitment and gives delegated authority to the Commissioner and Head of Human Resource Management to determine recruitment schedules based on establishment needs (see paragraphs 48-49).
8. Approves the re-establishment of the firefighter recruitment and outreach team (see paragraphs 60-61).
9. Approves the establishment of a firefighter transfer scheme for competent firefighters from other UK fire and rescue services (see paragraphs 63-64).
10. Approves the establishment of a reserve of £600k to fund the proposed re-establishment of the firefighter recruitment and outreach team for a period of two years (£550k), and the development of new advertising campaign materials and media placement in 2017/18 arising from the recent firefighter recruitment market research exercise (£50k) (see paragraphs 44 and 61).

Background

1. Members agreed to the introduction of two new eligibility criteria for the role of trainee firefighter as part of the Authority's Recruitment Strategy for the period 2013-2015.
2. Firstly, in adopting the Strategy in July 2013 (FEP 2100), Resources Committee agreed that for the future there should be a minimum pre-entry requirement, for the role of trainee firefighter, of a Level 2 educational qualification in English Language and Mathematics. Academically, the Level 2 qualification equates to GCSE grades A*-C; the vocational equivalent is NVQ Level 2. The rationale for this was as follows:
 - To enable the previous psychometric testing stage, which tested the literacy and numeracy skills required in the firefighter role, to be cut out, speeding up the recruitment process. In previous firefighter recruitment campaigns, the administration and marking of these tests had been undertaken manually.
 - To raise the profile of firefighting as a professional career.
 - To reduce the number of applications, making the process more manageable, and ensuring a higher standard at the outset.
3. Subsequently, in January 2015 (FEP 2379), Resources Committee agreed to endorse the proposal that applicants for the 2015 firefighter recruitment campaign be required to demonstrate three years residency in London, subject to the criteria being reviewed prior to the following recruitment round. The rationale for introducing this criterion was to increase diversity in the operational workforce given that, according to the 2011 census, London is the most ethnically diverse area in England and Wales, with the highest proportion of ethnic minority groups (just over 40% of London's population is BME). Having a workforce more reflective of London's population improves the operational effectiveness of the Brigade through its understanding and responsiveness to London's increasing diversity, particularly in the context of community engagement.
4. Resources Committee received regular 6-monthly updates on firefighter recruitment following the adoption of the Recruitment Strategy in July 2013. The most recent detailed update was in January 2016 'Outcome of the 2015 Firefighter Recruitment Campaign and Proposals for a 2016 Firefighter Recruitment Campaign' (FEP 2552). It was agreed at that stage not to amend the London residency criterion to enable its impact to be assessed over a longer period. This

therefore remained in place for the 2016 firefighter recruitment campaigns, however officers committed to undertake a review of the whole of the firefighter recruitment process in order to inform future campaigns. This review was also included as an action point in the Authority's Inclusion Strategy, see FEP 2599.

5. The review has focused on the impact of the current recruitment and selection processes on the diversity of applicants and resulting recruits, and their match to the required skills levels and overall numbers required. This has included engaging an external consultant to assess how these processes might be improved. The results of this are set out in this report alongside the recommendations for change.

Outcome of firefighter recruitment campaigns following new eligibility criteria

6. Three firefighter recruitment campaigns have commenced since the new eligibility criteria were introduced: in April 2015, February 2016, and most recently in July 2016. The April 2015 campaign is now complete; the February 2016 campaign is nearly complete; and the July 2016 campaign is now at the work-related test stage. Detailed outcomes from these three campaigns are attached as Appendices A-C, and are summarised below in Table 1, along with the outcomes from the three preceding campaigns in 2008, 2009, and 2011 for comparative purposes.

Table 1: Outcomes of firefighter recruitment campaigns, 2008-16 (key stages), including race/gender breakdown

	2016 (July)	2016 (Feb)	2015	2011	2009	2008
Total no. of applicants	703	1196	1598	8762	5768	5968
Number of women applicants (%)	73 (10.4%)	159 (13.3%)	149 (9.3%)	733 (8.4%)	586 (10.2%)	600 (10.1%)
Number of BME applicants (%)	199 (28.3%)	308 (25.8%)	451 (28.2%)	1808 (20.6%)	1321 (22.9%)	1390 (23.3%)
Number of LGBT applicants (%)¹	68 (9.7%)	112 (9.4%)	169 (10.6%)			
Number of LGBT female applicants (%)¹	16	41 (3.4%)	42 (2.6%)			
Number of LGBT male applicants (%)¹	52	71 (5.9%)	127 (7.9%)			
Number of applicants with disabilities (%)¹	38 (5.4%)	62 (5.2%)	82 (5.2%)			
Shortlisted/invited to tests	n/a	n/a	n/a	847	1092	822
Shortlisted/eligibility checks undertaken	296	450	487	n/a	n/a	n/a
Passed tests/invited to interview	n/a	n/a	n/a	538	738	563
Passed eligibility checks/invited to interview	224	292	295	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total no. of recruits	≤56 ²	≤57 ²	102	158	291	313
Number of women recruits (%)	≤10 ² (≈17.8%)	≤9 ² (≈15.8%)	10 (9.8%)	24 (15.2%)	55 (18.9%)	53 (16.9%)
Number of BME recruits (%)	≤15 ² (≈26.8%)	≤11 ² (≈19.3%)	24 (23.5%)	17 (10.8%)	50 (17.2%)	51 (16.3%)

Number of LGBT recruits (%) ¹	≤8 ² (≈14.3%)	≤6 ² (≈10.5%)	15 (14.7%)			
Number of LGBT female recruits (%) ¹	≤3 ² (≈5.4%)	≤2 ² (≈3.5%)	3 (2.9%)			
Number of LGBT male recruits (%) ¹	≤5 ² (≈8.9%)	≤4 ² (≈7.0%)	12 (11.8%)			
Number of recruits with disabilities (%) ¹	≤2 ² (≈3.6%)	≤6 ² (≈10.5%)	9 (8.8%)			

¹ Not separately recorded prior to 2015

² Total recruit figures given for February and July 2016 campaign recruits are maximum possible (less than or equal to) given that final stages are yet to be completed. Recruit percentages are approximate (≈), based on the maximum number of recruits; the final percentage could be higher or lower.

Analysis

7. The salient points to note from Table 1 are set out below, which includes commentary on the diversity outcomes of the 2015-16 firefighter recruitment campaigns (and 2008-11). A key element of the Authority's recruitment strategies has been to promote an increase in the representation of women and BME staff amongst the operational workforce. Currently 6.9% of the operational workforce are women, and 12.6% are BME.
- There has been a significant, and continuing, reduction in the number of applications from 2015 onwards. The average number of applications in 2008-11 was 6833; the average number in 2015-16 has been only 17% of this figure, 1166. At one level, a reduction in the number of applications was a desired outcome from introducing the educational qualification (see paragraph 2 above): in the 2008-11 campaigns there was the additional sifting stage of verbal and numerical testing. However the numbers of applications in 2015/16 were nevertheless below what was anticipated.
 - Although numbers invited to interview in 2008-11 were, as expected, a smaller percentage of total applications than in 2015-16 as a result of the additional testing stage, absolute numbers invited to interview in 2008-11 were on average more than double the number invited to interview in 2015-16 (613 in 2008-11, compared to 270 in 2015-16). This, together with a higher attrition rate through the process in 2015-16, meant that on average there were more than three and half times as many recruits per campaign in 2008-11 (254) compared to 2015-16 (a maximum average of 72 for the 2015 and 2016 campaigns). This level of recruitment will be insufficient to maintain the operational establishment in 2017/18 and 2018/19, see paragraphs 8-11, and Tables 2 and 3, below.
 - The introduction of the London residency criterion will inevitably have been a factor behind the reduction in the overall number of applications, however this has had the impact of increasing the percentage of BME applicants and BME recruits. The three campaigns in 2015-16 had the three highest percentages of BME applicants (between 25.8% and 28.3%) of the six campaigns; in addition the percentage of BME recruits in 2015, and the expected percentages for the two 2016 campaigns, will all be higher than for any of the three 2008-11 campaigns. At the same time it remains the case that the percentage of BME candidates is not maintained throughout the process with BME males in particular under performing at the assessment centre stage. Work is being undertaken as part of the Authority's new Inclusion Strategy 'Safer Together', agreed in June 2016 (FEP 2599), to address this.

- With regards to recruitment of women firefighters, the 2015 campaign was a disappointment with 9.3% of applications from women, and 9.8% women recruits, given that the average percentage of women recruits in the three 2008-11 campaigns was 17%. Following this, additional steps were taken in the 2016 campaigns to specifically target women, for example adverts appeared in the Facebook newsfeed of women aged 18-40 in London who were interested in fitness and sports which require a good level of upper body strength. This appears to have yielded results, as the February 2016 campaign showed the highest percentage of women applicants over this period, at 13.3%, with potentially the percentage of women recruits being back to around 15.8%. The percentage of women applicants in the July 2016 campaign did reduce, although at 10.4% this was still higher than any of the three 2008-11 campaigns, and the percentage of women recruits in this campaign could be up to around 17.8%.
- The percentage of LGBT applicants has remained relatively constant in the three 2015-16 campaigns, at around 10%. The percentage of LGBT recruits for the 2015 campaign was however higher at 14.7%, and is likely to be around 10.5% for the February 2016 campaign, and back up to 14.3% for the July 2016 campaign.
- The percentage of applicants who have declared a disability remained around 5% for the 2015-16 campaigns, with 8.8% recruited in the 2015 campaign, potentially 10.5% for the February 2016 campaign, but down to 3.6% for the July 2016 campaign.

Impact on the Firefighter Establishment

8. As can be seen from Table 1 above, there were 102 recruits from the 2015 campaign, there will be a maximum of 57 recruits from the February 2016 campaign, and a maximum of 56 recruits for the July 2016 campaign.
9. This level of recruits should be sufficient to fill the firefighter trainee courses that are booked up until the end of 2016/17, and we are expected to recruit up to 118 firefighter trainees in the current financial year. However on this level of recruitment, and based on current leaver projections, the Brigade will be around 93 firefighters below establishment level by 31 March 2017.
10. The movements in the firefighter establishment since 2008/09, and projected through to 2018/19 are plotted in Tables 2 and 3 below. Table 2 shows that the firefighter establishment was generally able to be maintained between 2008/09 and 2015/16 through a combination of (initially) recruiting around 200 firefighters per year, followed by substantial reductions in the firefighter establishment from 2011/12 onwards, in particular the LSP5 reductions in 2013/14, when over 500 firefighter posts were deleted. This led to a recruitment freeze in 2013 and 2014. However by 2015/16 the over-establishment generated by the LSP5 establishment reductions had disappeared as a result of leavers, and by the end of 2015/16, a vacancy margin had once again appeared.
11. Since 2008/09, operational leavers have averaged around 250 per year, and leaver rates are projected to continue to be above 200 per year in 2017/18 and 2018/19. This means that if firefighter recruitment continues at the 2015-16 levels (ca. 100 trainees recruited per year), and assuming no (significant) establishment changes, we will be under-established by ca. 224.5 posts at the end of 2017/18, and by ca. 337.5 posts at the end of 2018/19, see Table 3. We will only be able to maintain the establishment if we double our recent level of firefighter recruitment, i.e. if we recruit, on average around 200-250 trainees in both of the next two years.

This will require changes to the eligibility criteria and/or the marketing/advertising strategy, and/or other changes to the Brigade's approach to firefighter recruitment.

Table 2: FF (operational) establishment and recruits 2008-2017

Year	Estab at year end (31/03)	Net estab. change over year	No. of FF/ op joiners	No. of FF/ op leavers	Vacancy margin at year end (31/03)
2008/09	5867.50	-25.0	209	280	-34.3
2009/10	5859.00	-8.5	275	311	-127.2
2010/11	5922.50	63.5	222	238	-126.7
2011/12	5772.50	-150.0	253	290	-19.9
2012/13	5622.50	-150.0	36	219	8.2
2013/14	5039.00	-583.5	2	367	299.2
2014/15	5009.00	-30.0	40	233	30.4
2015/16	4987.00	-22.0	83	323	-172.9
2016/17	*4800.50	*-223.5	*134	*228	*-92.5

Notes:

- Operational joiners includes all trainees and transferees
- Operational leavers includes trainee leavers
- *Establishment figures for 2016/17 are based on current Operational Establishment (as at 01/12/2016), with any future known changes applied.
- *Operational Joiners for 2016/17 is based on current joiners to date (01/12/2016) plus expected joiners for the remainder of 2016/17.
- *Operational Leavers for 2016/17 based on recorded leavers up to 30/11/2016, plus predicted leavers for Dec-March 2016/17.
- Vacancy Margin is measured in terms of full time equivalents (FTE) and will take account of Operational Staff who have changed their working hours over this period.
- Vacancy Margin does not include trainees who have not been posted to station

Table 3: Projected figures for 2017/19, assuming no establishment changes, and 2015/16 levels of FF recruitment (100 per year)

Year	Estab at year end (31/03)	Net estab. change over year	No. of FF/ op joiners	No. of FF/ op leavers	Vacancy margin at year end (31/03)
2017/18	4800.50	0	100	232	-224.5
2018/19	4800.50	0	100	213	-337.5

Notes:

- Projections assume a vacancy margin of -92.5 at 31/03/2017 (based on current leaver & joiner predictions, and no further changes to Establishment)
- Projections assume that all Ops joiners within each Financial Year are posted into operational roles before the Financial year end.
- Projections assume that no operational staff increase or decrease their working hours over the highlighted period.

Implications for London residency and educational qualifications

London residency

12. The Authority's Diversity policy (Policy Number 394) states that, '*We aim to provide a fire service which is accessible to all and meets the needs of London's diverse communities*' and that, '*We will take positive action, in the delivery of our service to promote good relations between people from different communities who live in London and also between people from different communities who work for us*'.
13. Since the introduction of the London residency requirement in 2015, there has been a commitment to keeping it under review. The London residency requirement can be seen as a proportionate means of achieving legitimate aims, namely, the public sector equality duty within the Equality Act 2010 of advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a

protected characteristic and those who do not, and the improved operational effectiveness in the Brigade's community engagement delivered through a firefighter workforce which is in greater proportion drawn from and reflective of London's population. This has particular importance for community fire safety (e.g. Home Fire Safety Visits, schools talks, public education events, LIFE courses, Junior Fire-setters Intervention Scheme (JFIS) work), fire regulatory work, and firefighting and rescue work itself.

14. Whilst there was a legitimate aim in introducing the London residency requirement, the introduction of this requirement has coincided with a sharp reduction in the number of applications received from potential firefighter candidates. However as noted in Table 1 and paragraph 7 (third bullet) above, the London residency requirement has been successful in increasing diversity including the proportion of BME applicants and appointees. Therefore, while there is an argument to continue with a London residency, from the perspective of being a proportionate means of achieving the previously stated legitimate aims, the need to significantly increase the number of applicants means that there is a strong justification to relax the requirement, thus increasing the applicant pool available.
15. Linked to this is the issue of the affordability of living in London; it has been suggested that having a London residency qualification adversely impacts on those who simply cannot afford to live in London. At the September 2016 Resources Committee meeting Members asked that officers consider the issue of affordable living accommodation in London for operational staff as an important context for the review of recruitment, and as Members will be aware, affordable housing in London is a key Mayoral priority. The influence of the Authority however is limited in this regard. Officers have recently implemented the interest-free tenancy deposit loan, and propose to work with GLA colleagues and TfL to explore how our estate could be used to help tackle the housing challenges facing London, and in particular how this could benefit our own operational staff.
16. In light of the immediate need to increase the volume of firefighter trainee recruitment, officers propose to reduce the London residency requirement from three years to a period of 12 months. As before, this will be kept under review to monitor the overall effectiveness of the criterion.
17. In any event it is proposed that the London residency requirement is relaxed for those who are currently serving in, or have recently left the Armed Forces; students resident in London prior to commencing their course, even if their educational establishment is located outside of London; and London Fire Brigade FRS/Control staff living outside of London who wish to apply for the firefighter role. It is also proposed not to apply the London residency requirement for the planned firefighter transfer process, see paragraphs 63-64 below.

Educational qualifications

18. The educational qualifications were introduced, in part, to raise the professional profile of the role as a way of attracting high calibre candidates. As a result, literacy and numeracy tests were removed from the process. However the outcomes from the initial sift (application form) and assessment (dictation test) since 2015, indicate that, particularly with regards to literacy, the attainment of a Level 2 qualification does not necessary result in a candidate with the required literacy skills.
19. It may also be the case that good candidates are being lost by not affording applicants who cannot demonstrate the relevant qualifications an opportunity to prove their aptitude as part of the assessment process. The eligibility checks indicate that the Level 2 qualification is having an adverse impact on the overall number of applicants given the number of candidates rejected at

this stage who are unable to provide proof of their qualifications in English Language and/or Mathematics. The evidence suggests that obtaining proof of qualifications, generally taken at 16 years of age, is more problematic for older candidates and for candidates who have moved to the UK from overseas, particularly from areas of conflict.

20. This is one of the key issues that has been considered by the external consultant engaged to review the current firefighter recruitment process. The results and recommendations from this review are set out in the following paragraphs.

Review of Firefighter Selection and Assessment Process

21. The sequential stages for the firefighter selection and assessment process were amended in 2015 to accommodate the new eligibility requirements. The current process is as follows:

- **Application Form:** Applicants who state that they meet the eligibility criteria are required to complete a short application form. This includes four questions under which applicants demonstrate they have relevant experience to become an effective firefighter. The applications are then scored and verified manually; those who score 9+ out of a maximum score of 16 are shortlisted.
- **Eligibility checks:** Those shortlisted are asked to provide documentary evidence that shows they meet the Level 2 educational qualifications and the London residency criteria, and that they hold an ordinary driving licence.
- **'Stage 2' (Interview):** Short-listed candidates are invited to interview where they complete four assessments: a visual estimation test, a group exercise, a dictation exercise, and a structured interview. The pass score is 50% which is consistent with previous recruitment rounds.
- **Work-related tests:** Successful candidates at interview then undertake work-related physical activities which test aerobic fitness, stamina, strength and flexibility.
- **Medical:** Those who pass the work-related tests attend a medical with the Authority's occupational health provider, HML. Information from the candidate's GP and/or specialist is requested where HML deem this appropriate based on the candidate's responses on a medical questionnaire, and for some candidates the medical stage can involve a referral to an independent specialist. These processes can delay confirmation of the outcome of the medical stage.
- **References and criminal records checks:** Those who pass the medical stage are then offered employment subject to satisfactory references and criminal records checks.

22. As previously stated, the 2015 revisions were made in response to the introduction of the new eligibility criteria and resulted in the removal of the ability tests. Since that time officers have been monitoring the process and have identified a number of issues in addition to those related to the educational qualifications detailed in paragraphs 18-19 above. These are set out below.

23. Firstly, there are indications that the level of competences and behaviours required to pass the firefighter selection process does not always align with the level of performance required to successfully complete the new firefighter development programme introduced in 2015. As can be seen from Table 4 below, a similar percentage of firefighter trainees (around 6-8%) have failed to complete the firefighter training course in 2015/16 and 2016/17 as occurred in 2014/15.

Table 4 – Outcomes from firefighter trainee programmes, 2014-16

Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
No. of courses	4	6	4 to date ¹
No. commenced training	38	70	46 ²
No. completed training	35	65 ²	22
No. re-coursed	0	3	2
No. resigned	0	1	1
No. dismissed:	3	3	1

¹ Total of 10 courses scheduled for the financial year

² 1 delegate re-coursed from 2015/16 into 2016/17 course

24. Secondly, there are key elements of the process itself which need to be reviewed. The validity of the online application form is of particular concern. Shortlisting of applications since 2015 has been undertaken by the assessment centre staff to ensure a consistent approach. As a result the evidence indicates that there are applicants who are either not completing their own applications or know what to write in order to be shortlisted, as their performance at interview is not always consistent with their application form information. This has the effect of skewing the outcome predictions as well as not being the best use of resources.
25. To address these issues, officers engaged an external consultant to undertake a fundamental review of the process from the initial sift of applicants up to and including the Stage 2/Interview in line with industry best practice.
26. The review included a job analysis based on the national firefighter role map, the current national competencies framework, and the Brigade's proposed new Behavioural Framework currently being developed by the Development and Training department, together with a series of interviews with members of the Brigade's support groups, station-based staff and managers.
27. The full report and recommendations of the review are attached as Appendix D to this report, and a summary of the recommendations are set out below:
 - To replace the application form as a means of sifting (shortlisting candidates) with a suite of online assessments to assess behavioural responses and cognitive aptitude, using assessments which have been specifically designed for the fire and rescue service to provide face validity and thereby minimising adverse impact.
 - To undertake a longer term project to consider developing bespoke assessments that deal with LFB's specific requirements, including the proposed behavioural framework.
 - To replace the educational eligibility requirements with online aptitude tests of a similar standard which would be administered and scored electronically.
 - To adopt a revised firefighter assessment centre to validate the sift process, and which reflects the demands of the firefighter role, including the introduction of role play exercises.
 - To develop an accredited assessor programme in order to properly assess the revised assessment centre.

28. Having considered the report, officers propose to adopt the key recommendations, and therefore to revise the current firefighter selection process (initial application up to and including the assessment centre) from that detailed in paragraph 21 above to the following:

- Expression of Interest:** Applicants apply via the Brigade's job pages and provide basic personal information before progressing to the online sift.
- Phase 1 Sift (Longlist):** Online job preview questionnaire, behavioural assessment and situational awareness tests. Successful applicants progress to the phase 2 sift.
- Phase 2 Sift (Shortlist):** Online verbal, numerical, and mechanical reasoning aptitude tests. Successful candidates progress to the eligibility stage.
- Eligibility checks:** Shortlisted candidates are required to provide evidence of eligibility (i.e. London residency and ordinary driving licence) before moving to the assessment centre,.
- Assessment centre:** Validation of sift assessments, redesigned interview, group exercise, role play and written exercise.

(The assessment centre will be followed by the work-related tests, medical, and references/criminal records checks identical to the current process, see paragraph 21 above).

29. As highlighted within the consultant's report, there are a number of test developers and publishers who provide a range of assessment and aptitude tests. However, officers have identified Assessment and Development Consultants (A&DC) as being the only test publishers who have products designed with, and specifically for, the fire and rescue service, having worked with other fire and rescue services and CFOA to develop a range of sift tools to assess applicants for the firefighter role (the Phase 1 sift tests outlined in paragraph 28 above; A&DC also provide the Phase 2 sift tests which are more generic). Therefore, if approved, officers propose to purchase these Phase 1 and Phase 2 sift tests from A&DC. On the basis that A&DC are the only supplier of this whole product, a single tender action can be justified. The cost of purchasing the A&DC suite of tests will be £36,900, which will cover usage over a three year period. This cost can be met within existing 2016/17 budgets.
30. In addition to the face validity provided by the A&DC suite of tests (i.e. the tests will be viewed as valid and relevant by those taking them), the online web-based platform will reduce the resources and time taken to sift (short-list) candidates, and also provide instant feedback to candidates, which has been difficult to resource under the current arrangements. This will provide valuable support to applicants by identifying specific areas for development.
31. It will be noted that the consultant has recommended replacing the Level 2 educational qualification requirement with equivalent-standard verbal and numerical reasoning tests, and that officers propose to adopt this recommendation. One of the original reasons for introducing the Level 2 qualification was to speed up the recruitment process by cutting out the previous time-consuming aptitude test stage. However this is no longer a factor as the proposed replacement tests can be administered and scored online which does not take up time or staffing resources. Given this, the issues raised in paragraphs 18-19 above, and the comments within the consultant's report, appendix D, officers believe it would now be appropriate to remove the

Level 2 educational qualification requirements, and to revert to aptitude testing of an equivalent standard.

32. With regards to the proposed redesigned assessment centre, and as recommended by the consultant, it is important that assessors are fully briefed and have the required skills to assess candidates in order to provide objectivity and consistency. Therefore until the Brigade's proposed Licensed Assessor programme currently being developed by the Development and Training department is established and embedded, as agreed within the Inclusion Strategy FEP 2599, officers propose to commission an external provider to develop a briefing day for the assessors and to supply role players, after which it is proposed that assessors and role players will be sourced in-house. The cost of the proposed briefing day can be met within existing budgets.
33. In line with best practice, it is proposed that any new assessments are trialled prior to implementation, working alongside members of the support groups to facilitate this. A key aspect of the review is that it supports the Authority's Inclusion Strategy by minimising any adverse impact on BME, women, LGBT and disabled applicants, and addresses the overall improved service delivery objective within the Strategy to increase the diversity of the operational workforce. If firefighter recruitment goes live at the end of January 2017, the first assessment centres will be taking place in March/April 2017, which gives sufficient time for this trialling to take place.
34. The consultant's review did not consider the current work related tests, although it is well-documented that a disproportionate number of women fail at this stage. The work-related tests that the Brigade uses for firefighter selection have national validity: they are the National Firefighter Selection Tests (NFSTs) as recommended by DCLG (formerly ODPM) in 2005 following a lengthy and detailed study (see 'Development and Validation of National Firefighter Selection Tests: Physical Tests', ODPM, June 2005). A key driver in the development of the NFSTs was 'to minimise adverse impact among the target groups, especially female and ethnic minority candidates'.
35. Since 2005, there has been no validated body of work undertaken which would suggest that alternative physical tests should be undertaken for firefighter recruitment. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken by the CFOA Firefit steering group, in association with the University of Bath, which has led to new recommended fire ground fitness tests, but these tests are applicable to serving firefighters, not potential recruits. The NFSTs require a lower level of fitness than is expected from serving firefighters as it is potential that is being assessed.

Marketing and Advertising

36. In preparation for the 2015 firefighter recruitment campaign, a new marketing and advertising strategy involving targeted digital communications, including social media, was developed to attract highly motivated, high calibre, and physically fit applicants interested in pursuing a career with London Fire Brigade. Notwithstanding this approach, data from the three firefighter recruitment campaigns in 2015/16 shows that the Brigade's website continued to be the main contact point for the majority of those interested in becoming a firefighter, with 64% of applicants stating the website as their source of information.
37. Whilst the digital marketing increased the number of applicants from women in February 2016 (see paragraph 7 above, 4th bullet), it does not appear to have had a significant impact in attracting women who had not previously considered the role.

38. In order to understand why our attraction rate for women remains at around 10% of all applications, officers engaged external consultants ('Future Thinking') to undertake a market research exercise. The aim of the exercise was to highlight women's perceptions of firefighter as a role, and to identify the barriers to women becoming operational firefighters. While some work had already been done with operational women in relation to the attraction rates for promotion, officers felt that it was important to seek the views of women who had no connection with the fire and rescue service to ascertain if there were organisational issues to be addressed, and to give us insight to inform and improve future recruitment campaigns.
39. The outcomes of the review were reported to officers in December 2016, and can be found at Appendix E. A summary of the findings is detailed below:
- Women look for many qualities in a potential role; these often overlap with the role of a women firefighter, however there is an overall lack of awareness of the firefighter role which often results in women creating perceived barriers.
 - The actual role of firefighter only appeals to a narrow range of women: (1) those who have the drive and desire to become a firefighter; and (2) those that could be convinced if the seed was planted as the right opportunity arose.
 - At the same time there are unnecessary barriers in place that dissuade women from applying. These include the application process, the LFB website, and a lack of selling the job.
 - Experts have indicated that the goal of significantly increasing the percentage of women firefighters (from the current 7% to the previous target of 18%) may be unrealistic.
40. The recommendations from the review include to continue offering open days for women (these were mentioned as very important by women firefighters in confirming their decision to join LFB); to focus recruitment efforts on women who have a pre-existing or potential interest in the firefighter role, and on women who are also interested in the army/emergency services; to target gyms and fitness centres; to improve the LFB website to make it easier to find the careers section, and to depict more women in the role; to re-examine our targets for women in the operational workforce; to demystify the role (not to expect women to understand and desire the job in the same way as men); and to position the role as professional, with clear career progression opportunities, ensuring that social media imagery depicts women.
41. The report contains a lot of useful information and interesting findings, if not always surprising, and these will be used to inform our advertising and marketing strategy over the course of 2017. As the report has only recently been provided to officers, new campaign materials and messaging will not be ready in time for the new campaign in January 2017, but are now being developed for use later in the year. And whilst a number of findings regarding the LFB website are accepted by officers, firstly it should be noted that improvement of the recruitment pages has already been identified as a key objective in the current development of the new LFB website, and secondly the current website does regularly feature images of operational women on its front page; the report appears to suggest otherwise.
42. The marketing campaign which will be launched in January 2017, in advance of new campaign materials, will nevertheless seek to highlight different aspects of the firefighter role and career opportunities as the market research report recommends. Using written and video case studies, the campaign will highlight areas of work that are lesser known to the public such as the wide range of community outreach and educational work.

43. Officers have also looked more closely at how to maximise the targeting of potential applicants from under-represented groups. One approach is to map how a cross-section performs in the campaign (from attraction all the way through the recruitment process) compared to the relevant wider group. For example, marketing material will be targeted at women who have an interest in strength based sports and activities, and the performance of this sub-group can be compared to the performance of women overall. Targeting in this way is designed to attract people to find out more information about the role of a firefighter by visiting our jobs pages, and the mapping process enables this approach to be properly evaluated. Improved 'tracking' of the users' interaction with the advertisements, e.g. did they click through to find out more, or did they submit an application, will assist in understanding the barriers and effectiveness of the campaign. It will also enable officers to prioritise advertising space to the best performing advertisements during the campaign itself.
44. Promotion of firefighter recruitment in January 2017 will therefore initially use the same approach applied in recent campaigns, and during the course of 2017 the campaign will be informed by the commissioned research, with changes in images and messaging. The projected costs of the marketing and advertising campaign for January 2017 is approximately £30k which can be met from the existing 2016/17 recruitment budget. However, additional funding will be required to develop new campaign materials and for media placement in 2017/18 arising from the recent research. It is therefore proposed that a sum of £50k is earmarked for this as part of the proposed reserve

Firefighter apprenticeships and cadet pathways

45. With the introduction of the Government's Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017, officers are exploring a range of options for introducing operational apprenticeships and the Brigade will be represented on a firefighter trailblazer group led by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Department of Education approved the expression of interest submitted by Staffordshire F&RS on 18 November 2016. The first trailblazer meeting is on 19 December 2016 and the proposed new firefighter apprenticeship standard is expected to take around 12-18 months to develop. During the development of the standard officers will consider converting the current firefighter development programme into an apprenticeship programme as a single point of entry for firefighters. This will be dependant on the final agreed content of the standard and subject to consultation with the Fire Brigades Union. It is estimated that the Apprenticeship Levy will cost the Authority approximately £1.1 million p.a., but the successful development of firefighter apprenticeships should enable the Brigade to recover all of this sum.
46. Officers are also committed to generating interest within the firefighter trailblazer group to develop an additional operational apprenticeship standard. This is to target committed individuals to generate high quality applications for the firefighter programme and will be primarily aimed at fire cadets and adult cadet volunteers. This approach requires at least 10 organisations and the Department of Education to support the development of the new apprenticeship standard.
47. Establishing cadet pathways into firefighter recruitment is particularly attractive to the Brigade given the diversity profile of this cohort. In addition, officers have been working with the awarding body responsible for the re-design of the BTEC in Uniformed Public Services to influence future course content so that it is more aligned to firefighter competences and behaviours.

Open recruitment

48. The January 2016 Resources Committee report "Outcome of the 2015 Firefighter Recruitment Campaign and Proposals for the 2016 Firefighter Recruitment Campaign" (FEP 2552) advised Members that the review of longer-term options to improve attraction and recruitment rates would include consideration of having an open recruitment process, i.e. no closing date for applications, but that applications would be drawn down and progressed in accordance with recruitment needs.
49. Given the volume of recruitment needed over the next two years, see paragraph 11 above, officers propose to introduce open recruitment from January 2017 until such times as there are sufficient applicants to meet the projected establishment requirements for the succeeding 12-18 months. Recruitment can then re-commence at a future date as establishment needs dictate. It is also proposed that delegated authority is given to the Commissioner and Head of Human Resource Management to determine future recruitment schedules based on these establishment needs. (In practice, given the functionality of the Brigade's online recruitment system which currently requires a 'closing date' for recruitment campaigns in order to progress candidates, the campaign will, on the system, have a series of closing dates, following which the campaign will immediately re-open. Open recruitment will also necessitate having a system under which applicants who are not successful in the Phase 1 and 2 sifts can only re-apply after a certain time period has elapsed; officers propose this is initially 6 months, and to keep this under review).

Outreach

50. Prior to 2014, a dedicated team delivered a programme of outreach and positive action activities to support the Authority's diversity targets. This included visits to community events and careers fairs, open days for potential applicants and fitness clinics. Following the disestablishment of the outreach team at the time of the operational recruitment freeze in 2013/14, see paragraph 60 below, the number and frequency of activities has greatly reduced, with anything other than the fitness clinics requiring the support of volunteers mainly drawn from the support groups.
51. In order to meet the commitments set out in the Inclusion Strategy (FEP 2590) alongside the Brigade's recruitment diversity objectives, the current approach is not sustainable. Proposals for resourcing an enhanced recruitment and outreach function is detailed in paragraph 60 below.
52. If approved, the outreach team will have a strategic and community focus, developing partnerships with other organisations to promote diversity, working with borough managers to support the Inclusion Strategy, and developing relationships with community groups to promote diversity and the firefighter role to a wider audience.

Positive Action

53. Positive action initiatives have been widely used by the Brigade to increase the number of applicants from under-represented groups, the latest being the London Residency criteria. Although there has been some success, there is still a distance to go before the Brigade's operational workforce is reflective of the community it serves.
54. The proposed new online sift process set out in paragraph 28 above, by providing instant feedback on test scores, will provide an opportunity for an additional positive action measure to be implemented, i.e. focusing support on BME applicants who have demonstrated through the sift process that they have the required behaviours but who fall just outside the required standard for the ability tests.

55. As detailed in the recruitment consultant's report, there is evidence to suggest that members of some ethnic groups can obtain lower scores in aptitude tests, and although this will be minimised by adopting assessments designed specifically for firefighters, officers propose to address this by developing the concept of "Almost There" candidates (ATCs) – providing targeted support to BME candidates who are within 2-3% of the sift pass mark. The proposal is that ATCs are given support in order for them to achieve the required standard before re-taking the sift. Although the concept is in the early stages of development, this support could potentially include providing access to the range of practice test materials, holding in-house test practice sessions, or developing courses designed to address specific development needs. Development of this concept will be undertaken in close liaison with legal officers to ensure that any proposals are lawful under positive action legislation, and hence are not positive discrimination measures (see paragraphs 58-59 below).
56. As a first step, for the next firefighter recruitment campaign, officers propose to provide all applicants with access to a range of practice test material. Sift scores will then be analysed over a period of 3–6 months to identify where best to focus additional support before developing a programme or range of interventions. ATCs would also be provided with access to a mentor to support them through the programme and, if successful, this could potentially extend into the Firefighter Development Programme (FFD) as part of the Brigade's commitment in the Inclusion Strategy to develop a mentoring programme.
57. In addition, officers intend to develop an enhanced fitness programme for women to specifically develop upper body strength and provide a dedicated resource to support this in order to address the disproportionate failure rates of women at the work related test stage.

Positive discrimination

58. The Equalities Act 2010 permits general positive action to address under-representation in a workforce through measures such as encouraging applications for employment from under-represented groups, or offering pre-application training to under-represented groups ahead of the recruitment process, where the activity is a proportionate means to achieving a legitimate end. Further, positive action is permitted in recruitment if a particular group is under-represented, there are two individuals who are just as qualified as one another, but one of the individuals is from that under-represented group. However positive discrimination measures, for example recruiting (even if temporarily) solely from a group with a shared protected characteristic is unlawful. If the Authority were to support positive discrimination, this would need to take the form of lobbying the government for a change in law, and would most appropriately be done in close liaison with the wider GLA Group and the Mayor.
59. There are arguments for and against positive discrimination measures, and at a recent meeting of the Inclusion Board (30 November 2016) it was agreed to hold a full discussion on the issue at the next Board meeting in the New Year to determine what approach should be taken on this matter by the Authority, and for this to be reported back to Committee.

Resourcing of the recruitment function

60. In the meantime, a move to open recruitment and an enhanced outreach presence will require additional resourcing of the LFB firefighter recruitment function. Prior to the recruitment freeze of 2013-14, the Brigade had an outreach team of 3 watch manager specialists headed by a dedicated Positive Action Manager, plus two administrative support staff. The three watch manager specialist and administrative posts have since been deleted, and the Positive Action Manager is now the Organisational Change Development Manager, with outreach forming only one element of the role. Officers therefore propose the re-establishment of the dedicated

firefighter recruitment and outreach team. An initial assessment indicates that additional resources would be needed as follows (this includes expected grades and current costs, including employer oncosts):

- 1 x team manager (FRSE; £53,000)
- 2 x outreach watch manager A specialists (2 x £51,050 = £102,100)
- 1 x fitness adviser (FRSD; £47,300)
- 2 x administrative staff, to manage the process and support outreach (FRSB; 2 x £32,750 = £65,500)

61. Additional staffing on the above lines, with on-costs, will therefore cost in the region of £275k p.a. (the above totals £267,900, but these costs will increase with the expected pay increases in 2017/18 and 2018/19). At this stage it is not proposed that any additional staffing is established on a permanent basis, but on a temporary, two-year, basis, to meet the recruitment requirements, including in relation to diversity, up to the end of 2018/19. At that point, this function, and firefighter recruitment generally, can be reviewed. It is proposed to fund this fixed-term level of resources through the setting up of a reserve, with £550k earmarked for these staffing costs, to be funded from the surplus on the general reserve.
62. Until the team is established, which is anticipated to be in the first quarter of 2017/18, it will not be possible to undertake the full range of outreach work detailed in paragraph 52 or to fully implement the proposed ATC programme detailed in paragraphs 54-56 above. However the current fitness clinics, and tailored fitness programmes for women applicants, will continue whilst the additional resource is being put in place. In the medium to longer term, there are likely to be opportunities for collaboration in the area of recruitment with blue light and/or other partners, and officers will continue the existing dialogue on this with relevant agencies where this can lead to improved service and greater efficiency.

Firefighter transferees

63. The Fire Brigades Union have specifically requested that the Brigade considers re-establishing a firefighter transfer process within the recruitment review. Prior to 2015, the Brigade generally undertook a firefighter transfer process in parallel with its recruitment rounds, but this has not occurred in 2015 and 2016 given the London residency requirement. At the same time the Brigade has undertaken transfer processes over this period when recruiting to roles above firefighter, with no London residency requirement.
64. Given the Brigade's short-term recruitment needs, and in light of the request from the FBU, officers propose that a firefighter transfer process is re-instated with no London residency requirement. However it is proposed that this is conditional on firefighter transferees being assessed against the Brigade's proposed new Behavioural Framework. It is important that firefighters joining us from other Brigades are actively committed to the Brigade's values and inclusive culture.

Conclusion

65. In summary, the Authority is currently recruiting insufficient trainee firefighters to meet the projected establishment requirements over the next two years. Changes are required to the firefighter recruitment process in order to greatly increase the volume of recruitment, and whilst achieving this, the Authority also needs to significantly increase diversity amongst the operational workforce.

66. In order to achieve these two objectives, this report recommends changes to the firefighter recruitment process as follows:

- To reduce the London residency requirement from 3 years to 12 months, see paragraphs 12-17. This change to be implemented immediately.
- To introduce a new application and sift process, see appendix D and paragraphs 27-30. This change to be implemented immediately, i.e. for the recruitment campaign to commence in January 2017.
- To replace the Level 2 educational qualification requirement with online aptitude testing of the same standard, see appendix D, and paragraphs 18-19 and 31. This change to be implemented immediately.
- To implement a redesigned firefighter assessment process, see appendix D, and paragraphs 27-28 and 32-33. This change to be implemented immediately, i.e. in time for the first batch of shortlisted candidates from the January 2017 campaign.
- To implement new campaign advertising materials following the market research undertaken, see paragraphs 39-44. This will not be implemented in time for the launch of the January 2017 campaign, but will be implemented as soon as practicable, during the course of 2017.
- To move to open recruitment, see paragraphs 48-49. This change to be implemented immediately, with the launch of the January 2017 campaign.
- To re-establish the firefighter recruitment and outreach team, see paragraphs 60-61. This work will commence immediately, but will take 2-3 months to complete.
- To re-instate the firefighter transfer scheme, see paragraphs 63-64. This change to be implemented immediately, with the launch of the January 2017 campaign.

67. Future reporting on the outcomes of the January 2017 campaign will be via the HR Digest at Resources Committee, and through the reporting arrangements that are agreed under the new governance structures which will be introduced in 2017.

Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments

68. Sections 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010 permit positive action in recruitment before or at the application stage, as set out in the Authority's recruitment strategy and as referred to earlier in the report. At or prior to application stage, the steps that can be taken include encouraging particular groups to apply, or helping people with particular protected characteristics to perform to the best of their ability (for example, by giving them training or support not available to other applicants). The actions permitted do not include treating any persons more favourably in the recruitment or promotion process, and the Authority must be satisfied that the measures proposed are a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim otherwise there is a risk of the Authority not being able to successfully defend a claim for indirect race discrimination pursuant to Section 19 of the Equality Act 2010. All appointments must be made on merit.

69. European Union freedom of movement provisions require workers who are nationals of another Member State not to be treated differently to national workers due to their nationality. Indirect discrimination may be present if a relevant criterion for employment is intrinsically liable to affect and potentially disadvantage the nationals of another Member State more than those of the host state. However, this difference in treatment can be justified if they are based on objective considerations which are independent of the nationality of the persons concerned and proportionate to the aim legitimately pursued by the host state.

70. Accordingly, for the London residency eligibility requirement to successfully withstand a legal challenge, it would have to be objectively demonstrated to be justified as an appropriate and proportionate means of securing a legitimate aim i.e. the improved operational effectiveness in the Brigade's community engagement delivered through a firefighter workforce which is in greater proportion drawn from and reflective of London's population. This has particular importance for community fire safety (e.g. HFSV visits, schools talks, public education events, LIFE courses, JFIS work), fire regulatory work, and firefighting and rescue work itself.
71. However, if the rationale for the residency requirement was simply to increase the proportion of BME firefighters with no reference to the benefits of improved service delivery, then there would be a risk that the Authority may not be able to persuade a tribunal or court that it is adopting a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim should it have to defend an indirect race discrimination claim brought by an excluded non-BME would be applicant. This is because the aim would be discriminatory in that it would involve an attempt to increase the proportion of BME firefighters and therefore to decrease the proportion of non-BME firefighters with no objective justification. That would not amount to a legitimate aim for these purposes as such action is prohibited by the Equality Act. Similar risks would arise in relation to freedom of movement and potential finding of differential treatment being afforded to non-UK nationals as a consequence of there not being justification of a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. This is why the Brigade should continue to evidentially justify the residency requirement, and the impact of a more representative workforce, as leading to improved operational effectiveness.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments

72. This report proposes changes to the firefighter recruitment process from 2017. This will have a number of financial implications as set out below.
73. The report proposes the re-establishment of the firefighter recruitment and outreach team for a period of two years, along with the development of new advertising campaign materials and media placement. It is proposed that the cost of this is met through the establishment of a £600k earmarked reserve, which is reflected in the Budget Update report also on today's agenda.
74. The 2017/18 budget currently includes an assumption that there will be 90 vacancies on average during 2017/18. That forecast is on the assumption that the recommendations in this report are accepted and that recruitment levels increase from those seen in 2016/17.
75. The report notes that the £37k cost of purchasing the Assessment and Development Consultants suite of tests has been contained within the existing 2016/17 budget.
76. The report also discusses the apprenticeship levy which has a forecast budgeted cost to LFEPa of £1.1m in 2017/18. The report notes that the successful development of firefighter apprenticeships should enable LFEPa to recover all of this sum, which would increase the savings achievable in future years.

Sustainable Development implications

77. There are no direct sustainable development implications arising from this report.

Staff Side consultations undertaken

78. Staff side are being consulted on the proposals within this report, including the recruitment and selection process and the eligibility criteria. At the date of despatch of this report (5 January 2017), no specific comments had been received; any comments received prior 13 January 2017

will be reported to the Committee as appropriate. The Brigade Support Groups are also being consulted. Initial indications from the Support Groups are that in general they are supportive of the proposals but have concerns around (a) potential adverse impact of any new testing arrangements; and (b) re-instating the firefighter transfer process with no London residency requirement, as this could reduce the positive diversity impact of London residency. The Support Groups also wish it to be clear that outreach needs to be mainstreamed (for example, Borough Commanders having diversity recruitment targets; fire stations having a role in local recruitment activity), and so the role of the central outreach team is to provide support to local operational managers and not to undertake all outreach work themselves. Officers have confirmed to the Support Groups that this is indeed the Authority's view of outreach.

Equalities implications

79. A key strategic aim of the Authority has been the objective of achieving an operational workforce which reflects the diversity of the community it serves, in particular in respect of women and BME staff. This objective continues to have a high priority for the Brigade, and informs the recommendations within this report.
80. The Inclusion Strategy and accompanying action plan, which was endorsed by the Authority at its meeting on 30 June 2016 (FEP 2590), includes a number of activities relating to firefighter recruitment, i.e. the development of proposals for enhanced cadet and apprenticeship programmes, including pathways for cadets to become trainee firefighters; the review of social media targeted digital marketing, promoting greater use and investment where it has proven successful; a general review of our recruitment process, seeking good practice from similar industries who are also seeking to attract greater diversity of applicants to identify what we could do differently; and ensuring the support groups are involved in recruitment planning. Updates on this work will be provided through report-backs on the Inclusion Strategy.
81. The Brigade meets its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) to make reasonable adjustments to its recruitment processes to ensure disabled persons are not placed at a disadvantage.

List of Appendices to this report:

- Appendix A – Firefighter Recruitment Campaign April 2015 Applicant Analysis
 Appendix B – Firefighter Recruitment Campaign February 2016 Applicant Analysis
 Appendix C – Firefighter Recruitment Campaign July 2016 Applicant Analysis
 Appendix D – Outcome of Review of Firefighter Recruitment by Helen Bartimote Consulting Ltd
 Appendix E - Outcome of Research on attraction of Women applicants by 'Future Thinking'

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of background documents FEP 2100; FEP 2379; FEP 2552; FEP 2599 (LFEP Inclusion Strategy) Minutes of Resources Committee, 16/09/2016 2011 Census 'Development and Validation of National Firefighter Selection Tests: Physical Tests', ODPM, June 2005	
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Appendix A

Firefighter Recruitment Campaign 2015 Candidate Outcomes

This campaign is now concluded. In the table below (and the tables at Appendices B and C) the first percentage is the percentage of the whole cohort at the relevant stage; the percentage in (brackets) is the percentage of this category/total successful at the previous stage, who demonstrated this outcome at the stage in question. From the shortlisting stage onwards, the rows showing those successful at each stage are shaded; shaded rows plus the unshaded rows above will total the previous shaded row.

Firefighter Recruitment 2015		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
No. Applications	No.	149	1449	451	1147	169	127	42	82	1598
	%	9.3%	90.7%	28.2%	71.8%	10.6%	8.0%	2.6%	5.2%	
Shortlisted	No.	58	429	140	347	59	46	13	30	487
	%	11.9% (38.9%)	88.1% (29.6%)	28.7% (31.0%)	71.3% (30.3%)	12.1% (34.9%)	9.4% (36.2%)	2.7% (30.9%)	6.2% (36.6%)	(30.5%)
Not eligible	No.	23	169	66	126	23	18	5	14	192
	%	12.0% (39.7%)	88.0% (39.4%)	34.4% (47.1%)	65.6% (36.3%)	12.0% (39.0%)	9.4% (39.1%)	2.6% (38.5%)	7.3% (46.7%)	(39.4%)
Passed Eligibility Checks	No.	35	260	74	221	36	28	8	16	295
	%	11.9% (60.3%)	88.1% (60.6%)	25.1% (52.9%)	74.9% (63.7%)	12.2% (61.0%)	9.5% (60.9%)	2.7% (61.5%)	5.4% (53.3%)	(60.6%)
Unsuccessful at Interview	No.	15	122	38	99	13	16	5	5	137
	%	10.9% (42.9%)	89.1% (46.9%)	27.7% (51.4%)	72.3% (44.8%)	9.5% (36.1%)	11.5% (57.1%)	3.6% (62.5%)	3.6% (31.3%)	(46.4%)
Did not attend/withdrew from interview	No.	1	18	3	16	2	10	3	2	19
	%	5.3% (2.9%)	94.7% (6.9%)	15.8% (4.1%)	84.2% (7.2%)	10.5% (5.6%)	7.3% (35.7%)	2.2% (37.5%)	10.5% (12.5%)	(6.4%)
Successful at	No.	19	120	33	106	21	0	0	9	139

Interview	%	13.7% (54.3%)	86.3% (46.2%)	23.7% (44.6%)	76.3% (48.0%)	15.1% (58.3%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	6.5% (56.3%)	(47.1%)
Firefighter Recruitment 2015		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
Did not attend/ withdrew from Work-related tests	No.	8	8	2	14	2	2	0	0	16
	%	50.0% (42.1%)	50.0% (6.7%)	12.5% (6.1%)	87.5% (13.2%)	12.5% (9.5%)	25.0% (7.1%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(11.5%)
Successful at Work-related tests	No.	11	112	31	92	19	16	3	9	123
	%	8.9% (57.9%)	91.1% (93.3%)	25.2% (93.9%)	74.8% (86.8%)	15.4% (90.5%)	13.0% (100%)	2.4% (60.0%)	7.3% (100.0%)	(88.5%)
Unsuccessful at Medical	No.	1	9	2	8	2	0	2	0	10
	%	10.0% (9.1%)	90.0% (8.0%)	20.0% (6.5%)	80.0% (8.7%)	20.0% (10.5%)	0.0% (0.0%)	12.5% (40.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(8.1%)
Did not attend/ withdrew from Medical	No.	0	8	4	4	2	2	0	0	8
	%	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (7.1%)	50.0% (12.9%)	50.0% (4.3%)	25.0% (10.5%)	20.0% (12.5%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(6.5%)
Successful at Medical	No.	10	95	25	80	15	2	0	9	105
	%	9.5% (90.9)	90.5% (84.8%)	23.8% (80.6%)	76.2% (87.0%)	14.3% (78.9%)	25.0% (12.5%)	0.0% (0.0%)	8.6% (100%)	(85.4%)
Unsuccessful at Reference stage	No.	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (1.1%)	100% (4.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(1.0%)
Withdrew after offer	No.	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	%	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (2.1%)	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (2.5%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(1.9%)
Appointed	No.	10	92	24	78	15	12	3	9	102
	%	9.8% (100%)	90.2% (96.8%)	23.5% (96.0%)	76.5% (97.5%)	14.7% (100%)	11.8% (75.0%)	2.9% (100%)	8.8% (100%)	(97.1%)

Appendix B

Firefighter recruitment campaign February 2016 Candidate Outcomes

This campaign is largely completed. It will be seen that candidates still to be complete the selection process are as follows:

- 8 candidates currently deferred at the medical stage
- 13 candidates where final clearances (e.g. references) are currently being undertaken

Firefighter Recruitment - February 2016		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
No. Applications	No.	159	1037	308	888	112	71	41	62	1196
	%	13.30%	86.70%	25.80%	74.20%	9.40%	5.9%	3.4%	5.20%	
Shortlisted	No.	77	373	120	330	63	36	27	28	450
	%	17.1% (48.4%)	82.9% (36.0%)	26.7% (39.0%)	73.3% (37.2%)	14.0% (56.3%)	14.0% (56.3%)	6.0% (65.9%)	6.2% (45.2%)	(37.6%)
Not eligible	No.	17	101	33	85	22	15	7	9	118
	%	14.4% (22.1%)	85.6% (27.1%)	28.0% (27.5%)	72.0% (25.8%)	18.6% (34.9%)	12.7% (41.7%)	5.9% (25.9%)	7.6% (32.1%)	(26.2%)
Withdrew application at this stage	No.	6	34	14	26	4	4	0	2	40
	%	15.0% (7.8%)	85.0% (9.1%)	35.0% (11.7%)	65.0% (7.9%)	10.0% (6.3%)	10.0% (11.1%)	0.0% (0.0%)	5.0% (7.1%)	(8.9%)
Passed Eligibility Checks	No.	54	238	73	219	37	18	19	17	292
	%	18.5% (70.1%)	81.5% (63.8%)	25.0% (60.8%)	75.0% (66.4%)	12.7% (58.7%)	6.2% (50.0%)	6.5% (70.4%)	5.8% (60.7%)	(64.9%)
Unsuccessful at Interview	No.	26	160	54	132	23	13	10	9	186
	%	14.0% (48.1%)	86.0% (67.2%)	29.0% (74.0%)	71.0% (60.3%)	12.4% (62.2%)	7.0% (72.2%)	5.4% (52.6%)	4.8% (52.9%)	(63.7%)

Firefighter Recruitment - February 2016		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
Did not attend/withdrew from interview	No.	10	24	6	28	5	3	2	1	34
	%	29.4% (18.5%)	70.6% (10.1%)	17.6% (8.2%)	82.4% (12.8%)	14.7% (13.5%)	8.8% (16.6%)	5.8% (10.5%)	2.9% (5.9%)	(11.6%)
Successful at Interview	No.	18	54	13	59	9	2	7	7	72
	%	25.0% (33.3%)	75.0% (22.7%)	18.1% (17.8%)	81.9% (26.9%)	12.5% (24.3%)	2.8% (11.1%)	9.7% (36.8%)	9.7% (41.2%)	(24.7%)
Did not attend work-related tests	No.	7	2	0	9	2	0	2	0	9
	%	77.8% (38.9%)	22.2% (3.7%)	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (15.3%)	22.2% (22.2%)	0.0% (0.0%)	22.2% (28.6%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(12.5%)
Successful at work-related tests	No.	11	52	13	50	7	2	5	7	63
	%	17.5% (61.1%)	82.5% (96.3%)	20.6% (100%)	79.4% (84.7%)	11.1% (77.8%)	3.2% (100%)	7.9% (71.4%)	11.1% (100%)	(87.5%)
Unsuccessful at medical	No.	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
	%	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (1.9%)	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (2.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (14.3%)	(1.6%)
Did not attend medical	No.	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0% (0.0%)	100% (1.9%)	100% (7.7%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(1.6%)
Currently deferred at medical stage	No.	2	6	4	4	1	0	1	3	8
	%	25.0% (18.2%)	75.0% (11.5%)	50.0% (30.8%)	50.0% (8.0%)	12.5% (14.3%)	0.0% (0.0%)	12.5% (20.0%)	37.5% (42.9%)	(12.7%)
Successful at Medical	No.	9	44	8	45	6	2	4	3	53
	%	17.0% (81.8%)	83.0% (84.6%)	15.1% (61.5%)	84.9% (90.0%)	11.3% (85.7%)	3.8% (100%)	7.5% (80.0%)	5.7% (42.9%)	(84.1%)
Withdrew after medical	No.	2	2	1	3	1	0	1	0	4
	%	50.0% (22.2%)	50.0% (4.5%)	25.0% (12.5%)	75.0% (6.7%)	25.0% (16.7%)	0.0% (0.0%)	25.0% (25.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(7.5%)

Firefighter Recruitment - February 2016		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
Final clearances being undertaken (e.g. references)	No.	3	10	2	11	3	1	2	2	13
	%	23.1% (33.3%)	76.9% (22.7%)	15.4% (25.0%)	84.6% (24.4%)	23.1% (50.0%)	7.7% (50.0%)	15.4% (50.0%)	15.4% (66.7%)	(24.5%)
Appointed	No.	4	32	5	31	2	1	1	1	36
	%	11.1% (44.4%)	88.9% (72.7%)	13.9% (62.5%)	86.1% (68.9%)	5.6% (33.3%)	2.8% (50.0%)	2.8% (25.0%)	2.8% (33.3%)	(67.9%)
Potential maximum number of recruits	No. %	9 (15.8%)	48 (84.2%)	11 (19.3%)	46 (80.7%)	6 (10.5%)	2 (3.5%)	4 (7.0%)	6 (10.5%)	57

Appendix C

Firefighter recruitment campaign July 2016 Candidate Outcomes (as at 1st December 2016)

2016 Firefighter Recruitment – July 2016		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
No. Applications	No.	73	630	199	504	68	52	16	38	703
	%	10.4%	89.6%	28.3%	71.7%	9.7%	7.4%	2.3%	5.4%	
Shortlisted	No.	34	262	83	213	33	27	6	16	296
	%	11.5% (46.6%)	88.5% (41.6%)	28.0% (41.7%)	72.0% (42.3%)	11.1% (48.5%)	9.1% (51.9%)	2.0% (37.5%)	5.4% (42.1%)	(42.1%)
Not eligible	No.	9	63	25	47	5	3	2	3	72
	%	12.5% (26.5%)	87.5% (24.0%)	34.7% (30.1%)	65.3% (22.1%)	6.9% (15.2%)	4.2% (11.1%)	2.8% (33.3%)	4.2% (18.8%)	(24.3%)
Passed eligibility checks	No.	25	199	58	166	28	24	4	13	224
	%	11.2% (73.5%)	88.8% (76.0%)	25.9% (69.9%)	74.1% (77.9%)	12.5% (84.8%)	10.7% (88.9%)	1.8% (66.7%)	5.8% (81.3%)	(75.7%)
Unsuccessful at Interview	No.	11	130	39	102	17	17	0	11	141
	%	7.8% (44.0%)	92.2% (65.3%)	27.7% (67.2%)	72.3% (61.4%)	12.1% (60.7%)	12.1% (70.8%)	0.0% (0.0%)	7.8% (84.6%)	(62.9%)
Did not attend/withdrew from interview	No.	3	20	3	20	3	2	1	0	23
	%	13.1% (12.0%)	86.9% (10.1%)	13.0% (5.2%)	87.0% (12.0%)	13.1% (10.7%)	8.7% (8.3%)	4.3% (25.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(10.3%)
Successful at Interview	No.	11	49	16	44	8	5	3	2	60
	%	18.3% (44.0%)	81.7% (24.6%)	26.7% (27.6%)	73.3% (26.5%)	13.3% (28.6%)	8.3% (20.8%)	5.0% (75.0%)	3.3% (15.4%)	(26.8%)

2016 Firefighter Recruitment – July 2016		Female	Male	BME	White	LGBT	LGBT male	LGBT female	Disability	Total
Did not attend/withdrew from Work-related tests	No.	1	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
	%	25.0% (9.1%)	75.0% (6.1%)	25.0% (6.3%)	75.0% (6.8%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(6.7%)
Yet to attend Work-related Tests	No.	1	3	1	3	2	2	0	1	4
	%	25.0% (9.1%)	75.0% (6.1%)	25.0% (6.3%)	75.0% (6.8%)	50.0% (25.0%)	50.0% (40.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	25.0% (50.0%)	(6.7%)
Re-taking Work-related tests	No.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0% (9.1%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	100.0% (2.3%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(1.7%)
Successful at Work-related Tests	No.	8	43	14	37	6	3	3	1	51
	%	15.7% (72.7%)	84.3% (87.8%)	27.5% (87.5%)	72.5% (84.1%)	11.8% (75.0%)	5.9% (60.0%)	5.9% (100.0%)	2.0% (50.0%)	(85.0%)
Yet to attend Medical	No.	2	7	4	5	3	2	1	0	9
	%	22.2% (25.0%)	77.8% (16.3%)	44.4% (28.6%)	55.6% (13.5%)	33.3% (50.0%)	22.2% (66.7%)	11.1% (33.3%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(17.6%)
Currently deferred at medical stage	No.	1	10	3	8	1	0	1	0	11
	%	9.1% (12.5%)	90.9% (23.3%)	27.3% (21.4%)	72.7% (21.6%)	9.1% (16.7%)	0.0% (0.0%)	9.1% (33.3%)	0.0% (0.0%)	(21.6%)
Successful at Medical/Appointable	No.	5	26	7	24	2	1	1	1	31
	%	16.1% (62.5%)	83.9% (60.5%)	22.6% (50.0%)	77.4% (64.9%)	6.5% (33.3%)	3.2% (33.3%)	3.2% (33.3%)	3.2% (100.0%)	(60.8%)
Potential maximum number of recruits	No. %	10 17.9%	46 82.1%	15 26.8%	41 73.2%	8 14.3%	5 8.9%	3 5.4%	2 3.6%	56

Appendix D

Helen Bartimote Consulting Limited

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Phase 1: Review of the LFB Fire-Fighter Selection Process

This proposal paper provides the London Fire Brigade (LFB) with my initial propositions regarding the remodelling of the fire-fighter selection process; enabling key stakeholders an opportunity to discuss and agree on actions to be taken before phase 2 (the assessment centre design stage) commences.

My preliminary recommendations have been based on face-to-face and telephone interviews with representatives from the LFB recruitment and the assessment centre team, a small sample of current firefighters, crew and watch managers; and a review of other emergency service organisations, discussions with test publishers and my own experience of working within the LFB in previous years.

1. The Application Process

When dealing with high volume recruitment, as is the case for the LFB, it is crucial that the process considers available resources in terms of costs and time, in addition to the predictive validity of the application tool.

The traditional application form is a bio-data inventory or 'accomplishment record'. Applicants prepare their most significant past accomplishments in relation to the key skills and ability areas relevant for the role. Evaluators are trained to look through each individual application form and use set criteria to mark the applicants' suitability for the role. These types of assessments have been shown to be effective predictors of subsequent job performance. However, there are a number of apprehensions that can arise when using application forms in high volume recruitment.

When an organisation is receiving several thousand applications per recruitment round (as has been the case for the LFB), this system becomes a labour intensive process that requires months of sifting before applicants can be moved through the system. The cost in terms of resources is excessive and the outcome is a slow moving, outmoded process that does not harness current technology or provide any helpful feedback for applicants.

Another major criticism of using application forms is the accuracy of evidence; it is likely that many applicants are 'faking good'. The applicant distorts a response to appear more appealing to the recruiter than they actually are. Research suggests that there is a tendency for some applicants to fake on CVs and application-forms, and tend to focus on distorting evidence that they view as potentially negative. Most common areas of 'faking good' relate to over-estimating tenure with previous

employers, increasing final salary from last position and altering reason for leaving last employer.

It could be said that in the LFB's case there is potentially a considerable amount of 'faking good' regarding the candidate's range and / or depth of voluntary experience and range of emergency scenarios they have helped with. Of course, all experiences could be checked by speaking to a reference provided by the applicant for each example; however this has its own inherent issues (fake referees, no referee available etc.) and the time and resources doing this would be considerable and lengthen the process further. Unlike other job roles that can reduce down and pinpoint certain qualifications, previous employers and or experiences; the changing nature of the fire-fighter applicant means that potential comes in many different guises and therefore makes bio-data an unsuitable mode of assessment at the point of application.

There is an added issue with using application forms that is relevant to the LFB's situation and that involves 'repeat applicants', i.e. applicants that fail at some point in the process and re-apply or are continuously reapplying. Over time they will develop their own hypothesis as to what should and should not be included in the application form in order to be successful. Various web-based forums that aid and support applicants through the fire service application process support this also.

Furthermore, there is an implicit expectation from organisations using such detailed application forms, that the applicants can be articulate and literate about their life experiences. This is not always the case for many and they will receive substantial help from friends and family in writing the application form, which can then lead to distortion. Alternatively, the applicant may have significant potential for the role but find difficulty in expressing this succinctly in the written form. The ability to express oneself in writing is important for the role at times, but should not be the sole reason that an applicant with many suitable abilities and skills does not get sifted into the assessment centre process.

With the increase in recruitment technology using the internet, there is now a shift within high volume recruiters to move towards application forms that use hypothetical response items as opposed to focusing on past behaviours. The focus of this situational judgement approach is that the recruiter identifies how the applicants would respond to a work-based situation they may find themselves in. The questions move from collecting verifiable data to reviewing situational response. This approach firstly allows the organisation to be much more systematic in their approach and use critical incidents known to be important for the role to judge potential within applicants. As noted it drastically reduces time and cost by delivering items via an on-line multiple-choice test known as an SJT (Situational Judgement Test). This approach helps recruiters reduce the applicant pool to only those who have sensitivity to behaviour important to the role.

This approach also allows organisations to provide useful automated feedback to applicants and furthermore provides them with a realistic job preview of the role. This is important when an organisation is sifting out as many applicants as the LFB

does. To provide applicants with little to no feedback after rejecting them for a role that they may have aspired to for a lifetime can have a highly detrimental effect on how the organisation is viewed in the future. Research suggests that 'faking good' is much harder to do on SJTs than other approaches as it is difficult to identify any negative responses out of the choices available. Research on SJTs shows good correlations between these tests and actual teamwork performance – highly pertinent to the fire-fighter role.

It is worth noting that further technological advances have now moved these tests on further with delivery not only via the internet but also using text and video delivery.

In addition to the use of SJTs at the point of application, many high volume recruiters are also using on-line cognitive ability tests. Research evidence suggests that using a form of ability testing can be one of the most valuable measurement tools for organisations involved in selection and recruitment. Aptitude tests are a form of cognitive ability test that are focused on assessing potential for a certain role most commonly identifying relevant verbal, numerical and non-verbal reasoning abilities within the context of the role. Advances in on-line technology means these can be delivered via an on-line platform with follow-up supervised versions of the tests upon job offer to prevent any faking. If the aptitude test is set within the context of the recruiting organisation then face validity will tend to be higher. This in turn helps candidates to understand further the reasoning behind the request for completion. Some research has proposed that understanding relevance for tests plays an important factor in helping reduce adverse impact.

To summarise:

1. Evidently the current LFB application process needs revising. There is no available research into its actual level of predictive validation, it is not utilizing current recruitment technology and places excessive demands on human resources.
2. With such a reliance on this sift tool, with approximately 65% of applicants being sifted out of the process at this stage, the LFB needs to be absolutely certain that whatever measure being used is valid and reliable, that it determines what it says it is measuring and there will be consistency in scoring. At the current time the LFB does not have this evidence and therefore little support for keeping the existing application form.
3. It is also unclear as to why historically there has been a difference between BME and non-minority 'pass' applicants at the assessment centre stage. A higher percentage of BME applicants have been failing the assessment centre stage and are therefore sifted out to a greater degree than their non-minority group counterparts. This indicates that the current assessment centre has adverse impact. Is this a reflection of the assessment centre or of the inherent weakness of the application form i.e. are they incorrectly sifted into the second stage of the process in the first place? From this conclusion

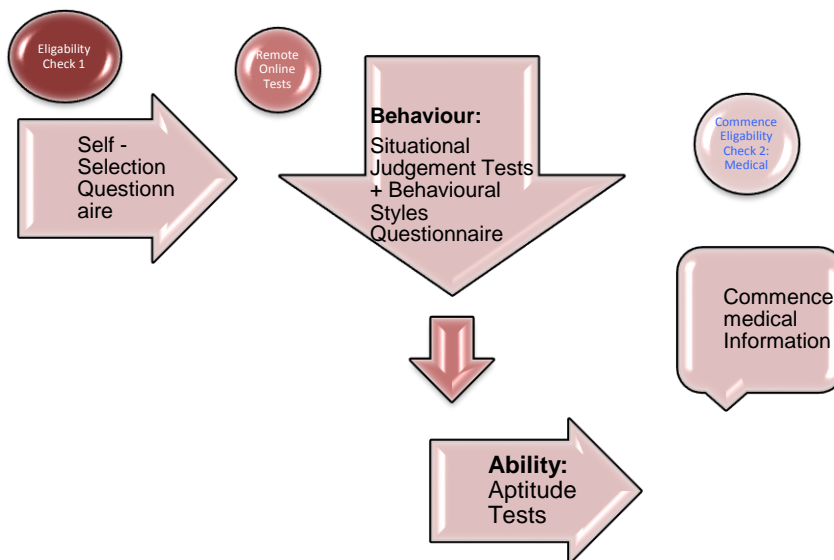
we can surmise that there are also 'fail' applicants that should have been progressed into the assessment centre stage. Or is it a combination of both? Should more support be given to help BME applicants prior to entering the assessment system? What it definitely does reflect is an inconsistency in measures between application form and assessment centre. Both need to be revised and when implemented, measures need to be put in place that ensure continued monitoring of applicants from application through to first placement at station.

4. Concern regarding adverse impact when using aptitude tests is understandable. However, if these tests are set within the fire service context then this is likely to help reduce impact. Furthermore, any test publisher should provide the LFB with data on how they have addressed the potential for adverse impact in their test construction process. In a major study, *Robertson and Smith (2001)*¹ argue that cognitive tests are consistently valid and fair when applied across different ethnic groups. They note that the predictions that are made are not unfair although they do highlight that there is evidence that members of different ethnic groups can 'obtain lower scores'. It is still unclear as to why these differences occur and researchers state it may reflect wider social, environmental and educational differences amongst these groups. Further research does however, highlight how high face valid tests will help reduce potential adverse impact. So if the LFB does use psychometric tools, then it is highly preferable to use ones set in the context of the emergency services. It is worth considering also that test publishers now are adept at ensuring adverse impact is limited and any tests that are purchased will be reviewed for adverse impact in trial data. Furthermore, pre-application support sessions for minority applicants can be very impactful and have been further evidenced as helping to reduce adverse impact.
5. From various discussions which have taken place it would appear that the current application form is likely to be subject to impression management or 'faking good' from applicants. There are no mechanisms in place to prevent applicants from giving incorrect information about themselves to portray their experience differently to how it actually is. For the more skilled writer, it is not too difficult to describe a situation which would use a diverse set of skills and behaviours. Evidently, the current form is not robust enough to prevent exaggeration of the applicants' experience and is too high in volume to check references for each example at this stage.
6. Human resource for current sifting is demanding, taking the recruitment team several weeks to manually read and score each individual application form. This process is also open to human error with final scores being hand-inputted into the system.

¹ Robertson, I.T. and Smith, M. (2001) 'Personnel Selection', *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, vol. 74, no. 4, pp 441-72.

7. The process does not harness new recruitment technology that most other organisations are now utilizing for such large-scale recruitment processes. Such technology allows for completion to be taken place remotely, is scored automatically, is based on valid and reliable research and produces automated feedback for applicants. Various other UK-based fire services² are now using on-line testing at the point of application without an application form being used. London is one of the few to still be using an application form approach.
8. Limited feedback is given to applicants and considering the uniqueness of the role and organisation, this is invaluable for applicants and sends out a positive message to all applying from the LFB. This can be an automated process if an on-line system is used.
9. Time and resource is currently spent on applicants who are not eligible for the process from the outset due to eligibility checks being conducted after application form sift. If an automated sift process is used, no time has been expended on those who later prove to be ineligible.

Key Recommendation: Proposed SIFT model



² A list can be found in the appendix of this document

- ✓ *I would recommend that the current application form be removed completely and replaced with a self-selection eligibility questionnaire to assess candidates expectations with the demands and challenges of the role ; followed by a suite of extensively validated on-line Situational Judgement Tests and a values based behavioural questionnaire in the first instance followed by a set of on-line Aptitude Tests. This would mean introducing a more standardized approach to initial selection reviewing core behavioural responses and cognitive aptitude at the earliest opportunity. Detailed investigation of experience would happen later on at the assessment centre stage. This ensures all applicants who have progressed to the assessment centre have the foundation of key verbal, numerical and mechanical reasoning and behavioural responses aligned to that of the firefighter role. I would highlight here the importance of including a mechanical reasoning test alongside verbal and numerical. It is very evident from discussions with current post holders and a review of the job requirements that to have an aptitude to think three dimensionally and understand how things fit together mechanically is a crucial aptitude for success in this role, an aptitude that has been neglected in the selection process for some time. Furthermore, a small sample of current successful fire-fighters were asked to complete a range of short aptitude tests as part of the research for this process review. Initial findings show relatively and/or normatively higher scores from these participants on tests of mechanical and/or diagrammatic and/or spatial reasoning. This is a sample review that is ongoing.*

There are options for this, which I have started to review and are as follows:

- ❖ *To purchase an off-the-shelf product, set in a more general context but measuring key areas - aptitude and / or Situational Judgement tests or consideration of the SIFT platform designed specifically for the fire-service incorporating the approach proposed. The latter would likely improve face validity of the tool due to applicants understanding the relevance.*

- ✓ *I recommend that further discussions take place between the LFB and test publishers: CEB Global, Saville Consulting and A&DC; to determine which suite of tests should be used, costs and how this would be implemented.*

- ❖ *To design a bespoke measure that is set in the context of the London Fire Brigade and measures these key abilities. By having a bespoke measure designed you have a measure that is for the sole purpose of assessment potential for the LFB. However, the initial costs would be significant and you would need to allocate at least a 12-month period for design. It could be that the LFB use off-the-shelf in the first instance with a view to having bespoke measures in place in the future.*

- ✓ *I recommend that consideration be given to setting up a longer-term project specifically established to identify cost and time implications for this longer-term solution.*

Eligibility Criteria

It is likely that the current requirements of a Level 2 educational qualification in Maths and English (equivalent to GCSE C and above), is contributing to the decline in current application numbers. A more detailed assessment at the initial application through SJT and then aptitude tests will limit the need for this requirement, as they will test literacy and numeracy to the standard required for this role i.e. within the competent average range as compared to the general population. I therefore recommend that the GCSE requirement is removed, and replaced by the aptitude tests.

For many, including older applicants, considerable difficulties in actually acquiring evidence of GCSEs taken or equivalent have led to delays in their application being processed, or being excluded if the evidence cannot be located. This situation is repeated for applicants from overseas.

Furthermore, for those applicants who now have excellent work experience but a poor educational history; access to the fire-fighter process has been denied unless they obtain these qualifications now. Those experiences that have led to difficulties at school could actually lead many to flourish in the firefighter role; using their own personal challenges to help and empathize with others in difficulty. Conversely, some applicants may have had an extensive amount of educational support and structure leading to excellent GCSE grades, whilst actually struggling independently and with little practical work experience or pragmatism.

Undoubtedly, firefighters need good verbal reasoning and numerical abilities, however, the use of aptitude tests would be a more appropriate measure and provide greater face validity, and these can now be undertaken and scored online.

We will therefore accommodate the range of experiences applicants have and can use within the firefighter role. By using the most up-to-date online recruitment technology there will be no burden on administration resources. Mechanisms can be put in place to ensure no applicant has made a fraudulent attempt to complete the tests – with a supervised test session being given at a suitable point in the process.

2. The Assessment Centre

The assessment centre is not a place but a process designed to measure multiple criteria. An assessment centre potentially consists of a range of assessments such as a group exercise, presentations, role-play, written exercise, interview, ability and personality tests etc. A range of well-trained assessors who are using a common set of criteria that is clearly defined and understood should observe applicants. However, there is no one overall set process for assessment centres. They vary widely in length, complexity and final decision-making process.

When assessment centre exercises are developed on a thorough job analysis and around the role and organisation, face validity is high. This means that applicants will generally view and understand the process as being fair.

Another reason why organisations value the assessment centre approach is they tend to have lower adverse impact than other assessment tools. However, there are factors, which can impact on this - including potential inaccuracies in parts of the application process, weak training for assessors and lack of support for BME applicants that applicants from non-minority groups may be receiving from a wide support network.

Critical aspects to consider in the assessment centre process include choice of assessors. They must be motivated to support the process and well trained. Research also suggests that if they are accountable for feedback and accountability for selection decisions, then effectiveness in this role is improved. Some recommend having a small assessor pool to ensure consistency whereas other researchers suggest involvement from a diverse pool of assessors from all areas of the organisation to engage and involve all in the process. Some organisations will only use psychologists or HR professionals as assessors; whilst others will only use managers. Support has been given to using individuals with these backgrounds who can view the role within the context of the organisation.

Furthermore, the method of collecting and recording observable behaviours needs to be given careful consideration by the organisation. Some research has suggested that assessors can feel 'overburdened' when recording evidence and miss information easily. If there are too many behaviours to realistically record then problems can occur. Similarly, if assessors simply do not understand the criteria then issues can arise. A careful review must be given to the methodology of assessment and type of rating scale used in this process.

In the final decision-making process stage, many organisations will use a 'wash-up' at the end of the assessment centre day. This involves all assessors meeting to review the data they have gathered on each applicant. Instead of a more mechanical approach, which is currently used within the LFB (exercises are weighted and a final score is calculated) a consensual system is used. This has the benefit that all assessors are permitted an opportunity to discuss reasoning for their scores. If there is a range of different and conflicting scores within a competency cluster then reasons for this can be discussed and changes can be made if necessary. This would lengthen the assessment day and may be more suitable for more senior level assessment centres within the LFB. However, due consideration should be given to this final decision making process as part of this review.

1. The current assessment centre needs revising to reflect the changing role of fire-fighter within London. Furthermore, there is an updated behavioural framework that is about to be introduced into the organisation and this is the perfect time to ensure the new entry assessment centre reflects this. The methodology for the assessment centre should be reviewed in terms of how assessors are resourced and trained and how behaviour is recorded and evaluated.
2. Below is an overview of a revised assessment centre format consisting of the following with weightings in brackets:
 - a. Interview (40)
 - b. Roleplay (25)
 - c. Group Exercise (25)
 - d. Written Exercise (10)

Using the new behavioural framework I would suggest the following matrix.

<i>Competency</i>	Interview (40)	Role-play Ex (25)	Group Ex (25)	Information Analysis Ex (10)
People Cluster	□	□	□	□
Delivering Results	□	□	□	
Personal Effectiveness	□	□	□	
Purpose Cluster	□			□
<i>Total Number of Cluster Areas Per Assessment</i>	4	3	3	2

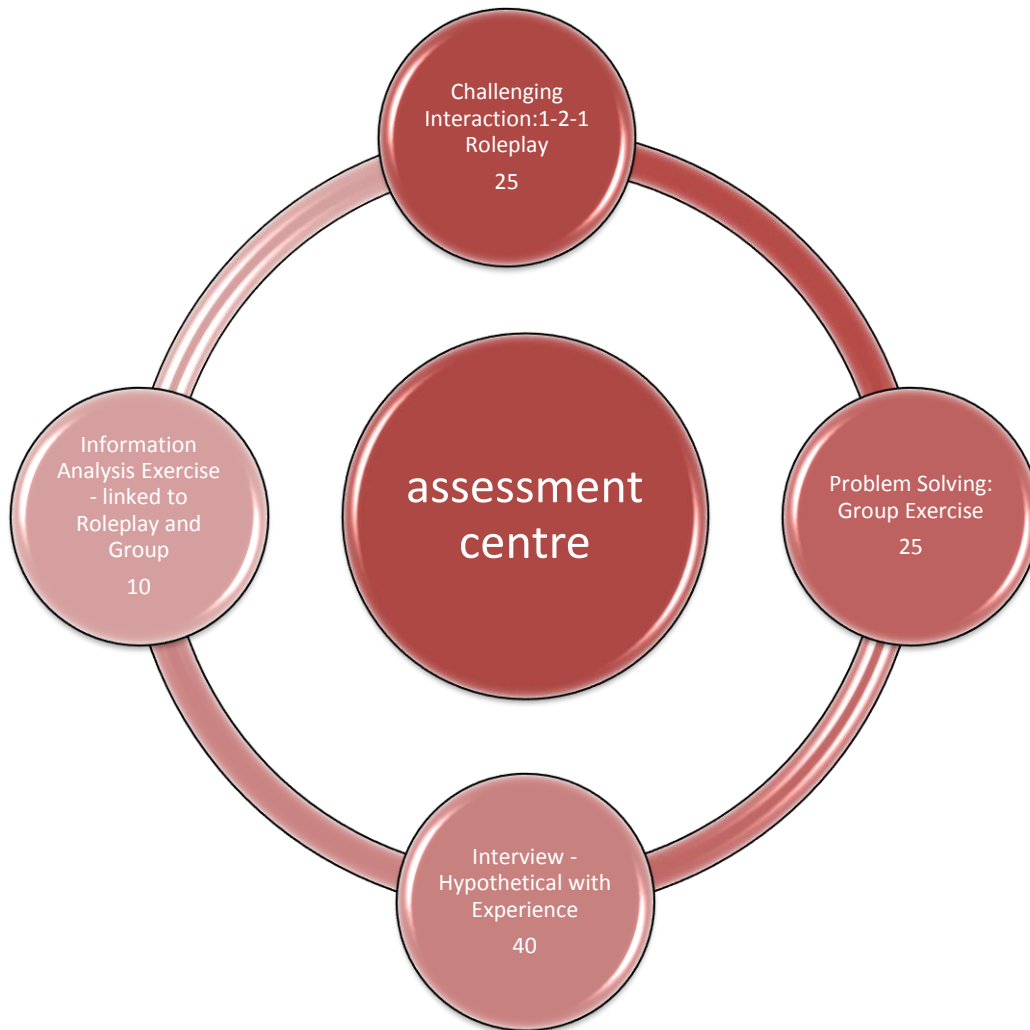
3. The proposed exercises have been based on discussions with managers and current post-holders and are designed to measure key behaviours deemed important to success in both training and the fire-fighter role. In particular it was felt a realistic and demanding role-play should be introduced to observe how applicants respond to highly demanding and often, emotional interpersonal situations. This is currently not assessed in the process and

is evidently a critical aspect of the role. It is expected that assessors will be able to accommodate the requirements for the role-player role, but only after ensuring their standard of assessing is high. Whilst this new training is being implemented, I suggest the LFB uses professional role-players as an interim measure.

4. It is proposed that the interview consists of both some hypothetical scenarios along with information gathering on past experience. A summary of the applicant's experience could also be provided to interviews prior to the assessment so they can put into context the questions being asked.
5. Although all applicants will have completed aptitude tests assessing their verbal fluency a written assessment is to be included which focuses on error checking and written expression; therefore ensuring further evidence for a suitable level of literacy skill. I will also look at linking this exercise to the previous group and role-play scenarios.
6. The current group exercise would benefit from revising and also made more context relevant to the role. Such changes as co-responding to incidents with London Ambulance Service, increased threat of terrorist related incidents, using specialist skills such as languages were discussed with me in terms of group scenarios. Although problem solving will be a key focus of the exercise, it will be assessed alongside other competency areas.

To summarise, there are certain drivers that require the LFB to update the current assessment centre. These include change in role, re-design of organisation wide behavioural framework and enhancement of assessor skills. It is hoped that with the improved prediction as a result of changes in the sift process the calibre of applicants that are invited to the assessment centre will be high. Therefore, in the future leading to a smaller pool shortlisted and leading to less demands on the LFB to provide resources at this stage.

Key Recommendation: The Assessment Centre



General Summary

Outlined below is a general overview for recommendations.

- The current process of identifying individuals with the potential to become fire-fighters within London can be greatly improved.
- New assessment technology utilizing the internet should be implemented to help streamline the process and produce more effective results.
- Implement a behavioural and ability sift as opposed to reviewing previous experience at the point of application.
- The assessment centre should be redesigned to acknowledge the change in firefighter role and also accommodate the redesign of the behavioural framework.
- All assessors should meet a defined standard before being permitted to assess.
- Ongoing monitoring should occur, as currently takes place, to ensure evaluation of the new process.

Specific Recommendations Summary

Outlined below are my specific recommendations.

- Replace the application form as a means of sifting (shortlisting candidates) with a suite of assessments to assess behavioural responses and cognitive aptitude, with consideration given to assessments specifically designed for the fire & rescue service to provide face validity and thereby further minimising adverse impact.
- Undertake a longer term project to consider developing bespoke measures that deal with LFB specific requirements including the proposed behavioural framework.
- Remove the educational eligibility requirements, and replace these with the literacy and numeracy aptitude tests.
- Adopt a revised assessment centre to validate the sift process and reflect the demands of the firefighter role, including the introduction of role play exercises.
- Develop an accredited assessor programme in order to properly assess the revised assessment centre.

The author of this report is a:

- Chartered Occupational Psychologist and Associate Fellow (British Psychological Society);
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- Registered Psychologist (Health and Care Professions Council).



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Appendix

Fire and Rescue services using online testing at point of application

AREA	APPROACH
Wales & Yorkshire Regions	<p>Bespoke on-line application process (SIFT) via A&DC Ltd test platform:</p> <p>Stage 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial Candidate Registration <p>Stage 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Realistic Job Preview (a <u>self-selection</u> questionnaire) ○ Eligibility Screen (does the candidate meet the basic requirements) ○ Behavioural Styles Questionnaire (a questionnaire about typical behaviours and underlying <u>values</u>) <p>Stage 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Situational Judgement Test –SJT (a range of realistic work related scenarios delivered via text or video. The applicant has to choose an appropriate behavioural response option).
Scottish Regions	<p>Online SJT + numerical ability psychometric via CEB Global test platform</p>
North Western & West Midlands Regions	<p>National Fire-Fighter Assessment Tests (based on 2005 tests) – moved to an online platform. No application form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verbal - Numerical - SJT