
REPORT AUTHOR: HEAD OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT SELECTION AND TRAINING

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Background Papers: None

Implications (tick✓):

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	✓
HUMAN RESOURCES	✓	EQUALITY IMPACT	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		

Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.

PURPOSE

To provide Members with an overview on the wholetime firefighter recruitment process, selection of personnel and provision of a suitable foundation training course for new wholetime duty system firefighters.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members consider the report and raise any specific questions that arise.

1. Background

- 1.1 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) completed its previous recruitment and selection process for new wholetime firefighters in 2009, with successful candidates attending a firefighter foundation course with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 1.2 Since 2010 BFRS has maintained its establishment through Firefighter transfer processes which have proved to be successful; 33 new personnel have joined through this process.

1.3 For 2016 BFRS will recruit and select twenty-four firefighters. This will include experienced firefighters on transfer and new firefighters drawn from our recruitment process, undertaking a foundation course.

2. The Recruitment and Selection Process

2.1 Recruitment and Selection has been delivered by a working group led by Training and Development Manager (TDM) and consisting of members of HR, Equality & Diversity, Operations and Training & Development.

2.2 In 2015/16 BFRS conducted the application process online. 655 initial interest logins were experienced, transforming to 468 submitted applications. Application requirements included a requirement to live within and no more than 10 miles outside the border of Bedfordshire in order to improve representation of, and support recruitment and selection from, our communities.

2.3 At the commencement of the recruitment campaign 136 people were on the Positive Action list and all were contacted inviting them to the Positive Action Events and informing them of the recruitment campaign. 17 people from the Positive Action List attended an event, with 16 other people who responded to external advertising of the events.

2.4 BFRS held two Positive Action events: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Positive Action Event was held on Saturday 3 October 2015 at Luton Community Fire Station where 15 people signed up as attendees; Women's Positive Action Event was held on Saturday 10 October 2015 at Training & Development Centre, BFRS Headquarters, Kempston where 18 people signed up as attendees.

2.5 Feedback from taken at these two events, with a 100% response from the BAME event and 66% response at the Women's event. The results are shown in the following tables:

BAME

Question	A lot	A bit	Not really	Not at all
Did you find the event useful?	15	0	0	0
Was the event enjoyable?	15	0	0	0
Are you now interested in being a firefighter?	15	0	0	0

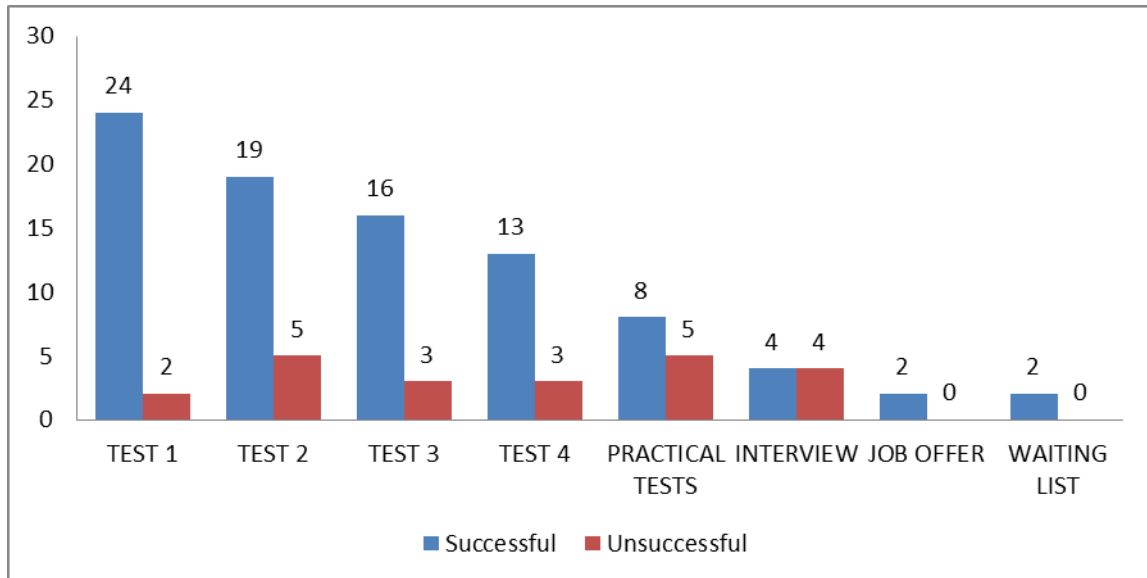
Women

Question	A lot	A bit	Not really	Not at all
Did you find the event useful?	12	0	0	0
Was the event enjoyable?	10	2	0	0
Are you now interested in being a firefighter?	12	0	0	0

2.6 43 people on our Positive Action List initiated interest in the recruitment campaign by requesting a login identity. The following table shows a summary of their application progress:

Application Stage	Number
Logged into system but did not submit application	8
Unsuccessful at application stage	9
Successful at application stage	26

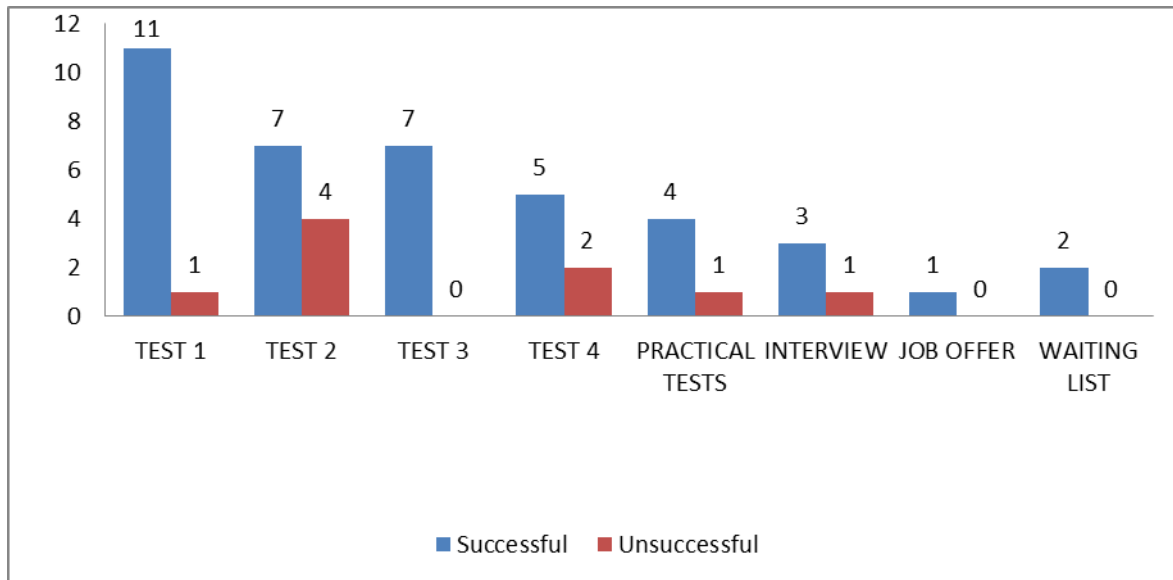
Of the 26 people successful at application stage, the graph below shows a summary of their progress at each subsequent stage:



2.7 Of the 33 people attending the two Positive Action events, 17 did not submit an application. This was surprisingly low given the responses received to the feedback questionnaire, with 100% stating they were now interested in becoming a firefighter. The 17 non-applicants were all contacted to learn why they chose not to apply. Only two responses were received. One was already working as a Retained Duty System firefighter in another Fire and Rescue Service and the other stated the changes to pension regulations and their concerns at maintaining a fitness standard for a longer period of time as a reason for not applying.

2.8 Of the 16 people that attended a positive action event and began the application process, the following summary shows the stages of their applications (11 of those detailed below are also on the positive action list):

Application Stage	Number
Logged into system but did not submit application	1
Unsuccessful at application stage	3
Successful at application stage	12



2.9 The tables below provide a summary of the 2015/16 recruitment and selection process and compares the current year activity with that experienced in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

Application Packs Distributed				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
969	671	939	N/A	Males
198	120	202	N/A	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
49	50	82	N/A	Females
14	8	6	N/A	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

Returned Application Forms				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
418	394	543	420	Males
66	65	32	75	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
43	33	46	45	Females
5	4	3	5	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females
N/A	N/A	N/A	3	Did not disclose gender or ethnic minority

Success at Paper Sift (Online Sift for 2015/16)				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
78	47	89	268	Males
14	8	5	38	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
N/A	N/A	N/A	1	of which did not disclose ethnic minority
9	6	8	32	Females
2	0	0	3	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

Success at Ability & Psychometric Tests				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
78	28	64	174	Males
14	3	3	22	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
9	5	5	21	Females
2	0	0	0	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

Success at Practical Tests				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
48	22	51	134	Males
6	3	1	20	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
7	4	2	8	Females
0	0	0	0	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

Success at Interview Stage				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
42	19	41	67	Males
5	3	1	12	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
7	3	2	6	Females
0	0	0	0	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

3. Recruitment and Selection Profile

- 3.1 Eighteen new trainee firefighters will be recruited and six experienced firefighters on transfer.
- 3.2 The eighteen firefighters selected represent the top performing applicants after interview stage; each having secured 90% or higher. At the time of writing this includes six current serving RDS firefighters from BFRS; four female applicants (22%); and two Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community applicants (11%).
- 3.3 The following set of tables provide data for breakdown at application and interview stages as a percentage; this enables a comparison at the start and end of the recruitment process.

Diversity percentage at application stage (%)				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
91	93	92	90	Males
16	16	6	18	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
9	7	8	10	Females
12	12	6	11	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

Diversity percentage following all stages (%)				
2006	2008	2009	2015/16	
86	86	98	92	Males
12	16	2	18	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Males
14	14	2	8	Females
0	0	0	0	of which Black and Minority Ethnic Females

- 3.4 This data shows comparative results for female and BME applications across three of the four years; 2009 was less successful at attracting BME applications and less successful at achieving a consistent percentage at completion. 2015/16 shows a return to consistent progress from application to end of process seen within 2006 and 2008, and there is a small level of improvement at application stage for those that have declared themselves as female and male BME.
- 3.5 More research will be required to understand why we are not achieving levels of proportionate success for female BME candidates. Of the five applications by

people declaring themselves as female and BME, two failed to progress beyond online testing and three at the ability and psychometric testing.

- 3.6 38% of female and 77% of male candidates passed the physical tests, which is comparable with 2009 (being 40% and 80%). These tests are conducted to a nationally accepted performance standard. 75% of female and 50% of male candidates passed the interview, which compares to 100% and 80% for 2009. This was a different question set than previous making direct comparison difficult. Overall, the interview stage has reduced down the number of candidates by 50%, where previously it by 20%.

4. Wholetime Firefighter Foundation Course

- 4.1 The wholetime firefighter foundation course will be run at Fire Service College (FSC), after comparing potential suppliers for cost and standard of provision. Firefighters will receive Skills for Fire & Rescue accredited learning over eight weeks.
- 4.2 BFRS retains an active interest in the course and the development of our new firefighters. BFRS Instructors will be available to support delivery and welfare throughout the course and assist with practical units and assessments.
- 4.3 Once they return to BFRS they will be provided with a Development Portfolio that will support them for the next three years.

5. Monitor and Review

- 5.1 TDM will lead on a review on conclusion of all elements of the recruitment and selection process to consider any learning points for future campaigns.
- 5.2 The review will involve key stakeholders to consider each stage of the process and draw the learning and improvement from it. This will include the ability of our Positive Action events to continue to support applications from areas of our community where we are currently under represented, to maintain our progress.
- 5.3 Six firefighters have been selected on transfer. This option brings experience into BFRS, provides earlier availability and maintains operational effectiveness. A reserve list has also been factored in addition to this to support future recruitment requirements.

SOC A C Peckham

Head of Training & Development

Implications

Policy

All training is sourced and allocated in line with current Service policy.

Equality

Scrutiny on recruitment and selection is continuous and cross-function. Positive Action has been delivered within legal framework. Actively encourage applications from within our diverse communities.