

FBU Fitness Working Group Report

Introduction

Since the introduction of the single SFRS in April this year, the FBU fitness working group have been meeting regularly to discuss the interim fitness procedure. Sister Christie and Brother Bennett have been leading on the negotiations with SFRS.

There was a lack of consistent application of fitness standards and testing across the previous 8 antecedent services, therefore the aim of these negotiations was to have an interim fitness procedure that was fair and equitable.

- 4 out of 8 antecedent services applied **different** fitness standards
- 1 out of 8 antecedent services applied **no** fitness standard
- 2 out of the 8 antecedent services applied **age and gender** adjustments

Over the past 9 months we have made comments and amendments to 7 drafts and the negotiations are now concluded. This final draft is now for comment and consideration by the regional committee.

We now have a 28 day consultation period for officials to consult with members. SFRS will be writing a communication and implementation document for the interim procedure. The FBU will be involved in that work as well. That work will be commencing in the next few weeks. The communication and implementation document will aid managers and members and explain in more detail the aims and objectives of the interim fitness procedure.

Report

The draft attached to this report is the final draft. Integrated into this draft are the key principles that the Scottish Government have agreed as part of our pension campaign. We hoped this would give members more confidence on the capability issue as well as strengthening the policy.

The procedure is self explanatory but below is a bullet point brief explanation of the process a firefighter will go through using this interim procedure:

- Year 1 fitness level between 33vo2 and 39.6vo2 - passed test but will have fitness support with no ongoing testing.
- If level is under 33vo2 then further support given for 3 months until next test. If not at the pass level then further support again for another 3 months. This will continue for 9 months then a case conference will be called with FBU involvement.
- If just under 33vo2 then no need to wait 3 months as a few weeks fitness support may be adequate to get to the pass level
- Once passed the individual will not be constantly retested but they will be given fitness support if their vo2 max is under 39.6
- As we have not discussed testing in great detail we have not agreed which is the more accurate means of testing therefore all options are open which include bike,

multi stage shuttle run, chester step test with the decisive tests being either the Chester Treadmill Walk Test (CTWT) or ramp protocol test with gas analyser.

- Ongoing support will be given to help pass the fitness test but there may be mitigating reasons for failing. If so then SFRS will look at reasonable adjustments or redeployment within role.
- If that is not possible then SFRS will commence an assessment for ill-health retirement through the IQMP process or commence authority initiated retirement process.

Head office has now confirmed FBU involvement in the main firefighter fitness working group. This working group's remit is detailed in section 2.3 of the interim fitness procedure. National officer Sean Starbuck has requested an invite to the group. This request has been granted by SFRS and we are now waiting on confirmation of the date of our first meeting.

Recommendation

The main firefighter fitness working group shall be basing its' decisions and outcomes on evidence based information. This interim procedure is purely based on fairness and health & safety. We also need to take our current pensions campaign into consideration as fitness and capability play a key role. With that in mind I do not think the regional committee are in a position to agree a procedure that is not evidence based and may cause the FBU some unnecessary concern for our pension's campaign. I think we can allow the Service to implement this interim procedure without any resistance and would hope this could be done as soon as possible in order to allow members to be treated equitably across the Service.

Report by Sister Christie

17 February 2014