

# Fire Cadets and Volunteer Cadet Instructors Tailored Recruitment Pilot into Operational Recruitment

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**Report to:**

Service Delivery Board.....  
Commissioners Board .....

**Date:**

21 August 2024  
11 December 2024

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**Report by:**

Jess Patten, Head of Youth Services

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**Report classification:**

For decision

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**Not for publication**

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**Values met**

Service  
Equity  
Learning

I agree the recommended decision below.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Roe'.

Andy Roe  
London Fire Commissioner

**This decision was remotely**  
Date **signed on 20 December 2024**

# PART ONE

## Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

### Executive Summary

This report outlines the proposal of a formalised, tailored route for Fire Cadets and Volunteer Cadet Instructors (VCIs) to become London Fire Brigade (LFB) operational Firefighter apprentices. Fire Cadets and VCIs represent the communities of London, with 52.2% of the provision identifying themselves as from an ethnic group, and a gender split of 47.7% female, 51.8% male and 0.5% gender diverse/undeclared. These individuals have also demonstrated a commitment to the organisation, have developed transferrable skills such as teamwork, communication and leadership, and embody the values of LFB which are key attributes looked for when recruiting LFB firefighters.

### DECISION OPTIONS

#### Recommended decisions

The London Fire Commissioner approves the following recommendations as part of a pilot scheme, which will run until 31 December 2025:

- 1) Removal of four out of the seven Outreach Pathway stages at Firefighter application stage for Fire Cadets and VCIs.
- 2) Fire Cadets and VCIs are only required to hold UK provisional driving license at Firefighter application stage.
- 3) Only one trainee without a full UK driving license will be allocated to each new cohort of FFD once the pilot is launched.
- 4) Fire Cadets and VCIs will have to obtain their full UK driving license within the FFD probationary period (currently 9 months, due to be extended to 10 months).
- 5) The Fire Cadets and VCIs tailored recruitment pilot is to be included in all Firefighter recruitment processes until 31/12/2025, with six monthly updates reported into Prevention and Protection (P&P) Principal Management Board (PMB) and SDB by exception.
- 6) The Fire Cadets and VCIs tailored recruitment pilot will be evaluated in late 2025, with recommendations presented to Service Delivery Board (SDB) regarding the future of this process and whether it is to be adopted as business as usual.

# 1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 This paper was delivered to Service Delivery Board on 21 August 2024. Whilst the paper was welcomed by the Board, there were concerns raised regarding the removal of the requirement to hold a full UK driving license upon application for those entering through the pilot, which could lead to a detrimental effect on the Brigade driver shortage. A request was also made to consider adding a good conduct review to the eligibility criteria to access the pilot.
- 1.2 A meeting was held with the Interim Head of Training Operations and a representative of Central Operations in late August to resolve their concerns regarding the removal of the requirement to hold a UK driving license upon application, and to discuss additional parameters to be set around entry. It was agreed that a cap on the number of trainees who could enter Firefighter Development (FFD) without a full UK driving license would be sufficient to determine the validity of the pilot during the proposed 12 months, and to mitigate the risk to Transport Training.
- 1.3 Recommendation 3 has been added to this paper, alongside new narrative and paragraphs across Section 2.3, 2.12 and 2.13 to address these changes
- 1.4 Fire Cadets has been operating in London Fire Brigade (LFB) under its current format since September 2013, expanding from five units to offering a provision to all London Boroughs (inclusive of the City of London) in 2023.
- 1.5 It has always been the aspiration of Youth Services to embed a formalised tailored route for Fire Cadets and VCI's into employment within LFB, as they represent the communities of London, have demonstrated skills such as teamwork, communication and leadership, and represent the values of LFB.
- 1.6 Fire Cadets and VCIs engage with their unit once a week for at least 36 weeks per year. Upon completion of the first year of engagement, Fire Cadets can apply for promotion into ranks of peer leadership. These ranked positions enable young people to engage with Fire Cadets for a maximum of four years, at which point they are encouraged to apply to become VCIs and continue their engagement as Instructors for the Fire Cadets provision.
- 1.7 There is ample anecdotal evidence that many Fire Cadets and VCIs develop an aspiration to work for LFB during their time engaging with the provision. To date there are over 100 serving employees of LFB who started their journey through Fire Cadets, across all three staff groups.
- 1.8 The Outreach Team are now the conduit to operational recruitment, with no potential candidate able to access recruitment opportunities for firefighter roles without first engaging with the Outreach Team. The LFB projects approximately 25 recruit courses per year moving forward, with a minimum of 10 recruits per course, equating to approximately 250 new recruits per year.

## 2 Objectives and expected outcomes

### Fire Cadets and VCI Tailored Recruitment Pilot

- 2.1 In order for any potential applicant to be passed to Recruitment for Firefighter roles, currently they must go through the following Outreach Pathway:

Stage 1: Attend an Outreach Attraction Event

- Stage 2: Register Interest
- Stage 3: Attend an online information session
- Stage 4: Complete an eligibility form
- Stage 5: Outreach SIFT exercise
- Stage 6: Attend an experience day at a Fire Station
- Stage 7: Progress to formal Recruitment Process

- 2.2 It is proposed that Fire Cadets and VCIs would go through a shortened tailored process, due to their evidenced ongoing engagement, skills, knowledge, experience, and values demonstrated whilst representing the LFB.
- 2.3 Any Fire Cadet or VCI who wishes to access this tailored process would need to evidence two years' worth of engagement on provision, with an attendance rate of 75% or higher, and having exhibited good conduct for the duration of their engagement.
- 2.4 Any young person who has completed 2 years on the Fire Cadets provision, and is of eligible age, will have achieved a rank within the Fire Cadets Progression Pathway. This means they will have undergone selection testing consisting of an interview, knowledge test and practical assessment. They will have spent 1 year minimum as a peer leader at their unit, demonstrating skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and mentoring. By placing a requirement of 2 years engagement we can evidence key skills that these young people are displaying that will be of significant benefit in any future LFB employee.
- 2.5 As part of the Fire Cadets provision, young people and adult volunteers have access to employability skills and interview techniques sessions, which will support them in achieving their future employment aspirations (both inside and outside the LFB).
- 2.6 Fire Cadets and VCIs would not need to engage with Stages 1 or 2 of the Outreach process as they are already known to LFB. Equally they would not need to engage with Stages 5 or 6 as they are already aware of what life on a Fire Station is like having attended Fire Cadets units hosted on Fire Stations for a prolonged period of time.
- 2.7 Therefore, this would see the pathway for Fire Cadets and VCIs as follows:

- ~~Stage 1: Attend an Outreach Attraction Event~~
- Stage 2: Register Interest
- Stage 3: Attend an online information session
- Stage 4: Complete an eligibility form
- ~~Stage 5: Outreach SIFT exercise~~
- ~~Stage 6: Attend an experience day at a Fire Station~~

### **Fire Cadets and VCI Tailored Recruitment Pilot Eligibility Criteria**

- 2.8 There are a number of barriers that have been identified by the Outreach Team which have resulted in certain groups finding it more difficult to meet the eligibility criteria to apply to become a London firefighter:

- 1. Age
- 2. Socio-economic status
- 3. Place of residence (e.g. Central London boroughs) approach

- 2.9** The biggest barrier to applications, particularly from current Fire Cadets and VCIs, is the requirement to hold a full UK driving license at the time of application. Many do not have access to financing themselves or via their parents to pay for driving lessons, which can be expensive.
- 2.10** Therefore, it is proposed that Fire Cadets and VCIs accessing the tailored process would only be required to hold a UK provisional license upon application. A provisional license is currently priced at £34 and can be easily obtained online via the DVLA.
- 2.11** By taking this approach, LFB would essentially be securing suitable Fire Cadets and VCIs an interview. This approach mirrors pathways being proposed by other Fire and Rescue Services for their Fire Cadets provisions, specifically Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.12** It is unclear at this stage how many Fire Cadets or VCIs who wish to enter this pilot would be doing so without holding a full UK driving license. However, by removing this eligibility criteria it will allow applicants to enter the recruitment process and determine whether they can successfully progress through it, before having to make a huge financial commitment to obtaining a driving license, which may be unnecessary should they be unsuccessful.
- 2.13** Following consultation with Learning and Professional Development, and Central Operations, it has been agreed that should the pilot be approved, each new FFD cohort would be limited to one trainee entering without holding a full UK driving license. This would cap the number of trainees entering FFD via the pilot without holding a full UK driving license to a maximum of 24, based on 24 courses over the 12 month period.

### **Fire Cadets and VCI Tailored Apprenticeship**

- 2.14** Successful applicants would still need to become an LFB motor driver as per the Firefighter role map and demonstrate compliance by the time they complete their apprenticeship to achieve competency, which would align with the current practice alongside all new recruits or comply with the FF9 alternative driving arrangements. The minimum time to complete the apprenticeship is 18 months of service.
- 2.15** The current apprenticeship process is used to demonstrate competency of Firefighters on Development. Each candidate is required to meet the following criteria:
1. The candidate needs to have successfully completed their apprenticeship, to include elements of a knowledge test, practical observation, professional discussion for their End Point Assessment (EPA) and have no outstanding Personal Development Plans (PDPs).
  2. The candidate has met all identified development needs and completed a minimum of 18 months of service.
  3. The candidate has no pending or outstanding award/warning/appeal in relation to the Brigade's disciplinary procedures.

In addition to the above criteria and in accordance with Policy 813 Driving Brigade vehicles (to support reducing the impact of standbys on existing drivers and ensuring that the maximum number of appliances are operationally available) the following additional criteria needs to be met before competency is reached:

4. The candidate has obtained their LGV provisional license, including passing the necessary LGV Theory/Hazard perception tests and medical.

5. The candidate's line manager has updated the Driving License Database with the correct and up-to-date details of the LGV Provisional license for the candidate.

- 2.16** To support the apprenticeship timelines and the LGV provisions as stated above, there would be a requirement for Fire Cadets and VCIs to achieve their full UK driving license within the FFD probation period, which is currently 9 months (due to be extended to 10 months). This requirement would also be reflected in their contract of employment.
- 2.17** This condition would also be added to PN 813 Driving Brigade vehicles as an amendment to 1.36 and 1.37, where the Fire Cadet and VCI Tailored Recruitment process would be referenced, and amended condition/timescales added, along with all relevant supporting documentation updated.
- 2.18** This would ensure that any trainee on the tailored process is able to be managed through both contractual and policy provisions, and should they fail to meet any element of their contract of employment, however due to this being a pilot, the relatively small numbers of Cadets / VCI recruits and testing center wait times etc, each individual's driving progress will be tracked and monitored on a case by case basis.

### **Purpose and Benefit of the Tailored Recruitment Pilot**

- 2.19** By taking this step, LFB would be making positive progress towards *Recommendation HMI 40: The brigade should identify and overcome barriers to equal opportunity, so that its workforce better represents its community. This includes making sure staff understand the value of positive action and having a diverse workforce.* This would also directly support *Action 40.1: The CRMP includes several actions to overcome barriers to equal opportunity. This includes continuing our outreach work to increase the proportion of applicants from underrepresented groups to firefighter roles.*
- 2.20** Currently the data indicates an average yearly intake of 9 Fire Cadets and/or VCI's per year under the current recruitment process. The changes proposed as part of the tailored process is likely to see these numbers increase. The results will be captured and reported as detailed in section 5.

| Cadets and VCIs  | totals |
|--|--------|
| Fire Cadets eligible to access the pathway                 | 18     |
| VCIs eligible to access the pathway                        | 55     |
| Total eligible applicants                                  | 73     |
| Approximate 25% uptake to progress to become a Firefighter | 18     |

- 2.21** Based on historical data it is anticipated that the number of individuals wishing to access the tailored process would be relatively low. To date approx. 100 Fire Cadets or VCIs have entered into LFB employment over the last 11 years, averaging nine applicants per year across all three staffing groups. This is supported by a review of the current cohort against the proposed pilot criteria.

**2.22** The current diversity statistics for Fire Cadets and VCIs as of May 2024, are as follows:

| Cohort               | Total Cadets Recruited | Female (%) | Male (%)  | Gender Neutral or Not Declared (%) | Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority (%) | SEN (%)  | Physical disability (%) |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Cadet (13-17 yrs.)   | 288                    | 140 (49%)  | 147 (51%) | 1 (<1%)                            | 170 (59%)                             | 45 (16%) | 15 (5%)                 |
| Officer (15-17 yrs.) | 123                    | 62 (50%)   | 60 (49%)  | 1 (1%)                             | 59 (48%)                              | 27 (22%) | 3 (2%)                  |
| <b>Total</b>         | 411                    | 202 (49%)  | 207 (50%) | 2 (1%)                             | 229 (56%)                             | 72 (18%) | 18 (4%)                 |

| Cohort                      | Total VCIs Recruited | Female (%) | Male (%) | Gender Not Declared (%) | Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority (%) | SEN (%)  | Physical disability (%) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Volunteer Cadet Instructors | 131                  | 57 (44%)   | 74 (56%) | 0 (0%)                  | 54 (41%)                              | 16 (12%) | 10 (8%)                 |

**2.23** The Fire Cadets provision is open access to anyone who wishes to engage. The provision recruits young people and adult volunteers from within the communities of London. Therefore, all individuals engaging on the provision directly represent London and its diverse population.

**2.24** As per the 2021 census data for England and Wales, in London 46.2% residents identified as Asian, black, mixed, or 'other' ethnic groups. ([Regional ethnic diversity - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk)) Diversity statistics for the Fire Cadets provision shows 52.2% of participants identify themselves from an ethnic group.

**2.25** Census data also showed that London was 51.1% female and 48.9% male ([Census population data by male and female national and regional](https://www.census.gov)). Whilst the Fire Cadets provision shows 47.7% of participants are female and 51.8% are male, the cohort is within a 3.5% differential of the regional population.

## Evaluation and Reporting

**2.26** The Cadets and VCI's pilot will be included in all recruitment processes until 31/12/2025 (option to extend if required), with six monthly updates reported into Prevention and Protection Principal Management Board (and SDB by exception) until the cadets become competent and to report on the impact of not having the full UK driving license on application.

**2.27** It is proposed that if agreed, a working group is to be established consisting of key stakeholders from Learning and Professional Development, Central Operations, People Services, Outreach and Youth Services, to meet regularly and ensure the efficient implementation of the pathway.

- 2.28** The progress of the pilot will form part of the Central Operations led Motor Driving Working Group.
- 2.29** The pilot will further explore if these principles can be applied to other roles within the LFB and LFB partners.

### **3 Values Comments**

- 3.1** The LFC notes the Fire Standards Board requirements around adopting and embedding the Core Code of Ethics at an individual and corporate level. Following extensive engagement, the LFC has introduced Brigade values which build on and do not detract from the Code of Ethics.
- 3.2** The Brigade values are:
- Service: we put the public first
  - Integrity: we act with honesty
  - Teamwork: we work together and include everyone
  - Equity: we treat everyone fairly according to their needs
  - Courage: we step up to the challenge
  - Learning: we listen so that we can improve
- 3.3** This pilot would support the Brigade values of Service, Equity, and Learning.
- 3.4** By implementing this pilot, LFB would be demonstrating 'Service' and 'Equity', and that the communities of London are best served by recruiting firefighters from within the city. All applicants via the pilot would be individuals living within one of the London boroughs, ensuring that this cohort of applicants are representative of the communities we serve.
- 3.5** Implementing a tailored recruitment process for Fire Cadets and VCIs has been an aspiration of LFB for over 10 years. Numerous discussions have taken place to formulate a robust method for this to be executed fairly and effectively. LFB has demonstrated 'Learning' through this process, by ensuring that all voices have been heard during this consultation process, and that consideration has been given to notable practice nationally in this area.

### **4 Equality Comments**

- 4.1** The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.
- 4.2** It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.



- 4.3** The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.
- 4.4** The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 4.5** Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic.
  - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
  - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 4.6** The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.
- 4.7** Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- tackle prejudice
  - promote understanding.
- 4.8** Fire Cadets has been operating within LFB for over for ten years. Staff consultation, Cadet Voice and Volunteer Voice has been embedded into the evaluation and quality assurance processes for this delivery, to ensure that it meets the needs of everyone participating.
- 4.9** Fire Cadets falls within the vision and mission of LFB Youth Services, which is to be a dynamic, innovative, inclusive, and forward-thinking youth provision within LFB, to support young people within all 32 London Boroughs, and the City of London. Youth Services aims to lead the way in making London a safer city by working with its young people across all aspects of prevention, including fire, water, and road safety, alongside anti-social behaviour, and the consequences of actions, to drive and forge safer, stronger, healthier, and cohesive communities.
- 4.10** Fire Cadets engages with an impressive spread of gender, BAME, neurodiverse and disabled individuals across all cohorts (Fire Cadets, Officer Cadets, VCIs). The provision is open access to anyone who wishes to engage, and personal risk assessments are carried out to ensure that no individual feels excluded from taking part.

- 4.11** Fire Cadets recruits young people and adult volunteers from within the communities of London. Therefore, all individuals engaging on the provision directly represent London and its diverse population across all 33 boroughs.
- 4.12** Fire Cadets is made accessible for any young person aged 13-17 and any adult volunteer aged 18+. Fire Cadets is currently engaging with a diverse range of ages from 13 – 73 years. Accessibility arrangements on venue have also been considered, to ensure that any individual wishing to engage with the provision is able to do so. Reasonable adjustments are made wherever practicable to support attendance, as evidenced by one VCI regularly engaging who is affected by paralysis of the legs.
- 4.13** All staff and VCIs undertake mandatory training on equality and diversity, and behaviours are held against the Togetherness Policy and the Togetherness Strategy. Every opportunity to promote equality takes place during team meetings and training sessions, to ensure that Fire Cadets units are considered safe spaces to all individuals who engage. All staff and VCIs adopt the LFB behavioural framework of compassion, togetherness, and accountability. Anyone who fails to exhibit the required behaviors as part of their role is performance managed accordingly.
- 4.14** Fire Cadets embodies the LFB behaviours of 'inspired by difference' and empowers employees, young people, and volunteers to be role models to their peers and their communities.
- 4.15** An equality impact assessment (EIA) screening has been completed and has been deemed to be of a high standard by the Inclusion Team. A full EIA is not currently in place due to this proposal being a pilot. Data will be pulled during the duration of the pilot, with ongoing monitoring of cohorts progressing through the pilot, to complete a full EIA ready for a final decision to be made at the end of 2025 regarding the future of this process.
- 4.16** It is expected that this pilot will be a good example of positive action, without negatively impacting against protected characteristics, due to the open access nature of Fire Cadets and VCI recruitment for Londoners, and therefore the diversity of prospective applicants gaining access to this pilot. It is hoped that there will be a positive increase in the diversity of candidates applying to become LFB firefighters; however, this will be continually monitored during the pilot and captured in the EIA when completed as part of the final evaluation in 2025.

## 5 Other considerations

### Workforce comments

- 5.1** During the Joint Committee for Firefighters meeting, held on 7 May 2024, the matter of holding a full UK driving license at the point of joining LFB was raised by the FBU under point 3.20 Competency Pay – Recruitment.
- 5.2** The position of the FBU is that the requirement of a UK driving license at point of joining could *"discriminate against those from lower socio-economic groups in inner city London where there were good transport links and therefore less imperative to drive."*
- 5.3** At present a response is awaited from the Head of HR Operations, however the FBU stated that *"their current position may also become a national position"* and that *"if the Brigade needed someone to drive at work then they should train that person to drive whilst employed and not require it before employment commenced."*
- 5.4** The Fire Cadets Tailored Recruitment Pilot would support the FBUs position and give LFB an opportunity to pilot the removal of a required UK driving license at point of application with a

relatively small pool of applicants. This pilot could then be used to evidence either the enforcement of the driving license requirement at application, or a wider organisational change for all future applicants.

- 5.5 Workforce comments have been pulled directly from the minutes of the Joint Committee for Firefighters meeting on 7 May 2024. Consultation has taken place with internal Employee Relations on this matter, but no direct comments have been provided by representative bodies at this time.

### **Sustainability comments**

- 5.6 Not applicable for the contents of this report.

### **Procurement comments**

- 5.7 Not applicable for the contents of this report.

### **Communications comments**

- 5.8 Not applicable for the contents of this report.

## **6 Financial comments**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications relating to the paper. Should future additional funding be required as a result of this pilot, cost appraisals will be considered as part of the 25/26 budget process.

## **7 Legal Comments**

- 7.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "LFC") is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Under section 327D of the GLA Act 1999, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017.
- 7.2 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by section 7 (2)(a) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ("FRSA 2004"), under which the LFC must secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting.
- 7.3 The LFC's general power to appoint staff can be found in s112 Local Government Act 1972 which states, at subsection 2, that: "An officer appointed under subsection (1) above shall hold office on such reasonable terms and conditions, including conditions as to remuneration, as the authority appointing him think fit."
- 7.4 It is therefore for the LFC to determine a reasonable pathway to identify and recruit officers required to fulfil the provisions of the FRSA 2004.

## List of appendices

| Appendix | Title | Open or confidential* |
|----------|-------|-----------------------|
|          |       |                       |
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### Part two confidentiality

Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part Two form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a Part Two form: No