

Independent Review of Police Officers' and Staff Remuneration and Conditions.

Part 2

Written Responses to relevant sections.

Fitness Testing

2.24 In my view, fitness testing must be included for all serving officers during their careers. In accepting that an officer must have a minimum level of fitness on entry to the service in order to meet the demands of the job, I believe that the police service must ensure that this standard is maintained whilst an officer is in-service, both to ensure that he/she is capable of coping with the demands of the job, and to protect the police service should any adverse event occur, caused by a lack of fitness in a serving officer. Indeed, by accepting that a fitness standard is essential on entry, I believe that there is an obligation on behalf of the employer to ensure that this standard is maintained by employees.

All police officers have to undertake regular Officer Safety Training (OST), and from a practical perspective, it would be sensible and reasonably simple to incorporate the job related fitness test (JRFT) into this training.

Assuming the minimum standards meet the demands of the job for males, females and officers of all ages, incorporation of a JRFT into the routine OST training of officers should be possible. However, and potentially controversially, it is my view that the same minimum standard that is set on entry should also be applied across all ages, and for both males and females. Failure to do so could be construed as "reverse discrimination", enabling older / female officers to serve within the police service with lower standards of fitness than many of their colleagues. Assuming the minimum standards reflect the basic demands of the job, and do not require a standard that is unrealistic, these standards should be consistent regardless of age and sex.

- 2.25 My observation of “bespoke” tests that have been developed and used by individual forces is that they have generally failed to differentiate between role based skills and competencies, and fitness. In trying to make a fitness test appear to be “job related”, they have often included specific activities that attempt to mimic certain demands of the job. However, these are separate to the core attributes of physical fitness (such as cardio vascular fitness and strength) that are required. Furthermore, I believe that there should be a consistent fitness test, and minimum standards, across all Police Forces in the country, otherwise there is the prospect of one force being construed as easier or harder to get into than another.
- 2.26 Having conducted significant research in this area, I believe that the current JRFT provides the simplest, most accurate, and most practical test of physical fitness within the police service. This research was documented in my report to the Home Office in March 2004 (*Research into Fitness for the Police Service, Lilleshall Sports Injury and Human Performance Centre*) The current levels have been set to reflect the core demands of the job, but do not reflect extremes of physical activity that an officer might be required to achieve. Were this to be the case, the standard would have to be set at a level that I believe would significantly restrict recruitment into the police service, particularly amongst female and older officers.
- 2.27 My view is that an annual fitness test would be appropriate. If longer, the potential time for fitness to be “lost” is greater, and hence the remedial process much longer.
- 2.28 If conducted as part of the annual OST training, I believe that the resource implications would be minimised, and the same officers conducting the training could also carry out the testing. Some training on testing procedures and reporting would be required, and there would need to be consideration of the resource needed to support officers who fail to meet the required standard, or

indeed who are close to failure, but need help to improve in the intervening period before their next fitness test. I am certain that there would be significant improvements in police officers' fitness if testing were to be introduced on a regular basis. A bespoke core team of "fitness instructors", providing a pan-UK fitness testing and support service may also need to be considered.

2.29 I believe that there must be very strict criteria around failure to reach the minimum standards. In my recent report to the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, (April 2011), I recommended that after a first failure, an officer should have to wait a minimum of 6 weeks, and a maximum of 10 weeks, before re-taking their test, during which time remedial support must be made available to them. If there is then a second failure, an officer should be allowed one further attempt, (ie 3 in total) following a similar time interval. During the intervening period between a failure and further attempts, an officer must be withdrawn from active service, and after a third failure, consideration will need to be given to either a permanent "back office" role, or cessation of their career.

2.30 In my report of 2009 to the NPIA, (*Research into Fitness for the Police Service, Lilleshall Consultancy Services, January 2009*) I focussed on the need for different minimum standards of fitness for officers employed in specialist roles, including armed response officers, mounted officers, police support unit officers, and strategic firearms officers. These standards are generally higher than the basic entry requirement, and were set after monitoring of the demands placed on specialist officers undertaking their duties. Fitness testing should again be on an annual basis.

2.31 My view is that as long as the minimum standards reflect the core requirements of the role, they meet and mitigate all equality issues.

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