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THIS CIRCULAR IS ABOUT: **EYESIGHT STANDARDS FOR POLICE  
RECRUITMENT**

FROM: **POLICE PERSONNEL UNIT**

EXPIRY DATE: **N/A**

DATE FOR  
IMPLEMENTATION: **1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2003**

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THIS CIRCULAR IS ADDRESSED TO:

**CHIEF OFFICERS OF POLICE FOR  
ENGLAND AND WALES**

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**DIRECTORS OF HUMAN RESOURCES**  
**DIRECTORS GENERAL NCS/NCIS**  
**POLICE STAFF ASSOCIATIONS**

Dear Chief Officer

This circular is about the Secretary of State's determination in respect of eyesight standards for police recruitment which will come into force on 1 April 2003. A copy of the determination is attached.

Regulation 10(1)(e) of the Police Regulations 2003 specifies that a candidate for appointment must meet the standard of eyesight determined by the Secretary of State.

The standards determined by the Secretary of State have been agreed by the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales. Your attention is drawn particularly to the change to the standard in respect of

colour defective vision which excludes only those who are monochromats. Forces are asked to monitor any adverse effects arising from the change, such as evidential issues, and report these to the Home Office.

It was agreed also by the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales that candidates' eyesight should be tested only after they have been assessed successfully and not at the start of the recruitment process. Furthermore, it was agreed, in principle, that forces should meet the cost of eyesight testing as part of their recruitment costs.

The new common standards take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003. Candidates will have access to the standards on the website at [www.policecouldyou.co.uk](http://www.policecouldyou.co.uk) from 1<sup>st</sup> April. The Police Regulations 2003 can be viewed at [www.legislation.hms0.gov.uk/si/si2002/20023162.htm](http://www.legislation.hms0.gov.uk/si/si2002/20023162.htm).

ISOBEL ROWLANDS

## EYESIGHT STANDARDS: POLICE RECRUITMENT

The standard of eyesight which must be met by a candidate for appointment to a police force in respect of each of the matters specified in the first column of the following table is that specified in the second column of the table.

Eyesight	Mandatory standard
Static Visual Acuity <sup>1</sup>	<p>Corrected distance visual acuity must be 6/12 in either eye and 6/6 or better, binocularly.</p> <p>Corrected near static visual acuity must be 6/9 or better, binocularly. [Applicants who do not reach the standard should not be rejected but should be invited for a further test after obtaining a stronger prescription].</p> <p>Uncorrected visual acuity must be 6/36 or better, binocularly.</p> <p>Corrected low contrast distance visual acuity must be 6/12 or better for a 10% contrast target, binocularly.</p>
Visual Field <sup>2</sup>	<p>A field-of-view of at least 120 degrees horizontally by 100 degrees vertically is required. The field-of-view should be free of any large defective areas, particularly in the fovea. Single defects smaller than the physiological blind spot, and multiple defects that add to an area smaller than the physiological blind spot, should be acceptable.</p>
Colour Vision <sup>3</sup>	<p>Monochromats should be rejected.</p> <p>Mild anomalous trichromats are acceptable and should be treated as normals.</p> <p>Severe anomalous trichromats and dichromats are also acceptable but should be instructed in coping strategies.</p> <p>[Applicants who show a lowered discrimination for blue colours should be referred to an ophthalmologist for further assessment. This should include a measure of their dark adaptation performance].</p>
Spectacles and contact lenses	<p>Correction should be worn where necessary to achieve 6/6 binocularly. Corrective spectacles and contact lenses are acceptable for the tasks of an Operational Police Constable.</p>
Eye Surgery	<p>PRK, LASIK, LASEK, ICRS, cataract surgery: There is no significant weakening of the cornea and applicants should not be rejected. A period of at least 6 weeks after surgery should be allowed before applications are accepted. There may be a reduction in low light level visual performance: Test visual performance under low illuminance conditions.</p> <p>Radial Keratotomy (RK), Arcuate Keratotomy (AK), corneal grafts. Any other surgical procedures that result in a significant weakening of the cornea. There is a measurable risk of corneal rupture if the eye is struck. Applicants should be rejected.</p>

- 1 Acuity should be measured using a Snellen eye chart, or equivalent.
- 2 The field of view may be tested using a confrontation test. However, it is recommended that forces use more sophisticated testing equipment, where possible. If the results of the confrontation test suggest that there is a reduced visual field, or if the results of the medical questionnaire suggest an increased risk of reduced visual field, applicants should be referred to an ophthalmologist for a thorough examination of their visual field.
- 3 Colour vision should be tested using the Farnsworth D-15 test. Applicants should not wear 'colour correcting' lenses during the colour vision tests.

25/03



# Home Office

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Heads of Recruitment

Our Ref  
Your Ref  
Date

14 March 2003

Dear Colleague

## EYESIGHT TESTING: POLICE RECRUITMENT

I am writing to inform you of changes to the process for testing the eyesight of potential recruits. The changes have arisen from the consultation on eyesight standards and testing procedures and from agreements reached by the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales (PABEW).

### The standards

2. The research to develop new, job related and fair eyesight standards for police recruitment was conducted by experts from City University on behalf of Home Office contractors, QinetiQ.

3. The recommended eyesight standards were subject to consultation with all forces, ACPO, the APA, HMIC, and police staff associations. Following consultation, the new eyesight standards were agreed by the PABEW on 30 January. The PABEW also agreed that the standards would be mandatory for all forces.

4. Police Regulations are currently being consolidated. The new Police Regulations 2003 set out the qualifications for appointment to a police force. A new regulation 10(1)(e) states that a candidate for appointment "must meet the standard of eyesight determined by the Secretary of State". This regulation will come into force on 1 April 2003.

5. I attach for your information a copy of the Secretary of State's draft determination in respect of eyesight standards. (This is not for further consultation - the terms of the determination were also agreed in PABEW). The definitive version will be included in a Home Office Circular which we will issue later this month. In the meantime, you will wish to be aware of the forthcoming changes.

6. The key points are that:

- The unaided vision standard has been lowered to 6/36.

- Applicants will be tested for near visual acuity and low contrast acuity. Field of vision will also be tested.
- Defective colour vision is, generally, no longer a reason for rejection unless the individual is a monochromat.
- Applicants should continue to be screened for defective colour vision but the Farnsworth D15 test should be used rather than City University's own test. Applicants who fail the D15 test should be referred to an ophthalmologist for further assessment. PABEW agreed that any issues arising from the change to this standard should be monitored by the police service. The details of this will be included in the Home Office Circular.
- Applications should be accepted six weeks following laser surgery. This was the point on which the police service was most finely balanced. The final decision was taken by Ministers on the basis that any stabilising issues should be resolved by the time an applicant is through the selection process and, if not, appointment can be deferred until stabilisation is complete.

### The testing procedure

7. The consultation also covered the stage of the recruitment process at which an applicant's eyesight should be tested. There was strong support for a system used by a number of forces whereby only those applicants with doubts as to whether they would meet the standards would be asked to submit a completed eyesight form with their application form. The eyesight of all other (successful) applicants would be tested after assessment and during medical examination. This could be done in force or by an optician. Forces currently using such a system had found that it was very rare for candidates to fail the eyesight test at the last lap.

8. At PABEW, however, the Police Federation took the view that all applicants should be treated equally from the outset; that it was the responsibility of forces to implement the standards and that forces should also bear the responsibility of the cost of eyesight tests whether done in-force or by an optician/ophthalmologist. Other constituent members, including ACPO, shared the view that it was the employer that set the standard, and it was the employer who had responsibility for the test and its cost. In consequence, the PABEW agreed that the police service should test only the eyesight of applicants who are successful at the assessment process; that this should be done in-force or by an optician/ophthalmologist as appropriate; and that the cost should, in principle, be met by forces. Forces may need to use some of their OH strategy funding for this purpose. The PABEW also agreed that the process should be consistent across all forces.

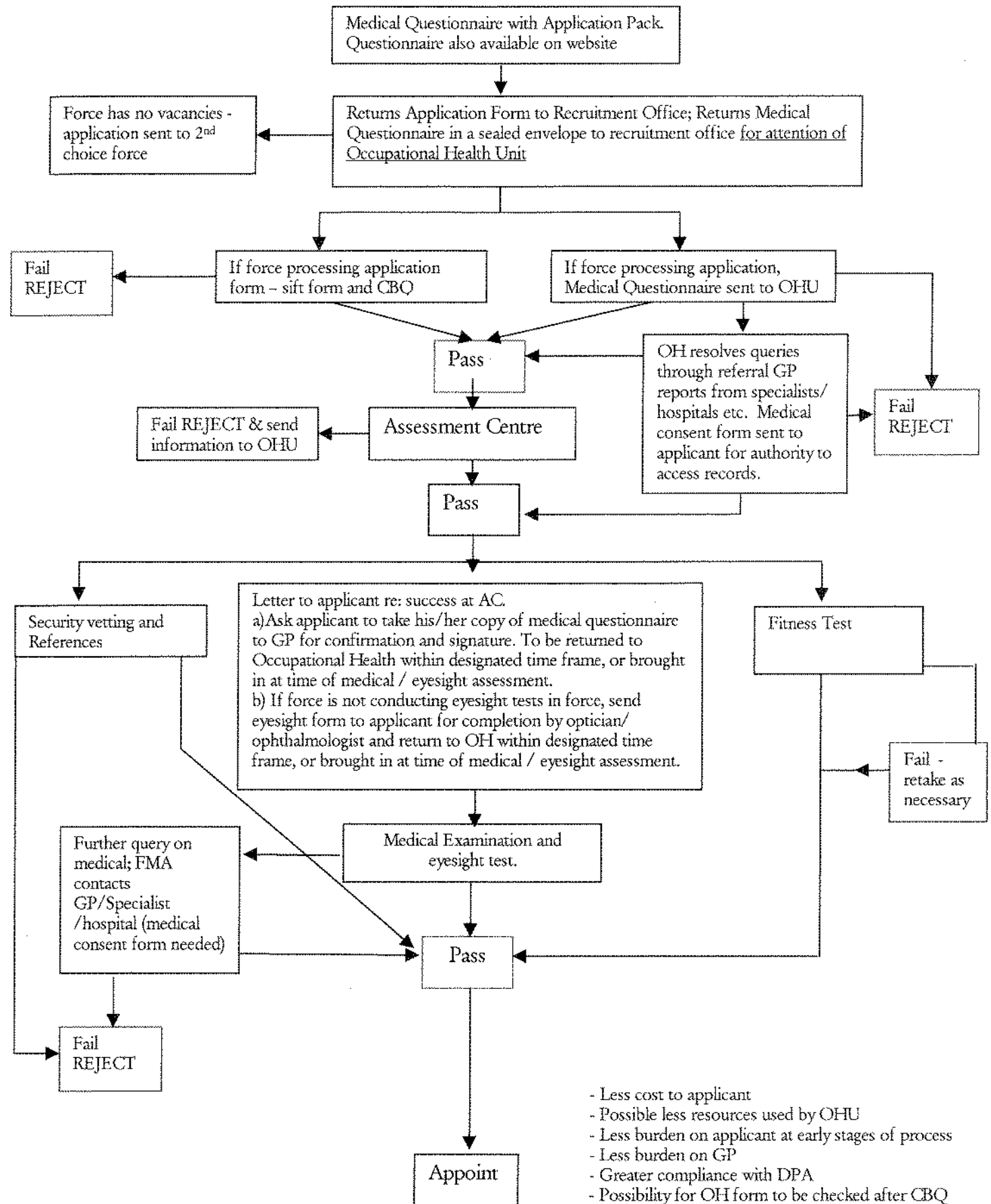
9. Forces will therefore need to alter their process to accommodate the PAB agreement. In practice, this means that the eyesight form will not be included within the application pack. An eyesight form has been devised, however, for successful applicants to take to an optician/ophthalmologist for completion where forces are not conducting the test in-house as part of the medical assessment. I attach a copy of the new eyesight form. Also attached is a flow chart setting out both the eyesight and the medical procedure. The new procedures should take effect from 1 April.

10. I am aware that this may be unwelcome news for some forces. However, the benefits are that these changes remove a number of barriers to police recruitment.

Yours faithfully

**Isobel Rowlands**

**Police Recruitment: Medical and Eyesight Process**  
 (NB: applicants must keep a copy of their medical questionnaire)



- Less cost to applicant
- Possible less resources used by OHU
- Less burden on applicant at early stages of process
- Less burden on GP
- Greater compliance with DPA
- Possibility for OH form to be checked after CBQ