



Watch Manager  
Guidance for Applicants

# SELECTION PROCESS

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[www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)





## Introduction

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in our forthcoming Watch Manager selection process and for taking the first step towards making a difference to the lives of others in Cheshire in 2025 and beyond.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has transformed in recent years to become one of the most respected fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom, acknowledged by many accolades, awards and progressive initiatives. Our mission is simple; to be an outstanding Service where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires, and other emergencies.

Our core strength in achieving this is our people. Attracting and retaining the best staff to work for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is fundamental in enabling us to deliver our strategic aims while maintaining a close connection with our communities. This strength is underpinned by a strong set of values that illustrate our culture and collective desire to be inclusive, do the right thing, act with compassion and make a difference in whatever way we can, for as many people as we can.

In these turbulent times, the need for strong leadership has never been so important and we are looking for exceptional candidates to join us on our journey towards being outstanding. As part of the Service's management team, you will play a critical role in transforming our mission into a reality while ensuring that the organisation remains responsive to the needs of its communities and staff.

You will be joining a well-functioning team that values innovation, hard work and prides itself on maintaining a positive working environment and achieving ambitious programmes of change. To be successful, you will need to demonstrate a strong track record of visible leadership and delivering results as well as a wholehearted commitment to inclusion, staff engagement and the ability to maximise the performance and potential of our staff and services. You will need to be willing to work hard as part of a team with the ability to motivate others in support of our objectives.

In terms of preparation, the approach is not prescriptive, but we would expect you to be able to demonstrate your understanding of the Service's strategic goals which, as Watch Manager, you will have a key role in delivering. Most importantly, you need to think about how you, as an individual, will personally contribute to the delivery of those goals, while leading and inspiring others to do the same.

We make no apology for the fact that we are setting high standards and only the best people who are suitably qualified for these roles will be considered. We are particularly keen to hear from female applicants and those from under-representative groups, but notwithstanding this, please be assured that the process will be scrupulously fair and is designed to give everyone an opportunity to demonstrate their suitability and readiness to be a Watch Manager on our team.

If you think you are ready for this new challenge, then we would welcome an application from you and wish you every success in the selection process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Waller', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Alex Waller**  
Chief Fire Officer



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# Watch Manager





## Selection Process Overview

### WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

It is important that you consider at an early stage of the process if you would like to request arrangements that will assist you in completing the selection process. For example, in relation to disability; a neurodiverse condition such as dyslexia; pregnancy; religion or belief; or injury etc.

Some examples of workplace adjustments might be different coloured paper, overlays, additional time, a scribe etc.

Any requests for workplace adjustments will be treated with the utmost confidence. For support or further information please email: [recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk)

### INITIAL APPLICATION

This process is open to **Wholetime** applicants only.

The initial application form is designed to help candidates assess their own eligibility and to assist the Service in making a judgement relating to their readiness and suitability to engage in the promotion process.

The application is a filter so all candidates are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to provide evidence that demonstrates they have the right skills and qualities to be suitable for a watch manager role within Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

This is the first stage and candidates must pass each stage to progress to the next.

Competent watch manager As should note that specific watch manager B roles, for example protection department, will be subject to a selection process.

### STAGE 1 – INCIDENT COMMAND ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 will require candidates to attend a half day Level 1 Incident Command Assessment.

*N.B. If you are an internal candidate and hold a valid Level 1 Command Assessment you will not be required to undertake a further command assessment as part of this process.*



## **STAGE 2 – INTERVIEW AND PRESENTATION**

Stage 2 will comprise of a panel interview with a presentation. The interview panel will be chaired by an area manager. The presentation topic will be provided in due course.

## **ENTRY TO THE WATCH MANAGER PROMOTION POOL**

The number of people given entry to the watch manager promotion pool will depend on the anticipated number of vacancies over the next 12 month period.

## **FEEDBACK**

All candidates are entitled to receive feedback on their performance from the promotion board process. To request feedback please email [recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk)



# Initial Application

## ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS

To be eligible to apply for this process, as a minimum candidates need to:

1. Be a current substantive competent crew manager or competent firefighter who has achieved and maintained competence at crew manager level in a temporary role, or a substantive watch manager applying to transfer in from another Fire and Rescue Service.
2. Have the support of your station manager and group manager.
3. Hold either:
  - a fire related degree or
  - a Level 3 Certificate in Fire Service Operations and Incident Command or
  - the IFE Level 3 Certificate (diploma) Unit 6: Fire Service Operations & Incident Command paper:  
Substantive crew managers who have achieved the IFE Level 3 Certificate Unit 2: Fire Service Operations paper can apply for promotion to watch manager without the relevant IFE qualification (this is a bye) subject to:
    - committing to undertaking and passing the WM paper within 2 years

Or

  - passing the station manager paper within 2 years of appointment

Candidates who have a live disciplinary sanction for either attendance or conduct, or who do not meet the Services' attendance level at the time of the application closing date, will not normally be eligible to engage in the selection process. Exceptions can be made in instances where extenuating circumstances apply and both the line manager and grandparent manager support the application.

Candidates who are currently under investigation that may result in a disciplinary hearing and/or sanction are not precluded from participating in the selection process. However, if successful, their appointment may be deferred subject to the status or outcome of the disciplinary process.

It is the individual's responsibility to declare the need for any workplace adjustments in respect of the process. All requests for workplace adjustments will be accommodated where possible upon receipt of a report outlining the specific nature of the requirements. This may be a formal diagnosis or a DO-IT profile that you have completed with CFRS. You can find more information about this on CFRS Intranet: [Neurodiversity screening and support \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



## APPLICATION FORM

The application form is an electronic document and should be completed and submitted via email to [Recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:Recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk). An acknowledgement email receipt will be sent to all candidates to confirm that their application has been received.

Applications require approval from your station manager and group manager. Approval will be based on an assessment of the candidate's performance in their current role, a verification of the evidence provided on the application form against the NFCC leadership framework and professional judgement of the individual's readiness and suitability for the role of watch manager.

Candidates are required to complete all relevant sections of the form. Section 2 should only be completed when a candidate wishes to declare extenuating circumstances in respect of their eligibility to participate in the process.

Internal candidates who were successful in reaching the interview stage of the last promotion board process do not need to complete Section 6 of this form.

Candidates are encouraged to take care in the completion of their application form and to provide clear and accurate information. This includes checking grammar and spelling and ensuring the number of words used for each section does not exceed the prescribed word count. While candidates may not exceed the word count, they are encouraged to use the full allotted word count to provide a comprehensive response.

Once complete, candidates should email their form to their station manager who should complete Section 7 and forward to the group manager to complete Section 8.

The group manager should return the form via email to the candidate who will be responsible for submission before the closing date.

Completed applications will be checked by the Recruitment team to ensure that all applicants meet the eligibility criteria.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit their completed application form with both line management and grandparent management endorsement. Incomplete applications will be excluded from the process.

## MANAGEMENT ENDORSEMENT

Candidates are encouraged to seek feedback regarding their suitability for promotion or notify their intent to transfer prior to completing their application. External candidates can submit their application without line manager support but if successful at Stage 3 we will require line manager endorsement before appointing to a role.

To promote transparency, it is also expected that where a manager is not intending to support an application for promotion a face-to-face dialogue will take place to explain the reasons why.

It is important that candidates ensure that sufficient time is given to their respective managers to review and complete Sections 7 and 8 of the application form prior to the





closing date. Candidates are therefore advised to declare their intention to apply at the earliest opportunity to ensure managers are provided with adequate notice.

If a manager does not support an application, the manager(s) are required to provide evidence and commentary to explain the reasons for this decision on the form. This evidence will be quality assured by the sifting panel to ensure that it is comprehensive and provides sufficient justification to support the decision.

If an application is not supported, a member of the sifting panel will contact the manager(s) directly to discuss their rationale and/or to request further clarification as required. If the sifting panel are not satisfied that sufficient evidence has been provided to decline support, they will contact the Head of Department for a final decision.

### **JOB AND LOCATION PREFERENCING**

On the application form candidates will be asked to indicate their preferred location(s) and these will be factored into posting decisions for successful candidates.

Should a candidate decline a posting in their preferred location the Service reserve the right to offer this position to the next available candidate in the promotion pool. The candidate can elect to stay in the promotion pool until the next promotion process.

### **APPLICATION SIFTING PROCESS**

Applications are sifted by a panel and scores assigned in each of the 4 NFCC Leadership areas.

The Personal Statement is also considered and specifically factored into deliberations at Stage 3 of the process in determining suitability. The panel consider experience to date which will include any acting or temporary assignments and appraisal ratings. Candidates are encouraged to use examples from any periods of acting up or temporary roles within their initial applications and throughout all stages of the promotion process as evidence of operating at the next level.

### **APPLICATION SIFT OUTCOMES**

Candidates who are shortlisted at the application stage will progress to Stage 1 of the promotion board process.

Candidates who are not shortlisted will not progress but will be invited to an application debrief group workshop. This will provide the opportunity to discuss style, content and preparation for the completion of future application forms. The workshop typically lasts 1-2 hours and is optional.

Candidates may also be afforded specific 121 feedback on request.



## **DUAL APPLICATIONS**

A scenario is possible where a substantive firefighter occupying a temporary watch manager position is eligible to apply on the basis that they have the required IFE and are competent crew managers. In this instance the candidate may wish to submit a dual application so that in the event they are unsuccessful in the watch manager process, they will have the fallback position of competing for a substantive crew manager position within the crew manager promotion board.

Candidates in this position are not required to submit two separate application forms. Dual applications can be declared under Section 4 of the watch manager application form. The timetable for the watch manager process has been designed so that if a candidate falls out at any stage, they can be automatically slotted into the crew manager process.



## Stage 1 – Incident Command Assessment

### ASSESSMENT FORMAT

The Assessment will comprise of:

Incident Command Assessment – Candidates will undertake an assessment at Level 1 Command Assessment involving a simulated incident using VSTEP Rescue Sim software. Time will be given for familiarisation with the software if not previously used.

*N.B. If you are an internal candidate and hold a valid Level 1 Command Assessment you will not be required to undertake a further command assessment as part of this process.*

Workplace adjustments will be considered upon request for any candidate who believes they have a condition that may warrant additional time.

### STAGE 1 RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Only candidates who are successful at this stage will be shortlisted to progress to Stage 2 of the process.

## Stage 2 – Panel Interview and Presentation

### PRESENTATION

The topic for this year's presentation will be forwarded upon successful completion of Stages 1.

Presentations will last for 10 minutes and candidates should be prepared to answer questions about their presentation at the end.

### PANEL INTERVIEW

The interview panel will be chaired by an area manager who will be supported by at least one other manager and / or HR.

The style of interview question may vary from competency based around the NFCC Leadership Framework to strengths based style questions. The panel may also ask questions that require the candidate to articulate what they would do in a situation or they may be required to express a view and/or opinion on a fire related issue.

During the Interview process the panel may also revisit the Personal Statement



contained within the initial application form and ensure that this is factored into the Stage 3 discussions and deliberations.

## **Stage 3 Results and Outcomes**

### **SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES**

The number of candidates that are successful at Stage 3 will depend on the forecasted number of vacancies for the following 12 month period.

Candidates who are given entry to the watch manager promotion pool will be assigned to a watch manager role either immediately or when a suitable vacancy arises. Candidates who are not offered a role immediately will remain in the pool until the next promotion board process.

Successful candidates will be invited to a post promotion board workshop and receive a bespoke “Step Up” development plan which is likely to require engagement in leadership development activities.

### **UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES**

All unsuccessful candidates will be offered feedback.

A bespoke “Step Forward” development plan for internal candidates will be agreed and documented in their appraisal in conjunction with the candidate’s line manager.

The intention of the “Step Forward” development plan is to support candidates and to prepare them for future selection processes.



# Entry to the Watch Manager Promotion Pool

## ROLE ASSIGNMENT

Assignment decisions are made by the Service and will be based on a review of skills, knowledge, experience and performance during the selection process. Assignment is based on best fit and suitability for the role rather than on the rank order and scores from the promotion board process.

A candidate who is not offered a post immediately will remain in the promotion pool until the conclusion of the next formal promotion board process – typically 12 months. If, due to variations in workforce planning predictions, an internal candidate has not been assigned a position before the next promotion board is launched, they will have to re-engage in a future process.

Returning applicants in this position may be afforded some exemptions in the next process to avoid them having to repeat aspects of the 2025 process in which they had performed well and met the required standard. These exemptions typically revolve around some aspects of the application form and the Stage 2 and will be limited to one process only.

## JOB ROLES AND LOCATIONS

Preferences that were expressed on the application form in respect of department will be taken into consideration when assigning people to roles.

Although every effort will be made to fulfil individual preferences whilst ensuring best fit for the role, the Service cannot provide guarantees that preferences will be fulfilled.

We understand that circumstances may change during the promotion board process but if a candidate declines a posting that is in line with their expressed preference and/or location the Service reserve the right to offer the posting to the next most suitable candidate. The candidate can elect to stay in the promotion pool until the next promotion board process.

If an individual in the promotion pool becomes subject to a disciplinary sanction, their position within the pool will be suspended until the sanction has been spent.

Depending on the nature and severity of the sanction, discretion may also be applied to remove candidates from the promotion pool.



## Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service

**Our Vision** is a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies.

**Our Mission** is to help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests.

### We will deliver this through our **Core Values**

#### **Being Inclusive**

By acting fairly, with integrity, respect and without prejudice.

#### **Doing the Right Thing**

By holding each other to account for ensuring high standards of professionalism in everything we do.

#### **Acting with Compassion**

By being understanding and offering help to each other and to our communities with warmth, patience and kindness.

#### **Making a Difference**

By making an impact in our organisation and in our communities in whatever ways we can, for as many people as we can.

### Recognising the Fire and Rescue Service's **Code of Ethics**



**NFCC**  
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Chiefs Council

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