



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 2026 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 also need to demonstrate your understanding of the strategic and political issues affecting the Service and 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 national issues pertaining to the Fire and Rescue Service and how these are likely to impact on the Service's strategic goals which, as a member of the middle management team, 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.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Waller', written in a cursive style.

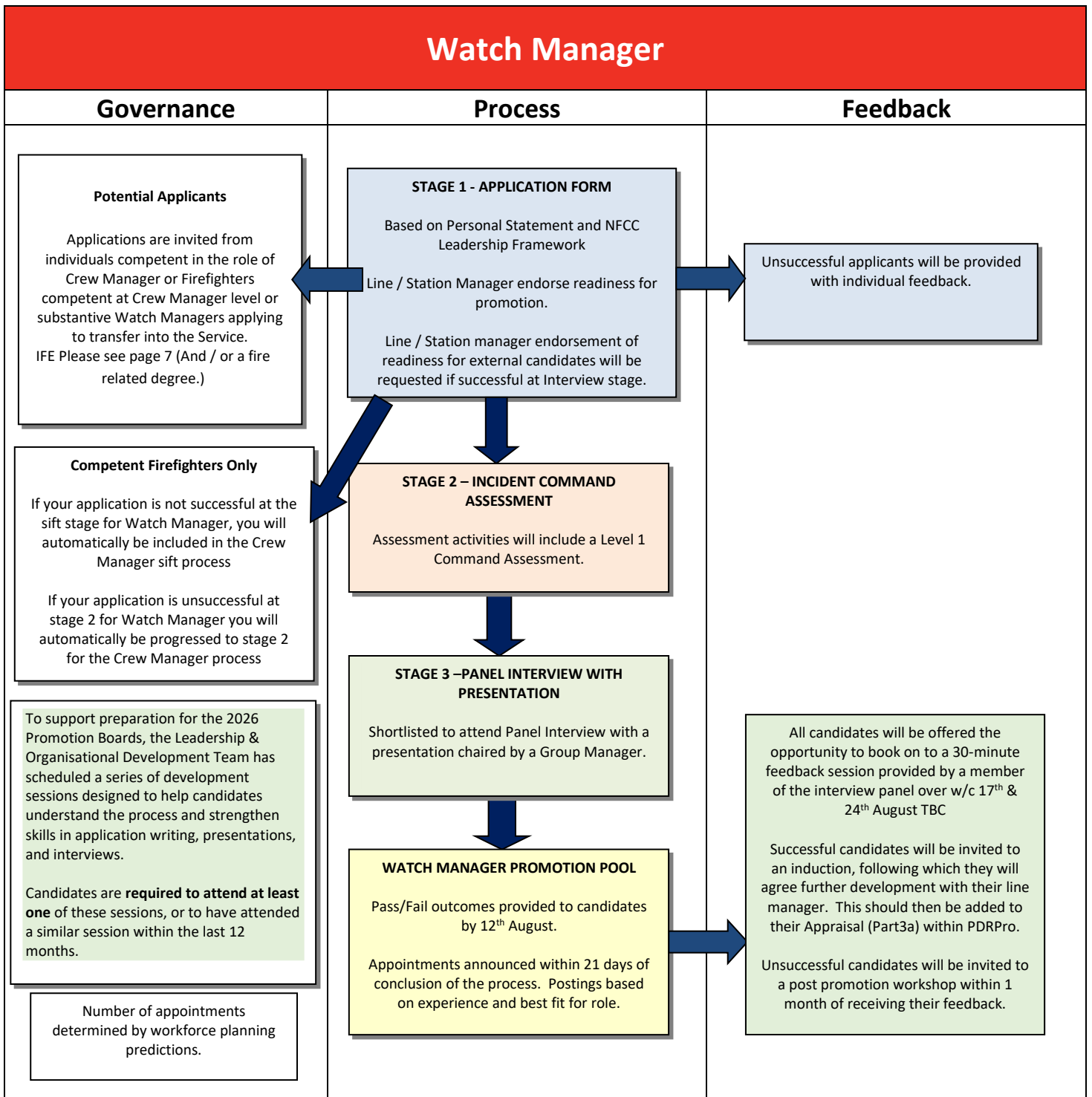
Alex Waller  
Chief Fire Officer

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## Selection Process Overview – Flowchart





## Selection Process Overview

### WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

We're committed to supporting colleagues who need workplace adjustments. If you feel an adjustment would help you, we'll work with you to accommodate this wherever possible. To help us understand what you need, please share a report outlining your requirements – this could be a formal diagnosis or a DO-IT profile completed with CFRS. More information is available on the CFRS Intranet: [Neurodiversity screening and support \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

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) at the earliest opportunity.

### STAGE 1 - 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 suitability, readiness and motivation 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.

Please note that internal competent Watch Manager 'A's wishing to transfer to a Watch Manager 'B' role may submit a transfer request instead of applying via the promotion board process. Any Watch Manager requesting to transfer from WMA to WMB must confirm that they have acquired and maintained all the relevant skills and competencies required for the role they wish to transfer into.

### STAGE 2 – INCIDENT COMMAND ASSESSMENT

Stage 2 will require candidates to attend a half day Level 1 Incident Command Assessment.

The requirement to undertake the Level 1 Incident Command Assessment will not apply to internal candidates who are currently 'green' and have an in-date command assessment pass at Level 1.



### **STAGE 3 – INTERVIEW AND PRESENTATION**

Stage 3 will comprise of a panel interview with a presentation. The interview panel will be chaired by a Group Manager.

### **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. Once outcomes are released by 12<sup>th</sup> August, candidates will be able to book a 30 minute individual feedback session via Teams with a panel member on a range of available dates.



## Stage 1 - 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 competent substantive and wholetime Crew Manager or a competent wholetime firefighter who has achieved and maintained competence at Crew Manager level in a temporary role, or a substantive wholetime Watch Manager applying to transfer in from another Fire and Rescue Service.
2. Have the endorsement of their Line Manager and /or Grandparent Manager if internal. External applicants can apply without manager endorsement but this will be required if successful in the process.
3. Hold either:
  - a fire related degree or
  - IFE Level 3 Certificate in Fire Service Operations and Incident Command paper (L3D6)

Applicants who have achieved the IFE Level 3 Award in Fire Operations paper (L3C2) can apply for promotion to the Watch Manager role subject to them committing to passing the IFE Level 3 Certificate in Fire Service Operations and Incident Command paper (L3D6) 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 the Line Manager, Grandparent Manager and HR 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.

### BYES

Candidates who reached the promotion pool in 2025 without a Bye but did not secure a permanent position, will have a Bye to interview with presentation. These candidates should submit an application but do not have to complete sections 3,6 and 7.



## 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 auto email receipt will be sent to all candidates to confirm that their application has been received.

Applications from competent or temporary Crew Managers will require endorsement from their Watch and Station Manager. Applications from temporary Watch Managers will require endorsement from their Station and Group Manager. Endorsement will be based on an assessment of the candidate's performance in their current role, and professional judgement of the individual's readiness and suitability for the role of Watch Manager.

Manager endorsement is not an indication of success at sift stage, the sift panel will assess against the Personal Statement and NFCC Leadership framework once the application window closes.

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.

Candidates are encouraged to take care in the completion of their application form and to provide clear and accurate information. This includes checking grammar, 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, internal candidates should email their form to their relevant manager who should complete the relevant line manager endorsement section.

When providing examples please consider their relevance to the leadership level for which you are applying under the NFCC leadership Framework. Aim to provide recent examples which evidence the required leadership level. Please refer to Pillar 7 and NFCC Leadership Framework for further guidance at all stages of the recruitment process.

The endorsing manager should return the form via email to the candidate who will be responsible for submitting their completed application form to the Recruitment Team.

Completed applications will be verified 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 the necessary line management endorsement. Incomplete applications may be excluded from the process.

## MANAGEMENT ENDORSEMENT

Candidates are encouraged to seek feedback from their manager 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 endorse an application for promotion, a face-to-face dialogue will take place to explain the reasons prior to completing the application.

It is important that candidates ensure that sufficient time is given to their respective managers to review and complete Sections 7 - 8 of the application form prior to the closing date. We encourage candidates 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 is 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 the Service will endeavour to meet the requests of staff whilst maintaining business need but cannot guarantee requests will be met.

## **APPLICATION SIFTING PROCESS**

Applications are sifted by a panel and scores assigned to the Personal Statement and each of the four areas of the NFCC Leadership Framework.

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 2 of the promotion board process.

Candidates who are not shortlisted will not progress but will be provided with individual feedback.

## **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 have maintained competence at Crew Manager level. In this instance the candidate



## **Cheshire** Fire & Rescue Service

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 1 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 once this opens.



## **Stage 2 – Incident Command Assessment**

### **INCIDENT COMMAND ASSESSMENT**

Candidates will undertake a 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. The requirement to undertake the Level 1 Incident Command Assessment will not apply to internal candidates who are currently 'green' and have an in-date command assessment pass at Level 1.

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

### **RESULTS AND OUTCOMES**

Only candidates who are successful at this stage will be shortlisted to progress to Stage 3 of the process.



## **Stage 3 – Panel Interview with Presentation**

### **INTERVIEW WITH PRESENTATION**

The presentation and panel interview will last approx. 60-90 minutes. Candidates will deliver their presentation to the panel first which is then followed by the panel interview. Candidates will have approximately five minutes to respond to each question. Should they exceed this timeframe, the panel will prompt them to move on to the next question.

Presentations will last for 15 minutes and candidates should be prepared to answer questions at the end. The presentation will account for 25% of the total interview score.

Presentation topics will be forwarded upon successful completion of stages 1 and 2.

### **PANEL INTERVIEW**

The interview panel will be chaired by a Group Manager who will be supported by a Station Manager and HR Advisor.

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

Interviews are designed to evaluate a candidate's potential as well as their experience. Where a suitable example is not available, candidates may respond with a hypothetical scenario.

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.

Candidates will be invited to arrive 30 minutes before their interview time and will be given the interview questions to prepare prior to the interview.

### **RESULTS AND OUTCOMES**

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.

Successful candidates will be invited to an induction, following which they will agree further development with their line manager. This should then be added to their Appraisal (Part 3a) within PDRPro.



Unsuccessful candidates will be invited to a post promotion workshop within 1 month of receiving their feedback.

## **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 to a permanent posting is based on best fit and suitability for the role for applicants who have reached the benchmark.

A candidate who is not offered a permanent post immediately will remain in the promotion pool until the conclusion of the next formal promotion board process – typically 12 months.

### **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. However, if a candidate declines a posting that aligns with their stated preferences and/or location, the Service reserves the right to offer that posting to the next most suitable candidate.

Candidates in the pool will receive one offer only, if they decline this offer (except in the case of a DC1 posting) they will be removed from the pool.

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.



**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**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council