# Human Resources Scheme

## Career Grade

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### Introduction

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service’s resourcing strategies are aimed at maintaining a high caliber workforce with the skills, competencies, knowledge and experience to deliver a diverse range of excellent services and to meet its many objectives. Career Grades are one of a range of initiatives available aimed at resolving recruitment and / or retention difficulties and supporting succession planning.

The objective of this scheme is to:

* Complement career pathways where appropriate;
* Support strategies for the recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled staff;
* Contribute to strategies for succession planning;
* Provide a fair and transparent system for progression within the specific Career Grade without the necessity of the recruitment process at each level.

From an employer point of view a Career Grade enables the employment of people who may not have the required level of qualification / competency but who could be trained to achieve the necessary levels over a reasonable period of time. There should be a clear link between the use of progression, organisational performance, effective career management and the need for the higher work to be undertaken.

The Career Grade scheme may ONLY be used in the following situations:

* Hard to Fill Jobs
* Transition from Apprenticeship to Employment.

### **Hard To Fill Jobs**

In certain circumstances, including where there is a national / local shortage of jobs or where competition for skills and experience is intense, it may be appropriate to “grow your own”. One way of achieving this is by using Career Grades. Many employees or prospective employees will value training and development opportunities and a career progression pathway over short term financial reward.

This career grade scheme may apply to any type of post within Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service except for Operational Fire Service posts and Teaching posts. In a school setting this scheme can apply to all posts except teachers. The career grade must only be considered at the point of a vacancy and evidence must exist that there are recruitment difficulties. For example, previous adverts using a variety of relevant advertising options. The vacancy **MUST** be at the highest level of the ‘career grade’.

This is distinct from:

* Career Pathways (i.e. the structure of the service has jobs which are incremental in terms of knowledge and skill and pay) where appointment to each level is vacancy led and appointment is through normal recruitment processes. However recruitment may be restricted to internal candidates when certain criteria are met.
* Employees who have a permanent job who are undertaking Continuous Professional Development (CPD) or apprenticeship / qualification training. In these circumstances there is no automatic progression to a higher level job.

### **Transition from Apprenticeship to Employment**

The service offers a wide range and levels of apprenticeship opportunities and may, in some cases, be able to offer a job at the end of the apprenticeship. This rewards the successful apprentice and benefits the service by providing a return on the investment given to the apprentice in terms of training, mentoring and work experience.

Sometimes the transition from apprenticeship to the job is not possible because the actual role requires more qualifications, skills or competencies than those acquired through the apprenticeship programme. For example, job specific skill(s) or post qualifying experience. In these circumstances it might be appropriate to support the former apprentice by appointing them to a career grade to give them more time to achieve the essential job requirements.

Progression within Career Grades is designed to enable the former apprentice to continue / complete their essential learning and development so that they can successfully undertake the job to which they have been appointed.

This will not be available to all apprentices as the determination of a career grade depends on the resourcing needs and vacancies, structures and operational requirements of the service area.

This only applies to Apprentices within Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service including Community and Voluntary controlled schools except for Operational Fire Service posts and Teaching posts. The vacancy to which the Apprentice is appointed **MUST** be at the highest level of the ‘career grade’.

This will not apply:

* where there are existing staff within the Service at lower levels than the highest level of the career grade. In these situations, where the career grade is justified on the basis of a hard to fill role, the career grade will be advertised in accordance with the principles of this scheme so that there are equal opportunities to apply.
* to existing employees who have a permanent job who are undertaking Continuous Professional Development or apprenticeship / qualification training. In these circumstances there is no automatic progression to a higher level job.

### **General Principles**

Progression within Career Grades may be viewed as a series of jobs with different levels of job demands and responsibilities and is designed to enable employees to progress in terms of incremental knowledge, skill and experience to **the level of job required to be performed / delivered** i.e. the vacancy should be at the highest level of the career grade.

Career Grades should only be created where there are recruitment and / or retention difficulties or to support the transition of apprentices into employment with the service. **They cannot be used as a way of rewarding high performance in a job.**

* In appointing a person to a Career Grade the manager should remember that they are appointing a prospective employee who should, with proper development, have the capability to operate at the top level of the Career Grade i.e. the job.
* Career Grades MUST only be created at the point of a vacancy. (They cannot be created during the recruitment process. In these circumstances if it is determined that a career grade is necessary the job must be re-advertised). However it may be appropriate to advertise the job and to state in the advert that recruitment may be via a Career Grade. The further details would then have to specify how the career grade will work (see below) including the levels and pay of the career grade.
* Existing employees can apply for career graded jobs where relevant as all vacancies are advertised internally and externally where appropriate. Existing employees will still be required to meet the necessary criteria and behaviours. Pay Protection would not apply in these circumstances and the existing employee will be paid (and work) to the relevant point of entry. Career Grades will have clearly defined responsibilities that apply to each level of the linked roles and there should be an identifiable pattern of career progression.
* Career Grades can be filled on a part time or full time basis.
* Progression within Career Grades should only be to the highest level of the link i.e. the level of post needed to be filled.
* When creating a Career Grade, the AD should determine the job requirements of each level and the qualifications, skills and competencies necessary (Appendix 4 is a template designed to assist in this process).
* The AD should ensure that each level within the linked grades is determined separately through identifying either an existing role or through the allocation process within the Job Family structure. In some cases the grades may move between job families. For example the lower level may be more practical and the higher level may be more organisational.
* If necessary, where there is no existing job, the job allocation / grading process must be followed including the corporate consistency checking process. This is to ensure fair and equal pay.
* Employees on a career grade should be undertaking duties and responsibilities commensurate with the level that they are paid. For example they must not progress unless they can undertake the new / higher role and neither should they undertake work of a higher role if they are not paid to do so.
* Each level in the Career Grade should be justified and there should be **no more than 3 Career Grade levels** for example entry level, intermediate and final level.
* Increments within each grade will depend on the circumstances of the role and the reason for the career grade. They may be awarded after a minimum of 6 months but for example some professional roles require a one year probationary period and in these circumstances the increments will not apply until this probation period is assessed as successfully completed. In other circumstances an increment within the grade may only be awarded if the employee is fully competent at that level.
* Appointments can be at the entry level or intermediate level provided the candidate meets the essential criteria for that level. If they meet the final level there is no need for a career grade.
* The advert should outline, and the further particulars should detail, the levels of the career grade, and should include the post specification for each level so that candidates can address their application appropriately and can understand how it will work in practice.
* Progression within the career grade will only occur following a full assessment against pre-determined competencies and the attainment of relevant qualifications, skills or competencies (Appendix 4).
* Whilst appropriate support will be given and additional measures / timescales may be implemented if appropriate, failure to achieve the standards will affect progression within the Career Grade and may result in the appointment being terminated using either the Capability or Disciplinary Procedure as appropriate.
* Career Grades will not normally apply to any post that is responsible for the management of staff until the highest level is achieved and it is a requirement of the job.
* Market Supplements or other recruitment incentives will not normally be paid to Career Grades but may in exceptional circumstances.

Examples of a Career Grade jobs would be:

* Apprentice Vehicle Maintenance and Repair
* Intermediate Level = newly qualified but without the additional job specific qualifications and competencies
* Final level = Fleet Services Mechanic (including for example HGV driving licence)
* Intermediate level = Newly qualified Social Worker / Academy
* Final level = qualified practitioner i.e. the Social Worker job (Must have passed ASYE).

### [**Responsibilities**](http://www.intouch.ccc/elibrary/Content/Intranet/536/671/5053/6001/41410105256.doc)

**Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will:**

* Identify, with the support of HR, where a Career Grade(s) is appropriate /justified based on operational requirements. (N.B. The approval process detailed below will also apply during Reshaping / Service Reviews).
  + Where the reason is recruitment and retention difficulties SLT will prepare the case for the career grade explaining the difficulty recruiting, providing the evidence, explaining the other options / potential solutions which have been explored. The application will detail the anticipated timeframes and how the career grade will be managed.
  + Where the reason is to support the transition of an Apprentice into employment SLT will ensure that the creation of a career grade is compatible with the structure in the Service area and does not adversely affect existing employees. For example the Apprentice should not ‘leap frog’ others within the Team into a higher grade.
* Use the Job Family pay and grading structure to determine the size and levels of the Career Grade and the relevant grading of each job level where necessary, by following the normal grading processes (and subject to corporate consistency checks).
* With the support of HR, determine the specific criteria for assessment and progression at each level and ensure the nominated manager, who will undertake the assessment, is competent in the relevant areas.
* Ensure that employees in Career Grades fully understand their role and responsibilities, how progression will work, the anticipated timescales involved and how they will be assessed.
* Nominate a manager to:
  + Produce and maintain a Development Plan and provide appropriate support to the employee on a career grade.
  + Manage the performance of the employee in a timely manner.
  + Notify the Service Centre of changes to grades.

**Employees will:**

* Undertake all the training, learning and development opportunities in order to gain skills, qualifications and competencies to progress to the next level identified in the Career Grade, within the prescribed timescales.
* Perform at the highest level of competency commensurate with the duties relevant to that level.
* Compile a **Personal Development Portfolio** of evidence of achievement.
* Cooperate with their manager in undertaking regular reviews of progress and 6 monthly / annual appraisals of progress / achievement.
* Repay Training costs (as set out in the Agreement) if:
  + Training is not undertaken or successfully completed to the required standards / competencies and within the timescales.
  + 3 years continuous service with Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service is not completed. The 3 years counts from the completion of the training and undertaking the full role (i.e. at the highest level of the career grade).
* Indicate their understanding and acceptance that failure to achieve the required standard within the prescribed timescales (as adjusted if necessary) will be dealt with through the Capability or Disciplinary procedure and may ultimately result in the termination of the employment.

**HR will:**

* Assist SLT to:
  + Identify the circumstances in which a Career Grade may be appropriate.
  + Establish the justification / rationale.
  + Ensure each level of the grade is properly allocated and grades are checked for consistency.
  + Determine the relevant qualifications, skills and competencies at each level.
* Support the recruitment and assessment processes.
* Monitor the use of Career Grades to ensure compliance with the relevant schemes, grading structure and the principles of equality.

### Process

1. When a vacancy is difficult to fill and / or suitable for an existing Apprentice, SLT, with the support of HR should review the Service structure and consider the relevant circumstances to determine if a Career Grade would best meet resourcing needs.
2. The head of department should prepare a report and provide the supporting evidence for the need for a career grade, with support from HR, for approval by SLT, (including relevant budget holders / Finance Manager). The Approval Form **Appendix 1** is available to use.
3. HR must also be informed of final decisions. (Please see– Appendix 1).
4. The cost of all training / development will be paid out of the Service / Directorate budget.
5. If the levels of the Career Grade(s) do not already exist within the Job Family framework the head of department should establish the Job Family level / grade following the usual allocation / grading processes including corporate consistency checks and obtain approval before proceeding.
6. The head od department and nominated manager will develop detailed objective competency / qualification criteria for progression and the measures of assessment to be used.
7. Normal employment checks will be required.

**Hard to fill roles only:**

1. The career grade job should be advertised through the CFRS recruitment procedures.
2. Adverts will specify that the vacancy is a Career Grade, the essential qualifications, skills and competencies required, the circumstances for progression and the anticipated timescales involved.
3. Adverts may be restricted to internal candidates where:
   1. the Service is being reshaped or the service is reducing employee numbers;
   2. there are employees / apprentices on the Alternative Employment Register and / or it is considered there is likely to be a sufficient pool of potential applicants;
   3. there may be Apprentices who are suitable to be considered for employment at the end of their Apprenticeship.

**Apprentices only:**

1. Adverts may not be necessary but an interview process should be followed for apprentices who may be suitable for a specific job within the particular service area where they are currently engaged.
2. The pre-determined competencies should be discussed at interview and the successful candidate / apprentice must commit to undertake the training and development and achieve the qualifications / competencies.
3. The successful candidate / apprentice must also agree to repay any relevant training and development expenses if they leave within 3 years of the final grade and will be asked to sign a Training Agreement as part of their contractual terms. Repayment is required even if the employee moves to another local authority or partner organisation. The Training / Learning Agreement is attached for use as **Appendix 2**.
4. The nominated Manager will provide appropriate support to the employee and should produce and maintain a Development Plan which details the support available. Suggestions for the Development Plan are shown in **Appendix 3.**
5. The nominated Manager will assess progress against the pre-determined criteria and provided the competency requirements have been met arrange for progression to the next level. **Appendix 4** provides an outline/ sample form for this purpose.
6. Managers will take relevant and timely corrective action, using the Performance Management Procedure, if the required competency levels are not met and /or where employees have not reached the required standard. (If the issues relate to conduct, lack of motivation / ambition not to achieve and perform the relevant level duties, then the Disciplinary Procedure should be used).
7. Managers need to inform the Service Centre via the Service Centre Portal when the employee should receive an increment or progress to the next grade and attach a copy of the completed Assessment form.

# Appendix 1: Career Grades-Application for Approval

### CAREER GRADES - APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Department: |  |
| Service Area: |  |
| Date of Application: |  |

**JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CAREER GRADE – Hard to fill Job(s)**

The application for a Career Grade must be fully supported and evidenced by completing the following:-

|  |
| --- |
| Detail the justification / rationale for creating this career grade e.g. difficulties with recruitment, national shortage, succession planning |
|  |
| Describe the evidence which support this and attach relevant evidence to this application. For example show at least 3 advertising campaigns, the methods and media used and the responses. |
|  |
| Describe how the career grade will fit into the Service structure |
|  |
| Explain any impact the career grade might have on existing staff and if necessary any action which will mitigate this impact |
|  |
| Detail the specific Qualifications, Skills and or Competencies the career grade is designed to support the employee to acquire and the anticipated timescales involved |
|  |

**JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CAREER GRADE – Transition from Apprentice to Employment**

|  |
| --- |
| Provide details of the Apprentice(s) / Apprenticeship and explain why the Career Grade is necessary e.g. actual job requirements include additional qualifications or post qualifying experience |
|  |
| Describe how the career grade will fit into the Service structure |
|  |
| Explain the impact creating this career grade for the Apprentice(s) may have on existing staff. If necessary detail actions to mitigate the impact. |
|  |
| Detail the specific Qualifications, Skills and or Competencies the career grade is designed to support the employee to acquire and the anticipated timescales involved |
|  |

**DETAIL THE JOBS(S) TO BE INCLUDED IN THE CAREER GRADE if the job family levels already exist:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Job Title | Role Profile Allocation | PG Number |
| Entry |  |  |  |
| Intermediate |  |  |  |
| Final i.e. the job/vacancy |  |  |  |

**OUTLINE THE JOB REQUIREMENTS where allocation and corporate consistency checking processes are required:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Job Requirements | | |
| Entry |  | | |
| Intermediate |  | | |
| Level | Job Title | Role Profile Allocation | PG Number |
| Final i.e. the job/vacancy |  |  |  |

***Head of Department SIGNATURE***

I agree that career grade role(s) is appropriate in this instance and that other avenues have been explored appropriately.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature of Assistant Director: |  |
| Date: |  |

**APPROVAL**

1. ***SLT representative’s SIGNATURE***

I agree that a Career Grade is appropriate in this instance and that other avenues have been explored appropriately.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature of Director / on behalf of DMT: |  |
| Date: |  |
| Directorate: |  |

1. **Notification to HR**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signed:  HR Manager |  |
| Date: |  |

**ADMINISTRATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date AD informed of decision: |  |

Note: When a vacancy occurs a new application will need to be made.Appendix 2: Career Grade Training Agreement

### Career Grade Training Agreement

TRAINING AGREEMENT between Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service (“the service”, and ……………… (“the employee”).

This is an Agreement between:

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Kemplay Bank, Penrith, CA10 2FA; and

1. [***Employee’s name***] of [***Employee’s address***] (referred to as “You” or “Your”).
2. **Terms of the Career Grade Appointment**
3. Pursuant to Your Contract of Employment dated [**date**], You are offered employment as a [**insert job title**] (Your “Role”) working in XXXXX [**Service Area**]. Your employment with the service will commence in the career grade on XXXXXXXX (“Commencement Date”).
4. The service has determined that you have been appointed to a “career grade” which enables progression to a specific role without applying the normal recruitment procedures.
5. The purpose of this Career Grade is to support you through the necessary training and work based experience in order to acquire the qualifications, skills and competencies to undertake the role of XXXXXX.
6. The service agrees that provided you have been assessed by the relevant manager as meeting all the qualification, skill and competency requirements, you will progress to the next level of the role / career grade until you reach the job to be filled.
7. Where the structure of the service changes (i.e. reshaping) and the career grade can no longer be justified you will be consulted and offered suitable alternative employment where possible.
8. **Terms relating to Learning & Development**
9. This appointment is offered to a job which has X linked levels and grades in order to enable you to acquire the relevant qualifications, skills and competencies by providing you with the appropriate learning and development necessary. The end result is to enable you to successfully undertake the duties and responsibilities at the highest level role within the career grade which is XXXXXX.
10. You will be required to successfully achieve XXXXXXXXXXX as detailed in the Assessment Record and progression will be dependent on meeting the criteria detailed in the Appendix to this document.
11. Your employment may be terminated if you fail to achieve the required levels of qualification, skill and competency.
12. You agree to:

* Attend all training days / sessions / tutorials / reviews etc. unless you have authorised absence e.g. maternity/special leave or are unfit to work, in which case normal reporting requirements and the provisions of the absence management procedure will apply
* Attend for work when not required on any learning and development course / activity (unless on authorised absence).
* Undertake work at a level equivalent to the requirements of the job at the appropriate assessed level.
* Commit to meeting all qualification / course requirements including deadlines for assignments, submission of work, thesis, dissertations and attendance at exams, etc.
* Pass each module / stage of any formal qualification course
* Information relating to your attendance; behaviours; progress and any concerns which may affect the successful completion of the qualification, being shared where appropriate between the training provider; your manager/mentor and the Learning and Skills team.
* Commit to working for Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service during any formal training period and for a minimum period of 3 years after successful completion and achievement of the qualification and other necessary competency standards and achieving the final career grade.
* Identify your particular learning and development needs, address weaknesses and meet the relevant competencies identified at each stage in order to progress to the next level.
* Keep a record / documentary evidence of the new qualification, skill or competency acquired after each learning event / activity.
* Present information in a logical order linked to the criteria for progression. (Where professional bodies require evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) then the portfolio should also link to those standards).

1. The Council agrees to:

* Pay the Training Costs which are: Learning and Development / costs including provider fees where agreed and necessary expenses incurred travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the service’s policy and procedures and approved by the Manager.
* Identify a manager or mentor who will organise and provide relevant work duties, work based practice / experience and learning and development activities to support the achievement of essential skills, qualifications and competencies for the posts at the relevant level.
* Allow appropriate study leave when undertaking a qualification course, in accordance with national guidance and the service’s policy / procedures.

1. **Repayment Terms**

Except in the circumstances set out in Clause e) below, You shall repay the training costs to the service as follows:

1. if You cease employment with the service or move to another role in the service that is not specified in your career grade **within 12 months** of Your Commencement Date, 100% of the Training costs shall be repaid;
2. if You cease employment with the service or move to another role or area in the service that is not specified in your career grade **more than 12 months** but **not more than 18 months** of Your Commencement Date, 75% of the Training costs shall be repaid;
3. if You cease employment with the service or move to another role or area in the service that is not specified in your career grade **more than 18 months** but **not more than** **24 months** of Your Commencement Date, 50% of the Training costs shall be repaid;
4. If You cease employment with the service or move to another role or area in the service that is not specified in your career grade **more than 24 months** but **not more than 36 months** of Your Commencement Date, 25% of the Training costs shall be repaid.
5. You agree to the service deducting the sums under this Agreement from your salary (including final salary) or any outstanding payments due to you. Any outstanding balance must be repaid to the service within 3 months from the date of termination of employment.
6. You shall not be required to repay the Training costs under Clause 3 above if:
7. You move to another Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service role and which is within the same service area and the relevant Assistant Director agrees the training is a relevant qualification / skill.
8. the service terminates Your employment by reason of redundancy.
9. You terminate your employment in response to an act which is found to be a fundamental breach by the service.
10. **Failure to pass any stage**

Failure to pass the qualification(s), each L & D activity and / or probation or year-end assessments will be considered by the relevant manager. Where the service considers legitimate reasons exist, the service may provide relevant timed support where possible and appropriate.

If the issue is capability or no legitimate reason(s) exists, failure to pass stages or assessments will be considered using the Performance Management or Disciplinary procedure and may ultimately result in your employment being terminated by giving the notice as set out in your contract of employment.

1. **Progression to posts within the Career Grade**

Provided you successfully complete and obtain the skill, qualifications and competencies required subject to a continued vacancy of the post you will progress to the next level of job within the career grade.

Upon successful completion and achievement of the highest level a new contract of employment for the relevant job will be given and the career grade will end.

1. **Your Signed Agreement**

Please indicate your acceptance of the terms set out in this Agreement by signing two copies and returning them to Your Manager for signature. Your Manager will forward one copy to the Service Centre for retention with Your signed contract of employment and return one copy to You.

I agree to the above terms, including the repayment terms, set out above

………………………………………. [***Employee’s name***]

………………………………………. [***date***]

………………………………………. [***Manager’s name***]

Manager, signed for and on behalf of the service

…………………………………. [**date**]

# Appendix 3: Career Grades – Manager Support

### Career Grades – Manager Support

The following are suggestions for the type of support managers should provide to employees for the successful and timely achievement of professional / job competencies:

1. A **Development Plan** which could include:
   1. clearly defined objectives for development
   2. Suitable learning and development opportunities including:
   * Formal training / qualification courses
   * In house / external short courses
   * Work Shadowing
   * Mentoring / coaching
   * Job rotation
   * Secondment
   * Supervised practice
   * Project work
   * Research / Theoretical learning

Each activity should specify the outcome and new skill, qualification or experience acquired.

1. The **allocation of work** which reflect the current level within the Career Grade.

Regular **supervision, review and appraisal of progress**, against the set criteria / objectives identified in the Career grade Roles. (Where necessary reasonable adjustments may be made to support individuals to achieve and to respond to unforeseen personal circumstances). This will include identifying strengths and weaknesses and providing constructive feedback on progress.

# Appendix 4: Career Grade - Assessment Record

### Career Grade – Assessment Record

Outline guidance given below. Detail depends on the nature of the post and qualification and training to be undertaken

Each competency and qualification level must be completed before progression to the next level.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Post Spec | Competency required to pass to next level | Qualification | Target completed | Measures of assessment evidenced by e.g. observation, qualification, certificate | Date completed | Date HR notified of progression to Level B / Next Level in Career Grade |
| Level 1 – A | Entry level | Undertake …………… – | Enrol on *qualification / training course* |  | 1. 6 months in post 2. Observation (assessed by ………… as competent) 3. Assessment |  |  |
| Level 1 – B |  | Competent at Undertaking …………….. |  |  | 1. Observation (assessed by ………… as competent) 2. Documentary evidence e.g. examples of work – successful outcomes |  |  |
|  | | | | | | | |
| Level 2 - A | Intermediate – Assistant | Undertake *assessments* – observing / shadowing |  |  | 1. 6 months in post 2. Observation 3. Assessment |  |  |
| Level 2 - B | Intermediate Assistant | Undertake **routine** …………… | Pass …. Qualification |  | 1. Observation (assessed by ………… as competent) 2. Qualification 3. Relevant post qualification experience 4. Portfolio of evidence e.g. case files with successful outcomes |  |  |
|  | | | | | | | |
| Level 3 - A | Full role | Undertake **complex** ………. 6 months in post |  |  | 1. 6 months in post 2. Observation (assessed by ….. as fully competent |  |  |
| Level 3 - B | Fully competent practitioner | Undertake full duties and responsibilities |  |  | Ongoing supervision, 1:1’s, appraisal, CPD etc. |  |  |