# Resourcing and Talent Guidance

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# Fair and Inclusive Recruitment

### Vacancy Management & Resourcing Options

When a vacancy/vacancies are identified in the service, there are several approaches that can be considered prior to seeking authorisation to recruit to the post. Sometimes an alternative approach to filling a vacancy supports diversity in the workplace, such as considering an apprenticeship or adapting the working arrangements of a role to part-time hours supporting applicants with caring responsibilities to apply.

Recruiting managers are advised to discuss any resourcing approach with a member of the Resourcing and Talent team, or with their own management team, to consider all options. Once these have been discussed and a suitable approach identified, this must be detailed in the RT1 – Vacancy Approval Form and sent for authorisation.

Where a strong and developed internal pool of applicants is identified, the service can initially have an internal only process, restricting the opportunities to internal applicants. Again, the decision making for this must be documented on RT1 - Vacancy Approval Form and sent for authorisation.

The authorisation process will depend on the type of vacancy and managers are advised to refer to the appropriate process for further detail.

Details of available resourcing options can be found in the **Resourcing Options Guidance document.** This guidance will support and guide managers in finding the best fit for their operational need and also includes detail on contract types/terms and conditions.

Following authorisation, the manager should contact the Resourcing and Talent team as soon as possible to discuss the advert, advertising options, resourcing training, the process, and to also consider if any additional training is required to support equality and diversity within the process.

### Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

Every role at the service will have a job description and this must be attached to any advert for a vacancy. For operational roles, these may include a Development Pathway and Essential Criteria. For corporate roles, these may be Post Specifications.

Managers should work with HR to ensure the relevant job description accurately reflects the main duties and responsibilities of the role. It should be written with an inclusive approach, an accessible tone, and should refrain from using any gender coded language. This job description will be read by potential applicants, so if it is clear and easy to read, it will encourage people to apply, creating a wider talent pool.

### Expressions of Interest

As detailed in the **Resourcing and Talent Policy,** Expressions of Interest should not be used to fill internal recruitment needs, unless in exceptional circumstances. Where a manager seeks to use an Expression of Interest, they must complete a RT1 - Vacancy Approval Form and get written approval before moving forward with this.

The manager must detail on the approval form why this process is the most suitable. Examples of wrong reasons for an expression of interest would be ‘it is a quicker timescale than recruitment’ or ‘it’s easier to get this approved’.

Expressions of Interest should not replace internal only recruitment processes and if undertaken without scrutiny, can cause discrimination and challenge.

Accurate records of assessments and decision making **must** be maintained and sent to the Resourcing and Talent team to store in line with GDPR requirements.

### Advertising vacancies

The Resourcing and Talent team will work with the recruiting manager to process all adverts.

The below principles will be followed when writing adverts:

* The language is accessible and understandable to a wide range of reading ages.
* An honest description of the role/team/service is given.
* All recruitment dates are confirmed, allowing applicants to plan. Where possible, it is also advised to have the assessment process included on the advert (e.g. interview, Drill Assessment, timed online agility test).
* The correct salary and contract information is included.
* It is essential to have the level of DBS check required on the advert. This allows applicants who may be on barred lists or have restrictions when working make informed decisions when applying for roles.
* A consistent format is followed for all adverts, except for campaigns where they are part of a dedicated microsite.
* Gender-coded language is removed as much as possible. An example of gender coded language is: ‘must thrive in a **challenging** and **decisive** environment’. The words in bold have been identified, through multiple studies, as gender coded words for men. Similarly, words such as ‘collaborative, compassionate, and committed’ are identified gender-coded words for females. If can be especially disadvantaging to non-binary applicants as well, if a considerable amount of gender-coded language is included in adverts. To ensure we receive a diverse pool of applicants, it is key to be aware of the message the advert is giving out.
* The use of logographs is minimised, supporting accessibility functions who may struggle to read the letter, sign, or symbol. Examples of common logographs are: &, @, +, and %. Using a logograph for an email address is acceptable.
* It’s good practice to include a contact on the advert for applicants to reach out to and informally discuss the opportunity. This contact must ensure that any informal discussions do not give the impression of being a telephone interview (especially if the contact will also be sat on the panel) and that all information given to applicants is consistent, especially around internal and external applicants. Informal discussions should also not discuss any personal circumstances with applicants.

The Resourcing and Talent team will ensure the above principles are applied before any adverts go live.

All vacancies will be advertised on the CFRS external website, and external opportunities will be promoted through CFRS social media channels. External roles will also be advertised on the NFCC Jobs Board, and any other relevant jobs boards identified by the recruiting manager.

As part of our work under the Armed Forces Covenant, we will also post jobs on the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and Forces Families Jobs (FFJ).

### Applications

For most vacancies, the service’s online application form will be used for applications. This application form must also be provided in document/paper format for any applicants who request this. All requests applicants need to complete to be eligible for a process will be detailed on the advert and supported by Resourcing and Talent, for example asking applicants to send proof of competency.

The CFRS Application Form has information for applicants on each section to make them aware if the details provided will be shared with the Shortlisting Panel or not. This is important to build trust with applicants that any bias will be removed where possible, to support them to complete the application, and encourage them to consider CFRS as an inclusive employer.

For certain recruitment campaigns, such as On-Call recruitment, an alternative application method can be considered and put in place. This will be done by Resourcing and Talent and will be regularly reviewed to ensure fairness, equality, and efficiency.

### Resourcing e-learning and additional training

All managers who are recruiting, shortlisting, or assessing candidates **must** complete the Resourcing and Talent e-learning. The Resourcing and Talent team will work with Learning & Development to inform them who needs signed up to the e-learning and confirmation of completion will be required prior to any assessments (as a minimum.)

The reason we are implementing an e-learning is to ensure consistency of standards across all recruitment and promotion processes, as well as an understanding of key equality issues such as unconscious bias, Positive Action, and direct and indirect discrimination.

The e-learning lasts for a rolling 12-months and does not need completed for every individual process, unless any informal issues are identified and then Resourcing and Talent will recommend the employee re-takes the e-learning to refresh best practice.

If any additional training is identified, particularly where there is a large campaign, the Resourcing and Talent team will work to implement this, with the support of Learning and Development colleagues if required.

### Shortlisting best practice

Where a process has used the CFRS Application Form, the Resourcing and Talent team will download the data and store this securely.

The information the Shortlisting Panel will receive at this stage will be:

* Job title of the vacancy
* Are they an internal candidate?
* Are they on the Alternative Employment Programme?
* Do they consider themselves eligible for the Guaranteed Interview Scheme?
* Qualifications, Training or Expertise
* Knowledge and Skills
* Current or most recent job title
* Name of current or most recent employer

Resourcing and Talent will add the required sections to RT2 – Shortlisting Spreadsheet and send this directly to the recruiting manager. The recruiting manager will need to identify at least one other panel member to complete shortlisting, but an ideal panel is three or more. It is advised to have a balance of gender, age, and race across the shortlisting panel where possible.

Before shortlisting commences, the panel should agree a benchmark which applicants must meet to progress to the next stages. It is advised that all applications are assessed against the essential criteria in the job description.

Where reasonable, all applications should be scored by all shortlisting panel members, without discussion and influence from other panel members/employees. Sometimes, depending on the supporting information requested at application, a member of the shortlisting panel might be able to identify who the applicant is, especially internal applications. If this is the case, it is advised the panel member reflects on any conscious bias they may have (positive or negative) and discuss this with the wider panel. It may be that another panel member shortlists that application to offer an impartial assessment.

For processes where a high volume of applications is received, it is acceptable for a shortlisting panel to divide applications and score individually, however this must be followed by full panel moderation to ensure scoring has been as consistent as possible.

If a process has been advertised as ‘internal only’, the Resourcing and Talent team will exclude any external applications and will inform these applicants.

It is important to note that any information around disabilities will be removed at this stage of the process, including whether applicants have Dyslexia, so the shortlisting panel must reasonably consider the allowance of grammar and spelling mistakes that may be caused by Disability or Neurodiversity. It is not acceptable to mark an applicant low because of grammar and spelling issues, while the content and demonstrated skills meets the requirements of the role.

After Shortlisting has been completed, the shortlisting panel will need to fully complete RT2 – Shortlisting spreadsheet and return it to the Resourcing and Talent team.

The Resourcing and Talent team will add in the personal data (Name/pronouns/contact details) for any successfully shortlisted candidates and return to the manager. They will also attach RT3 – Invite to Assessment, RT4 – Interview Question Scoring Sheet, and RT5 – Candidate Notes sheet. Where a different assessment method is used, Resourcing and Talent will provide a scoring sheet.

Recruiting managers are required to organise interviews themselves, however the Resourcing and Talent team can advise where needed.

**Alternative Employment Programme (AEP)**

For detailed guidance on the AEP, please refer to Appendix A. It is important to note with the AEP that there are several reasons why employees access the AEP, and this does not indicate capability issues or inability to do work well. It’s important employees on the AEP are supported as much as reasonably possible to retain their skills, knowledge, and values in our service.

If managers are unsure of how to proceed with an applicant on the AEP, it’s important to get in touch with Resourcing and Talent to discuss any queries or perceived issues.

**Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service offers a Guaranteed Interview Scheme to the following applicants:

* Those who consider themselves disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010
* Those in care or who have left care, and are aged 24 years old and under
* Armed Forces veterans whose last long-term substantive employer was the Armed Forces

If an applicant meets one or more of the criteria above, and wishes to be considered for the scheme, they will indicate on the relevant application form section and a guaranteed interview will be offered if they can demonstrate they meet the essential criteria for the role.

The reason the scheme applies to the following applicants is due to research identifying certain groups of applicants as having increased disadvantages when applying for roles. By ensuring they receive a guaranteed interview if they meet the essential criteria of the role, this allows them to have an opportunity at roles they might not be considered for.

There are certain roles in our Service that require assessments to be completed to progress onto the next stages. In these instances, the Guaranteed Interview Scheme will not apply, and applicants will be required to complete all assessments to progress to an interview stage (if applicable). However, the Service will still request applicants identify themselves if they would like to be considered under the scheme and additional support will be provided, so as not to disadvantage them.

Further information on the Guaranteed Interview Scheme can be found at Appendix B.

**Criminal Convictions or Cautions**

All roles within our service are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and require a Standard DBS Check, which will have been detailed on the advert. Where a role requires an Enhanced DBS Check (with or without Barred List Checks), this will also have been made clear on the advert. To support rehabilitation and remove stigma around offenders, we do not ask for any details of convictions or cautions on the CFRS application form. Instead, we ask:

* Do you have any relevant criminal convictions or offences that are unspent and not protected (filtered off your record) as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974? (Yes/No)
* Do you have any relevant spent criminal offences that are not protected / filtered from your criminal record? (Yes/No)

This section of the application form is removed before shortlisting. If an applicant is successful at the selection process, as part of pre-employment checks the relevant DBS check for the role will be processed, and they will receive a DBS certificate. This will disclose details of all spent and unspent cautions and convictions unless they are eligible for removal (often referred to as filtered or protected). Any information regarding a conviction or caution will be handled by Resourcing and Talent, and HR and recruiting managers will be informed if/when appropriate. Decisions on appointment should not be impacted by information around convictions or cautions, and instead the appropriate risk assessment process should be completed.

More information on convictions and cautions can be found in the **Safer Recruitment and DBS Policy**. You can also find guidance at Appendix C – Suitability of Ex-Offenders.

### Assessment methods

There are many ways of assessing applicants and their suitability for roles, and where multiple assessments are offered this can allow applicants the opportunity to demonstrate wider skills or even an opportunity to shine at something they are more competent and comfortable with.

When considering the recruitment process, it’s good practice to consider which assessment methods would help applicants display the qualities, knowledge, and skills required for the role.

Regardless of whichever assessment methods are selected for the process, the below principles should be followed:

* Ensuring the assessment method doesn’t advantage or disadvantage a certain group of people, e.g. On-Call applicants.
* Where possible, assessment methods should be shared with applicants at the advert stage of the process. If they are required to give a presentation, for example, it’s helpful if they know and can have some practise in the lead up to the interview.
* Assessments should be fair and accessible to all. Where there may be a disadvantage to a disabled applicant, reasonable adjustments should be considered and implemented. It is important the service has an open and supportive approach to reasonable adjustments, as often applicants will not ask for any for fear of seeming at an advantage.
* For all panel interviews, where possible, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service promotes applicants having ten minutes before the panel starts to sit with the questions and make notes. This allows the applicant to enter the interview panel with a little preparation and helps get a better performance out of them. Applicants should be given RT5 – Candidate Notes Sheet for this part of the process.

For guidance on suitability of assessment methods, please refer to Appendix D – Assessment Methods.

### Reasonable Adjustments

On the CFRS application form, there is a section where candidates can confidentially disclose any reasonable adjustments they may require at interview or assessment. There is still a prevalent stigma around people with disabilities so many applicants will not feel comfortable to disclose to a potential future employer or as part of a promotion process. Also, many disabled people do not want to ask for reasonable adjustments for fear of being a ‘burden’ or seeming ‘difficult’.

It is important all information regarding reasonable adjustments is kept as confidential as possible and consent must be sought with the applicant to disclose this to anyone else involved in a recruitment process. The Resourcing and Talent team will remove the relevant section from the application form, reducing possible bias, and if the applicant is invited to the next stages of the process, the Resourcing and Talent team will get in touch directly with the applicant to discuss what they need and if it can be reasonably put in place.

The Resourcing and Talent team will also offer additional opportunity for applicants to request reasonable adjustments throughout the stages of any process. An applicant must not be disadvantaged or declined reasonable adjustments because they did not disclose it on the application form or inform the team sooner.

When discussing reasonable adjustments, the Resourcing and Talent team will be led by the applicant, encouraging them to share what would be most helpful and collaboratively discussing ways in which to implement this. They will be honest with a candidate where needed, if unable to reasonably implement the adjustment, however there should not be the approach of one option for all. There is a wide range of Disabilities and a broad spectrum of Neurodiversity, and we must be flexible, reasonable, and adaptable to support applicants.

Where an applicant has a visible or non-visible disability, the interview panel/assessors must not ask about this at interview. If there is a decision that this applicant is most suitable for the role based on experience, skill, and assessment scores, applicants must still not be asked about any disabilities, and the Occupational Health team will review and provide guidance on workplace adjustments.

### Proof of Right to Work

All employers in the UK have a responsibility to check if an applicant is allowed to work in the UK before they are employed. There are two ways of doing this:

* You can check the applicant’s right to work online, if they have given you a share code
* You can check the applicant’s original documents.

CFRS understands that applicants travel from all over to attend assessment days and interviews for their roles, and often when pre-employment checks are being undertaken an applicant is unable to travel to Resourcing and Talent to produce original documents.

Therefore, it is key that applicants are informed about the Right to Work check at interview/assessment, and this is detailed in RT3 – Invite to Assessment. The Resourcing and Talent team will share with applicants which documents can be accepted for this.

The recruiting manager will need to request to see the applicant’s original documents when they attend interview/assessment days. This must be done with the applicant present, and the recruiting manager will make copies of the documents, sign them, date them, and deliver them to the Resourcing and Talent team to store securely.

What to check:

* the documents are genuine, original and unchanged and belong to the person who has given them to you.
* photos are the same across all documents and look like the applicant.
* dates of birth are the same across all documents.
* if 2 documents give different names, the applicant has supporting documents showing why they’re different, such as a marriage certificate or divorce decree.

Making a copy:

* make a copy that cannot be changed, for example a photocopy.
* make sure the copy is clear enough to read.
* for passports, copy any page with the expiry date and applicant’s details (for example nationality, date of birth and photograph) including endorsements, for example a work visa.
* for all other documents you must make a complete copy.
* keep copies during the applicant’s employment and for 2 years after they stop working for you.
* record the date the check was made.

If there are any queries around any part of the Right to Work check, please contact Resourcing and Talent for advice and support.

### Appointment

Following the assessments/interviews, the recruiting manager must return all interview/assessment notes to the Resourcing and Talent team. Ideally, this will be scanned across to the team, but they can be given to the team in paper form where required.

The recruiting manager and assessment/interview panel are advised to decide a suitable appointment as soon as possible following the end of the process. It is key that only the performance of the required assessments is considered, as internal applicants will be at an advantage if previous work performance is taken into account.

Best practice is to appoint the highest performing and most suitable candidate, however that has been captured by the assessments.

**Utilising Positive Action at appointment**

Positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 mean that it is not unlawful to recruit or promote a candidate who is of equal merit to another candidate, if the employer reasonably thinks:

* the candidate has a protected characteristic that is underrepresented in the workforce.
* that people with that characteristic suffer a disadvantage connected to that characteristic.

However, positive action does not allow an employer to appoint a less suitable candidate just because that candidate has a protected characteristic that is underrepresented or disadvantaged.

It is key to remember with positive action that the above provisions only apply when candidates are ‘as qualified’ as each other, and implementing positive action is a proportionate way to address underrepresentation or disadvantage.

### Pre-employment checks and Safer Recruitment

Where possible, the recruiting manager and/or panel members/assessors should contact all applicants to make them aware of the outcome. For the successful applicant, it is advised this is by phone, allowing the applicant to accept a verbal offer of appointment. If the applicant accepts the offer, the recruiting manager should email the Resourcing and Talent team and attach RT6 – Outcome Form. The Resourcing and Talent team will issue an offer letter to the successful applicant(s), stating the appointment is subject to satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks.

Managers should **not** agree a start date, encourage an individual to hand in their notice, or ask the applicant to begin working for the service until Resourcing and Talent have confirmed all checks are complete.

Disciplinary proceedings may be taken where a manager commences an individual’s employment prior to a DBS Disclosure (criminal records check) being complete.

Pre-employment checks required will depend on whether the role is operational or corporate, and other circumstances, but will include as a minimum:

**References**

* All external applicants are required to provide a minimum of two references.
* An employment reference from the current or most recent employer is required.
* A character reference is also required.
* References cannot be from close friends, family members, or relatives.
* References for internal applicants will be sought from the current line manager unless they are on the interview panel. In this case a reference will be required from a manager with relevant working relationship with the individual.
* Where the post involves contact with vulnerable adults or children, the recruiting manager will be required to follow up at least one written reference with a verbal reference.
* References will be requested for the successful applicant only and consent will be sought prior to contacting any references.
* Appointment will not be confirmed until the necessary references have been received and are deemed satisfactory.
* Where the applicant fails to provide the necessary references then the offer of employment will be withdrawn.
* Pre-written or historical references/testimonials will not be accepted.

**Medical**

* All appointments will be subject to satisfactory assessment of a medical. The requirements of this will differ depending on role.
* The outcome of the medical assessment will be shared with the applicant and the Resourcing and Talent team.
* Appointments cannot proceed without clearance from Occupational Health.
* Where an applicant has not met the required standard at medical, the offer of employment will be withdrawn.
* Disabled applicants should never be excluded unless it is clear that the applicant is unable to perform a duty that is intrinsic to the role, having taken into account reasonable adjustments.

**Right to Work**

* This will have been captured at the interview/assessment stage. Any copies of documents provided to prove Right to Work **must** be sent to Resourcing and Talent.

**Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

* Following legislation change in 2023, all roles in the Fire Sector are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and require a DBS check.
* The level of check required will be included on the job description and advert wording, and applicants can disclose any convictions or cautions on a confidential section of the application form.
* DBS checks for new starters will be processed by the Resourcing and Talent team, using an umbrella body who is registered to submit checks on behalf of our organisation.
* Where there is a positive disclosure on a certificate, the Resourcing and Talent team will follow a Risk Assessment process, detailed in the **Safer Recruitment and DBS Policy**.
* Where the Risk Assessment is not authorised, the offer of employment will be withdrawn.
* For further information on DBS and recruitment, please refer to the **Safer Recruitment and DBS policy.**

### Contracts

The Resourcing and Talent team will issue a contract of employment (or Casual Worker Agreement where relevant) before the agreed start date for new appointments to the Service.

Where any appointment is for a Fixed Term the contract will state the reason for the fixed term nature of the post i.e. due to Funding / Event or Cover. Managers will be required to provide appropriate details which will be included in the contract. If required, the Resourcing and Talent can provide guidance regarding such reasons.

For further information on Fixed Term Contracts, please refer to the **Resourcing Options Guidance**.

### Induction

The services’ induction process is designed to help new employees and employees who have moved to a new job in the fire service integrate effectively within the organisation and become engaged in their new work. This will not only help us to retain new people but result in better performance results.

Managers and Employees should refer to the services’ **Induction Toolkit** for further guidance.

### Probation

Managers and employees should refer to the services’ **Probation Period Policy** for further guidance.

# Appendix A – Alternative Employment Programme (AEP) Guidance

The Alternative Employment Programme (AEP) enables the movement of talent, knowledge, skills, and experience around the Service as we continue to re-shape. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service’s position is that, wherever possible, it is a priority to retain a well skilled workforce, one that is talented, knowledgeable, and experienced.

We aim to provide employees and managers with the support needed tailored to individual circumstances. This includes support for employees to help them complete job application forms to secure another post in the service.

The Service has specific responsibilities in cases of redundancy and disability. In cases of redundancy, the service has a responsibility to consider suitable alternative employment where an employee may potentially be made redundant. In cases of disability there is a legal requirement to consider all reasonable adjustments, one of which could be an alternative type of work.

**Eligibility Criteria**

There are various reasons why an employee may require the support of the AEP.

An employee can join the AEP if:

* They are identified as at risk of redundancy through reorganisation or restructuring, including during maternity leave,
* They are nearing completion of an Apprenticeship,
* They are approaching the end of a fixed term contract, and they will have more than one year’s continuous service by the date employment is due to terminate,
* They become pregnant and cannot continue in their current post,
* Through ill-health or disability, they cannot continue in their current post; or where another post could be more suitable due to their disability with a reasonable adjustment,
* There are reasons connected with discipline, workplace complaints, or capability.

**Joining the AEP**

When an employee is identified as eligible to join the AEP, for reasons other than restructures, the manager must complete RT8 – Alternative Employment Form and send it to the HR team directly. For restructure reasons joining the AEP will be confirmed by HR.

Membership of the AEP ceases when an employee leaves the Service.

**Manager responsibilities**

The line manager is expected to ensure the employee understands the AEP procedures and to arrange any training or support which may be required to assist the employee in securing a suitable alternative post. The Workforce Development Group can also be a point of support for identifying any suitable vacancies and arranging training and support to assist with securing a role.

The manager must hold regular meetings whilst the employee is on AEP to ensure they are proactively seeking a suitable alternative post and to update HR of any changes to the employment status or the employee’s circumstances. A review will take place after three months.

**Employee responsibilities**
Employees on AEP are required to check current vacancies daily and submit an application for any jobs they wish to be considered for. Where an employee does not have access to the internet then they should notify their line manager so alternative arrangements can be made to check vacancies.

AEP employees should consider all posts which are a similar grade to their current post and where they can demonstrate that they have (or can attain with reasonable training and support) the knowledge, skills, and experience to fulfil the key responsibilities of the advertised post. They should also consider changes to their working arrangements for example, whether they are able to work in an alternative location or different hours, as this may enhance the possibility of securing an alternative post.

AEP employees need to be able to identify their transferable skills and consider how these may be applied in roles other than their current post or area of work. The Resourcing and Talent team are able to assist with Job Search advice and coaching; this can be arranged through the line manager contacting the team.

Engagement with the AEP will be monitored. Where an employee on the AEP repeatedly fails to engage in the process they may be placed in a vulnerable position and may be removed from the programme. In serious cases this may also affect any entitlement to redundancy pay.

Where an AEP candidate submits multiple applications in a short space of time and is invited for interview for more than one post and is offered one or more posts, they will be required to confirm acceptance of an offer on the same day or no later than 48 hours of the offer being made. If they do not, the offer may be rescinded as it may not be acceptable for the recruiting manager to delay any appointment or re-advertisement unduly.

If an AEP employee unreasonably refuses an offer of suitable alternative employment they may forfeit their entitlement to redundancy pay and may be removed from the AEP.

**Recruiting manager responsibilities - Shortlisting & Interviewing**

All applications submitted by AEP employees must be considered by the recruiting manager when the advert closes along with any other applications from internal or external candidates.

Where an AEP employee meets or reasonably meets the essential criteria for the post, they will be invited to interview. Where there are gaps in the essential requirements, serious consideration should be given to whether with reasonable additional training, coaching, or mentoring it would enable the AEP candidate to acquire them within a reasonable period of time. Guidance can be sought from Resourcing and Talent when determining the appropriateness of transferable skills.

Recruiting managers must evidence the shortlisting and assessment decisions providing detailed information where candidates are not shortlisted/appointed and the considerations/adjustments that were considered in the decision-making process. All shortlisting information and any other relevant decision-making information must be provided to Resourcing and Talent to store.

The recruiting manager will be advised by Resourcing and Talent of any applications from AEP employees who are due to leave employment prior to the scheduled shortlist or interview date. Where an AEP employee is identified as ‘at risk’ of redundancy and has been issued with notice of termination, they must be interviewed if they reasonably meet the essential criteria of the post and, if successful, offered the post before their termination date.

Recruiting managers must be aware that where both AEP and non-AEP employees are deemed as appointable through the recruitment process based on the criteria applicable to the circumstances, that AEP candidates will take precedence over non-AEP applicants.

AEP non-appointment decisions will be reviewed to ensure consistent application of processes.

Recruiting managers must be prepared to provide constructive feedback to AEP candidates who are either not shortlisted or unsuccessful at interview. Feedback should be provided promptly to aid the AEP employee to adopt any suggested improvements to their applications or interview technique.

**Redundancy and trial periods**An employee who is under notice of redundancy has a statutory provision for a four-week trial period in an alternative job where the terms of the new contract differ from the original contract. The trial period begins when the previous contract has ended and ends four weeks after the date on which the employee starts work under the new contract.

The purpose of the trial period is to give the employee a chance to decide whether the new job is suitable without necessarily losing the right to a redundancy payment. The manager should also use the trial period to assess the employee's suitability for the role and to consider what if any additional training is required.

The four-week trial period can be extended for retraining purposes by written agreement, specifying the date on which the trial period ends and sets out the employee's terms and conditions after it ends. However, if the employee works beyond the end of the four-week period, or the jointly agreed extended period, any redundancy entitlement will be lost because the employee will be deemed to have accepted the new employment. This will be communicated to employees when the trial of the new role is offered.

Should the manager wish to end the new contract within the four weeks for a reason connected with the new job, the employee will preserve the right to a redundancy payment under the old contract.

Managers should seek advice from Resourcing and Talent to ensure the Service complies with its legal obligations. Management reserves the right to make the final decision on this matter, although the views of the employee will be considered.

Work trials will not be used unless the employee is on notice of redundancy.

**Moving to a suitable alternative post**Once an AEP employee has accepted the offer of an alternative post, the recruiting manager must advise Resourcing and Talent, and submit the appropriate transfer form.

The Resourcing and Talent team will issue a formal offer letter and will initiate any checks required before a start date is arranged and the transfer completed. This may include references; health assessment and criminal records check as appropriate for the alternative role.

Where applicable, pay protection will be paid in line with the Service’s Pay Protection Procedure.

If the suitable alternative post is for a fixed term period (e.g. maternity cover) the AEP employee will be eligible to rejoin the AEP 3 months before the end of the fixed term period or the return date of the individual they are covering for. In this case any redundancy costs remain with the original directorate, except where the receiving department further extends the fixed term contract when the costs will move to them.

# Appendix B – Guaranteed Interview Scheme Guidance

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service recognises it has a role to play in helping those disadvantaged in recruitment processes, specifically:

* Those who consider themselves disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010
* Those in care or who have left care, and are aged 24 years old and under
* Armed Forces veterans whose last long-term substantive employer was the Armed Forces

If an applicant meets one or more of the criteria above, and wishes to be considered for the scheme, they will indicate on the relevant application form section and a guaranteed interview will be offered if they can demonstrate they meet the essential criteria for the role.

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme is a commitment that the Service has made to guarantee an interview for any applicants who meet the criteria above and meet the essential criteria set out in the role profile for roles where external recruitment is required only. The scheme is not a guaranteed job, as selection procedures will ensure the best candidate for the job is appointed, based on the objective criteria of the role profile.

This commitment from the Service is to support:

* The Armed Forces Covenant
* Being a Disability Confident Employer
* The Care Leavers Covenant

**How to best utilise this scheme:**

* Job Description - Before advertising, the recruiting manager needs to review the post specification and ensure that it lists all the key skills and qualifications that are essential to the role. This will ensure that shortlisting is completed in an objective way.
* Advertising - External job adverts will appear on dedicated jobs boards in line with the criteria set above. This could be the MoD’s Career Transition Partnership (CTP) Right Job website or government job boards. This will potentially widen the pool of applications received.
* Shortlisting - The Resourcing and Talent team will check the application form to see if the applicant has declared they wish to be considered for the scheme and will let the shortlisting panel know. Any applicant that meets the essential criteria for the role and the scheme eligibility must be offered an interview alongside other applicants that meet the essential criteria.
* Appointment - There are certain roles in our Service that require assessments to be completed to progress onto the next stages. In these instances, the Guaranteed Interview Scheme will not apply, and applicants will be required to complete all assessments to progress to an interview stage (if applicable). However, the Service will still request applicants identify themselves if they would like to be considered under the scheme and additional support will be provided, so as not to disadvantage them.

# Appendix C – Suitability of Ex-Offenders Guidance

The purpose of this appendix is to provide recruitment guidance on the Suitability of Ex-Offenders. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the **Safer Recruitment and DBS procedure**.

This guidance is made available on-line to candidates and employees and will be provided to any candidate that requests it, at the start and any point during the recruitment process. This guidance covers:

* All employees
* All Candidates
* Volunteers
* Externally Provided Workforce

**The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, the Exceptions order, and protected/filtered offences.**

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA) was introduced to support the rehabilitation of

offenders who have not been convicted of any serious offence for specific periods. The Act

enables criminal convictions to become ‘spent’ or ignored after a specified ‘rehabilitation period’.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, excludes some activities, offices and occupations and people can be expected to declare their convictions during the recruitment process, even if they are spent.\*

\*However, changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (SI 1975/1023) in 2013 introduced additional protections for those with offences, meaning that some spent criminal offences are protected and “filtered” off a DBS certificate. These offences do not have to be disclosed by candidates and may not be taken into account by employers when making recruitment decisions.

**What do applicants need to disclose?**

We ask all candidates to disclose any unspent criminal offences during the recruitment process and employees thereafter as and when applicable.

All our roles require a DBS certificate, so applicants are applying for a role that is outlined in the ROA (exceptions) order and as such, we require applicants to disclose any spent offences.

However, in all circumstances, candidates or employees should not disclose any offences which are protected or filtered from an individual’s criminal record.

The questions asked on the application form are:

* Do you have any relevant criminal convictions or offences that are unspent and not protected (filtered off your record) as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974? (Yes/No)
* Do you have any relevant spent criminal offences that are not protected / filtered from your criminal record? (Yes/No)

**Selection, Assessment and Fair Treatment**

It is recognised that in order to appoint on merit, and to comply with legislation, it is important to consider candidates for employment from the broadest range possible, which includes ex-offenders. Obtaining a job is an essential part of successful rehabilitation.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is committed to the fair treatment of its workforce, potential workforce, or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.

CFRS actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, and welcomes applications from a wide range of applicants for interview based on skills, competencies, qualifications, and experience.

Through the pre-employment process, we will only ask individuals to provide details of convictions and cautions that we are legally entitled to know about.

If applicants incorrectly disclose information during the recruitment process that we are not legally entitled to know about, this information will be disregarded and will not form part of any decision-making process on the suitability for employment.

Where an applicant discloses offences that we are entitled to know about, applicants will be treated fairly and not discriminated unfairly against because of a conviction or other information revealed.

The suitability for the individual’s employment will be assessed proportionally, through a risk assessment. This risk assessment can be found in our Safer Recruitment and DBS Procedure and is based on advice from Unlock.org.uk, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and guidance from the PFCC Ethics and Integrity panel for Cumbria.

**Withdrawal of Conditional Offer of Employment**

CFRS undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

For applicants, failure to reveal any information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

**DBS Code of Practice**

As an organisation assessing applicants’ suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service complies fully with the [code of practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice) and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.

The DBS code of Practice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice>

Where a DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested (where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, and where appropriate Police Act Regulations as amended)

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service can only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected.

For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being conditionally offered the position.

**Training**

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service ensures that all those involved in the recruitment decision making process, where a criminal offence is involved, have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences.

The Service also ensures that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

# Appendix D - Assessment Methods

We have a wide range of corporate and operational roles in our service and part of our commitment to ensuring we get the right people in the right role is supporting managers to facilitate diverse and appropriate recruitment processes for their vacancies.

A key part of this is considering which assessment methods will help demonstrate the key skills, knowledge, and values we are looking for in our teams.

Below are several Assessment Methods to consider, however the Resourcing and Talent team are able to advise on other assessment methods if needed.

### Interviews

Panel interviews are one of the most common assessment methods used in recruitment and promotion. This is an excellent opportunity for the panel to directly meet the candidate, ask relevant questions, and also to sell the Service to potential future employees. How candidates are made to feel on an interview day is important and we want all candidates to have a positive experience, so they consider CFRS opportunities in the future.

Any person from Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service or partner organisations involved in the recruitment process has a duty to conduct the interview in a professional manner without bias in favour of a particular candidate. Often, people aren’t aware of their bias – this is unconscious bias, and it is important the interview panel supports and challenges one another on their biases in a fair and open way.

It's also key to make candidates feel as comfortable as possible. Very few people enjoy interviews and how we treat candidates reflects our service and our values. Panel members are encouraged to be friendly, professional, inclusive, and supportive in interview panels.

**Key Points for Interviews**

* The panel should prepare a set of interview questions which will be asked of all candidates. Care must be taken to ensure questions do not discriminate and all candidates are treated equally.
* The panel will also ensure that the questions that they ask job applicants are not unnecessarily intrusive.
* It is important that the interview questions do not only measure the candidate’s knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities but that the process is also used to measure candidate’s motives, values, attitudes, and behaviours.
* Care should be taken to avoid sector jargon or abbreviations which candidates may not be familiar with and may confuse them.
* The interview can be an opportunity for the panel to ask about any employment history and gaps in employment, however these must be done through appropriate questions.
* The panel can ask probing questions where the candidate’s response to an initial question needs further expansion to explain what the applicant’s role was and what part they themselves played. Panels should practice in-depth probing to really understand not just what people do but how they do it and more importantly why they do it. This will give a more rounded and complete picture of the candidate.
* To ensure fairness, the line manager should ensure that questions asked are consistent in all interviews for a particular job. On no account should any job offer be made during or at the end of an interview.
* Candidates should be given an opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the post for which they are applying, but this is not compulsory and should not be scored or assessed. It is acceptable for a candidate to not have any questions at the end of the interview.
* Line managers must make a record of every recruitment interview using RT4 – Interview Question Scoring Sheet. Completed records must forwarded to the Resourcing and Talent team to be retained for a suitable period. To ensure fairness, the line manager should ensure that questions asked are consistent in all interviews for a particular job. On no account should any job offer be made during or at the end of an interview.
* The panel should ensure appropriate time is allocated to each interview and to allow time between interviews for the panel to complete their notes on each candidate. They should also ensure support is available to assist with any administration of tests, presentations or photocopying of documents the candidate is requested to produce at interview.

For standard recruitment processes, the recruiting manager will be responsible for validating any documents the candidate has been asked to bring to the interview for their Right to Work check.

### Psychometric Testing

Psychometric tests are tools which can be used for many activities such as recruitment, training and development, career guidance, and team building. Psychometric tests are designed and developed in such a way that the results have a reasonable degree of accuracy, and such tests almost certainly have credibility and validity within recruitment processes.

The Head of People and Talent must approve any requests to use psychometric testing in a recruitment process. Recruiting managers who wish to include psychometric testing in recruitment should speak to Resourcing and Talent for advice.

Any test used must have been validated in relation to the job, be free of bias, and be administered and validated by a suitably trained person. The use of such tests must not disadvantage particular groups or unfairly discriminate applicants.

It is important to bear in mind that the use of psychometric testing may not be appropriate or that such testing may need to be adjusted, for example where an applicant is neurodivergent or has requested reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process. In these circumstances, the line manager requesting such testing must refer to Resourcing and Talent for guidance.

The types of tests used for selection purposes should:

* Measure ability, aptitude, or attainment and /or:
* Be designed to assess personal qualities, personality, temperament, values, and interests.

Those people who are responsible for delivering the psychometric tests will always ensure that the test results are strictly confidential and that all candidates receive the appropriate feedback and interpretation of the results.

### Drill Ground assessment

For operational roles, especially promotions, a Drill Ground Assessment is an excellent way of assessing leadership skills and competence at ensuring safely supervised operational training.

They are also a good opportunity for the service to assess practical skills and knowledge, and to show potential future leaders how they will be supported and developed if successful. How candidates are made to feel on an assessment day is important and we want all candidates, both internal and external to have a positive experience, so there is trust and integrity in our processes.

Any person from Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service or partner organisations involved in the recruitment process has a duty to conduct Drill Ground assessments in a professional manner without bias in favour of a particular candidate. Often, people aren’t aware of their bias – this is unconscious bias, and it is important the assessing team supports and challenges one another on their biases in a fair and open way.

It's also key to make candidates feel as comfortable as possible. Very few people enjoy assessments and how we treat candidates reflects our service and our values. Assessors are encouraged to be friendly, professional, inclusive, and supportive throughout Drill Ground assessments.

If a recruiting manager or campaign is looking to implement a Drill Ground assessment for the recruitment process, advice and guidance can be sought from Resourcing and Talent, or the Learning and Development team. We currently have a scoring sheet and criteria for a Drill Ground assessment that can be requested from Resourcing and Talent.

### Technical assessment

Where the role requires specialist technical or professional knowledge or some element of role-specific expertise, this can be assessed through a separate technical interview, test, or post-related activity (e.g. in-tray exercise).

The marking criteria and overall weighting given to the assessment should be agreed in advance.

### Presentations

Where the role will involve making delivering information to large audiences or presenting, the candidates may be required to deliver a short presentation to the panel.

Best practice is to give the candidates the presentation question when inviting them to interview to allow them to produce a high quality presentation, however in our service often information needs delivered with little time to prepare, so another option is to set the task on the day of the interview, testing their ability to cope under pressure and demonstrate their knowledge or expertise ‘on the spot’.

In all cases, candidates should all be offered the same materials and given the same time scale in which to prepare and present, unless they require reasonable adjustments.

The marking criteria and overall weighting given to the presentation should be agreed in advance.

### Stakeholder Panels

It is important that we engage with our Stakeholders when considering key appointments in the service. Where a post requires significant work with our partners, or it is a highly visible role in the community, it might be reasonable to arrange a Stakeholder Panel.

Including a Stakeholder Panel allows candidates to demonstrate they can adapt to their audience, they consider stakeholder engagement, and they are thinking about the wider role the service plays in Cumbria/the UK.

Where a Stakeholder Panel is put in place, the below principles must be followed:

* The panel members must be fully briefed on the process prior to the interview.
* They must be given a copy of the job description/person specification.
* The panel chair should be a member of the service.
* The interview questions may be preprepared but it is good practice to share these ahead of the interview date and allow for any changes/suggestions.
* Scoring mechanism will be agreed before the interview.

### People Panels

It is important that we listen to our communities and involve them in shaping and developing the future of our Service. Where a post requires the successful candidate to work closely with people and communities, it might be reasonable to arrange a People Panel.

Including a People Panel enables candidates to demonstrate their ability to understand and relate to a particular group (e.g. children and young people).

Where a People Panel is put in place, the below principles must be followed:

* The panel members must be fully briefed on the process prior to the interview.
* They must be given a copy of the job description/person specification.
* A facilitator should be present throughout the interview.
* The People Panel should be encouraged to consider the questions they would like to ask, and Resourcing and Talent/the recruiting manager will be on hand to support.
* Scoring mechanism will be agreed before the interview.