

Guidance for appointing chief officers

June 2024

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Introduction

This guidance describes the principles, processes and responsibilities required for appointing:

- chief constables (CCs)
- deputy chief constables (DCCs)
- assistant chief constables (ACCs)
- the Metropolitan Police Service commissioner, deputy commissioner (DC), assistant commissioners (ACs), deputy assistant commissioners (DACs) and commanders
- the City of London Police commissioner, ACs and commanders

This guidance can be used:

- by police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and CCs to follow, while recognising that they are responsible for managing their own appointment processes in accordance with police regulations and other legislative requirements
- to provide advice and guidance to PCCs and CCs on how to design and deliver a chief police officer appointment process that is underpinned by the principles of merit, fairness and openness

The guidance is a non-prescriptive reference for those making chief police officer appointments. PCCs and CCs should review this document to identify their specific roles and responsibilities, as well as the essential stages in designing and delivering an appointment process.

This guidance is applicable to chief police officer appointments in England and Wales. While this guidance is not designed to support chief officer appointments for Police Scotland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and non–Home Office forces, it may be used as a helpful guide where appropriate. Similarly, this guidance may be helpful in informing senior police staff appointment processes.

Nothing in this guidance prohibits the application of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) 'Advice note 8: Retirement and re-joiner guidance', published in July 2022.

The College will provide support to PCCs and CCs making chief officer appointments – please contact hub@college.police.uk

Roles and responsibilities

PCCs are responsible for the appointment of CCs. In the context of police force areas where police governance falls under the remit of an elected mayor, the mayor will be responsible for the appointment of CCs and may appoint a deputy mayor for crime and policing to exercise functions on their behalf. The City of London Corporation is responsible for the appointment of the Commissioner of the City of London Police.

CCs are responsible for the appointment of other chief officer roles.

Merit, fairness and openness

PCCs and CCs must observe the principles of merit, fairness and openness when selecting and assessing chief police officers. The definition of these principles is based on those contained in the [Civil Service Commission recruitment principles](#), published in April 2018.

- **Merit** means appointing the best available person judged against the essential criteria for the role. No one should be appointed to do a job unless they are competent to do it and the job must be offered to the person who would do it best. The successful candidate should be chosen from a sufficiently strong and diverse pool of eligible candidates.
- **Fairness** means there must be no bias in assessing candidates. Selection processes must be objective, impartial and applied consistently.
- **Openness** means that job opportunities must be advertised publicly. The aim of the advertisement should be to attract a strong field of eligible applicants. Potential candidates must be given reasonable access to information about the job, its requirements and the selection process. In open competitions, anyone who wishes must be allowed to apply.

By ensuring that these principles underpin chief police officer appointments, PCCs and CCs will have confidence in what they are measuring. They will also have

confidence that candidates are assessed in a consistent way, and that there is a transparent and justifiable reason why the appointed candidate is the right candidate for the role.

Substantive and temporary appointments

This guidance applies to the permanent appointment of chief police officers into a substantive post. A police officer who has not demonstrated the baseline standard on the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) can be temporarily appointed into a chief police officer role. Examples of this include where there is a short-term unforeseen requirement to promote an individual temporarily into a chief police officer role for operational reasons, so that service delivery is not compromised, or where there is a requirement to appoint a chief police officer temporarily to oversee an organisational or operational project. In these circumstances, that officer must attend the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) development centre within 12 months of that temporary appointment or at the next available opportunity.

Movement between forces

Movement between forces in England and Wales as a chief officer, including the use of secondments, can bring benefits through exchanging experience of policing in other areas and understanding of other operating environments. Movement between forces is not mandatory, and there can be challenges and barriers associated with this. However, PCCs and CCs should consider how they can encourage applicants from outside their force to participate in their chief police officer appointment process. Movement between forces at chief officer level is not the only means by which a chief police officer can bring a different perspective. Experience in another force at superintendent or chief superintendent level can also bring benefits of experience of senior leadership in another area.

Pre-appointment planning

As part of the pre-appointment planning, a PCC or CC will define the requirements of their vacancy and identify who is best suited to sit on the appointment panel. It is for the PCC or CC to decide how they wish to run their appointment process. While they

may devolve responsibility for putting the appointment process in place to a suitably qualified person, they maintain oversight and hold responsibility for ensuring it is done.

When a PCC is planning a CC appointment, they may consider contacting the His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) responsible for their region, who can provide an overview of efficiency and effectiveness of the force. This information may help to inform the design and delivery of the appointment process. The College can support this activity in advising how information provided by the HMI can be incorporated into assessment activities.

PCCs and CCs should be mindful of potential scheduling conflicts to maximise the ability of potential applicants to participate in the process. This could include local and national events. Forces participating in the police leadership programme (PLP) – stage 5 (executive leaders) will commit to not run chief officer appointment processes during module delivery.

- The police professional profile, leadership standards and the Competency and Values Framework (CVF) should be used to develop a job description and to define what is being sought in potential candidates for chief officer roles. The needs and values specific to the force should also be reflected in the appointment process.
- For CC appointments, HMIs can provide useful information to inform the design and delivery of the appointment.
- Assessment criteria for the appointment should be identified in advance of launching the appointment process. These criteria should reflect the level of the vacancy, as well as current and future demands on the force.
- A chief officer appointment process must comply with the principles of merit, fairness and openness.
- A chief officer appointment process must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty. Equality, diversity and inclusion should be proactively considered in the design and delivery of the appointment process.
- A chief officer appointment process must adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

College role

The College will provide the following support to PCCs and CCs making chief officer appointments:

- guidance for appointing chief officers
- a central point for advertising all chief officer vacancies and contacting potential candidates
- data collection to support national workforce planning and to report on chief officer appointment activity
- specialist recruitment and assessment advice and support, including:
 - support to PCCs and CCs in establishing assessment criteria for an appointment process
 - design of selection exercises and identification of appropriate methods based on issues facing the force
 - briefing and training for appointment panel members
 - practical support in delivering selection process activity
 - psychometric assessment of applicants
- guidance, briefing and training for independent members
- guidance, briefing and training for delivering feedback to candidates following the appointment process
- guidance for inducting and onboarding of chief officers following the appointment process

- PCCs and CCs must ensure that they comply with data collection requirements to support national workforce planning.

Advertising

A permanent substantive chief police officer vacancy should be advertised as required. There is no need to hold chief police officer appointment processes to coincide with the conclusion of the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders). Permanent substantive chief police officer vacancies should be advertised nationally. PCCs and

CCs should consider what opportunities they can provide to encourage applications and generate a strong and diverse pool of applicants (particularly from external applicants, to maximise the benefits for the service from a wider talent pool and movement between forces). All applicants should be provided with equal opportunities and access to information about the role and the force, regardless of whether they are external or internal candidates.

- Adverts should specify the date by which applications must be made.
- Adverts should be placed on a national public-facing website or within another national publication that deals with policing matters.
- Adverts should be open for a minimum of three weeks.

Eligibility

Individuals who previously qualified as eligible for a chief police officer appointment by virtue of successfully completing the senior police national assessment centre (senior PNAC) and the strategic command course (SCC) will be eligible for substantive appointment to a chief police officer role. Police officers who have successfully completed the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) as part of cohorts 1 and 2 will be eligible for substantive appointment to a chief police officer role. Police officers who have demonstrated the baseline standard on the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) development centre and successfully completed cohort 3 of the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) will also be eligible for substantive appointment to a chief police officer role.

Police officers who have demonstrated the baseline standard on the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) development centre can be appointed into chief police officer roles on a temporary basis. A police officer who is appointed temporarily into a chief police officer role must commence the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) within 12 months of temporary appointment or at the next available opportunity if not already on the programme. On successful completion of the programme, they can be substantively appointed with no further appointment process, assuming they were originally selected in accordance with this guidance, via an open and competitive recruitment process that was underpinned by the principles of merit, fairness and openness.

A police officer who has been temporarily appointed to a chief police officer role who fails to achieve the required standard as determined by the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) assessment requirements will withdraw from the programme. Under these circumstances, they will revert to their previous substantive rank as soon as practicable.

It is not mandatory for an individual on the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) to apply for a chief officer role while on the programme. However, it is expected that individuals on the programme are joining because they intend to apply for roles at chief officer level within the following 24 months.

Chief officer appointment processes for Police Scotland, Police Service of Northern Ireland and non-Home Office forces are not required to follow the processes outlined in this guidance. While individuals from these policing organisations can participate in the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders), they have their own legislation, process and procedures relating to chief officer appointments. It is recommended that senior police staff appointment processes follow the guidance outlined in this document, but there is no requirement to do so.

Overseas officers who are eligible in terms of rank and overseas force can be appointed into a chief police officer role on a temporary basis, with the expectation that they start the programme within 12 months or start the next available programme following their appointment.

Overseas police forces and ranks that are approved for chief police officer appointments in England and Wales can be found within [**The Appointment of Chief Officers of Police \(Overseas Police Forces\) Regulations 2014.**](#)

There are no restrictions on moving to another force or role while an individual is on the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders).

- Applicants for chief police officer appointments in England and Wales must meet the eligibility criteria.
- Applicants for CCs or commissioner must have held the rank of ACC, commander or a more senior rank in a UK police force, or must meet the eligibility requirements as an overseas officer.

Conduct

PCCs and CCs should consider all applicants' disciplinary records and should be aware of any outstanding allegations or ongoing incidents at the outset of an appointment process (during application and shortlisting). The PCC or CC must review the barred and advisory lists to confirm that an individual is eligible for appointment. Applicants must consent to a review of their disciplinary record as part of the appointment process.

CCs should satisfy themselves that they have completed a comprehensive review of the disciplinary record, including both live and concluded matters, of any chief police officer they appoint. A CC should inform the PCC if they appoint a chief officer with a disciplinary record that is live. They should consider whether it would be appropriate to inform the PCC of any concluded matters that could have a potential effect on the individual's role in policing and on their force, region and community. A PCC may consider asking CCs whether there are any disciplinary matters – live or concluded – that could have a potential impact on their force, region and community.

It is the responsibility of the PCC or CC to decide whether to appoint a candidate with evidence of a live or concluded disciplinary in circumstances where an individual is subject to ongoing investigation. The PCC or CC should complete a risk-based assessment that considers the circumstances of the disciplinary, the potential effect on the individual's role in policing and the impact that the appointment would have on their force, region and community.

A candidate appointed to a chief officer role should be re-vetted as part of the appointment process, in accordance with the [Vetting Code of Practice](#) and the [authorised professional practice \(APP\) on Vetting](#).

- PCCs and CCs should consider an applicant's disciplinary record at the outset of the appointment process.
- Applicants for chief officer appointments will not be eligible if they are named on the barred and advisory lists.
- CCs should inform the PCC if they appoint a chief officer with a disciplinary record that is live.

- A candidate appointed to a chief officer role should be re-vetted as part of the appointment process.

Application and shortlisting

All applicants should complete an application for a chief police officer vacancy. The information in the application should be used to:

- determine the extent to which the applicant meets the requirements for the role
- confirm their eligibility
- identify whether they should progress to the next stage of the appointment process

The appointment panel should use a structured evidence-based assessment method to review all applications against the eligibility requirements and the predetermined assessment criteria, and to identify suitable candidates to take forward to the next stage of the appointment process. All applicants should also complete a biographical data monitoring form, which will be submitted to the College and to either the force or the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for national monitoring and reporting purposes. However, this should not be shared with the appointment panel.

Following shortlisting of applicants, it may be helpful to consider asking a representative from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to provide an overview of the police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) reports from shortlisted applicants current force and how this reflects the information provided by HMI during the pre-planning phase.

- All individuals who are eligible to apply for a chief police officer appointment vacancy must be allowed to apply and progress to shortlisting.
- Only applicants who meet the eligibility requirements and predetermined assessment criteria should progress to subsequent stages of the appointment process.
- Forces and OPCCs must provide biographical data to the College relating to all chief officer appointment applications.

PLP end-programme reports

The College will produce objectively assessed evaluations of an individual's performance on the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) in the form of an end-programme report.

The end-programme report is endorsed by a member of the programme directing team. This report will be submitted as part of a chief police officer appointment process. Individuals applying for a chief police officer appointment during their time on the programme will be provided with an interim report. The interim report will provide a simple summary of a delegate's progress through the programme and will include a transcript containing assessment outcomes that are available at the time of request.

End-programme reports will be provided to individuals on successful completion of the programme. Interim reports must be requested by the individual and only in support of engagement with a chief police officer appointment process.

The end-programme report can provide a helpful additional source of information for appointment panels when considering the performance of individuals in the chief police officer appointment process, such as:

- confirming eligibility
- areas for exploration during the appointment process
- a source of insight in relation to strengths and areas for development when in post
- to complement evidence gathered through the appointment process itself

It is anticipated that these reports will be most useful as individuals graduate from the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) and are promoted into a substantive ACC role. Panels should therefore be mindful of the currency of information in these reports as an individual progresses in their chief officer career to the ranks of DCC and CC.

Applicants for chief officer roles will not be required to submit their Executive Leadership Development Report, and these should not be requested as part of a chief officer appointment process. This is to avoid frustrating the intended purpose of

the portfolio, which is to facilitate honest reflection and development, and to reduce the risk of biases being introduced to the appointment process.

Individuals who are eligible by virtue of having successfully completed senior PNAC and the SCC will not be required to submit an additional report. However, they may be asked to provide reports from senior PNAC and the SCC instead of the PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) end-programme report. Panels should be mindful of the currency of information in senior PNAC and SCC reports.

- PLP – stage 5 (executive leaders) reports will be made available to an appointment panel during a chief police officer appointment process.
- Programme reports may be used to inform readiness and areas for development of an individual. They must not be the sole source of evidence for an appointment decision.

Assessment

The aim of the assessment is to challenge candidates and to test that they meet the necessary requirements to perform the role. The PCC or CC will determine how assessment takes place and what methods are used in a chief officer appointment process. Assessment methods should be selected or designed that specifically elicit the agreed assessment criteria in a fair and consistent way. PCCs and CCs should balance the need to deliver a robust and rigorous process without being unfairly onerous. All applicants should be assessed against the agreed predetermined assessment criteria. Design and delivery of assessments should allow both external and internal candidates an equal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the role. The Code of Ethics should be embedded into the appointment process to ensure that applicants are assessed against behaviours associated with effective and ethical performance in the police service. This can be achieved by using the CVF as the assessment criteria.

- Assessment criteria for chief police officer appointments should reflect the level of the vacancy and should be drawn from – or link to – the police professional profile, CVF and executive leadership standards.

- Appointment panel members should take part in performance benchmarking activity prior to making their assessment. This could involve discussing and confirming as a panel what good and poor performance looks like, as well as how this relates to assessment outcomes and decision making.
- Assessment tools should provide the opportunity for candidates to display the evidence defined as required for performance in the role.
- Assessment tools should be designed to assess the specific competencies and values they are supposed to measure.
- All candidates should undertake the same assessment.
- All appointment panel members should follow a structured, evidence-based assessment methodology that clearly identifies how the candidate's evidence has contributed to the assessment outcome.
- The same assessment criteria should be applied consistently across all candidates.
- Candidates' performance should be evaluated objectively using a predetermined rating scale that allows appointment panel members to distinguish meaningfully between effective and ineffective performance.

Appointment panel

The PCC makes the decision about whom to appoint to a vacant CC role, while the CC makes this decision for all other chief officer vacancies. To support them in making that decision, the PCC or CC will convene an appointment panel.

The appointment panel will challenge and test that the candidate meets the necessary requirements to perform the role. In collaboration with the PCC or CC, the appointment panel will:

- shortlist applicants against the agreed assessment criteria
- assess all shortlisted candidates against the agreed assessment criteria
- consider which candidate most closely meets the appointment criteria

The PCC or CC will determine who sits on their appointment panel to support them in testing and challenging applicants' suitability for the role. Appointment panel

members should be diverse and should have the necessary skills to make a fair assessment of candidates for senior police leadership roles. All panel members should complete briefing or training prior to a chief officer appointment process, to ensure compliance with the principles of merit, fairness and openness. The PCC or CC should ensure that no conflict of interest exists between the appointment panel members and applicants prior to shortlisting.

The appointment panel must include at least one independent panel member. Independent panel members are part of the appointment panel and must also be experienced in selection and assessment practices, as they are responsible for determining the extent to which the appointment process is conducted, in line with the principles of merit, fairness and openness.

For CC appointments, the independent panel member will produce a written report on the appointment process, which should be submitted to the police and crime panel (PCP) at the same time as the name of the preferred candidate. The report should explicitly address the appointment principles of merit, fairness and openness. The report should also address the extent to which the panel was able to challenge the preferred candidates and test that they meet the necessary requirements to perform the role. The independent member for all other chief officer appointments (ACC and DCC) is not required to produce a written report on the appointment process, but CCs may consider requesting this.

The independent panel member should not be:

- the PCC
- a member of the PCC's staff
- a member of the PCP
- a member of Parliament
- a local councillor
- a serving or retired police officer or member of police staff
- a civil servant
- a member of the National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly or Scottish Government
- HMICFRS staff

- Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) commissioner or staff
- College of Policing staff

While individuals in these roles are not eligible to be an independent panel member, they can sit on the appointment panel. A PCC or CC may identify a suitable independent member based on the guidance provided by the College.

The appointment panel for a CC vacancy must include a senior policing advisor. The senior policing advisor is an individual with professional policing knowledge, who will provide the PCC with advice at an appropriate level from a policing perspective. The senior policing advisor may be:

- the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the College of Policing
- HMIs
- CC members of the NPCC
- recently retired CCs

If a recently retired CC is acting as senior policing advisor, it is recommended that the individual has retired within the previous two years, unless they have relevant experience in UK policing or the wider criminal justice system since retirement that demonstrates their ability to operate as a credible strategic leader. CCs may wish to consider including a senior policing advisor in their appointment panel for DCC and ACC roles, although this is not a requirement.

- The appointment panel should be suitably experienced and competent to assess the suitability of a senior police leader and to understand the needs of the force and its community.
- The appointment panel for all chief police officer appointments must include an independent member.
- The appointment panel for a CC vacancy must include a senior policing advisor.
- The appointment panel should receive briefing or training in selection and assessment practices prior to a chief police officer appointment process, specifically assessment principles, assessment methodology, assessment criteria and rating scales, and assessment logistics.

- Appointment panel members should be actively inclusive and explicitly mindful of barriers and biases that could influence their assessment.
- Pre-appointment panel member briefing or training should be provided by a suitably qualified person.

Decision making

The appointment process should use a robust decision-making model based on evidence of the agreed assessment criteria. PCCs and CCs will need to identify how ratings are collated and to identify a point that distinguishes between a candidate who has met the standard and one who has not. The decision on whom to appoint is the responsibility of the PCC or CC, but they should base their decision on the assessments made by the appointment panel and information gained through the appointment process to demonstrate that decision making is based on merit.

- The same decision-making model should be applied consistently across all candidates.

Feedback

All candidates who participate in a chief officer appointment process should receive clear and timely feedback, so that they can build it into their continuing professional development. Feedback should consist of a constructive evaluation of their performance in the appointment process based on their performance in all assessment components. Feedback should be timely and can be provided in a written format, via telephone or face to face. PCCs and CCs should also capture feedback from candidates undertaking their appointment processes.

- Feedback should accurately reflect what a candidate said and did in the appointment process.
- Individuals providing feedback must have received training about how to deliver effective constructive feedback.

Scrutiny

The process to appoint a chief police officer will be subject to a process of scrutiny throughout the appointment process and following the identification of the preferred candidate (or candidates).

The appointment of a CC will be made by a PCC, subject to a confirmation hearing by the PCP, who will satisfy themselves that:

- the process was properly conducted
- the process adhered to the principles of merit, fairness and openness
- the preferred candidate meets the requirements of the role

In accordance with the policing protocol, CCs must consult with the PCC on their proposed chief officer appointment.

The College will produce an annual report to summarise national chief officer appointment activity, including – but not limited to – the number of appointments that have taken place, anonymised biographical summary data relating to applications and appointments, and themes arising from appointments as appropriate.

- All chief police officer appointment processes must be scrutinised to ensure they comply with the principle of merit, fairness and openness.
- PCPs have power of veto of a PCC's first preferred candidate.

Induction and onboarding

Following a chief officer appointment process, a PCC or CC should ensure that an induction plan is developed to support the onboarding process. This will provide newly appointed chief officers with early and ongoing support, guidance and learning to transition effectively into their new role and force. Feedback from the appointment process can be used to inform an individual's continuing professional development.

- Induction activities should be designed to reflect the needs of the individual and their force.

About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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