

Promotion and progression for sergeants and inspectors

Published on 27 October 2023

[Our proposals for a clear, consistent promotion process](#)

News 2 mins read

We're working with forces to design a new promotion process for sergeants and inspectors that is simpler to understand and apply for, provides an equal and fair opportunity for all and provides more consistency across forces.

The proposals being tested include giving officers aiming for promotion an opportunity to demonstrate their legal knowledge while doing the job, rather than in an exam.

We've heard from officers that the current process is overly complex, there is not enough focus on leadership skills and that good potential candidates are put off by the time and resources needed to prepare for the exam. We've also listened to feedback that too much emphasis is placed on the purpose and function of the current legal knowledge exam.

The new proposed process will work with the leadership standards and police leadership programme to provide a clear path for those wishing to progress from new recruit to chief officer.

A small number of forces, still to be confirmed, will take part in a year-long test phase of the proposed new process. This will help us test ways to make sure that officers have the operational experience and knowledge they need to be an effective leader.

Those forces not taking part in the test phase will continue to operate the existing process for police officers seeking promotion to the rank of sergeant or inspector, including the sergeants' and inspectors' exams.

The results of the test phase will be reviewed in early 2025 before a proposal is brought to stakeholder groups and the Chief Constables' Council. Any national changes to the promotion process, if agreed, are not likely to be in place until at least 2027.

Over the past two years we have been out in forces speaking to officers and leaders at all levels to understand how the current promotion process is working. The message has been clear that many find it overly complex, there is not enough focus on leadership skills and that good potential candidates are put off by the time and resources needed to pass the exam.

This feedback from officers has been central to our work to reform the promotion process so that it is fair and accessible to everyone with the right skills and that the process provides the core leadership development required when stepping up to the next rank.

We want to make sure the process is fair and accessible to everyone while maintaining the high standard you must achieve to lead as a sergeant or an inspector in policing. People serving in these ranks have the opportunity to make a huge contribution to the culture of the service and support the development and performance of the vast majority of officers. It is vital we have the right people in those roles. We will work closely with officers and senior leaders during the trial before taking any decision on a way forward.

Jo Noakes, Director of Leadership and Workforce Development, College of Policing

Tags

Career pathways Leadership development