



South Tyneside Council



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RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

Policy and Procedure

Introduction

People are important. They are the most valuable resource in our organisation and our success depends on having people with the right skills and abilities. Without them, we will not deliver the improvements needed in our services or continue to provide exceptional services for the residents of South Tyneside.

To make sure that the right people are recruited in the first place, a fair, structured and professional recruitment process must be consistently applied.

These guidelines are intended to provide a model of best practice to help people involved in the recruitment and selection process and apply to all levels of recruitment, up to and including Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. The guidelines aim to ensure that the process is carried out in a fair, efficient and cost-effective manner, which takes account of relevant legislation, the Council's commitment to safeguarding children and young people and vulnerable adults and the Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy. This will lead to the appointment of suitably qualified and experienced employees, minimise the risk of unlawful discrimination and enable the Council to compete effectively in the job market.

All employees involved in recruitment and selection must familiarise themselves with these guidelines. Recruitment and Selection including Safeguarding training will be provided to all managers and can be accessed via the Training Programme. At least one interviewer on each panel for posts which have contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults must have received this training.

South Tyneside Council is committed to children and young people's participation - all posts relating to children and young people should consider children and young people's involvement as a key part of the selection process.

Additional information and advice on recruitment and selection is available from HR Services.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Policy applies to the recruitment of all employment groups and grades including those, that are temporary but excluding workers recruited from an agency. They do not apply in circumstances where an existing employee is required to “act up” to a post to cover for absence (e.g. due to maternity leave, sickness etc.), or pending the appointment of a new postholder. For long term acting up, where several potential postholders could be eligible, an objective selection method should be used, e.g. informal interviews. For further information please refer to Secondment and Acting Up Policy.

Aims of the Recruitment and Selection Process

The aims of the recruitment and selection process are to:

- recruit high quality employees with the right skills on the appropriate contracts to deliver the key objectives of the position and the Council
- ensure that all processes support the commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and that effective systems and training are in place
- ensure that equality of opportunity is considered as an essential part of recruitment practice, encouraging diversity
- ensure that recruitment is effective as a key public relations exercise for all involved
- ensure that recruitment is fair, consistent, efficient, objective and cost-effective
- help and encourage best practice by training those involved to follow a structured and systematic process of selection
- continuously monitor, review and improve the recruitment process in the light of experience, changes in employment legislation and information obtained from those involved in the process

2 INITIAL STEPS IN FILLING A VACANCY

To fill a vacant post (*), the following steps should be carried out:

(*) If the post is already covered by a job-share arrangement and one of the partners leave, the remaining sharer may be offered the option of working full time. For more information on job share, please refer to the Flexible Working Policy.

Review the post

If the vacancy is for an existing post, consider whether the role is still needed and if so, have the duties or responsibilities changed since the post was last filled. The existing job description and person specification should be updated and amended as appropriate. The band may also need to be reviewed to reflect the changes to the post. If the post is to be regraded or established a Staffing Report or Human Resources Committee report (for Band 8 and above) must be submitted and agreed **before** the post can be advertised. Additionally this should be agreed in conjunction with the Job Evaluation Team to ensure that the new post is correctly banded.

Define the job requirements

If it is a new post, you must prepare a job description and a person specification (see Section 3).

Decide whether the post is to be exempt from Job Sharing

The Council believes that with careful planning and management, most posts are suitable for job share and it would only be in exceptional circumstances that a post would be exempt from job sharing. Examples of situations where job share may not be appropriate include jobs that cannot be carried out by two employees due to the need for continuity; where one to one client contact is high and the lack of continuity would have a negative impact; where there are residential posts, with employees living on site for example Caretakers.

These instances are examples only, not an exhaustive list and a request to exempt a post from job share would be subject to further discussion. The reasons why a post is considered unsuitable for job share must be submitted with the Post Authorisation Form (Appendix A) for the Corporate Lead HR to consider.

Nominate an Interview Panel

The interview panel should include at least two interviewers, one of which **must be** included in the 'List of Officers Approved to Exercise Delegated Powers', Part C, Section 3 of the Council's Constitution. For posts having contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults at least one interviewer must have undertaken Safer Recruitment Training. For posts that work with children, young people or vulnerable adults you must consider including children and vulnerable adults in the recruitment process. Specifically for posts that work with looked after children (LAC) it is a recommendation of the leading improvements for looked after children (LILAC) report 2012 that looked after children be involved in the recruitment process. The dates on which the shortlisting and interviews will take place should be decided **before** the post is advertised and must be included on the Post Authorisation Form (Appendix A) as this information is sent out to candidates. Recruiting managers should also complete 'Involving children and young people in recruitment – request form' (Appendix Q) at an early stage in the process.

Authorisation to Recruit

To advertise a post a Post Authorisation Form should be completed (Appendix A) should be completed. This form must be sent by the relevant Corporate Director or delegated officer and then sent to HR Services with a job description, person specification and advert (if necessary).

3 JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Job Description

The job description for the post should be short and to the point. It should identify the overall objective and the main duties and responsibilities of the job. It should include the following information:

- Service/Group
- Post title
- Band
- Post to which the holder is responsible
- Posts for which the holder is responsible for example all staff within the Admin Team (do not state specific numbers as this may be subject to change)
- Job purpose or main function(s)
- List of the key outcomes of the post and more specific information as to how they will be achieved
- All job descriptions applicable to working with children and young people/vulnerable adults will include a commitment to safeguarding

A job description template is included as Appendix B and should be used each time a job description is produced.

Person Specification

A well written person specification is crucial for an effective and professional recruitment and selection process. It should reflect a profile of the “ideal candidate” in terms of their experience, skills, qualifications and other attributes needed to perform well in the job. It will be useful in:

- producing the job advertisement if applicable
- choosing the selection methods to be used
- shortlisting
- making the final selection
- demonstrating that you have selected fairly and chosen the most suitable candidate

A person specification template and a guide to completing them are included in Appendix C.

The qualities or criteria should be classified as either essential or desirable. Essential criteria are those which must be met before a candidate can be appointed. The desirable criteria are those qualities which would be preferred and can be used to reduce the numbers on the shortlist if a large number of candidates satisfy the essential criteria. The way in which both the essential and desirable criteria are to be assessed during the selection process should also be included for example through the application form, certificates, interview, presentation and references etc.

In the person specification:

- only include criteria which genuinely affects the ability to carry out the job; do not set unjustifiable high standards or use irrelevant items as this could lead to unlawful discrimination (*)
- avoid criteria that is subjective. If you cannot measure it from an application form, interview or selection exercise - do not include it
- do not use age as a criterion as an indicator of experience/maturity
- state if an enhanced disclosure and barring service disclosure is required for the role
- do not attach undue importance to specific formal qualifications; often an equivalent alternative or other evidence of ability may be as relevant
- rather than amount, describe the experience required in terms of quality, level and type, for example by specifying relevant, significant or substantial experience.
- do not assume that relevant skills or experience could have been gained only in a work environment
- avoid unjustifiable physical requirements that could exclude candidates with disabilities
- be specific, for example rather than stating ‘good communication skills’, it is better to specify exactly what is required in the post, such as ‘be able to prepare and deliver presentations to small groups.
- If the candidate will be asked to complete a presentation or test, ensure that this is stated in the ‘method of assessment’ column.

Assistance with compiling job descriptions and person specifications is available from HR Services.

(*) It is unlawful to :

- treat one person less favourably than you would treat another on the grounds of sex, race, disability, marital status, age, religion or belief or
- to apply an unjustifiable condition or requirement which puts people of a particular sex or group at a disadvantage compared with others

4 METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

Internal/External Advertising

To promote open competition, avoid indirect discrimination and attract a sufficiently wide field of candidates, vacancies should be made available to external candidates as well as to internal candidates. However, where it is considered that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced internal candidates eligible to apply for a post, advertising can be restricted, in the first instance, to internal candidates. In special circumstances, such as those described below, these arrangements may be temporarily changed:

- where restructuring is to occur
- in the event of budget reduction exercises, vacancies may initially be restricted to candidates who are existing employees whose jobs are at risk.
- to redeploy an existing employee in a redundancy situation.
- to redeploy an employee who becomes medically unfit for their existing job but is considered fit for other duties
- where applicable, to redeploy an employee whose fixed term contract is not being renewed.

For further information on redeployment, please refer to the Redeployment Policy.

Although the normal method of recruitment is to advertise and fill vacancies individually as they occur, you may use other methods as described below in order to streamline the process or reduce costs.

Annual/Specific Recruitment Campaigns

If it is intended to fill several identical or very similar vacancies within a few months, several employees can be recruited by means of a single campaign to take up their appointments over that period.

Employment Pool

Drawing from a pool of employees can be particularly useful in cases where it is important to fill a vacancy quickly, or where temporary or emergency cover is required.

Appointment of candidates who have applied previously

If a vacancy arises within six months of an identical one having been filled, it is possible to appoint one of the previously unsuccessful candidates without advertising the post at managers discretion (subject to post authorisation form being signed any necessary checks for example medical clearance, etc.). In this situation, you **must** choose the next best candidate still available who meets at least the essential criteria in the person specification. A Post Authorisation Form must be completed and approved by the Corporate Director or delegated officer prior to an offer being made to the candidate.

5 ADVERTISING VACANCIES

The aim of recruitment advertising is to attract a suitable field of candidates for the post.

“Word of Mouth” Recruitment

Vacancies **must not** be advertised by “word of mouth” alone since people/groups that may be under-represented in the area are unlikely to hear about them and it may lead to claims of discrimination.

Advertisements

All recruitment adverts **must** be placed through HR Services in order to:

- maximise discounts on advertising costs
- ensure that they are in accordance with the Council’s Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy
- ensure that they comply with legislation
- ensure that the vacancy exists and that it can be advertised, for example previous postholder has left, or a new post has been agreed. All new posts graded Band 8 and above are subject to agreement by Human Resources Committee. Posts graded Band 7 and below are agreed under delegated powers in consultation with the Corporate Lead HR and the Trade Unions. Please contact HR Services for further advice on the establishment of new posts.
- guarantee inclusion on the fortnightly Jobs Bulletin
- ensure the advert is produced in the Council’s ‘corporate style’

All adverts must be based on the facts detailed in the job description and person specification.

Compiling Advertisements

The cost of advertising is extremely high. Therefore, your advert should just be a sentence to describe the job and signpost the applicant to the Council’s web site for further information. If more detail is required, then the advert should be brief including the main duties of the post and the essential requirements to be met (as set out in the person specification) clearly enough to enable candidates to decide whether they are suitable candidates. The advert must be non-discriminatory and should avoid any gender or culturally specific language. There are certain exceptions to this known as Genuine Occupational Requirements (as detailed in below in 5.6). All adverts should also state if clearance is required from the Disclosure and Barring Service and contain a commitment to safeguarding. There is no requirement to compile an advert for an internal post as this is carried out by HR Services.

A good advert will:

- attract the reader’s attention
- make the right people read it thoroughly and motivate them to reply
- make it easy to reply

Additionally, all job adverts applicable to working with children and young people or vulnerable adults will include a commitment to safeguarding and state that ‘enhanced DBS clearance will be sought’. HR services will automatically include the statement in all adverts.

Genuine Occupational Requirement (G.O.R.)

As a general rule, all posts must by law, be open to all candidates irrespective of their ethnic origin, sex or age, however, it is permissible in certain circumstances (specified in the Equality

Act 2010) to seek only candidates of a particular race, sex or age where this is a G.O.R, for example a single-sex establishment. Such cases are extremely rare. If you consider that a G.O.R may apply to a vacancy, please contact HR Services before taking further action.

Choice of Media

All vacancies open to external candidates are advertised as a minimum in the local Job Centres, on www.southtyneside.info and in the fortnightly Jobs Bulletin. If you want to advertise more widely, HR services can advise you on the costs, deadlines and circulation details. Response rates for previous advertisements are also available from HR Services.

In addition, you may wish to consider further ways to attract applications from under-represented groups, for example by using periodicals aimed at disability groups etc.

Deadline for return of completed applications

Generally, a minimum of two weeks from the appearance of the advert in the fortnightly jobs bulletin should be given to allow candidates sufficient time to receive, complete and return their application form. Applications should be received before 12.00 noon on the closing date and late applications will only be considered, at the discretion of the employing Service/Group, if exceptional circumstances apply. It is recommended that once the shortlisting process has started, late applications (unless the candidate has had agreement from the Service/Group) should not be accepted.

6 INFORMATION TO CANDIDATES

The information provided to candidates by HR Services via the intranet/internet will include an Application Form, Guidance Notes, Job Description, Person Specification, Supplementary Information Sheet (excluding teaching and former manual worker posts) and any other appropriate information supplied by the employing Service/Group.

Application forms

- All job applicants (whether internal or external) must complete the standard application form. The use of this form ensures that candidates provide the required information in a consistent and standard way which should help to assess and compare them systematically. Other types of application (e.g. C.V.'s) will not be accepted.
- A candidate who cannot complete an application form personally (for example due to literacy difficulties or a disability) should **not** be excluded from consideration. In such cases, they may get help to complete the form or submit their application in an alternative format, for example on tape.
- Individuals who make an unsolicited job application or casual enquiry about employment to the Corporate Lead HR will be advised that recruitment is by application in response to specific advertised vacancies only. If a suitable post is being advertised at that time, the individual will be referred to the Council's Website for further information.

Acknowledging Applications

For administrative reasons, it is Council policy **not** to acknowledge applications. The application form informs candidates that if they have not heard from the Council within six weeks of the closing date, they can assume that their application has been unsuccessful.

7 PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

Accuracy of Information

The information given in job applications must be full and accurate. Candidates who conceal or misrepresent relevant information are liable to be disqualified or, if already appointed, dismissed. Areas of doubt should be explored at interview.

Candidates Related to Officers and/or Councillors

The Employment Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution, Part D, Section 7, Part 1 states:

"The Council will adopt a policy requiring a candidate for any appointment to state in writing whether they are the parent, grandparent, partner, child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece of an existing Councillor or officer of the Council graded at a minimum above SCP 28 or equivalent; or of the partner of such persons"

You should detail this information in the relevant section on the application form.

No candidate so related to a councillor or any such officer will be appointed without the consent of the Corporate Lead HR.

Canvassing

Canvassing occurs when a candidate tries to gain an advantage through informal attempts to further their application. The Employment Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution, Part D, Section 7, Part 1 states:

'The Council will disqualify any applicant who directly or indirectly seeks the support of any councillor or any employee of the Council for that appointment with the Council'.

'No councillor or employee of the Council will seek support for any person for any appointment with the Council. This rule shall not preclude any member or employee of the Council from giving a written testimonial of any candidate's ability, experience or character for consideration in conjunction with an individual application, but having given such a testimonial, that member or employee shall take no part in the shortlisting or interview process'.

An employee who is canvassed by, or on behalf of, a job candidate must report this to the Corporate Lead HR who will take appropriate action.

Confidentiality

Data Protection Legislation gives individuals certain rights in respect of the processing of personal data about them that takes place during the recruitment process. This does not prevent an employer from carrying out an effective recruitment exercise but helps to strike a balance between the employer's needs and the applicant's right to respect for his or her private life. The Legislation grants employees the right to have a copy of the information that an organisation holds about them.

Information obtained in the course of recruitment and selection may include details of a sensitive or personal nature, which must be treated as confidential by all those involved. This will include keeping information contained in application forms secure, following retention periods for recruitment records and carefully considering which information should be

transferred to the employee's personal file. For further information, please refer to the [Human Resources Retention Schedule](#) and the [Recruitment Privacy Notice](#)

8 SHORTLISTING CANDIDATES

Who should Shortlist?

The challenge for officers shortlisting is to reduce the total number of applications to a more manageable number in a way that is reliable, valid, fair and cost-effective. Shortlisting should be carried out:

- by at least two people (one of whom should have management responsibility for the vacant post and be part of the final interview panel)
- as soon as possible after the closing date but by the date specified on the Post Authorisation Form
- based only on the criteria identified in the person specification
- confidentially

The Shortlisting Process

If possible, the number of candidates shortlisted should be sufficient to provide a reasonable choice, allowing for withdrawals.

Although officers shortlisting can examine relevant information individually, they should reach a joint decision as to which candidates are included on the shortlist. All applications received must be considered unless they have been received after the closing date. In such circumstances, it is at the discretion of the officers shortlisting as to whether to accept the application form. However, any application forms received after the shortlisting process has been completed should not be accepted.

Method of drawing up the shortlist:

- assess the candidates strictly against the criteria as indicated in the method of assessment column of the person specification
- disregard a candidate's disability, ethnic origin, gender (including pregnancy) or marital status, except where this is a genuine occupational requirement (see above)
- exclude any candidate who clearly fails to meet all the essential criteria in the qualifications and work experience sections of the person specification. You should **ONLY** shortlist using these two sections, the other criteria should be assessed at interview.
- use the desirable criteria to reduce the field of candidates further if required
- be consistent in how you apply the criteria. If you reduce or adjust the criteria, you must ensure that it is applied exactly the same to all candidates and evidence your rationale for doing so.
- record your decisions and the reasons for them on a shortlisting matrix (see Appendix D). The matrix **must** be signed and dated by **all** the shortlisting officers.
- Place a ✓ in the relevant box of the shortlisting matrix if a candidate meets a particular criterion, and a ✗ if a candidate does not meet a particular criterion. It is not acceptable to insert a ?, a decision must be made as to whether the candidates possesses the required criteria.
- Check application forms for any gaps in employment or educational histories, to be clarified at interview

Candidates with a Disability

As a Disability Symbol User, the Council guarantees to interview all suitably qualified candidates who consider themselves to have a disability and who meet the essential criteria.

Once the initial shortlist has been produced using the essential criteria, officers must contact HR Services to find out if any of the candidates consider themselves to be disabled. This **must** be carried out **before** desirable criteria are introduced. A 'Positive about Disabled People' flyer will be included in the recruitment file to highlight that disabled candidates have applied for the post.

If the applicant does not meet all the essential criteria, check that this is not due to a reason related to their disability. If there is a direct link between their disability and their inability to meet the essential criteria, they should still be invited to attend an interview.

Informing Shortlisted Candidates

HR Services should receive the recruitment pack with the Interview Requirements Form (Appendix E) and Interview Schedule – Panel Information (Appendix F) and Interview Questions (Appendix G) fully completed. The interview invitation letter should contain the following information:

- The date and time of the interview
- Where the interview will be held (a map to be enclosed where appropriate)
- Who the interview will be with?
- Information regarding children & young people/service user participation in the recruitment process
- Approximately how long the interview will last
- Whether the candidates will be required to prepare for the interview (for example presentation) or undergo any form of selection testing
- To bring a driving licence or passport to prove their identity, qualification and a document from List A/B (see Appendix P)
- Whether they have any special needs that we should prepare for. This is to identify any special arrangements that may be needed for them to attend (this could involve, for example, providing assistance to those with hearing, sight or mobility difficulties or allowing them to bring a colleague) and to give them information about such matters as physical access to the premises, parking facilities and communication assistance available
- Who they should report to on arrival?
- A statement that they will be asked at interview about their suitability to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults (if applicable).

A standard interview invitation letter is included as Appendix H.

9 THE SELECTION STAGE

Selection Methods

The purpose of the selection stage is to assess shortlisted candidates against the criteria in the person specification. It normally includes an interview used with information from other sources, for example application form or references, etc. For guidance on how to conduct interviews, see section 11.

However, the interview in isolation is of limited value in predicting how a candidate will perform in the job and is unlikely to satisfactorily assess all relevant factors in the person specification.

It is recommended that you use at least one other additional method of assessment, such as a psychometric test, work sample test, presentation or practical job-related exercise, to help predict how the candidate will perform if appointed to the post. In this way, there is a far greater chance of reaching an objective decision and of selecting the most suitable candidate. Any additional selection methods used must be appropriate to the post being recruited to. Please contact HR Services for further advice. Please also see 2.4 for involvement of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the process and Appendix R (Guidance on involving children and young people in recruitment).

The use of psychometric tests within the Council is strictly regulated. The tests can be administered and interpreted only by people who are appropriately trained and qualified and are specifically authorised.

Properly validated psychometric tests can help in reaching objective and reliable selection decisions and are helpful in determining a candidate's suitability. Various types include:

- tests of critical reasoning
- tests of specific aptitudes (for example numerical, spatial, mechanical, clerical, computer)
- attainment tests (for example typing, spelling)

For further information on psychometric testing please refer to Recruitment and Selection: Application of Psychometric Testing.

References

Except where candidates have stated on their application form that a referee should not be contacted prior to the interview, **two** written references **must** be taken up for all shortlisted internal and external candidates, for temporary and permanent posts, before interview. This enables a follow up during the interview stage regarding any points that may arise from the information obtained.

Where an applicant states that they prefer referees not to be contacted before interview they will be informed that any subsequent offer would be conditional upon satisfactory references.

Open references will not be accepted.

Candidates are required to supply two employment references, one of which **must** be the candidate's current or most recent employer. The exception to this would be where a candidate has been employed in their current post for less than one month. Where the post applied for involves working with children, young people or vulnerable adults and the candidate's current or most recent job did not involve working with these groups, then the recruiting manager should consult HR Services to seek alternative relevant references. Additionally, where there are any concerns about a candidate working with these groups the Council may contact any of the organisations listed on a candidate's application form to obtain a reference.

Applicants will be advised in the recruitment documentation that references will include a request for information on any relevant allegations concerning the applicant's suitability to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The main purpose of a reference is to verify information given by a candidate and to confirm assessments made during the final selection stage. References are likely to be more useful and relevant if referees are sent a job description and person specification. The reference

request includes questions relating to the safeguarding of children and young people and vulnerable adults. A standard reference request is included in Appendix I.

Referees will be sent via email from HR Services. References received by telephone are acceptable as long as the referee sends written confirmation.

When a written reference is received from a successful candidate, HR Services will telephone or email the referee to ensure that the information received is genuine. This telephone check will be carried out for all posts, which require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The member of staff carrying out the check will record the outcome. The original reference will then be retained on the employee's personal file.

A manager who is actively involved in a recruitment process will not be able to provide a reference for a candidate being assessed in that same process. In these circumstances the candidate will be asked to supply an alternative referee, or a different manager should be involved in selecting the successful candidate

Under the Data Protection Act (1998), references are not exempt from disclosure when in the possession of a new/prospective employer therefore we may be obliged to disclose the reference to the candidate. They may be called as legal evidence in any allegation of discrimination. References need to be treated with some caution by the panel as they have the potential to be indirectly discriminatory due to the possible prejudices of the referees. Any concerns should be discussed with HR Services.

10 THE INTERVIEW

Interview Purpose

The interview is the most popular of the selection techniques. Its purpose is to help assess how closely the candidate meets the criteria contained in the person specification and to give the candidate information about the job. It is a two-way process - the panel needs to assess the candidate and the candidate needs to decide if they want to work for the Council. The way the interview is conducted is vital as it reflects the level of professionalism of the Council and recruitment needs to be seen as a significant public relations exercise.

The Interview Panel

Panel interviews enable decisions to be shared. The size and composition of the interview panel will depend upon the nature of the post to be filled. However, for all posts there must be at least two interviewers, one of whom must be authorised to appoint under delegated powers and one of whom should have management responsibility for the post. The other can also be a manager from the employing group or a representative from HR Services. Please see 2.4 for involvement of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the process and Appendix R (Guidance on involving children and young people in recruitment).

At least one interviewer on the panel must have been through safeguarding training, where the role being recruited to is one which has contact with children and young people or vulnerable adults.

Preparation for the Interview

Interviewers should prepare for the interview by:

- familiarising themselves with the job description and person specification

- checking the information available in respect of each shortlisted candidate (application form, references, test results etc.) and identifying areas which may require further questioning. This particularly includes identifying any gaps in employment or educational histories which require clarification
- drawing up a series of standard questions to be put to **all** candidates

Using standard questions helps to ensure that interviewers express themselves clearly without bias. Used consistently, they allow them to compare candidates on the same basis whilst avoiding irrelevant issues. Interviewers should agree in advance the detailed structure of the interview, including their respective roles and areas of questioning. A schedule of interview questions to be completed by each member of the interview panel should be drawn up. For posts working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, there should be at least one question on their commitment to safeguarding. The responses to each question/exercise should be scored as this will allow for a consistent and fair assessment of each candidate (see appendix G). Additional supplementary questions can be used as appropriate to probe into specific areas and to allow for a more detailed understanding of the candidates' experience, skills and qualities to be obtained.

It is best practice to prepare an information pack for each member of the interview panel. The pack should include a copy of each candidate's application form and references (if received prior to the interview) the job description, person specification and the interview questions for each candidate. This will allow the interview process to be conducted in an orderly and professional manner and the decision to be clearly recorded. Please contact HR Services for further advice if required.

Structure of Interviews

The following format of interviews is suggested:

- *the opening* – this will include introductions, advising candidates of the structure which the interview will follow and that note taking will occur. A few moments of small talk will help to relax the candidate and establish rapport.
- *the body* – this is the main part of the interview where the required evidence about the candidate's suitability for the post against the key criteria is obtained. Candidates should be asked a series of standard questions and any additional supplementary questions as appropriate. Probing questions on safeguarding should be asked of candidates applying for roles working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- *the close* - candidates should always be given the opportunity and sufficient time to ask any questions or raise any queries they may have. They should be informed of the timescales and methods of notifying them of the outcome (for example letter, telephone call etc.) and should be thanked for attending the interview. Interviewers should also use this time to check a candidate's identity. The arrangements for feedback should also be discussed.

Questions to Candidates

Candidates must not be asked questions related to their gender, ethnic origin, marital status, personal or family circumstances, sexuality, trade union activities, age, religion or belief, or disability as they have no bearing on a person's suitability for the job and could be unfairly discriminatory.

However, if candidates raise these matters (e.g. asking about childcare arrangements) a reply can be given. If a job requires special working arrangements (e.g. unsocial hours or regular overtime) candidates can be asked if they can meet these requirements, as long as all candidates are asked in the same manner, using the same wording each time.

Care must be taken to phrase questions clearly and unambiguously, avoiding jargon, which may not be readily understood by all candidates. Questions should encourage candidates to give information and enable them to demonstrate their suitability for the role. They should not be used as a test.

Taking Notes

It is important that interviewers make notes on the template shown as Appendix G and do not rely on memory. The candidates should be aware that notes will be taken but he/she should not be able to see what is written. The process of note taking should not mean that eye contact is lost – the notes should be brief. These notes should be factual and not include opinions. Notes taken at an interview may be subject to scrutiny by the candidate.

11 MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

Evaluating Candidates

An evaluation of each candidate should be made, taking into account information from **all** elements of the process, including:

- Application Form
- Interview
- Children and young people/service user involvement where applicable
- Occupational tests/work simulations/presentations
- References

Recruiters must carry out their evaluation strictly and should aim to reach a general agreement about each candidate. Each question/presentation/exercise should be scored to give a consistent mechanism for assessing each candidate. An example scoring key is shown in Appendix G. A written assessment of each candidate should be made and entered in the overall comments box.

Notifying Candidates

All candidates who attend for interview should be informed of the outcome of their application, ideally via telephone, and then confirmed in writing if requested and be offered the opportunity for feedback. When giving feedback, consideration should be given to the following:

DO:

- Be realistic – direct your comments towards actions that the candidate can control
- Be specific – generalisations are not helpful
- Be clear about what you say
- Be descriptive rather than evaluative
- Be sensitive to the goals of the candidate
- Be consciously non-judgemental – describe behaviour, don't judge people
- Be aware of balancing positive and negative feedback – positive feedback on its own allows no room for improvement and negative feedback alone is discouraging
- Be prompt following the request where possible – delay reduces impact
- Tell candidates what the Council was looking for and why they did not meet the standard
- Focus on aspects which the candidate can do something about

- Emphasise that the decision was based firmly and fairly on the evidence presented during the selection process
- Ensure that feedback given is accurate and unbiased
- Be tactful and try to give constructive advice for example suggest areas where they need to gain more experience in relation to the selection criteria

DON'T:

- Simply say there was a better candidate on the day
- Enter into a detailed debate about the rights and wrongs of the decision
- Give elaborate explanations of the reasons for not appointing as this may lead to the candidate objecting to the reasons stated and engaging in a lengthy and pointless dialogue
- Give feedback on information that did not emerge from the selection process
- Make statements that might imply unfair discrimination
- Offer positive feedback only as a compensation for negative feedback. This creates mixed messages and reduces the credibility of what you want to say. If however the candidate takes the feedback very negatively, sandwiching negative feedback between positives can be helpful.

A standard unsuccessful letter will be sent if the panel are unable to contact the candidates directly (Appendix M).

If the recruitment has involved a young person/service user element, the member of staff who coordinated this involvement should be informed of the outcome in order to update the young people/service users. This should follow notification of candidates.

Offer of Employment

All offers of employment must be made by an officer who is included in the 'List of Officers Approved to Exercise Delegated Powers', Part C, Section 3 of the Council's Constitution. An offer of appointment must be made conditional upon the receipt of references satisfactory to the Council, qualifications, proof of registration with DFE or HCPC if applicable, medical clearance, photographic proof of identification, eligibility to work in the United Kingdom and further overseas checks, if appropriate, a Disclosure and Barring Service check, if these are not immediately available. At this point the successful candidate's date of birth should also be checked against all documents supplied. Under no circumstances should an appointment be confirmed or taken up until these clearances are obtained. Remember, **a verbal offer is legally binding**.

A standard offer of appointment letter is included as Appendix N.

Once all clearances have been received a letter should be sent to the candidate to confirm the offer of employment and provide a start date with the Council (Appendix O). The letter will be issued by the group team in HR Services. For further information on induction please refer to Section I in the Human Resources Manual.

Starting Salary

New starters to the Council will be placed on a spot point within the band. If a manager has been experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties a report should be submitted to the Corporate Lead HR requesting a market forces supplement to be added to the post. In the case of internal employees applying for and obtaining a new post within the same band, where their current salary is a higher SCP, their salary would remain unchanged as long as the new role does not put them into a different band.

Where a new post is subject to a career grade, the starting salary must be agreed in line with the criteria identified in the career grade.

Pre-employment checks

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

All successful candidates for work or training with the Council in a post whose normal duties meet the old or new definitions of regulated activity will be subject to an enhanced disclosure or an enhanced disclosure and a barred list check.

The procedure is as follows:

- A provisional job offer is made to the successful candidate.
- The candidate is given a blank Disclosure Application Form to complete and a copy of the DBS Information Sheet and Booklet and advised that this should be returned within 5 days.
- The candidate completes the form and provides the necessary evidence for verification to the recruiting manager/Headteacher/HR Services. HR Services will ensure that the completed form and supporting evidence is supplied promptly and where necessary contact the candidate where the documents have not been returned within 5 days.
- Once verified, disclosure forms must be forwarded by recruiting managers/ Head teachers to HR Services, to be countersigned and sent to the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Disclosure information is sent from the Disclosure and Barring Service to the candidate.
- If a meeting is required disclosure certificates must be stored in locked cabinets.
- If the disclosure is satisfactory, HR Services will send a summary letter to the recruiting manager/Head teacher confirming the clearance date and disclosure number.

For the rules regarding the portability of DBS Disclosures, please refer to the Disclosure and Barring Checks Policy.

Successful candidates for posts subject to a DBS check should not start work until a satisfactory DBS disclosure has been received. However, managers and Head teachers have discretion to allow an individual to begin work pending receipt of the disclosure and barring service clearance but must ensure the following:

- the individual is appropriately supervised
- the DBS application form has been submitted
- other pre-employment checks have been completed
- the Teacher's Pensions online children's barred list is checked for school employees (This covers the Children's list as well as any residual list 99 bars).
- In these instances, a Risk Assessment Form (Appendix J) should be completed by the appropriate manager/Head Teacher, signed by the Head of Service (Council Employees only) and copied to HR Services before the employee starts work.

For all employees who begin work without a DBS disclosure it must be made clear that they are subject to additional supervision. The nature of the additional supervision must be specified and the roles of staff in undertaking the supervision made clear. The arrangements must be recorded and reviewed regularly, at least every two weeks, until the disclosure and barring service clearance is received. The DBS Supervision Letter shown in Appendix K

should be sent to the candidate to advise them of the additional supervision and make it clear that their employment is still conditional on receipt of satisfactory checks.

Where an applicant, or an existing employee, in a post which is exempt under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 receives a DBS certificate containing details of a criminal record, an objective assessment must be made as to their suitability for the post. This assessment must be approved by the relevant Corporate Director to ensure consistency of approach by completing the Record of Discussion Regarding DBS Certificate form shown in Appendix L. The Council undertakes to discuss any matter revealed in a certificate with the applicant prior to withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. For additional information, please refer to the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

For more information please refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service Policy.

Medical Checks

All candidates appointed to a post must be fit to carry out the duties.

All successful candidates must be medically cleared **before** the offer of appointment is confirmed. Candidates must be asked to complete a medical questionnaire in confidence, which is then sent under separate cover to the Occupational Health Unit and may be followed up by an appointment for a medical examination. An envelope addressed to the Occupational Health Unit should be sent out with all medical questionnaires.

Special attention should be paid to those:

- where driving or climbing is a substantial part of the job
- previously retired from employment on health grounds

Please note internal candidates are still required to complete a medical questionnaire.

Qualification and Registration Checks

If qualifications and registration are an essential/legal requirement for the post, the original qualification certificates must have been sighted and a copy retained on personal files. Additionally, for relevant posts proof of registration with the HCPC or DFE must also be produced and copied. This information should be sought and checked before any offer of employment is confirmed.

Evidence of the Right to Work in the UK

Under the provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, the Council is required to verify that prospective employees have permission to work in the UK. Before employment starts you must see, copy and retain the documents produced to verify this. Acceptable documents are listed in Appendix P. If a candidate provides a document, or documents from List B, checks should be repeated at least once every 12 months.

On receipt of the documents they must be checked to ensure that they are valid, genuine and that the potential or existing worker is the person named in the documents. The documents must be checked to ensure that the worker is allowed to carry out the work in question.

Overseas Record Checks

Where individuals have lived abroad, DBS disclosures will not show any offences that may have been committed. Additional checks will need to be made, such as obtaining good conduct certificates from relevant embassies or police forces, as needed.

Identity Checks

Proof of identity must be checked and retained, including photographic evidence e.g. birth certification, passport, driving licence.

Employment references

Two employment references must be retained, one of which must be the candidate's current or most recent employer. For references see section 9.2 of this Policy.

Aids and Adaptations for Disabilities

Job Centre Plus can provide assistance with funding to meet the costs of aids or adaptations needed in the workplace to accommodate an existing or potential employee with a disability. Further information and advice can be obtained from HR Services.

12 RECORD KEEPING

Information will be collated for the purpose of equality and diversity monitoring throughout the recruitment and selection process.

Following recruitment to a new post the following documents should be contained on the successful candidate's personal file: -

- Proof of identity, including photographic evidence
- Application form
- 2 references, including confirmation that the follow up telephone call has been carried out to check authenticity.
- Medical clearance
- Proof of qualifications
- Proof of registration with DFE or HCPC if applicable
- Record that a satisfactory DBS disclosure has been received.
- Checks on the right to work in the UK if applicable
- Further overseas record checks if applicable
- Notes from interview (including recording sheets from any service user engagement activity)
- Job description and person specification

To allow for the appointment of a previously unsuccessful candidate to an identical vacancy (see section 4) or to answer a complaint of unlawful discrimination (see section 13), the recruitment file must be kept by HR Services for 12 months from the date of appointment

The Corporate Lead HR may request to study the record of any recruitment exercise. Regular recruitment file audits are carried out by representatives of HR Services to ensure that correct procedures are being followed.

Please refer to Retention of information guidelines for further information.

13 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Right of Complaint

The Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that no discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief occurs in the recruitment and selection process. Equality of opportunity must be an integral part of the process.

Candidates for posts have the right to complain to the Council if they consider that they have been unlawfully discriminated against during the selection process. It does not affect their right of complaint to an Employment Tribunal under the various employment acts.

Should a candidate wish to raise a complaint regarding the application of this Policy, this should be made in writing, to HR Services. All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure outlined below and the decision given is final.

Procedure

The complaint must be made in writing to the Corporate Lead HR within three months of the action in question. On receipt of the complaint the Corporate Lead for HR will:

- if feasible and appropriate, “freeze” the appointment pending the outcome of an investigation
- complete an investigation into the complaint and report back to the complainant within two weeks
- Interview all relevant persons including the complainant, and have access to all documents used during the selection process
- Determine what action, if any, will be taken and inform the complainant accordingly
- Give consideration to invoking the Disciplinary Procedure if a complaint of discriminatory behaviour is upheld.

14 MONITORING

HR Services will collate and analyse information from the equality and diversity monitoring forms. The Corporate Lead HR is also responsible for monitoring the application and effectiveness of this policy and for recommending changes as required.

15 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

South Tyneside Council is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity. An equality check this Policy was carried out in 2018 and no equality check implications were identified.

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