



Recruitment and Selection

Code of Practice

Contents

- **Introduction**
 - **Aims and objectives**
 - **Principles Underpinning the Code**
 - **Guidance on Good Practice**
- Stage 1 Planning and Preparation**
- Stage 2 Short-listing**
- Stage 3 Selection**
- Stage 4 The Decision**
- **Next Steps to Successful Recruitment**

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The Council is committed to ensuring fair processes in Recruitment and Selection, as these are vital to its successful operation and the community rightly expects our procedures to be inclusive and transparent. High standards are required from those who have responsibility for recruitment, and appropriate training and guidance will be given to enable them to gain the skills and knowledge required. It is one of the most important decisions a manager makes and it is crucial to make sure it is the right decision.
- 2 The Code is derived from the Council's policy on Recruitment and applies to all Council posts outside schools. For posts that are jointly funded with other partners the same principles should apply. Where the Council is the employer under joint funding arrangements this Code of Practice should be used.
- 3 This Code applies once a decision to recruit has been taken, ie after all other resourcing options have been considered.
- 4 The principles, outlined in this Code, underpin the recruitment processes. Recruiting managers should refer to the recruitment toolkit for more information and guidance on the areas outlined in this Code.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4 The Council's aim is to have fair and transparent recruitment and selection policies and practices that encourage applications which reflect the composition of the wider local community and where decisions are made on the basis of merit, without unfair discrimination.
- 5 The Council will use positive action where appropriate to encourage recruitment from applications in under-represented categories.
- 6 The Council will strive to ensure that recruitment information practices and decisions are such that they will not deter, prevent or exclude any sections of the community unfairly from applying for, or gaining employment with, the Council.
- 7 The Code aims to allow managers a degree of flexibility in deciding on the most appropriate recruitment process, to suit the role and circumstances, subject to the overall principles being adhered to.
- 8 Recruitment practices will support the Council's 'Resourcing Talent Strategy' and will be consistent with the corporate values; **best practice, customer first and value for money.**

PRINCIPLES

- Managers should explore other opportunities to support internal progression, such as job rotation, talent pool, secondment, acting up rather than just to fill the post via a recruitment process.
- Lead Officers have responsibility for each recruitment process they lead. At least one, if not all officers, on the panel should be familiar with the Code of Practice.
- The same people should usually be on the panel for each stage of the process (this may vary during assessment centre activities).
- The panel must be aware of the equality legislation and the Council's approach to Equality and Diversity.
- All posts will have a job description which has been evaluated together with a person specification which will include core competencies.
- The person specification should not include attributes that cannot be assessed.
- Advertisements will not be placed in the press/publications unless there is a clear business case for doing so.
- The shortlisting panel should only select on the basis of the criteria in the person specification and job description.
- The "Positive about Disabled People" standard must be adopted and communicated via all recruitment literature as should the Council's commitment to Safer Recruitment and 'Mindful Employer'.
- Managers must adhere to and support candidates put forward via the priority recruitment process.
- References need only be sought for the successful applicant except where safer recruitment practices are required.
- A range of assessment and selection tools should be used, relevant to the role. As a minimum, recruiting managers must be able to assess a candidate's suitability against selection criteria.
- Feedback can be given to all candidates but should be offered to all those on the shortlist, as a minimum.
- All posts working with vulnerable groups, must be recruited in-line with safer recruitment practice.

GUIDANCE ON GOOD PRACTICE

The recruitment and selection process can be considered in four stages:

Planning and Preparation - Short listing - Selecting - The Decision.

Stage 1. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

This is the most important part of the process – a good decision depends on careful thought about the responsibilities of the post, the person required to fill it (including skills and competencies) and the method by which the person is going to be recruited and selected.

1.0 Appoint a Lead Officer

- 1.1 The Head of Service has delegated responsibility for appointing staff, but will further delegate that responsibility to other managers in the service as appropriate, subject to the HR delegations and Officer Employment Procedure Rules. For each recruitment process the Head of Service should nominate a Lead Officer (where it is not the HOS themselves).
- 1.2 The Lead Officer has a crucial role in recruitment. Their responsibilities are critical to the success of the recruitment decision, by:
 - ensuring that the process is fair, and that it complies with the Council's standards
 - ensuring that all members of the panel understand the process and their responsibilities
 - keeping detailed records of the process at each stage
 - being answerable for any challenge
- 1.3 There is no specific level of seniority for the Lead Officer, but whatever the grade, they carry the same responsibilities.
- 1.4 The Lead Officer will normally chair the panel and **must** be familiar with the Code and associated guidance relating to recruitment and selection, including an up to date knowledge of relevant legislation. For appointments made by the Staffing Committee, the Chair of the Staffing Committee will be the Lead Officer.
- 1.5 The Lead Officer is responsible for liaising with the Employee Service Centre, who undertake the administration, (e.g. placing the advertisement, receiving applications, preparing the recruitment pack, storing the documentation) and for keeping records of the decisions made.
- 1.6 The Lead Officer is responsible for seeking HR or legal advice where necessary.

2.0 Agree the composition of the recruitment panel

- 2.1 The aim should be to balance the panel in terms of gender and where possible other protected characteristics, for example, disability, age and ethnic origin.
- 2.2 For some posts it will be appropriate to enable clients/service users to have an input into the process, but they should do this before the formal interview process, which should be confidential. Consideration needs to be given to the Council's 'Childrens Pledge' and the inclusion of looked after children, in the process.
Observers who have an involvement in the post, eg partner organisations may attend the interviews, but will not take part in the final decision making.
- 2.3 A panel should usually comprise at least two officers unless it is for the role of Director, when there must be a minimum of 3 on the panel (refer to current HR Scheme of Delegation and Officer Employment Procedure Rules).
- 2.4 Directors can appoint to all jobs at Head of Service level or below, in accordance with the Officer Employment Rules.
For Director appointments and above, the Staffing Committee must make the selection (refer to refer to current HR Scheme of Delegation and Officer Employment Procedure Rules).
- 2.5 Once the composition of the panel is agreed, this should not be changed part way through the

process, except in emergencies. A realistic timetable for the process should be agreed at this stage, if not already agreed.

3.0 Finalise and Agree the Vacancy Requirements

3.1 The Lead Officer should consult with the other members of the panel about the content of the job description and the person specification to ensure:

- The post has an up-to-date job description written in a clear and concise manner to the Council standard which reflects an accurate description of the duties and responsibilities
- If the duties have changed substantially the post is re-evaluated
- There is an up to date Person Specification written to the Council Standard which is directly relevant to the post, without being unduly restrictive so as to exclude or discriminate against any particular group
- The Council competencies are aligned to the person specification aswell as any additional agreed competencies
- The Person Specification should be reviewed for each post, eg for similar posts the desirable criteria may be different as you may require experience/skills/attributes to balance those of other team members
- The Specification will set out how each criterion will be assessed (eg. application form, other checks, interview, references, aptitude tests etc.) If a criterion cannot be fairly assessed it should not form part of the Person Specification

3.2 Once these two key pieces of information have been completed, the post may then be advertised.

If the key documents are prepared well they will form the basis for advertising, short-listing and interview tests and questions.

4.0 Agree an Advertising Strategy

4.1 Subject to the approval process, all roles should be advertised internally and externally to ensure potential employees reflect the diversity of the community they serve. However for some roles, it may be apparent that there are suitably qualified candidates internally and therefore it may not be necessary to advertise externally.

4.2 It should be noted that there is no cost to advertising jobs externally with the Job Centre, on the Council Web site and Council social media sites and therefore all external jobs will be advertised using these methods.

4.3 The recruitment team will inform the Lead Officer if there are any employees who have priority for recruitment and whose application should be given prior consideration before advertising the post. (See section 6)

4.4 Consideration should be given to the type of media and publications to ensure that as wide a range of potential applicants as possible (and particularly under-represented groups) will see the advertised post.

4.5 The Lead Officer must have a conversation with the recruitment advertising partner (TMP) in advance of drafting the advertisement to discuss the most effective channel for advertising the post. A business case must be agreed with the HR Business Partner, if a press advertisement is to be approved, as social media channels are more cost effective.

4.5 Where a number of advertisements are being placed at the same time, for the Council, composite advertisements will be used. Consideration should also be given to similar roles being advertised in the same Service, within a short space of time; advertising strategy should ensure value for money and consider the Council's reputation e.g. if the same roles are being advertised consecutively.

4.7 The cost of advertising should be proportionate to the type of post and salary level.

4.8 The Lead Officer should provide the recruitment team with the draft advertisement, job description, person specification and a completed on-line recruitment pack.

- 4.9 The advertisement should include the logos of the 'Positive about Disabled People' and 'Mindful Employer' as well as a safeguarding statement including DBS check, if applicable.
- 4.10 Attention should be paid to the needs of potential applicants who have special needs, e.g. information in audio format or in large print, and all recruitment information should be capable of being delivered in these formats on request.

5. Agree the Format of the Application

- 5.1 For the majority of roles, the full application form should be used.
- 5.2 Applicants will be asked to complete an on-line application form; in exceptional circumstances a paper application form may be completed, the recruitment team will advise.

6.0 Consider Ring-fencing and Priority Recruitment

- 6.1 There will be circumstances where vacant posts should not be advertised as above and where ring fencing is justified. You must agree the process with HR and the Trade Unions, where appropriate, before embarking on the interview process.
- 6.2 Employees who are on the redeployment register have priority for the vacancies before they are advertised to a wider pool of candidates. The Council also supports other employment schemes and suitable candidates will be notified to the Manager who must be considered if there are no suitable candidates from the redeployment list.

Applicants must be interviewed if they meet the essential criteria on the Person Specification. The Lead Officer must make a firm decision on whether these applicants are suitable before advertising the vacancy.

- 6.3 If the vacancy is to be advertised internally, only, then temporary workers and agency workers are both eligible to apply for the role. However casual workers are not employees and therefore would not usually be eligible until the role is advertised externally.

Stage 2 - SHORTLISTING

At the short listing stage the challenge is to ensure that the most suitable candidates are invited for selection.

1.0 Decide on the short-listing panel & shortlist

- 1.1 Where there is a need for long listing (ie there may be many applications) this may be done by less than the whole panel, at the discretion of the Lead Officer, but all members of the interview panel should be involved in the short listing process and records kept of how they arrived at their decision.
- 1.2 Appointments must be made on the basis of merit and in accordance with the Code of Conduct; in particular, to avoid any possible accusation of bias, members of the panel should not be involved in an appointment process where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with them.

Similarly, officers cannot be involved in decisions about discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any employee who is a relative, partner etc. Whilst it may be possible for an applicant to be appointed to a post where a close relation would normally be the supervisor, this would depend on the nature of the post, and whether alternative arrangements could be made for certain parts of the manager's role. The Lead Officer should discuss this in advance with their HR Adviser.

- 1.3 The panel should draw up a shortlist having regard to the person specification and job description. They need to decide what weight or order of importance should be given to the desirable criteria if there are too many applicants who meet the essential criteria to form a reasonable shortlist, and further shortlist according to those criteria.

2.0 Consider the 'Positive About Disabled People' standard

- 2.1 The Council has adopted the "Positive about Disabled People" standard, and as part of meeting that standard the recruitment team will inform the Lead Officer of any disabled applicants. They must be short listed if they meet the essential criteria on the person specification.

3.0 Keep Consistent Records

- 3.1 The following records should be kept in accordance with the Council Standard. They are the responsibility of the Lead Officer. Notes must be written professionally as they may be open to scrutiny if the process was ever legally challenged;
 - Brief record of the reasons why applicants were not short listed
 - A note of the preparation meeting before the interview takes place
 - Reasons for rejecting the unsuccessful applicants at interview.
 - The case for appointing the successful applicant.

4.0 Invite shortlisted applicants to Interview

- 4.1 Those who are successfully short listed should be invited for interview, and should be asked if they have any special needs which need to be planned for during the selection process. If there is any difficulty with providing facilities the advice of HR should be sought. The Employee Service Centre will support this process.
- 4.2 If no applicants match the essential criteria, then consideration should be given to re-advertising the vacancy, as well as checking whether the person specification was appropriate in all respects.

Stage 3 - SELECTION

This is the process to ensure the most suitable candidate is offered the role and the records should clearly demonstrate this.

1.0 Take up References for shortlisted candidates (in accordance with the Reference Policy and Guidance)

- 1.1 References are typically requested following a recruitment selection process, except for roles where safer recruitment practices apply.
- 1.2 For roles within Children and Young People Service, the Council will request two written or verbal references in advance of a selection process, using the template provided.
- 1.3 Only one reference is required for internal applicants, except for roles working with vulnerable groups when 2 will be required.
- 1.4 Managers recruiting for vulnerable groups should ensure they follow safer recruitment practice ; the application form must be scrutinised to ensure any gaps in employment can be accounted for. References must be selected from the most appropriate people, in the employment history; for vulnerable groups if there is a gap since working with vulnerable groups a reference from that historic employer will be required to understand why employment ceased.
- 1.5 The Lead Officer should read them prior to the interview to identify any areas of concern, but to avoid the other panel members being unduly influenced. Candidates must be given the opportunity, during the selection process, to explain any ambiguous or contentious areas, fully.

2.0 Consider what Format, Selection will take

- 2.1 It is important that all the criteria that are listed on the person specification are tested and that criteria which cannot be tested are not used.
- 2.2 Interviews alone may not always be a good indicator of suitability or potential. Consideration must therefore be given to tests and the use of assessment centres, especially for senior, specialised or high volume roles.
Great care needs to be taken over the design of the assessment exercises to ensure that they are not indirectly discriminatory or give unfair advantage to some candidates over others. The guidance note on the use of Occupational Testing should be followed and advice sought from HR where relevant.
- 2.3 Where Personality Profiles eg, OPQ's are used, they must only be administered by properly qualified and registered persons. HR has a number of qualified officers and can give advice on the most appropriate assessment centre exercises to use.
- 2.4 The Lead Officer should receive the results of the tests before the interview decision takes place.

3.0 Prepare for the Interview

- 3.1 The panel needs to spend time to agree the questions to be asked. The aim is to treat each interviewee equitably by asking each the same question, in the same way, whilst asking further probing questions where insufficient, inadequate or contradictory responses are made. The questions must relate to the job demands and be able to fairly assess the candidate's ability to do the job.
- 3.2 A decision also needs to be made about the mechanisms that the panel will use for coming to a decision, e.g. it is advisable for the answers to be scored on a scale of 5 (poor, average, fair, good, excellent) and where the answers are scored the panel needs to decide how much weight should be given to each question, taking into account any tests, that may also have been undertaken.

This will differ depending on the post, but those aspects in the Person Specification which are most important in performing the job should normally score the highest.

- 3.3 The layout of the interviewing room should be carefully considered, especially if there are interviewees with special needs. A quiet room should be used so that once the interviews have begun there should be no interruptions or distractions.
- 3.4 Interviewees should be welcomed and introduced to the panel, by the person chairing the panel and the way that the interview is to be structured, explained.
- 3.5 The interview also provides applicants with an opportunity to gather information about the role and the Council so that they can decide whether they would accept the job if offered to them. How you conduct the interview and the selection process will have an impact on the reputation of the Council.
- 3.5 Concise notes of each candidate's response should be recorded on the scoring templates.
- 3.6 Each member of the panel should come to a view on the scores and then compare notes in the post interview discussion. A mechanistic scoring method should not be substituted, however, for a thorough discussion of the comparative merits of each candidate. It should be an indication to help you make a final decision.

4.0 Take a copy of Evidence for Pre-Employment Checks

- 4.1 You must check all of the candidates' eligibility to work, regardless of nationality. The checklist of suitable documents is contained within the recruitment pack. Further guidance can be found in the toolkit.
- 4.2 If the post is subject to a DBS check (usually vulnerable groups) then copies of the correct documentation must also be taken to confirm identity.

Note – whilst some of the documentation may appear to be the same for the above checks, there are different requirements and care must be taken to ensure that the checks are valid.

- 4.3 Professional qualifications should be checked to ensure that those claimed are verified, as well as for other checks such as driving licences, where these are a requirement for the job.

Part 4 - THE DECISION

The decision on who to appoint is critical as once an offer is made, verbally or in writing, it cannot be retracted unless it was clearly made conditional and some of the conditions cannot be met.

1.0 Make the Decision

- 1.1 After the interviews have been concluded the panel should discuss the interviewees, having regard to the results of any tests and the information on the application form. The Lead Officer should keep a record of the reasons for the panel's decision.
- 1.2 The offer is usually conditional, and may be subject to references, medicals, DBS check etc.
- 1.3 If the preferred candidate will be working with vulnerable adults or children, two written references must be received prior to an offer of employment being made unless there are exceptional circumstances.

2.0 Feedback to Candidates

- 2.1 The Lead Officer is responsible for notifying the successful and the unsuccessful applicants.
- 2.2 All applicants can be offered feedback. The Lead Officer is responsible for giving feedback to those included on the shortlist and for notifying the recruitment team about the outcome of the interviews.
- 2.3 For internal applicants, where appropriate, it is helpful for the feedback to signal where there might be development needs which could feed into their next appraisal.
- 2.4 The records of the interview should be kept on the recruitment file and returned to the recruitment team with a copy of the Decision form.

3.0 Ensure Pre-Employment Checks are Completed

- 3.1 The Employee Service Centre are responsible for applying the procedures for medicals, written references including absence history, monitoring information and the contractual paperwork.
- 3.2 Managers are responsible for processing DBS checks. They should not confirm appointment to jobs dealing with children and vulnerable adults until the outcome of the DBS check is known and it is satisfactory.
Where an applicant comes from overseas there will may be complications about receiving a DBS check for the whole of that person's past employment, and in these cases the procedure for checking overseas workers and immigrants should be followed.
- 3.3 Pre-Employment checks also apply to internal candidates and agency workers.
- 3.4 Where the successful applicant has a disability as defined by the Equality Act, and the panel is unsure of what reasonable adjustments may need to be made to enable them to fulfil the job satisfactorily, then the advice of Occupational Health should be sought.
- 3.5 Once all pre-employment checks have been confirmed satisfactory to the recruiting manager, the appointment can be confirmed in writing via the Employee Service Centre..
- 3.6 Where the post is internal, the Lead Officer should negotiate with the manager of the successful applicant as to the date the successful applicant can take up their new job

4.0 Notify the Employee Service Centre of the Appointment

- 4.1 Managers must inform the Employee Service Centre of the new starter via the Oracle dashboard, to ensure that the new starter is paid on time.
- 4.2 Managers are responsible for ensuring all of the day 1 activity is undertaken in readiness for the start date.

Next Steps to Successful Recruitment.....

✓ Visit the Recruitment Toolkits on I-west.

This will provide more information and guidance on most aspects covered in the Code, in addition:

- Process Flowcharts
- Templates
- Legislation
- Safer Recruitment Guidance including DBS Guidance

✓ Consider whether you need further training, especially if you are to be the Lead Officer

- Read the Recruiters Training Guide
- Speak to your HR Adviser to discuss what training you require and what is currently available