

Recruitment Policy

Human Resources

Issued by Strategic People Services, HR&OD

Effective from 19 December 2022

# 

# RECRUITMENT POLICY

# 1 Introduction

# Principles

* 1. This policy sets out the process to be followed in the recruitment of permanent and temporary employees. It is the Council’s policy to recruit employees either on permanent or fixed term contracts.
  2. The Council aims to recruit the person most suited to the requirements of the job. Selection will be based on applicants’ abilities and individual merit as measured against pre-determined selection criteria; with decisions being made without regard to age, disability, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. These are “protected characteristics” under the Equality Act 2010.

1.3 This policy embodies the Council’s responsibilities under relevant employment legislation. Failure to apply this procedure could lead to awards against the Council in an employment tribunal. Officers found to have breached this policy will be liable to disciplinary action.

1.4 Recruitment training is provided; officers likely to be involved in the recruitment of staff should ensure that they have attended a training course.

1.5 The Council is committed to valuing diversity and equality of opportunity. Managers must ensure that this policy is applied in a fair and equitable manner.

1.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced a Statutory

Code of Practice, which provides a comprehensive and technical guide to the Equalities Act 2010. The Code is an invaluable resource; it is recommended to recruiting managers and can be viewed via the Commission’s website [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

1.7 The Recruitment Policy is reinforced by other related HR procedures e.g. Probationary Policy, DBS Guidance, Fluency Duty Guidance, Obtaining References Guidance, which should be read in conjunction with this policy. All HR policies and Guidelines are available to employees on the Council’s intranet under HR Policies.

**Safer Recruitment**

1.8 There are a number of legislative requirements and statutory guidelines for compliance to ensure the safe recruitment into council posts, particularly positions where staff work with or are closely involved in services for children and vulnerable adults. These include but are not limited to:

Keeping Children Safe in Education: for schools and colleges. DfE September 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550511/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf>

Working together to Safeguard Children - A guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. DfE March 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf>

1.9 Additionally employees are referred to the council’s Safer Recruitment Guide.

**Secondments**

1.10 A secondment is the temporary transfer of an employee to another post within the Council or to an external organisation, to enable the employee an opportunity for development.

1.11 Secondments compliment the Council’s People Strategy and are intended to form part of the Council’s overall approach to succession planning and positive action.

1.12 Secondment opportunities are open to employees who have completed their probation and have a minimum of one year’s continuous service in their substantive role with Hounslow Council.

1.13 Employees wishing to apply for a secondment (outside of their team) must seek approval from their line manager before applying. The decision to release an employee to undertake the secondment rests with their substantive manager and this decision will be made based on the operational needs of the service.

1.14 Further details on how secondments operate within the Council are set out in the Secondment Guidelines available on the intranet under HR Policies.

# Who does the policy apply to?

1.15 This Policy applies to all employees of the Council, except those employed in schools under the control of Governing Bodies, for whom procedures adopted by the Governing Body will apply.

1.16 The recruitment of Chief Officers and other “protected posts” will be in accordance with the Council’s standing orders. This procedure is set out in the Appointment, Discipline and Dismissal of Chief Officers Policy, available on the intranet under HR Policies. The use of Search Agencies is limited to the recruitment of Chief Officers.

1.17 This policy does not apply to agency workers or casual workers. Managers are referred to the “Sourcing Agency Workers, Interims and Consultants available on the intranet HR policies.

**E-recruitment**

1.18 The Council uses an e-recruitment system that enables and supports the recruitment processes outlined in this Policy. Managers can access the

e-recruitment system through their People Manager Access on iHounslow. If you are a new recruiting manager and require access, then please email [ihounslow.help@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:ihounslow.help@hounslow.gov.uk)

1.19 Recruiting managers should complete the various recruitment and selection processes as required on-line. User Guides and training manuals have been produced to assist managers. The Recruitment User Manager’s Guide is available on the intranet under iHounslow.

**Equality Act 2010 – Obligations**

1.20 Employers have a statutory obligation not to discriminate against, victimise or harass employees or job applicants. In recruitment this means that employers must not discriminate against or victimise job applicants in:

* The arrangements made for deciding who should be offered employment
* In the terms on which they offer employment or
* By not offering employment to the applicant

1.21 Those involved in recruitment must bear this in mind throughout the application of this policy.

**2 Review of Post**

2.1 When a vacancy occurs the line manager should review the purpose of the role and the job performance, taking into account what the role may require or offer in the following 2-5 years.

2.2 Due consideration should therefore be given to:

* How the post contributes to Corporate and Departmental Plans
* Is there a continuing need for this job role in its present form?
* Will the current job role meet new challenges in service needs?
* Are all team functions adequately covered by the existing roles; if not would revisions to this job role be appropriate?
* Would the needs of the service/team be best met by a permanent or fixed term appointment?
* Are interim arrangements required; if so what should they be?

2.3 Budgetary concerns will need to be factored into the above assessment.

**3 Establishment Control**

**Approval to recruit**

3.1 A vacant post must exist on the Establishment before recruitment activity can commence. Further advice on this may be sought from [ihounslow.help@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:ihounslow.help@hounslow.gov.uk).

**Authority to establish a post**

3.2 The establishment of new posts will require approval under delegated authority; full details are set out in the Council’s Scheme of Delegation. A delegated authority form template is available for use on the intranet. Guidelines on Establishment Control are available on the intranet under HR Policies, Recruitment & Selection.

# Request to vary recruitment procedure

3.3 In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to adapt the recruitment process outlined in this policy to meet particular service needs. Should this be necessary, a Request to Vary an Established HR Process Form must be completed at the beginning of the exercise. This form is available on the intranet under HR Forms.

**4 Defining the Job**

**Job Descriptions/Employee Specification**

4.1 The recruiting manager must ensure that there is an up-to-date job description and employee specification. The job description describes the duties, responsibilities and level of seniority associated with the post.

4.2 The employee specification sets out the qualifications, knowledge, experience, skills, and aptitudes required for the effective performance of the job. These criteria must be relevant and appropriate to the level of the post and not directly or indirectly discriminate against potential applicants with any of the “protected characteristics” under the Equality Act 2010 (see 1.2).

Statutory Requirement

4.3 Where there is a statutory requirement e.g. an occupational requirement (see 5.1), the fluency duty (see 4.20-4.22) applies or a professional qualification required to undertake the post, these must be clearly set out in the job description/employee specification and the advert as appropriately.

4.4 A standard template exists and is available for use on the intranet under HR Forms, titled job description/employee specification template.

4.5 All established posts will have an existing job description and employee specification. These should be reviewed at each recruitment activity to accurately reflect current and future service needs. Managers should also take the opportunity to “refresh” the paperwork, i.e. use the most current template, amend changes to post titles, re-date the documents. If significant changes are made it may be necessary to seek a re-evaluation of the post prior to recruiting. Requests for job evaluation can be made through the HR Advisers in Human Resources.

4.6 If a newly created post, the recruiting manager must draft a job description and employee specification. The post will then be subject to job evaluation; this may be completed as part of the process for seeking authority to establish a post but must be completed prior to advertisement of the post.

**Identifying the Panel**

4.7 The appointment panel must comprise at least two officers; one normally being the line manager (referred to as recruiting manager). The panel will need to identify a Chair, usually but not always the recruiting manager. The panel should be determined prior to the recruiting manager completing the recruitment planning e-form.

4.8 The composition of the panel must be such as to maintain both public and staff confidence in its integrity in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, section 9. Panel members, and any advisers to the panel, must declare any interests, friendships and associations which could conflict with or be perceived to conflict with their responsibilities on the panel.

4.9 At least one of the panel members (ideally the Chair) should have undertaken the Council’s recruitment training course.

4.10 The use of non Council employees on the panel should be avoided. However in some multi-disciplinary teams it may be necessary for an employee of a partner organisation or an agency worker to participate in a recruitment panel. In such circumstances the individual should be fully briefed on the Council’s recruitment processes and their obligations as a panel member.

**Recruitment Timetable**

4.11 At the outset the panel should agree a timetable, co-ordinating with the HR Transactional team, to identify the key dates i.e. for the advert appearing, closing date, shortlisting and interview dates. These should be recorded in the recruitment planning e-form. A minimum two-week closing date will apply. The recruiting manager must notify HR Business Support Services of delays or changes to the timescales or absences by panel members during key stages. Failure to do so may hinder the recruitment.

4.12 As well as timescales the recruiting manager/panel should also consider occupational requirements (see paragraph 5.1-5.2), selection criteria (see paragraph 4.12-4.16) media choice, and information to be provided to applicants.

**Selection criteria**

4.13 The recruiting manager should consider in advance the selection criteria and determine:

* The criteria to be assessed at each stage of the selection process
* How best the criteria can be tested and assessed
* Whether criteria are to be weighted i.e. prioritised

Statement of application

4.14 Applicants will be directed to complete a supporting statement in their application for the post. The statement should relate to the key criteria on the employee specification and will be used for the purpose of shortlisting.

Use of Tests

4.15 The most useful tests are those developed from key job related tasks and designed to measure ability or knowledge e.g. computer software tests, numeracy exercises, in tray exercises, presentations. Recruiting managers are advised to discuss tests with their HR Advisory Team prior to use, to ensure that they reflect job related requirements, and fairly assess candidates’ ability against the employee specification. Selection tests may be inherently discriminatory and care must therefore be taken in their usage. Where such a test is to be used, HR Business Support Services must be notified so that candidates can be advised accordingly.

4.16 Psychometric tests are more complex, and are objective, standardised instruments; designed to assess people and measure the differences between individuals using well controlled, uniform methods of administration and scoring. There are broadly speaking two forms of psychometric tests suitable for an occupation setting, these are:

* Those designed to measure maximum performance, such as ability, aptitude or attainment
* Those designed to assess personal qualities such as personality, temperament, values and interests

4.17 They should only be used and administered by professionals trained to use the tests in accordance with the test supplier’s requirements. Such tests will need to be sourced externally. In Hounslow the use of psychometric tests (or assessment centres) is limited to the appointment of Chief Officers.

**Disabled applicants**

4.18 Recruiting managers must give due consideration to the needs of disabled applicants throughout the recruitment and selection stages. In particular, managers must consider, and where appropriate, make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable applicants to participate in the recruitment process.

4.19 The Council is a “Disability Confident” employer, which means that applicants who have declared a disability, will automatically be shortlisted for interview if they demonstrate that they meet the minimum criteria on the employee specification.

**Fluency Duty**

4.20 The Immigration Act 2016 (Part 7) places a statutory duty on public sector employers to ensure that workers in customer-facing roles speak fluent English. Managers are referred to the Guidance to the Public Fluency Duty on the intranet (under HR Policies) which provides detailed advice on this duty.

4.21 In complying with the fluency duty it is important to ensure that managers do not contravene the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. All job applicants must therefore be treated fairly and not disadvantaged on the basis of a protected characteristic (see 1.2)

4.22 This means that the job description and advert must make clear that the fluency duty applies to the post. Additionally, the employee specification must set out the necessary standard of spoken English required for the post. The interview panel should have objective methods of evaluating candidates against the selection criteria identified.

# Advertising

**Occupational Requirements**

5.1 In certain limited circumstances, it is lawful for an employer to require (and advertise) for a job applicant to have a particular protected characteristic (e.g. gender, race, disability, sexual orientation etc). These exceptions are known as occupational requirements and are subject to certain statutory conditions being met. Managers will be required to demonstrate that the nature or context of the work makes the occupational requirement essential. Caution is therefore advised and further advice should be sought from the HR Advisory Team prior to their use.

5.2 If an occupational requirement is agreed then the particular protected characteristic should be clearly included in the employee specification and advert.

**Politically Restricted Posts**

5.3 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, contains provisions to restrict the political involvement of certain local authority post holders. Further details are provided in the Council’s Code of Conduct, section 12. Adverts for such vacancies will clearly state that the post is politically restricted.

**Advertising**

5.4 All vacancies will be open to internal and external applicants concurrently on the Council website. In some cases it may be appropriate to advertise vacancies internally only. For example, posts that are career graded or linked graded such as those in Business Support Services. A Request to Vary an Established HR Process Form will need to be completed for this purpose.

5.5 The placement of external adverts will be in accordance with the current procurement arrangements via contracted suppliers; the HR Business Support Services Team will advise. The Council uses an online recruitment system and placement of advertisements will be via appropriate websites. As a minimum all vacancies will appear on the Council’s website; for any additional media advertisements the recruiting manager must provide cost codes.

5.6 The placement of advertisements may be delayed to facilitate redeployment opportunities. The HR Advisory Teams will advise as and when required.

**Social media and recruitment**

5.7 The council’s recruitment team will use modern recruitment practices, including social media, to ensure the best candidates are sourced and to provide a positive candidate experience.

5.8 To avoid allegations of inequality managers should be cautious if they are searching for candidates on social media. Such action could lead to claims against the Council that an applicant’s protected characteristics i.e. gender, age, and sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision.

5.9 Recruiting managers should not make systematic or routine checks of prospective employees’ social media activities. It is not good practice, on ethical or legal grounds, to conduct such checks and to make recruitment decisions on the information found. Any such checks will be performed by the recruitment team, as part of the reference checking process.

**Applications**

5.10 Applications will normally be made using the council’s application form. Other application formats can, however, be considered by managers where these would appropriate for the post. Any abridged application format should by shortlisting stage include a candidate’s employment chronology. The Recruitment Team can provide further advice in these circumstances.

5.11 The council will, wherever possible, accommodate requests from disabled applications to apply in a different format.

5.12 Candidates are required to provide accurate and truthful information in their application. If it later transpires that the candidate provided false information or failed to alert the council to significant matters that may have affected the recruitment decision, action may be taken under the council’s disciplinary policy which could lead to dismissal.

# Shortlisting

6.1 The Chair will receive an automatic alert on the e-recruitment system when applications are ready for shortlisting. Shortlisting however will take place outside of the e-recruitment system.

6.2 The Chair should therefore download the necessary forms for the other panel members. Ideally all panel members will shortlist; as a minimum two panel members (which must include the Chair) must have completed individual shortlists.

**Rating**

6.3 At shortlisting stage, the following rating is applicable: met, partially met and not met.

**Assessment**

6.4 Decisions will be made against the information provided in the application form, which test the criteria set out in the employee specification, using any weighting if appropriate. The panel must ensure that their assessment and subsequent rating has been objectively made.

6.5 Where applicants have declared that they have a disability, assessment of the applicant will take into account any reasonable adjustment requested.

**Joint shortlist**

6.6 The Chair is responsible for coordinating the joint shortlist. This may involve the panel meeting to consider jointly their individual decisions. Once a panel’s shortlist is confirmed the Chair will upload the decisions on the e-recruitment system, moving applicants forward to the next stage.

# Interview

7.1 Managers will create interview slots for candidates. These will be confirmed by the HR Business Support Services Team via the e-recruitment system. Details of any selection tests applicable must be provided to the HR Business Support Services Team so that candidates can be informed.

7.2 Candidates will be invited to indicate any special needs or reasonable adjustments that may be required to enable their full participation in the interview process. Wherever possible such requests will be met.

7.3 The interview documents will be available to the panel via the HR Business Support Services Team.

**Interview**

7.4 The panel will have agreed the interview process in advance including the questions to be used. Whilst all candidates will be interviewed in the same way, it is accepted that follow up and/or probing questions will vary. Except in specific circumstances, it is unlawful to ask applicants about their disability or health until an offer is made.

7.5 The panel are required to take individual notes of all interviews. These notes are disclosable under the Data Protection Act and during employment tribunal proceedings; notes should therefore be confined to responses provided by the candidates.

**Rating**

7.6 Once interviews are completed, the panel will individually assess each candidate against the criteria being tested, using the following rating:

* 5 - Excellent
* 4 - Good
* 3 - Fair
* 2 - Weak
* 1 - Poor

7.7 The panel will jointly discuss each candidate’s assessment against the requirements of the employee specification, using all the information available from the interview and tests that may have been used. Any differences should be fully discussed in order to reach a consensus. The Panel must reach a decision.

**Pre-employment enquiries about disability and health**

7.8 It is unlawful to ask applicants about their disability or health prior to a job offer (on conditional or unconditional basis). This includes questions at interview. Applicants with disabilities should be assessed objectively for their ability to do the job.

7.9 There are some exceptions to the above general rule. For example it is lawful to ask questions relating to a reasonable adjustment that has been requested in the arrangements for a selection test or interview. Information on disability or health which has been obtained for the purpose of making such reasonable adjustments should not form any part of the decision making process.

7.10 Even where applicants volunteer information about their disability or health, the panel must ensure that in responding to this disclosure they only ask questions relating to reasonable adjustments that may be required either as set out in 7.9 or to carry out an intrinsic function of the job.

7.11 In practice there are very few situations where disability or health enquiries are permitted and if managers are unsure they should seek prior advice from Human Resources.

7.12 All job offers are subject to the completion of a Health Assessment Questionnaire and conditional to a satisfactory medical clearance. The Council’s Occupation Health Service provider may gather health/disability related information provided it is relevant to the job in question and that reasonable adjustments are adequately considered.

**Decision**

7.13 Following the deliberations, the Chair will ensure that a panel decision is reached on each candidate, which should provide the rationale for the decisions. The Chair is responsible for uploading the panel decisions on the e-recruitment system.

7.14 It is essential that the individual score sheets and joint decision sheet are completed promptly and accurately, providing factual evidence of the interviews and decision making. The recruiting manager is responsible for retaining the interview panel documentation. Interview questions, notes and score sheets are to be retained for a period of one year (two years when appointing to a statutory post) after the interview date.

7.15 Candidates will receive notification of the panel’s decision via e-recruitment.

7.16 Any “no show” candidates should be immediately notified to the HR Business Support Service.

**Reserve candidates**

7.17 Where more than one candidate is judged to be suitable for appointment, the panel should identify a first choice. The panel may choose to place their second choice on a reserve list should the first candidate decline the offer. A reserve candidate may also be offered the post in the event of the position (or an identical position) becoming vacant again. Such a vacancy should normally be within six months of the recruitment decision.

7.18 In some circumstances exceptional reserve candidates may be considered for similar roles in other teams.

7.19 The appointment of reserve candidates will require approval via the completion of a Request to Vary an Established HR Process Form.

**Feedback**

7.20 Where feedback is requested, this should be based on the joint decision sheet; demonstrating the objective reasons for the panel’s decision as it relates to the job requirements. The feedback will be provided by the Chair, who should consider the best means of responding to the request. Wherever possible, feedback should be provided within two weeks of receiving the request.

# Post Interview

8.1 The Chair will ensure that the panel’s decision is entered on the

e-recruitment system and once completed, the HR Business Support Service should be informed. Panel members should forward their documentation to the recruiting manager and not retain recruitment information themselves. The recruiting manager must ensure that the panel’s documents are collected and saved in a password protected e-file, which should be retained for one year, unless the recruitment is for a statutory post in which case the retention period is two years. Once the retention period has expired, the recruiting manager must securely destroy the e-file.

**Consolidating the Interview**

8.2 Job offers will be generated via e-recruitment and will be conditional on receipt of satisfactory references, medical clearance, declaration of interest, right to work in the UK, and other employment checks as appropriate e.g. criminal records checks, declaration of unspent criminal convictions, verification of professional registration e.g. Social Worker registration and evidence of professional or academic qualifications.

8.3 The Right to Work in the UK Policy provides more details of the statutory checks necessary to ensure that successful applicants can legitimately be employed by the Council. The policy is available on the intranet.

8.4 For the purpose of safer recruitment, posts involving working with children and/or vulnerable adults will require criminal records checks via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to establish declaration of spent and/or unspent criminal convictions.

Wherever a conviction is disclosed, action should be taken in accordance with the Safer Recruitment Guide. Guidance on DBS disclosure checks is also available on the intranet. Managers may seek advice from their HR Advisory team on posts eligible for DBS checks.

8.5 All pre-employment checks must be reviewed by the recruiting manager and/or HR Business Support Services. Any returns that are incomplete or disclose information that is non-standard must be discussed with HR Advisory. HR will advise on any required approval process.

**References**

8.6 A minimum of two references will be required before an offer can be confirmed. One should be from a current or most recent employer (or teacher/tutor if applicant has recently left school/college). In exceptional circumstances this may not apply e.g. for an internal candidate or where a candidate has worked in one organisation for a long period of time.

8.7 For some posts, e.g. social workers, five years employment history will be checked; this may involve additional reference requests.

8.8 Candidates who have any gaps in employment of more than four weeks, during the previous 5 years, must provide details of how the time was spent prior to any offer being confirmed.

8.9 Character references from relatives or people writing solely in the capacity of friends are not acceptable. The Council reserves the right to take up further references. Further information on taking up references is provided in the Obtaining References Guidance available on the intranet. On receipt, references will be forwarded to the Chair, who is responsible for determining whether the reference is deemed satisfactory.

**Medical Clearances**

8.10 A Health Assessment Questionnaire will be forwarded to the Council’s Occupational Health Service provider for their consideration. If necessary they will contact the applicant for additional information or arrange a meeting to discuss any health issues, which relate to the job requirements. No withdrawal of an offer for medical reasons should be made without a meeting between the applicant and Occupational Health.

**Employment Checks**

8.11 The HR Business Support Service will be responsible for the verification of the employment checks and will, if necessary, report any anomalies to the Chair.

8.12 Where the recruiting manager is considering withdrawing an offer they must seek advice from the appropriate HR Manager before any such action is taken.

8.13 Once all the employment checks have been completed and the recruiting manager informed, a start date can be confirmed.

**Induction**

8.14 It is important that arrangements are made for the proper induction of new entrants. Managers are referred to the Induction Policy on the intranet.

8.15 The recruiting manager will arrange for new entrants to attend a Corporate Induction Course and also address any local induction requirements at the earliest available opportunity.

**Probationary**

8.16 All new appointees to the Council will be subject to the completion of a satisfactory, six months’ probationary period. The recruiting manager must implement the Council’s Probationary Policy from the date of commencement.

8.17 Existing employees who have successfully completed a probationary period will not be subject to a further probationary period should they be appointed to another post following a full recruitment process. In these circumstances the manager should set up regular supervision meetings in order to support and appraise the employee’s performance in the new role. Any performance concerns are to be addressed through the Capability Policy.

**Complaints**

8.18 If a complaint is received from an unsuccessful applicant about the recruitment exercise i.e. about procedural irregularities or perverse decision, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate HR Manager for their consideration. A written response will be provided within two weeks of receipt of the complaint.

8.19 Complaints from existing employees arising from applications made as part of the Organisation Change Policy should also be made to the appropriate HR Manager.

8.20 Complaints concerning selection for redundancy should be dealt with in accordance with the Redundancy & Redeployment Policy.

**Monitoring**

8.21 HR will maintain and publicise monitoring data in respect of recruitment activity as part of the Council’s duty under the Equalities Act 2010.