Recruitment and Selection

Policy and Code of Practice

We, Newcastle City Council, are committed to making sure our workforce represents the varied communities we serve. We aim to recruit the best staff, no matter what their age, disability, gender reassignment or identify, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion and belief, or sexual orientation. These are called protected characteristics.

We are committed to continually assessing our recruitment procedures and practices to remove barriers to employment for under-represented groups, and to make sure we continue to recruit within the law and according to best practice.

Where appropriate, we aim to have a flexible recruitment process to meet the needs of directorates, with a clear consistent corporate procedure to make sure all requirements are met. We have developed this policy and the supporting code of practice to make sure we achieve these aims.

We are committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Authorised managers are responsible for making sure that we do not put vulnerable clients at risk by failing to recruit staff in line with the procedures and the guidance provided for staff working with these client groups. If you are recruiting staff to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults, you must also follow our Safer Recruitment Guidance and the Criminal Record and Barred List Check Procedures.

We are committed to protecting Government assets including information. Authorised managers are responsible for making sure that any employee who accesses the Public Service Network (PSN) is security checked to the Baseline Personnel Security Standard.

We will not knowingly employ an individual who has been awarded a Local Government Pension for Ill Health at Tier 1.

All you need to know at a glance

The authorised manager should plan a draft timeline for the recruitment exercise and make sure panel is available for proposed shortlisting and interview dates. They should write a job advert which attracts potential applicants and lists the essential criteria so applicants can assess the role and decide if it may be suitable for them. The authorised manager should complete an Approval to Advertise Form. The panel must appoint the best person for the job and should take steps to eliminate bias in order to introduce

more objectivity. They do this by spending sufficient time to shortlist, by planning a structured interview with competency based interview questions, by scrutinising references, and consideration of information from any additional selection method. All pre-employment checks should be completed before the successful candidate starts the job, and they should have a full induction.

Complaints

If anyone applying for a job feels that they have been unlawfully discriminated against during any part of the recruitment and selection process, they have the right to complain in writing to the Chief Executive within three months. The Assistant Director Human Resources will investigate the complaint and report back, with recommendations, to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will decide what action, if any, to take and will tell the person who made the complaint what is going to happen.

Solutions

If the Chief Executive upholds a complaint, the solution offered will usually be for the person who made the complaint to re-join the selection process. Here are some examples of solutions:

- If someone is not included on the short-list and there is no justified reason for this, they may be put on the short-list for the job or for another appropriate vacancy;
- If the questions asked at the interview are considered to be unfair, the applicant's suitability may be reassessed and another interview arranged for that job or another appropriate vacancy;
- If it is found that the person who made the complaint was the best person for the job, they may be offered either that job or another appropriate vacancy;
- If it is found that the council has failed to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person who has been made a conditional offer of appointment and the post is still vacant, the adjustment will be made with an offer for that job;
- If it is found that the council has failed to make a reasonable adjustment and the post applied for has been filled, we will make arrangements to interview the disabled person for another suitable vacancy and to make reasonable adjustments if the person is selected.

Roles and Responsibilities

Authorised Managers

To help us make sure this policy is effectively put into practice across the organisation, authorised managers from each directorate are responsible for the recruitment decisions made within their directorates. Their role is to make sure that all recruitment is carried out fairly and without discrimination. This will include:

- advertising vacancies;
- arranging appropriate selection panels;
- managing the recruitment process;
- making sure all pre-employment checks have been made;
- reaching a decision about who to appoint; and
- ensuring eligibility to work in the UK.
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All managers are responsible for making sure they do not discriminate when recruiting because of someone's protected characteristic(s).

To support authorised managers in carrying out their role, we offer training on LMS to help them understand their responsibilities, and to make sure that recruitment activities are carried out within the law and in line with best practice. Authorised managers are responsible for making sure they are appropriately trained and understand their responsibilities under this policy, and for making sure that all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process follow this policy and the associated code of practice.

The Chair of the Interview Panel

The chair of the interview panel is the person responsible for appointing staff and should have been identified by their Chief Officer as an authorised manager. They will be personally responsible for making sure that the correct policies and procedures are followed in making the appointment. For Wingrove, this is the usually the head teacher.

Authorised Manager with DBS Responsibilities

Authorised Manager with DBS Responsibilities are required where DBS checks are not clear to explore the issue and make a judgement as to the impact of the information on their decision, in consultation with the Appointing Panel. At Wingrove, this is the school business manager.

Employee Service (ES)

The ES team are responsible for managing the recruitment process in line with directorate instructions. They will:-

- place adverts;
- issue application forms and packs;
- record application forms and equality monitoring information;
- send interview letters to applicants;
- ask for references;
- maintain the recruitment file.
- undertake identity checking
- undertake online Disclosure Barring Service and Disclosure Scotland checks through GBG the Councils online provider.

They will only place a new member of staff on the HR/payroll system when they receive an appointment approval form signed by an 'authorised manager', to confirm that all pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed and the code of practice has been followed.

Assistant Director Human Resources

The Head of Strategic Human Resources is responsible for advising the council on this recruitment policy.

Learning and Development

The corporate learning and development team provide e-learning courses via LMS for authorised managers and recruiters to make sure they are able to carry out their responsibilities in line with the code of practice.

Human Resources and ES

HR and ES are able to provide advice and guidance on this policy.

Legal Context

By law, employers must not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against people because of their protected characteristic(s). This applies to all aspects of the recruitment process, from advertising jobs through to appointing staff. Certain posts are politically restricted (not able to take part in political activities or take up a political office, for example, as a member of parliament). It should be made clear in recruitment advertising if the post is politically restricted. Under the Local Government Act 1989, councils must appoint staff based on their skills and experience.

Working Time Directive

The working time directive says that workers over the age of 18 must not work (on average) more than 48 hours a week (40 hours a week for people under 18). We must tell all applicants that they cannot work over 48 hours a week.

Preventing Illegal Working

We must make sure that employees are allowed to work in the UK under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 by checking their identify documents against List A and List B.

We must make sure that the documents presented as proof belong to the selected applicant, and that they allow the applicant to do the type of work they are being appointed to do. If an applicant gives you two documents which have different names, ask them for a further document to explain the reason for this, such as a marriage certificate, a divorce decree, a deed poll or statutory declaration.

The proof of eligibility to work in the UK will either show an ongoing right to work in the UK (List A) or it will show an entitlement to work in the UK for a limited period only (List B).

If you appoint someone who provides the specified documents from List B you must make repeat checks to ensure the employee can still work legally in the UK.

If you wish to appoint someone who is not an EEA national you must read the policy on Employing People from Outside European Economic Area (Sponsorship) to see whether or not you would be permitted to appoint them under the Points Based System.

Recruitment Controls

Consider the long term budget implications for your service area before you submit a request to advertise a vacancy and consider whether there are other ways to get the work done, such as moving the duties to a lower graded post.

Requests to advertise a vacancy must be made on the Approval to Advertise Online

form. Your request will go through an approval process before it is actioned. Before we advertise the post, we must be satisfied that:

filling the post is essential to maintain front line services;

filling the post will mitigate a significant risk; or

filling the post is necessary to maintain or secure funding from a partner.

Internal Transfer and Stepping Down

A vacancy can be filled without advertising by transferring an employee from another post at the same grade. Someone can then be recruited for the resulting vacancy. If more than one person is interested in transferring, a selection interview should take place. Employees applying to 'step down' to a lower-graded job may be appointed without competition, as long as their own job is then filled, although separate arrangements will apply in the redeployment scheme.

Secondment

A vacant post may be filled temporarily in line with our policy on secondment, by transferring a council employee currently in a post at the same grade or through open competition among current staff following internal advertisement. Normally, secondments will be for up to 12 months. In exceptional cases, they can be up to 24 months.

Redeployment & Internal Advertising

Recruitment can be restricted to internal applicants in the following cases:-

- To move an existing employee who has been made redundant or is at risk (redundant employees with two year's service have the right to an automatic interview – preferential consideration – without open competition from other applicants, for a suitable vacancy and to be appointed if they are successful at the interview).
- To move an existing employee who becomes medically unfit for their present job.
- To reduce staffing costs by filling a post internally and removing the resulting vacancy, to find jobs for employees directly affected by a reorganisation or changes to a staffing structure.
- If we decide to restrict advertising to internal applicants only, to meet our budget, or to help with workforce planning.

Internal vacancies are open to trainees and casual staff who are employed directly by the Council, and to agency staff who are on assignment with the Council.

Appointing Previous Applicants

When a vacancy arises within six months of the same or an identical one having been filled and you have permission to recruit from the external market, you may appoint one of the previously unsuccessful applicants without advertising the position, as long as the applicant meets all of the essential conditions. You must submit another approval to advertise form before you do this so that redeployees have the opportunity to apply for the post.

Job Carving

The aim of job carving is to create employment opportunities that are accessible to people who face significant barriers to employment, specifically people with a disability or long-term health problem.

Parts of an existing post or posts are separated out to create a post with very specific tasks. The hours of employment would depend on the tasks within the post, but job-carved posts can be for any number of hours each week.

Job carving can be very beneficial to both the employer and employee. It could be used very effectively to support many city council policies, including the work-life balance. It may also be a useful option to consider when recruiting people for posts that have previously proved difficult to fill.

To create a job-carved post, you must follow the guidance on grading of new posts.

Examples of how job carving may work:

- Where someone with a full-time job reduces their hours, the remaining hours are used to create a job-carved post.
- Where a part-time vacancy arises, the tasks are separated into distinct areas and posts developed as necessary.
- Where a post is difficult to recruit to, the post could be separated into distinct job-carved posts which may then attract different applicants.

For more information, advice or support on job carving, please contact WorkFirst on 0191 2788334 or e-mail WorkFirst@newcastle.gov.uk.

Advertising Vacancies

All vacancies must normally be advertised to redeployees and internal applicants before being advertised externally and all vacancies must be formally advertised.

All recruitment adverts must be placed through the ES team.

All external vacancies will be advertised in the Job Centre, Jobs Bulletin, the North East Recruitment Portal and on our website.

The authorised manager, through the Approval to Advertise form, will supply the ES team with:

- the job description and person specification;
- the text of the proposed advertisement; and
- any specific instructions or extra information to be provided to the people applying for jobs.

Joint Posts

Joint Posts are those that are funded between Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council. In the first instance these posts are advertised to redeployment candidates from both Authorities. Any eligible redeployment candidate meeting the essential criteria of the post will receive a preferential interview.

If we are the host Authority and the successful candidate is on our redeployment register they will be subject to our redeployment policies including pay protection. However, if the successful candidate is a redeployee from Gateshead Council they would not be entitled to any pay protection. They would maintain continuity of service in terms of annual leave, sick pay entitlement and other conditions.

If Gateshead Council are the host Authority and the successful candidate is from our redeployment register they will not be entitled to any pay protection.

Recruitment Documentation

The ES team will make sure that recruitment file is kept updated during the recruitment process. It will be kept for 6 months, (unless we need to keep it for longer for legal reasons) and includes the following.

- Approval to advertise electronic form
- Job description and person specification
- Job advertisement
- All job application forms
- Interview notes and a record of the decisions made and reasons why
- Test results (if this applies)
- References

All other correspondence relating to the process

Approval to Advertise

Every post must have a clear job advertisement, job description and person specification. The job description is a statement of the purpose and responsibilities of the post, and the person specification describes the skills and abilities needed to carry out the post. The job description must be current before the post is advertised, and if new, must have been subject to a full job evaluation process. The person specification should be reviewed to make sure it is up to date and any amendments have been made.

Job Descriptions Must Include:

- the grade;
- the title of the post;
- the job evaluation code
- the post to which the holder is responsible;
- the posts for which the holder is responsible;
- the job purpose or main function;
- the main responsibilities or a list of the main duties; and
- the date of the latest revision.
- Further guidance and templates are available.

Person Specifications

Include only conditions that will genuinely affect job performance. Do not put too much importance on specific formal qualifications, as other evidence of ability may be just as relevant. If you can't justify including a specific qualification don't use it. Be particularly careful when applying general qualifications as an entry requirement (for example, five GCSEs), as this will be difficult to justify. Describe the experience needed in terms of quality, level and type rather than the amount. For example, asking for five years' experience could be age discriminatory if you can't justify why it is essential.
Do not use age as a condition or as an indicator of experience or maturity. Avoid

unjustifiable physical requirements which could exclude people with disabilities. Further guidance is available.

Genuine Occupational Requirements

All posts must be open to all applicants, except in certain circumstances where it is a genuine occupational requirement (GOR) to advertise for people with a particular protected characteristic. These cases are likely to be rare within the city council but, if you consider that a GOR may apply, contact your HR Lead before taking further action.

Information to Applicants

People enquiring about a job must receive a copy of the job advert, an application form, and the job description and person specification. Disabled people may apply for jobs in Braille, on audio tape or in large print. You should contact the ES team for advice on using Braille or audio tape.

Job Application Forms

All job applicants (whether internal or external) must complete an application, as instructed in the job advert.

There are two Newcastle City Council paper application forms available, and the authorised manager must decide which form is most appropriate for the post being advertised. The paper job application form is divided into three sections. Part A covers personal details, part B covers experience, qualifications and skills, and part C covers equality and diversity monitoring. ES will remove part C (equality and diversity monitoring) and it will not be made available to anyone involved in the recruitment process.
Form 1 is appropriate for most posts within the council.
Form 2 is appropriate for posts where there are no or limited entry requirements.

Applicants who cannot fill in an Application Form Themselves

An applicant who cannot fill in a job application themselves (for example, because of reading or writing difficulties or a disability) should still be considered, unless this is directly relevant to the job. In such cases, they may get help to fill in the form.

Receiving and Acknowledging Applications

The ES team will send out application forms, and filled-in forms must be returned by the closing date given to the ES team. They will contact the authorised manager to ask if they will accept any applications received after the closing date. We will not accept late applications once the short-listing process has started.

Because of the cost, we will not acknowledge application forms or contact people who have not been short-listed.

We will keep a record of the names of people who apply for each post on a database. We will keep the information for monitoring purposes in case we receive any complaints.

Applicant's Relationship with Council Members or Staff

Applicants must tell us about any relationships with a member, school governor or senior officer of the council, within the directorate where the post they are applying for is located.

Councillors and senior officers must tell the Chief Executive on form CCE.2 (contained in the Newcastle Charter) about their relationship to a relative who they know to be applying for a job with us. Similarly, a senior officer who is selecting someone for a job should tell their director if they know anyone who has applied. For this purpose, a senior officer means over spinal column point 28 or equivalent.

Canvassing

Any applicant who canvasses (tries to use their relationship to gain an advantage in the recruitment process) or allows someone to canvass on their behalf will be disqualified.

Unless they are related to, or have a close personal relationship with, someone applying for a job, councillors and employees are allowed to act as referees for that person. They cannot provide a personal reference for that applicant if they are involved in the recruitment process (short-listing or interviewing).

Line managers are allowed to provide an employment reference for a member of their team, who has applied for a post where they are involved in the recruitment process (short-listing or interviewing).

Declaring Outside Interests and Other Employment

People applying for a job over spinal column point 28 must not carry out any other business or take up additional appointments while employed by us, without our permission, as detailed in the Employee Code of Conduct.

Short-listing Applicants

The ES team will contact the authorised manager, within two working days of the closing date for the post, to tell them that the shortlisting pack is ready. Applicants should be short-listed by at least two people who will be involved in the final interview panel (one of whom should have management responsibility for the post to be filled). As far as possible, the people short-listing for each post must have a reasonable gender balance. The people creating the short-list review each application form and assess that applicant against the person specification for the post. Any applicant who does not meet the minimum essential conditions should not be included on the short-list. A record of the decisions made should be recorded on the short-listing form provided by ES with recruitment pack.

The authorised manager will be responsible for the security and confidentiality of the application forms. The short-listing form should be filled in and returned, together with the successful and unsuccessful application forms, to the ES team.

Guaranteed Interview Schemes

We guarantee to interview applicants who meet the essential criteria for vacancies and who are:

disabled. The ES team are responsible for reviewing the applicant assessment forms and, by agreement with the authorised manager, adding to the short-list any disabled applicants who qualify.

defined as job ready by Newcastle Futures. A pro-forma will be attached to the application form of any qualifying candidate.

'looked after children' or care leavers of Newcastle City Council where we are classed as the 'corporate parent'. A pro-forma will be attached to the application form of any qualifying candidate.

in receipt of cash value protection as a result of a change in grade. The application form of any qualifying candidates will be marked that they qualify for the scheme.

Contacting Short-listed Applicants

The ES team will check if any of the short-listed applicants have asked for special interview arrangements and will ask you to make any necessary arrangements. They will send letters to the short-listed applicants inviting them for an interview. Authorised managers must give the ES team at least 2 weeks' notice to allow sufficient time for arrangements to be made.

Declaring Criminal Convictions

All applicants must make a statement on their application form about any unspent criminal convictions they have (convictions which are still current according to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act). For posts working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, applicants must also include spent convictions (see the Safe Recruitment Guidance and the Criminal Record and Barred List Check Procedures).

Dealing with a Declared Criminal Record

The existence of a criminal record will not necessarily disqualify an individual from consideration, as detailed in our Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-offenders . In deciding whether it affects a candidate's suitability, the Authorised Manager with DBS responsibilities will consider the following factors:

- whether the conviction or other matter is relevant to the position in question;
- the seriousness of any offence revealed;
- the length of time since the offence or other matter occurred;
- whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour or other relevant matters;
- whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour or the other relevant matters.

If in doubt, more information should be sought from the candidate either before or at interview. This can also be discussed with your usual HR adviser. You may also find the CIPD's guidance on this subject useful.

You must not base recruitment decisions on information about historical offences which is subject to filtering.

If it is established before the final selection stage that a candidate has a criminal record which clearly makes him/her unsuitable for further consideration then his/her invitation to interview should be withdrawn, and the reason explained to him/her. It will be the responsibility of the Authorised Manager with DBS responsibility to explore the issue and make a judgement as to the impact of the information on their decision, in consultation with the Appointing Panel.

Failure to Disclose Criminal Convictions

Candidates sign their application forms to declare that the information they have provided is full and accurate. If it is subsequently established that a candidate has failed to disclose an unspent criminal conviction he/she is liable to be disqualified from the selection process, or dismissed if he/she is already in post.

Taking up References

All applicants must provide two referees. Applicants are asked to provide references from their current or most recent employer if they are not in work. ES will ask for references using the reference request form. The applicant cannot start work, or be given an unconditional offer of employment until we have received two satisfactory references. The reference from the primary referee must be in writing. The second reference can be a verbal reference, if a record is made of the conversation and the person taking the verbal reference is sure they are talking to the referee.

The ES team will ask for references after the short-listing process has been completed and before the interview, unless the authorised manager has told them otherwise.

If the authorised manager has phoned the referee for more information, a written record should be made and attached to the reference request form supplied by that referee.

ES will ask for references for internal candidates. An authorised manager that is recruiting someone from their own business area may email ES to confirm that taking references will not be necessary.

Interview and Assessment

The recruitment process must involve an interview used with information collected from other sources, for example, a job application form, references and so on.

It is not essential, but strongly recommended, that at least one other method of assessment, such as an occupational test, work sample or practical job-related exercise, is used to give unbiased information on the short-listed applicants.

All applicants must be asked a series of standard competency based interview questions. It is acceptable to follow up the standard questions with related questions to make sure the applicant has the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge.

All applicants must be asked a question to assess their attitude or commitment to equalities. The question should be appropriate to the level and type of post.

It is acceptable to ask the applicant to expand on the information they have given on their application form.

The authorised manager is responsible for checking that the successful applicant has the right to work in the UK. ES ask applicants to bring proof of their eligibility to work in the UK to the interview. This proof should be photocopied for all candidates who are interviewed. This will speed up the recruitment process. Once you have appointed the successful candidate you should shred all proof of eligibility to work for unsuccessful candidates, before the recruitment pack is returned to ES.

Interview Panel

The interview panel must be made up of at least a chair of the panel and one other interviewer (one of whom should have management responsibility for the post). One-to-one interviews are not acceptable and, as far as possible, the panel should have a reasonable balance of men and women. Members may be involved in making staff appointments to the post of Chief Executive, chief officers and deputy chief officers.

Non-council staff can be on the interview panel to appoint council staff, for example, where we have partnership arrangements in place. Their role should be viewed as advisory, and the authorised manager makes the final decision on appointing staff.

It is the authorised manager's responsibility to make sure that panel members understand and follow this code of practice.

Interview Record

We use the applicant assessment form to record the questions asked and to summarise each applicant's answers.

The interview record form must show how each applicant has met (or not met) the person specification. Interviewers should summarise the evidence presented by the applicant. At the end of the interview, the panel should discuss the responses given by each applicant, agree who best meets the person specification and the reason why, and record a summary of their decision on the interview record summary form.

It is important that the applicant assessment form has enough detail to make sure that the reason for the decision is clear, if there is any future complaint about the recruitment process.

Contacting Applicants

We will tell short-listed applicants the outcome of their application as soon as possible.

You should make sure that you contact applicants who have a sight or hearing difficulty in the appropriate way, for example, a phone call or in Braille for people with a sight difficulty, or by letter or minicom for people with a hearing difficulty.

Both internal and external applicants may ask for feedback on how they performed during the selection process. If asked, the authorised manager should make arrangements for this to happen. We guarantee feedback to unsuccessful applicants who have applied for positions through Newcastle Futures.

Offer of Employment and Pre-employment Checks

Any offer of appointment must be made on the condition that we receive proof of relevant qualifications, permission to work in the UK, satisfactory references, a relevant driving licence (where appropriate), membership of a professional body (where appropriate) and medical clearance (where appropriate), if these are not already available.

Copies of these documents should be kept on the individual's personal file. Before taking a copy, you must take all reasonable steps to check that the original document is valid and satisfy yourself that the applicant is the person named in the document. You must sign and date copies with a note to say you have seen the original before forwarding to ES for the personal file.

Passport - Check the passport has not been tampered with and pay particular attention to the photograph. Does it appear excessively large (there may be another hidden underneath), or has the laminate been cut?

Birth Certificate – Check the birth certificate is the long version which shows the name of at least one parent. Check for tampering – for example changes using liquid paper, overwriting or spelling mistakes. There should be a watermark visible when the document is held up to the light.

You must ask the successful applicant to provide evidence that they are allowed to work in the UK.

For certain posts, where the job holder is subject to additional risks, the successful applicant needs medical clearance. This is also required where the job holder is subject to the Educational Health Standards 2003. If the successful applicant is already an employee they would only need to get medical clearance if their new post exposes them to additional risks other than their current post or if they become subject to the Educational Health Standards 2003.

An **authorised manager** for your directorate must sign the appointment approval form before sending it to the ES team, to show that all necessary checks have been completed correctly before the person starts work. The ES team will not place a new member of staff onto the HR/Payroll system until they have received this signed confirmation.

Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled People

We will ask disabled applicants about workplace adjustments only if they are selected for the job. The job offer should be on the condition that reasonable adjustments can be made. You should contact human resources if reasonable adjustments are being considered.

Details of the Start Date

Once we receive all clearances, we can arrange a start date with the successful applicant. The ES team will confirm in writing all appointment details with the employee, including the statement of main terms and conditions.

Starting Salary

All newly-appointed staff should be placed on the lowest point of their salary scale.

Exceptions are allowed in certain circumstances (for example, where the employee would not otherwise receive an increase in pay). If in doubt, you should consult the human resources team before making an offer.

Interview Expenses

We will refund interview expenses to successful applicants in line with our policy, alongside their first salary payment.

You must arrange refunds for interview expenses for unsuccessful candidates by emailing accountspayable@newcastle.gov.uk.

If an applicant withdraws or turns down an offer of employment, we will not refund their expenses. We will only refund the expenses of the appointed applicant when they start work.

Induction Arrangements

All new employees should take part in a corporate induction in line with our corporate policy. The line manager is responsible for making sure that a suitable team or department induction is organised for new and transferring staff members.

Feedback

http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/