

Safer Recruitment Policy



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1 Introduction

The Safer Recruitment procedure applies to all employees and workers of the Council when undertaking recruitment and selection activity and must be used in all Council recruitment, including for casual positions.

The Council's ability to provide quality services depends upon the skills, abilities and knowledge of the people that work for us and the recruitment process is vital in ensuring that the most suitable people are appointed.

Safer recruitment practice aims to minimise the risk of appointing someone unsuitable to a position where they will be in contact with children, young people and adults at risk and could cause them harm. Even if the role does not work with children, young people and adults at risk, the Safer Recruitment Policy must be followed as applicable. This procedure must be used in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy and the details given in the Disclosure and Barring Service Policy (available on the [Intranet](#)).

Personal recommendation or word of mouth recruitment will not be acceptable. This does not prevent friends or relatives of existing employees responding to advertised vacancies in the normal way, along with other applicants. If any proposed panel member is related to an applicant, or has a close relationship (for example married, co-habiting, dating, relation, close or family friend) with them outside work, they must not take part in the selection process.

For Chief Executive, Director and statutory appointments, a panel of Members must be fully involved in the shortlisting and interview process as per the Council's Constitution.

Further guidance on the recruitment process and the documents to support the process are available on the Intranet.

2 Legislation

The relevant legislation that underpins the safer recruitment procedure is as follows:

Equality Act – This act legally protects job applicants from discrimination during the recruitment process.

Data Protection Act (GDPR) – This act covers how we handle applicants' personal information and documentation.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) – This act protects the rights of those with convictions that are deemed to have been spent after a specified rehabilitation period removing the obligation to declare. This however does not apply if the role or activities of the role are listed in the ROA Exceptions order.

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act – This states that employers must check documentation to establish a person's eligibility to work in the UK and comply with any restrictions stated.

Freedom of Information Act – This provides the public access to information held by public authorities such as recruitment details.

Employment Rights Act – Sets out the rights of employees with regards to areas such as pay, flexible working and termination of employment.

Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations – Prohibits less favourable treatment of a fixed term employee than a comparable permanent employee with regards to pay, benefits etc.

3 Roles and responsibilities

Recruiting manager must

- Attend safer recruitment training to ensure the recruitment process is followed and carried out correctly.
- Identify the need to recruit and determine the skills, knowledge and experience required for the position.
- Confirm funding with accountancy and obtain authorisation to fill the position through the relevant process
- Provide suitable advert wording along with a Job Description and Person Specification for the role, submitting for job evaluation where necessary.
- Respond to applicant queries throughout the recruitment process including job-specific questions and requests for feedback.
- Complete the shortlisting process and make arrangements for interviews to take place (rooms, equipment etc).
- Provide interview questions that enable the applicant to demonstrate how they meet the requirements of the position.
- Ensure that key documentation is obtained as part of the interview process including a right to work check as per the most current guidance.
- Confirm a verbal conditional offer, subject to references with the successful applicant. Maintain contact during the pre-employment vetting process, including meeting with applicant if required should any issues need to be discussed that arise during pre-employment vetting.
- Arrange a start date with the applicant, once notified by HR that all pre-employment checks have been completed.

Human Resources

- Provide training to managers in the safer recruitment policy and procedure and keep records of all managers who have attended training.
- Provide advice and support to recruiting managers on the safer recruitment process including position requirements such as training and DBS.
- Review the role against any redeployees to identify any who are suitable.
- Set up job vacancies on the Councils recruitment site.
- Administer pre-employment checks for successful applicants.
- Support recruiting managers when meeting with applicants to discuss any individual circumstances regarding any areas of concern (e.g. reference detail, DBS outcome etc).
- Notify the recruiting manager when pre-employment vetting has been completed so that a start date can be arranged.

4 Recruiting Planning

4.1 When a vacancy arises

When a position has or is going to become vacant, the first step is to review whether it needs to be filled and how the requirements have or may need to change. Whilst there is a tendency to replace like for like, the Council recognises that positions and service requirements can develop over time and this is a good opportunity to look at the different options available.

4.2 Job Description

Each role will require a Job Description which will also include a Person Specification for the role. If the role already exists, then the current Job Description will need to be reviewed and amended as required to reflect the intended duties of the role. For new roles a job description will need to be created using the current template (available on the intranet).

If a new job role is identified (or the existing role has changed significantly) then a job description must be submitted to HR so that job evaluation can be completed to determine the grade of the role.

4.3 Authorisation to fill

All positions require authorisation to fill. To do this, Managers must complete an 'Authorisation to Fill' Form, available on the [Intranet](#). This will require the following information, some of which should be obtained in advance of completing the form.

- Information on the role such as job title, grade, type of contract, contractual hours and funding details.

- Business case
- Role requirements such as hybrid / flexible approach and training
- DBS Requirement - At this stage, a review must be undertaken to determine the eligibility of the role to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check. This should be completed via the online eligibility tool <https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>.
- Advert details
- IT Equipment/systems

The authority to fill will first be sent to accountancy to authorise and then to the Service Director. The recruiting manager will be notified of the outcome by email.

4.3 Redeployment

If the authority to fill is approved, HR will review the pool of employees for whom redeployment or relocation needs to be considered in accordance with the redeployment policy and procedure and identify anyone for whom the job could be a suitable alternative to the one currently held.

Only when it is agreed that the job is not suitable for a redeployee, will advertising methods be considered.

5 Advertising the vacancy

Once an authority to fill has been authorised by accountancy and the Service Director, it will be sent to the Senior HR Business Partner. The recruiting manager will then need to send HR the proposed advertisement text and copy of the job description (which also includes the person specification).

5.1 Job Advert Content

All adverts will be posted based on advert wording provided by the recruiting manager along with the following mandatory safeguarding statement:

'Chelmsford City Council is committed to safeguarding and protecting the children and young people that we work with. As such, all posts are subject to a safer recruitment process, including the disclosure of criminal records and vetting checks. We ensure that we have a range of policies and procedures in place which promote safeguarding and safer working practice across our services.'

For non-operational full-time roles, text will also be added to inform applicants they can request part time hours in their application as part of the Council's inclusion the Essex Family Friendly scheme.

A job pack will be attached to the advert which will contain the Job Description and Person Specification, information on the salary and working hours along with other information applicable to the role such as the requirement for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check

5.2 Advert Placement

Recruiting managers have the option to advertise their roles for internal applicants only for an initial period before opening up to external applicants. Alternatively adverts can be opened up to both from the start.

Internal advertisements are usually listed for 1 week, with external adverts listed for up to 3 weeks unless otherwise stated by the recruiting manager on the authority to fill request. Positions that are advertised internally and externally at the same time will have the same closing date.

Internal applicants can apply using their iTrent ESS log in details. This will include all casual workers, permanent and temporary employees of the Council. Individuals employed via an employment agency can apply for internal only vacancies by registering an account via the external website.

External adverts will be placed on the Council website, along with several external sites and social media, depending on the role being advertised.

Should services wish the role to be placed on any specific site relevant to the profession, this can be requested on the authority to fill form. If a cost is payable, services are required to fund this and are asked to provide a cost code so that HR can raise a purchase order.

6 Application process

All applicants are required to apply via the web recruitment portal using the online application form to ensure that information from the applicants is consistent and can be compared equally. It will also ensure applicants provide the information required for selection and pre-employment vetting purposes. CVs will not be accepted.

7 Shortlisting

Shortlisting is the process by which applications are reviewed and applicants are selected for interview. This must be completed against the person specification which has been prepared for the position. Shortlisting must be carried out by at least two individuals and should ideally be the same people who will be on the interview panel. Consideration should also be given to the composition of the panel to ensure diversity is represented.

As part of the process, applicants who have declared a disability are required to be shortlisted under the Disability Confident Scheme. This guarantees an interview if they meet the essential criteria. These applicants are identified showing a blue flag next to their name on recruiting manger.

Once the closing date has passed, HR will forward the shortlisting documentation for completion which will consist of an email explaining the next steps along with resources for shortlisting and interview. Also attached is the shortlisting and interview details form which must be completed and returned to HR, including rejection codes for any applicants who have not been shortlisted for interview.

When shortlisting, recruiting managers must identify:

- Incomplete sections in applications
- Unexplained gaps in employment history which must be asked of applicants if they are invited to interview and responses recorded
- Periods of time spent working or living overseas
- Reasons for leaving past employment
- Career changes without any clear career or salary progression
- Moves from permanent to temporary positions

These elements are important as they may suggest that information is being withheld and may be of concern in relation to safeguarding.

The shortlisting and interview details form must be returned to HR even if the selection process has not identified any suitable applicants for interview.

Applicants who have not been shortlisted will be notified by HR. Interview invitations will be sent to those who have been shortlisted allowing them to book an interview slot via our recruitment portal. The dates and times for interview will be taken from the interview details form.

8 Interview / Assessment Process

8.1 Assessment Methods

For all vacancies, managers will be required to conduct an interview. However, the use of other assessment tools, in addition to the interview, is recommended as this can help to improve the robustness of the selection process.

Managers need to review how they intend to assess each element of the person specification and decide the most appropriate method. This may be via interview questions but can also include, for example, psychometric testing, work sample tests and presentations.

Any tests must be related to the requirements of the job/person specification and be shown to be valid as part of the selection process. Services will be required to fund any testing used, where necessary.

A Senior HR Business Partner should be consulted in the selection and application of tests and recruiting managers must make themselves aware of the Ethical test use policy.

8.2 Interview Preparation

The recruiting manager is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate arrangements have been made for their interviews (i.e. room bookings, equipment, notifying the customer service centre of visitors or facilities services if outside opening hours etc.) HR will also advise of any access requirements that they have been made aware of.

It is the Manager's responsibility to check interview bookings and contact applicants if they have not responded to the invite from HR.

Interview Panel

The interview panel must consist of at least two people. It is essential that at least one member of the panel has attended the Council's Recruitment and Selection training. Interviews should be conducted in an appropriate setting, ideally face to face, however a virtual interview can be conducted if appropriate.

Interview Questions Preparation

A set of questions matched to the job requirements/person specification needs to be prepared by the panel prior to the interview. This is to help ensure that the interview is conducted on an equitable basis and means that all applicants are asked the same questions. This does not prevent the panel from asking follow-up questions or additional questions related to the applicant's application form.

Any weighting of scores should be agreed prior to the interview. Weighting may be useful to ensure that the skills, knowledge or competence that are integral to the role are identified and appropriate weight is given to these factors during the selection process.

Panel members must avoid questions which could be interpreted as being discriminatory and potentially unlawful e.g. about marital status or family/domestic arrangements. It is essential to concentrate on job requirements and ensure that applicants have the opportunity to evidence that they can meet them.

8.3 At the Interview

Prior to starting the interview, a panel member must request the following documentation from the applicant, which they are asked to bring with them in their interview invitation.

Right to work / Essential qualifications and memberships

A list of acceptable documents, (to evidence eligibility to work in the UK), are included in the shortlisting email and are available on the HR intranet site. The panel must check the authenticity of the document, that it is acceptable and that the photo bears the likeness of the applicant, known as an imposter check. If the applicant provides a right to work document without a photo, an acceptable photographic ID document must be provided in addition to the right to work document, so the imposter check can be completed.

As part of checking the right to work documents an imposter check must be conducted to confirm the applicant at interview matches the documents provided. If the applicant has provided right to work evidence that does not display a photo, they will also need to provide photo ID as listed in the right to work guidance. Copies must be taken for the Council's records, ensuring that 'Check conducted' has been written on this to confirm all elements of the check have been undertaken.

Any qualifications and memberships listed as essential under the Education/Qualification section of the person specification for the role, must be taken.

Interview questions

The same questions must be asked of all applicants with panel members taking notes throughout each interview. Applicants can request to see their assessment forms and interview notes so panel members must ensure that these are legible and factually correct and do not include any subjective remarks. The notes will help in the completion of assessment forms and can be referred to at a later stage to assist in the fair comparison of applicants.

At the end of the interview applicants should be asked if there are any questions which they wish to ask about the job or the appointment process. Finally, the applicants should be informed when a decision is likely to be made and how they will be notified.

Ensure that any gaps in employment history or discrepancies highlighted in preparation stages have been asked and clarified, detailing answers so these can be attached to application form. This will ensure that questions are not asked unnecessarily at the vetting stages.

Scoring

Interview assessment forms must be completed for each applicant interviewed. These should be completed jointly by the panel with evidence for each mark clearly indicated, ensuring that a justification is provided for why the score was given (i.e Experience in a customer service demonstrated with examples provided from last 2 employers, A Levels in English and Maths etc).

When completing the interview assessment form, testing scores along with any agreed weighting must be taken into account when scoring against the relevant part (or parts) of the person specification. The applicant with the highest score-will generally be the one who is successful and therefore appointed into the position, providing they have also met each element of the essential criteria. If an applicant has scored highest, but not met the essential criteria, then the next highest scoring applicant who has met the essential criteria is appointable.

8.4 Appointment of successful applicant

An initial conditional verbal offer can be made to the applicant by the recruiting manager, ensuring the applicant is aware this is subject to placement health questionnaire, references, relevant criminal conviction check and DBS disclosure if applicable (see the Disclosure and Barring Checks policy for more information). **No offer should be made if eligibility to work in the UK has not been evidenced.** Once a decision has been made by the Panel, the lead member must complete an appointment form detailing all information relevant to the position and successful applicant. All documentation regarding the appointment will also need to be included with the form (interview questions and notes, assessment form, right to work, qualifications etc).

Recruiting managers should be aware that if the successful applicant is an existing agency worker, a fee may be payable to the supplying agency. This would be funded by the service recruiting into the role.

The commencing salary will usually be at the bottom pay point of the advertised grade. Any higher salary offer should be discussed with the Senior HR Business Partner and agreed by the Service Manager. This will need to be included on the appointment form.

9 Pre-Employment Vetting

All positions require pre-employment checks to ensure there are no known reasons why an applicant should not undertake the role they have applied for. Some checks will be specific to positions that have contact with children or young people.

The HR Support Team will co-ordinate all pre-employment checks and will inform the manager when these have been completed. **No individual should start employment with the Council until these checks have been cleared.**

Start dates will not be confirmed until the pre-employment vetting has been completed.

9.1 References

For all positions, HR will review the applicant's previous 5 years' employment / education history from the application form and interview notes from recruiting manager.

For all appointments, HR will request a reference from each employer (or education institution) from the most recent 2 years of their employment / education history. References from friends and family members will generally not be accepted. In some circumstances HR may also request a HMRC 5-year employment history check to verify previous employment.

For any employment / educational history gaps of 3 months or greater, a satisfactory explanation will be sought from the applicant and additional references taken as appropriate. Gaps of greater than 6 months will be further explored, and evidence obtained from the applicant regarding the reason for the gap.

For internal applicants transferring to a different section or Directorate, one reference will be obtained from their current line manager by HR.

Should a reference state any information about the applicant which would deem the reference unsatisfactory, the pre-employment vetting will be reviewed by a Senior HR Business Partner and discussed with the recruiting manager.

9.2 Placement Health Questionnaire

A Placement Health Questionnaire must be completed for all applicants.

The placement health questionnaire will be sent to the successful applicant to complete by HR with the conditional offer of employment letter. This will be assessed by our occupational health provider and any considerations sent to HR. Recruiting managers will be provided with the outcome should any adjustments or reviews need to be made such as a risk assessment. In some circumstances applicants may be required to attend a follow up appointment with occupational health to provide further information on a flagged health condition or ailment.

9.3 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks and overseas checks

Where a DBS check is required, HR will request the recruiting manager obtain acceptable ID documents to commence the check. HR will then advise the applicant of any further actions they need to take.

Once the check is completed HR will be advised if the check is clear or if there is information on the check that needs to be reviewed. In the case of a review, the applicant will be requested to bring the certificate to the recruiting manager to take a copy. In this situation, an assessment must be completed as outlined in the Disclosure and Barring Service checks policy.

An overseas check may also be required depending on the applicant's employment history or gaps in employment history which have been declared.

It is Council policy to undertake a recheck every 3 years.

9.4 Young Worker Risk Assessment

Where a manager recruits someone under the age of 18 they will need to complete a risk assessment. There are also restrictions on the working times and number of hours the individual can work, depending on their age. For further details, please see the Young Persons Procedure available on the Health and Safety Intranet page.

A child work permit will also be required should the applicant not yet have reached the compulsory school leaving age.

9.5 Withdrawal of Conditional Offer of Employment

If it has not been possible to satisfactorily complete pre-employment vetting, or there be another substantial reason, it may be necessary to withdraw a conditional offer of employment from the applicant. All circumstances regarding this must be discussed between the recruiting manager and Senior HR Business Partner.

Should a decision to withdraw a conditional offer of employment be made, the applicant will be informed by HR.

10 Employing people with disabilities

As a Disability Confident Employer, we are working towards removing barriers for disabled people in our approach to recruitment, along with in the workplace.

Under the scheme the Council guarantees interviews to all applicants with a disability who meet the essential requirements of the position as set out in the person specification.

HR can provide advice on making reasonable adjustments to the interview arrangements for applicants with a disability including seeking the advice of Occupational Health or another appropriate agency as needed.

If at the interview stage the manager is unsure if the applicant will be able to fulfil all aspects of the role, guidance should be sought from a Senior HR Business Partner. In

some instances consideration can be given to offering a temporary work trial to enable a fuller assessment of the needs of the applicant. Access to Work can assist with and fund adaptations to work equipment, transportation to and from work and the provision of assistants/mentors etc. Contact should be made with Access to Work by the individual. The Access to Work Mental Health Support service is also available to employees.

11 Inactive casual workers

Casual workers who have not undertaken any work assignments in a period of 6 months will be processed as a leaver. Both manager and worker will be advised of this by email.

Should the worker wish to re-commence work assignments after being made a leaver, the manager must take the necessary steps to re-appoint the worker into the position with sufficient time given to allow for any vetting that is required. In some circumstances direct appointment may not be possible and the position will need to be advertised.

The pre-employment vetting required may vary depending on the role the previous worker is going into, along with the length of time since they last worked.

12 Related policies and procedures

- Disclosure and Barring checks policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Agency workers, interim and consultants' policy and procedure
- Probation policy
- Ethical test use policy

Version Number	Changes Made	Changes Made By:	Authorised/Checked?	Date of Changes
3.0	Policy rewritten	Alex Garrod		Jun 2023
2.7	Updates and amendments as recommended following consultation with the NSPCC	Jane Corsham	Consultation with management, employees and Unison	Dec 2019
2.6	Changed DBS checks every 3 years and updated procedure regarding references	HR Team	Director of Community Services and HR.	Oct 2014
2.5	Appendix 1 – Employment of Disabled People added	HR Team	Y	Oct 2014
2.4	Including sentence in 6.2.1 references	HR Team	Y	March 2013