

Recruiting staff

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It is worth dedicating some time to setting up a thorough recruitment procedure and making sure that everyone who takes part in recruitment is familiar with it – ensuring that you get the right person for the job, that you don't discriminate and that you safeguard any children and vulnerable adults with whom you work.

1 | Defining the job

If you are replacing someone who has left, or trying to fill a new post, think about the job that needs doing. Does the job description need reviewing? Is there still the same need for this job that there was? You'll need to write a job description and person specification before you advertise.

A clear job description will include:

- The job title;
- A statement of who the post holder is responsible to;
- A statement of who the post holder is responsible for;
- The job purpose;
- The main duties of the post.

It should provide a job applicant with important information about the post and how it fits into the organisation's structure. It is also an important tool once the person is in post, and should be checked at least once a year to make sure it is still relevant and up to date.

The work on the person specification. It is important not to do this until the job description is complete, because it should relate very closely to the duties and responsibilities within the job description. Make sure that you are asking only for the experience, skills and qualities that are needed to do the job. For example, if the post holder won't need to drive, don't ask for a driving licence. Be aware that making some things an essential requirement might discriminate against certain sections of society – asking for a driving licence, for example, might discriminate against some disabled people.

Because of the regulations prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of age, you should avoid asking for a number of years' experience. Also avoid using language in a person specification or advertisement which implies a particular age of candidate is required – words such as “dynamic”, for example, which implies youth.

2 | Advertising

To encourage a diverse range of applications, advertise in places that will reach a diverse range of people. Think about newspapers such as Society Guardian (published Wednesdays), local papers and Job Centres. You can use websites – some newspapers also have websites to advertise jobs and there are specialist jobs websites. Other voluntary organisations may be willing to advertise your vacancy.

3 | Application forms

An application form should serve a number of purposes:

- It provides you with a name and contact details.
- It gives objective information about qualifications and previous experience.
- It allows the applicant to say why they think they are appropriate for the job.
- It gives names of referees.

Application forms essentially have two parts. The first part asks for personal details such as the applicant's name and age. The second part asks for information on the applicant's qualifications, experience and skills. Try and make the form straightforward and ask for responses which relate to the job description and person specification. Allow enough space for answers and indicate whether applicants can attach supplementary sheets. You should ask for the names of at least two referees, one of whom should be the most recent employer or, in the case of a volunteer, the most recent organisation with whom they worked. Make it clear on the application form at what point you will take up references.

If the job would involve work with children and young people or vulnerable adults, include a sentence in the application form such as: 'Because of the type of work, involving contact with children and young people or vulnerable adults, you are required by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to declare all convictions including spent convictions.' But make sure that you add a statement such as: 'Having a conviction will not necessarily prevent you from working for [name of organisation].'

4 | Interview panel

There should be more than one person on an interview panel – an odd number is ideal in case of disagreements – and you should aim to have a mix of men and women. The panel should also include people who know the organisation and the post that is being recruited for. You may wish to include people from other organisations, but make sure that they are well briefed.

5 | Shortlisting

Shortlisting should be carried out by the interview panel. They should assess candidates against the person specification, whether by allocating scores or some other method. It would be worth agreeing before shortlisting begins the maximum and minimum number of people that could be interviewed.

6 | Interviews

Before the interviews begin, make sure that you allow time for the interview panel to meet and agree the questions they are going to ask. Consider also how you are going to assess each interviewee against the person specification – there are a number of techniques that range from simply taking detailed notes to awarding points for each element of the person specification (these can be weighted so that more importance is attached to some elements).

Make sure that the room is set up in advance and that if any interviewees have special requirements (for example, they need to use the lift rather than the stairs), you have prepared for this.

For many posts, you will gain a more rounded impression of candidates by asking them to do some sort of work-based test. This may require that they give a presentation or do some written work. You may ask them to carry out an in-tray exercise which tests the ability to prioritise as well as a range of other skills (such as analysis of budgets, letter writing skills and HR knowledge). In determining what type of test to use, consider what skills you are keen to evaluate in relation to the person specification.

7 | Criminal record checks

A check should be obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau for all paid and volunteer staff who will be working with children, young people and vulnerable adults before they start work with your organisation. You will be breaking the law if you discover that a job applicant has been banned from working with children or vulnerable adults and you then go on to appoint them. Likewise, someone who has been banned from working with children or vulnerable adults would be breaking the law if they accepted such a post. See **Factsheet 27: Child and vulnerable adult protection** for responsibilities on employers relating to criminal record checks.

8 | Equal opportunities and the law

When recruiting, it is illegal to set requirements or use criteria that discriminate directly or indirectly against (or in favour of) people on the basis of their racial group; sex or marital status; sexual orientation or religious belief; or age. The only way in which you are allowed to positively discriminate on these grounds is if you can show that this is a genuine occupational qualification for a job and can be justified in terms of the job description. An example of this would be a post working in a women's refuge, which should be filled by women only.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it illegal to discriminate unjustifiably against a person on the basis of disability. Employers are expected to make reasonable adjustments in order to accommodate disabled employees. Reasonable adjustments might include making adjustments to premises, altering the person's working hours, providing a reader or interpreter, acquiring special equipment or modifying existing equipment. The Act lists a number of factors that may have a bearing on whether it is reasonable for an employer to have to make a particular adjustment – further information on these is available on the Disability Rights Commission website (www.drc.gov.uk).

Further help

Ask BVSC Helpline

0121 678 8888
askbvsc@bvsc.org

Development Agencies website

Links and information for developing voluntary and community organisations.
www.birmingham-da.org