

Recruitment and Selection Procedure

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1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The vision of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) is to contribute to the development of excellent public services in Wales by ensuring that service providers continue to value and learn from complaints. To achieve this vision, the Ombudsman needs to be supported by professional and highly motivated staff, therefore it is vital that when recruiting staff, the best person for the job is selected.
- 1.2 The Ombudsman's policy is to ensure that all vacancies are filled through fair and open competition.
- 1.3 The procedure set out below fully complies with the Ombudsman's equality duties.

2.0 Aims of the Policy

1. To ensure that recruitment processes are fit for purpose.
2. To appoint the best person for each position.
3. To ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants.
4. To ensure compliance with the PSOW's equality duties and relevant employment legislation.
5. To promote the values of the PSOW.
6. To meet the operational requirements and the strategic objectives of the PSOW.
7. To maintain a well qualified, experienced and motivated workforce.
8. To assist staff members to develop and use their abilities and skills to best effect.

Note: Any reference to communication in writing includes email correspondence.

3.0 Responsibilities of Employees involved in Recruitment and Selection

- 3.1 All staff involved in the recruitment process should be aware of their responsibilities under the relevant legislation (more information available from the Chief Operating Officer, with advice from PSOW's HR Adviser). Appropriate training or updates will be provided for those involved in recruitment and selection. The PSOW aims to promote equality of opportunity in all its activities, and in respect of this, all members of staff should be mindful of the Equality Act and should maintain a positive attitude towards equality of employment.
- 3.2. If a member of staff involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or family relationship with an applicant or otherwise knows an

applicant (for example as a friend outside work), they must declare this to the COO/Dol or ADLA as soon as they are aware of the individual's application. A decision will then be made as to whether they can be involved in the process. Such decisions will take account of the need to ensure that the process is impartial and fair, and is seen to be so.

- 3.3 All documentation relating to applicants will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and in accordance with data protection legislation. Applicants will have the right to feedback and to access any documentation held on them in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 3.4 Employees developing a job description must ensure that unnecessary requirements are not included that, for example, may exclude a disabled person who could do the job, either with or without a reasonable adjustment.
- 3.5 It is illegal to advertise a job in a way that might be understood to exclude people with a disability.

4.0 Selection Process

- 4.1 The selection process should be:
 - Transparent;
 - Timely and cost effective;
 - Equitable; and
 - Free from conflict of interest.
- 4.2 The recruitment procedure may not commence until:
 - PSOW Financial Procedures establish that there is a need for a post or posts to be created or filled, and that adequate budgetary provision exists; and
 - A job description and person specification have been approved.
- 4.3 All recruitment will be based on agreed job descriptions and person specifications. Recruitment and selection must be conducted as an evidence based process and candidates should be assessed against agreed selection criteria, based on relevant knowledge, skills, competencies, experience and qualifications to perform the role as outlined in the person specification. All decisions must be recorded.
- 4.4 Short-listing must be undertaken by at least two individuals who are involved in the interviewing process. Interviews should be conducted by at least two people. All interviews for one post must be conducted by the same people. The make up of the interviewing panel should, where possible, include male and female staff. Any skills tests (eg, presentations, in-tray exercises) must be directly related to the role and

measured against objective criteria and presentations for one post must be assessed by the same persons. Candidates must be notified of the details of any skills tests when they are invited for interview.

- 4.5 Interview questions must relate to the job requirements as exemplified in the person specification and the candidate's suitability for the position. The person specification should be used as the basis for determining the interview questions. The selection team should also take this opportunity to review the context of the application form.
- 4.6 The successful candidate will be determined by the scoring mechanism used. The final scores for candidates will usually be a unanimous decision of the panel but may also be by a majority view (see 5.5.3 below).
- 4.7 Candidates will be informed of the result of the interview within 10 working days.
- 4.8 As an equal opportunities employer the PSOW will not discriminate against a disabled person in relation to the arrangements made for determining to whom the job should be offered. The broad term "arrangements" has deliberately been used to cover anything done as part of the recruitment process including application form, interviews and arrangements for selection, opportunities for training or promotion, conditions of employment, treatment at work, or dismissal.

5.0 Duties and Responsibilities of Recruitment and Selection Panel

5.1 Recruitment Panel

1. The Ombudsman may elect to chair a recruitment panel or may identify a Director or Manager to act as Chairperson.
2. The Chair will be responsible for ensuring that the recruitment process is conducted in a fair and open manner.
3. The Ombudsman will also identify at least two other persons to form the interview panel.
4. Every interview panel will, where possible, include male and female staff.
5. One or more of the interview panel members may be external to PSOW where the Ombudsman judges that the seniority or the nature of the post being recruited to makes this appropriate.
6. Where appropriate, panel members may include an existing member of staff already performing the role to be advertised.

5.2 Advertising the Vacancy

- 5.2.1 The interview panel will agree the content of the job advert, where the vacancy is to be advertised, the start and finish date for the advert and the contents of the applicants' pack. The PSOW standard application form should be used together with the standard 'notes for candidates', which should be suitably amended to reflect the post being advertised. There will normally be a three week period between the start date and closing date. The Chairperson will give these details to the Corporate Services Manager who will make the necessary arrangements to advertise the vacancy.
- 5.2.2 The panel will also agree provisional interview dates and what the elements of the selection process will be e.g. if a skills test (relevant to the post) is to be included or if a competency based interview alone will be used. These details may be included in the advertisement.

5.3 Management of Applications

- 5.3.1 If the interview panel believe that the response rate will be above 40 applications (judging by previous similar vacancies), the PSOW may outsource the recruitment process (up to the longlist) to a recruitment agency, which will be chosen by the Corporate Services Manager. The Chairperson will be responsible for briefing the recruitment agency. The agency will be responsible for receiving enquiries and dispatching application packs, answering queries (where necessary after checking information with the Chairperson) from potential applicants, receiving completed applications and preparing the longlist of candidates, in priority order, who meet the requirements of the person specification. The agency will deliver the longlist, which will be clearly scored against the criteria, to the Chairperson by an agreed date.
- 5.3.2 If the anticipated response rate is below the above threshold, then the whole process will be managed internally. Once the deadline for applications has passed, the Corporate Services Manager will pass all the applications received to the Chairperson.

5.4 Shortlisting

- 5.4.1 The interview panel will consider the longlist as provided by the agency, or all the applications if an agency was not used. Applications will be assessed using a matrix of the criteria drawn from the person specification (essential criteria first). The panel will agree in advance what weighting should be given to each element in the matrix in arriving at an overall score. Any candidate who has scored "not acceptable" in relation to an essential skill will automatically be assigned an overall score of "not appointable" irrespective of their marks in relation to other essential skills. The strength of each skill identified from the application form will be scored as follows:

- 1: Not acceptable
- 2: Does not quite meet the minimum standard
- 3: Just meets the minimum standard
- 4: Comfortably meets the minimum standards
- 5: Outstanding

5.4.2 Through the process of shortlisting the panel will identify the candidates to go through to the next stage. Shortlisted applicants will be selected in descending order from those applications which obtained the highest score in the shortlisting process. In the event of candidates tying, the panel will in the first instance give priority to the candidates with the fewest scores of 1 or 2 for individual skills. In the event of a further tie, the interview panel will give priority to the candidate or candidates appearing to have the greater depth of relevant experience, especially in the essential skills.

5.4.3 In order to make effective use of the panel's time where there are a large number of candidates to be considered, the Chairperson may ask panel members to mark applications as described above in advance of the meeting and to rank candidates accordingly (no distinction need be drawn between candidates who have scored "not appointable"). 5.4.4 Once a shortlist has been agreed and the interview dates confirmed, the Chairperson and Corporate Services Manager will prepare an interview schedule. The Corporate Services Manager will then:

- Arrange for shortlisted candidates to be invited for interview in accordance with the schedule, initially by telephone and subsequently to be confirmed in writing;
- Arrange for those candidates not shortlisted to be informed in writing that they have been unsuccessful; and
- Ensure that arrangements are made for administration of the interview process, including the room(s) required, any technical requirements and the provision of refreshments for the interview panel.

5.5 The Interview Process

5.5.1 The interview panel will prepare a list of competency based questions which will be asked of each candidate. The panel will also agree the content of any competency based test(s) which are to be used and the scoring mechanism for those tests. Questions and tests will be used to assess the extent to which candidates meet the requirements of the person specification and suitability for the duties as set out in the job description. A scoring matrix (will be prepared in advance. Unless otherwise agreed before the first interview commences, all questions and tests will be given equal weighting. The same approach to tie-

breaking will be used as at the shortlisting stage. A minimum overall score to be a successful candidate will also be agreed. The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the questions and any test(s) are non-discriminatory and can be objectively justified.

- 5.5.2 Guidance on interviewing can be found at Appendix A. All candidates will be asked the same agreed questions. Supplementary questions may be asked depending on the answers given. At the conclusion of each interview, the candidate will be given the opportunity to clarify anything s/he said or to ask questions of the panel. When the candidate leaves, panel members will make a provisional assessment of the candidate's performance, taking into account both their performance at interview and their written application. Panel members will record their provisional scores on the matrix. If a competency test has been used that will also be scored using the agreed method.
- 5.5.3 At the conclusion of the interviews the Chairperson will lead a discussion on the candidates and panel marks for each question and test will be agreed for each candidate. The Chairperson will ensure that the members only discuss matters which are relevant to the post and can be evidenced from the candidate's application form, interview and any competency based test. The objective of the discussion is to achieve unanimous agreement. If unanimity is not possible, a majority score will be used. The Chairperson will formally record the panel decision and record the agreed candidate's score for each essential skill area on a master matrix.
- 5.5.4 Once a panel mark has been agreed for each candidate, candidates will be ranked in merit order. Where there is a tie between candidates, the interview panel will, as at the shortlisting stage, assess one or more of any skills which have been listed as desirable in the person specification. These should be marked in the same manner as the essential skills. In the event of a further tie, the interview panel will give priority to the candidate(s) appearing to have the greater depth of relevant experience. The panel will record the definitive ranking and its reasons for prioritising between any candidates who were tied with respect to essential skills.
- 5.5.5 An offer of employment will be made to the highest ranked candidate(s) according to the number of posts available, providing that candidate has achieved the appointable standard previously agreed. The offer will be made in the first instance by telephone by the Chairperson who will include details of the proposed starting salary. If the offer is declined the next ranked candidate will be offered the post. This process will continue until an offer is accepted or until no candidate of appointable standard remains.
- 5.5.6 If no candidate meets the appointable standard then no offer of employment will be made. PSOW would prefer not to make an appointment than to appoint a candidate who does not fully meet the high standards required.

5.5.7 If there are more candidates whom the panel would have been happy to appoint than there are vacancies, their names may be kept on a reserve list for twelve months in case further vacancies at the grade advertised arise within that period. Those candidates so identified will be recorded in merit order on the panel's decision notice.

5.6 Post Interview Process

5.6.1 The conditional offer to candidate(s) is normally made by telephone by the Chairperson. Assuming the candidate indicates that s/he accepts the conditional offer, the Chairperson will arrange for that offer to be confirmed in writing within one working day. The candidate will be asked to confirm acceptance within 5 working days and to indicate a proposed start date (subject to pre-employment checks). Unsuccessful candidates will not be told of the outcome until PSOW has a confirmed acceptance of the conditional offer of employment.

5.6.2 Candidates unsuccessful at interview will be notified and this will usually be in writing from Corporate Services. All candidates interviewed will be made aware that they may request feedback from the Chairperson or a panel member.

5.6.3 PSOW will carry out a range of pre-employment checks, managed by Corporate Services. These will always include checking eligibility to work in the UK, and checking references. References received will be shared with the Chairperson.

5.6.4. Following the successful completion of pre-employment checks, the successful candidate(s) will normally commence employment at 10.00 hours on the agreed starting date. The Corporate Services Manager will issue a new starters pack on arrival and the line manager will outline the induction programme which s/he has prepared, based on the PSOW agreed induction process.

5.7 Record Keeping

5.7.1 The applications of successful candidates will form part of the personnel file for that individual. Application forms for those applicants not shortlisted will be kept for 12 months. Application forms for those candidates who feature on a reserve list will be kept for 12 months unless they are offered employment before then.

5.7.2 The panel's decision notice and master matrix will be kept for 12 months.

5.7.3 Individual panel members' notes and matrix score sheets will be retained by Corporate Services for a period of four months and then destroyed.

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Good Practice Guidance on Interviews

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with good practice guidelines, panel members should follow the standardised assessment process and complete documentation in full to ensure that there is a clear audit trail to justify any selection decision that has been made.
- 1.2 Documentation of evidence justifying the selection decision will play a critical role in ensuring fairness and objectivity and in defending the organisation against claims of unfairness in the selection process or the selection decision.
- 1.3 Here are some reminders about good practice assessment:

Observe



Record



Classify



Evaluate

2.0 Observing behaviour

- 2.1 Observing simply involves being attentive to the candidate and whatever s/he is doing or saying throughout the interview:
 - Don't make judgements (even though you may be tempted).
 - Don't talk to other panel members about candidates until they have all completed their interview score sheets or you will undermine their objectivity.
 - Observe non-verbal behaviour – non verbal behaviour accounts for over two thirds of communication.
 - Observe specific behaviours – the more specific you are, the more objective your judgements will be.
 - Give each candidate the same opportunity ...even if it is the 100th time you have conducted the interview!

3.0 Recording behaviour

3.1 Recording simply involves making good notes of what people say and do. Recording needs to be structured and accurate, but you can't write as quickly as people can talk (probably!):

- Keep writing throughout the interview to ensure you have as much information as possible.
- Record what people say and do rather than just short-hand adjectives e.g. 'He raised his voice and thumped the table' is more objective than 'He got very agitated and aggressive'.
- Get some specific quotes – this will be powerful information for discussion and feedback as well as boosting the objectivity of your judgements.
- Record non-verbal behaviour too.
- You won't be able to record everything, but aim for 70%.
- As long as **you** can understand your notes afterwards, it doesn't matter how you write.
- Try to develop a shorthand style of your own – this will speed things up significantly.
- **Beware** – although you need to take full notes, try to keep some eye contact with the candidate.

4.0 Classifying behaviour

4.1 Classifying simply involves categorising your notes and evidence against the competencies. This is sometimes a mixture of science and judgement as it may not always be obvious exactly which competency a piece of evidence relates to:

- Try to classify evidence as soon as possible after the interview.
- Use the behavioural indicators to help classify but remember these indicators are not exhaustive.
- **Write down specific examples on the report form** – these will be used ultimately for feedback to the candidate.
- Make sure any judgements you make are supported by an example.
- Highlight both **positive and negative examples** from your notes.
- Only use a piece of evidence once – the important thing is to classify it somewhere; if you use the same evidence more than once you will end up being unfairly harsh or lenient in your evaluation.

- Think about things the candidate could have said, but didn't – this is important information too.
- Complete the assessor report form in a way which is legible and meaningful to others – use specific examples of what the candidate has said or done.

5.0 Evaluating behaviour

5.1 Evaluation is the last thing that you do, once you have collated all your evidence against the competencies.

- Weigh up the evidence rather than count up the amount of evidence: one big chunk of positive evidence might outweigh several small bits of negative evidence.
- Try to use the full range of the rating scale (most people are tempted to avoid the extremes!).
- Think about what the 'acceptable' level of performance is (ie the minimum requirement for the job).
- Avoid giving 'half marks' – use your judgement based on the evidence you have.
- Your rating is simply a reflection of how you view the candidate's performance; you will have to be able to justify it to other panel members in the panel discussion.
- If there is no evidence for a competency, don't try to manufacture some! Simply indicate no evidence with a rating of 0.
- If there is conflicting evidence for a competency e.g. written v spoken communication, you should indicate this with a split rating (e.g. 2/4) but be clear why you are splitting the rating!