



Human Resources
Goireasan Daonna

Recruitment and Selection Guidance

Contents

Clàr-innse

Introduction	3
Guidance	3
Roles and Responsibilities	4
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment	5
Pre Recruitment Planning	9
EATR Process	11
Application Review and Shortlisting	14
Interview Process	19
Appointment and Conditional Offer	22
Pre Employment Checks	23
Final Steps of Appointment	27
Additional Recruitment and Selection Considerations	28
Quick Links	31

Introduction

The Recruitment and Selection Guidance supports Lead Officers (and in some cases Head Teachers) to consistently appoint the most suitable candidate to each vacancy, helping to build a skilled and future-ready workforce for the Highland Council.

The Highland Council is committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse workplace which promotes equality, ensuring that all candidates are assessed fairly based on their skills, experiences and potential - free from bias or discrimination. As a Disability Confident Employer, we actively remove barriers to recruitment and encourage applications from people with disabilities and those with long-term health conditions

This guidance should be followed by all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process to ensure a robust, transparent and merit based process is followed to select the best candidate for the post.

The Highland Council aim to provide a positive experience for all candidates and to be recognised as the employer of choice across the Highlands.

Further information, including employee benefits and applicant guidance is available on the [HR Microsite](#), and can be downloaded on [myjobscotland](#).

Implementation of this guidance will ensure:

- A consistent, efficient and cost-effective recruitment process
- A strong commitment to equality of opportunity
- Alignment with Service Workforce Planning
- A positive applicant experience throughout the recruitment process
- The appointment of the most suitable candidate.

Guidance

This guidance applies to Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees. Teachers and Associated Professionals whose conditions of service are governed by the [Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers \(SNCT\)](#) and [Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers \(LNCT\) agreements](#) may be subject to different provisions. However, the general principles outlined in this policy will still apply.

Roles and Responsibilities

Lead Officer/Head Teacher/Depute Head Teacher

The Lead Officer is responsible for ensuring that the recruitment and selection process is followed in accordance with this guidance.

HR Transactions Team

The HR Transactions Team manages the Highland Council vacancies that appear on myjobscotland. The HR Transactions Team provides support to Lead Officers throughout the recruitment process in relation to TalentLink and myjobscotland. The HR Transactions Team generic email boxes are as detailed below:

General Recruitment Enquiries: Recruitment.Enquiries@highland.gov.uk
Teaching Recruitment: Staffing.RecruitmentTeaching@highland.gov.uk
References: Recruitment.References@highland.gov.uk
Disclosure Checks and PVG Membership: Recruitment.Disclosure@highland.gov.uk

Human Resources (HR)

HR can provide consultancy and advice in relation to good practice. Please contact HR if you have any queries or concerns about job roles and structures. HR can also provide advice on redeployment, Job Evaluation (including where there is a new job created), appointment of Migrant Workers and EU Settled Status scheme etc., where required.

HR will regularly review the policy and procedures to ensure that they are not discriminatory, are robust and achieve the purpose for which they have been designed.

Education and Learning – Workforce Planning and Staffing Team

Education and Learning Establishment Authority to Recruit (EATR) Forms, New Appointment Forms, Contractual Change Forms and Leaver Forms are routed through the Education and Learning Workforce Planning and Staffing Team. Please ensure where prompted that you identify any Education and Learning post as being school based (even if it may not be) to allow this workflow to take place.

Schools are staffed in line with 'Devolved School Management' staffing levels, with the exception of Additional Support Needs (ASN) staff and any staff funded from specific sources such as Pupil Equity Fund (PEF).

For queries relating to non-teaching staffing, HR System Forms (EATRs, Employee Appointment/Change/Leaver Forms), Maternity leave, Flexible Working requests or any other enquiries regarding to non-teaching conditions of service, please contact the Staffing Officers: clstaffing.nonteaching@highland.gov.uk

The Education and Learning Business Support Team are responsible for advertising approved posts, arranging interviews and undertaking pre-recruitment checks for all posts as well as maintaining the Supply List on behalf of the Service and processing supply claim forms to Payroll. Email: recruitment.enquiries@highland.gov.uk

Additional Support Needs (ASN) Staffing

Pupil Support Assistants are allocated to schools by the area team based on the levels of need in the school on an annual basis. Depending on the movement of pupils, this level of need will potentially change from one school session to the next and occasionally within a session. It should therefore be noted that whilst posts might be advertised to a specific school in the first instance, there will be a need for staff to be redeployed from one school base to another to meet service needs. This will be negotiated with staff through the Head Teacher.

Recruitment and Selection Training

Recruitment and Selection e-learning is available on [Traineasy](#) and should be undertaken by all Interview Panel Members.

In-person Recruitment and Selection training is available for all Lead Officers/Head Teachers/Acting Head Teachers and should be completed prior to commencing the process. The e-learning module must be completed prior to attending the in-person training. Please check the [People Development Training Calendar](#) for available dates.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment

The Highland Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion throughout its recruitment and employment practices. This guidance aligns with the Equality Act 2010 and supports the Council's [Equal Opportunities Policy](#).

We ensure that no applicant is discriminated against at any stage of the recruitment process based on protected characteristics, including:

- Age
- Disability

- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Promoting Inclusive Recruitment

To embed equality and fairness in our recruitment practices, the Highland Council promotes:

- A discrimination free environment
- Recognition and appreciation of individual differences
- Encouragement of applications from individuals facing the barriers entering the labour market
- Fair and unbiased treatment of all candidates
- Awareness and avoidance of unconscious bias
- Selection and appointment based on merit, skills and ability
- Development opportunities that are inclusive and sensitive to gender-specific needs
- Justifiable and inclusive job criteria

Disability Confident Leader

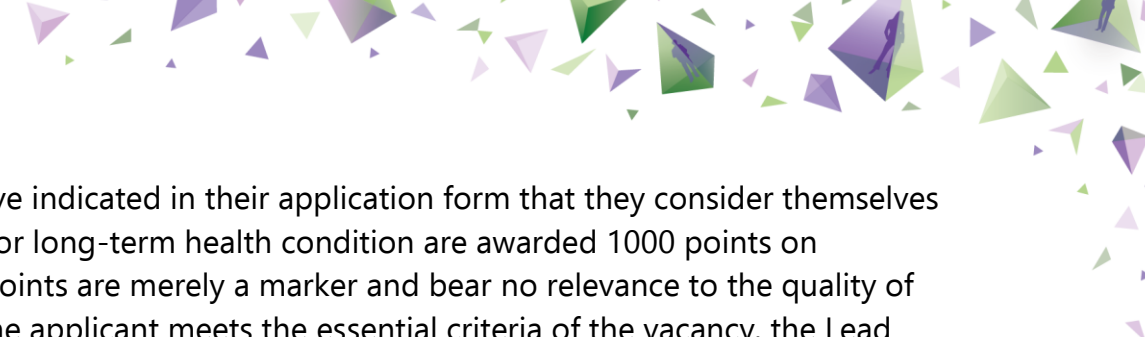
As a Disability Confident Employer, the Council is dedicated to removing the barriers that candidates with disabilities and long-term health conditions may face. We are committed to employing and retaining disabled individuals and ensuring they can fulfil their potential.

Where requested, Lead Officers should make reasonable adjustments to the recruitment and selection process to ensure candidates with disabilities are not disadvantaged and can fully participate.

Guaranteed Interview Schemes

Applicants with disabilities or long-term health conditions

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme provides an opportunity for applicants with disabilities, who meet the essential criteria, to directly progress their application to the interview stage.



Candidates who have indicated in their application form that they consider themselves to have a disability or long-term health condition are awarded 1000 points on TalentLink. These points are merely a marker and bear no relevance to the quality of the application. If the applicant meets the essential criteria of the vacancy, the Lead Officer must invite the candidate for interview under the terms of our commitment to the Disability Confident Scheme as Disability Confident Leaders.

Understanding Impairments under the Equality Act

A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments which can include physical conditions, mental illness, neurological conditions, sensory impairments and conditions that are considered to be 'hidden' impairments.

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone with a "physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

Under the Equality Act 2010, making reasonable adjustments is a statutory requirement and supports candidates during the recruitment process. Arrangements for making reasonable adjustments should be carried out in discussion with the candidate and may include:

- physical changes to the interview venue for example an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person
- providing an interview venue with ground floor access for a wheelchair user or a person with impaired mobility
- extra time to carry out a selection assessment
- provide candidates with interview questions in advance (see [Candidate Preparation Opportunity](#))
- adapted equipment for example a chair, keyboard or height adjustable desk or providing voice recognition software
- ensuring information is available in accessible formats.

Access to Work Scheme

Where there are costs incurred to make reasonable adjustments because of a disability, support may be available from [Access to Work](#) - a Government Scheme that can provide a grant to pay for, or go towards, practical assistance and equipment. Access to Work also has a Mental Health Support Service. There is an assessment process which determines the type of support an employee will need.

Reasonable Adjustment Passport Scheme

The Council has adopted a [Reasonable Adjustment Passport](#) scheme which is a record of adjustments agreed between an employee who has a health condition or disability and their line manager. The passport acts as a 'live' document detailing reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Where an internal employee is the successful candidate for a post they may share their existing Reasonable Adjustment Passport with the Lead Officer.

For further information refer to [Employing Disabled People and People with Health Conditions](#).

Applications from Under-Represented Groups

The Highland Council includes a positive action statement in all its vacancies to encourage applications from groups who may underrepresented:

"The Highland Council is an Equal Opportunities employer and is committed to improving the diversity of its workforce. We welcome applications from people from all backgrounds, representative of the communities we serve. We champion diversity, inclusion and wellbeing within the workplace".

The Highland Council's [Employability Team](#) support people of working age across the Highlands who want to work but need additional support, training or work experience to find and sustain a job, or to return to work after a break. For further information contact the [Employability Team](#).

The Scottish Government are seeking to address the issues and disadvantage experience by people from racialised minorities in Scotland, please see [their Anti-Racist Employment Strategy](#) for further information. [The Scottish Government Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit](#) provides guidance to improve the diversity of the workforce by recruiting more people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Occupational Requirement

In certain circumstances it is lawful under the Equality Act 2010 for an employer to require a job applicant or worker to have a particular protected characteristic. This is known as an 'occupational requirement' and both of the following must apply:

- the protected characteristic is essential for, and relates to, the main tasks of the job

- the Council can prove it has a good business reason ('objective justification')

An example would be a women's refuge which lawfully provides services to women only can apply a requirement for all members of its staff to be women.

Where there is an Occupational Requirement associated with a job, or where it is considered that there should be, the Lead Officer should consult with [HR](#) at the outset of the recruitment process.

Pre Recruitment Planning

Lead Officers should not automatically advertise a vacant post on a like for like basis, they must first assess with their Line Manager whether the vacancy needs filled. There may be alternative ways of working within the Service/Cluster that can fulfil the duties of the job role without having to recruit or working in a different way. For further Guidance see [Flexible Working Arrangements](#).

Where a Lead Officer needs to recruit, consideration should be given to their Service Plan and their Service Workforce Planning, such as whether the vacancy presents an opportunity to employ a Modern Apprentice as part of longer-term workforce development.

Duration of Post

Lead Officers should decide if the post should be offered as a secondment opportunity, fixed term or permanent role. Where appropriate, fixed-term vacancies will be advertised as potential secondment opportunities for permanent employees. Secondments help build a more agile workforce by developing skills, broadening experience, and future-proofing teams across the Council. For further information please refer to [Secondment Policy](#).

Secondment or Temporary/Fixed term post becoming permanent

Where a temporary/fixed term job is being made permanent or there is a secondee, temporary or fixed term employee within a permanent post and it is proposed to make a permanent appointment, depending on the circumstances the incumbent can be considered on a permanent basis without further advertising providing:

- the post has previously been advertised
- the secondment or temporary/fixed term appointment was made following a formal recruitment process.

Secondments, temporary or fixed term posts are not guaranteed to become permanent. Each post is treated individually. For further information please contact [HR](#).

Creation of a new post not on the Service Establishment

Where the Lead Officer and Line Manager have recognised a need for a new role within their Service/Section, this can be created and added to Service Establishment through completion of an 'EATR form' if the new post has an existing 'Approved Post Title'. The Lead Officer must contact [HR](#) where a new Post Title is required as the [Job Evaluation process](#) must be undertaken to confirm the Grade for the job role.

Job Description and Person Specification (non-school vacancies)

The job description should accurately reflect the duties of the post, outlining clearly the responsibilities applicable to the job. This will give potential candidates an understanding of the requirements of the job from which they can assess their interest and suitability.

A person specification is a profile of the attitudes and behaviours of the type of person that is needed to do the job. This is considered the 'essential criteria' and is used to assess the application forms received, to assess evidence provided by candidates at interview and inform the final selection decision. The Lead Officer should ensure that the essential criteria accurately describes the types and level of skills, physical and mental requirements, knowledge and behaviours required of the postholder in carrying out the duties of the post. Lead Officers should update existing job description and person specification into the [Job Description and Person Specification new format](#).

Avoid the use of any criteria or language in job descriptions or job specifications that could be viewed as discriminatory and that cannot be objectively justified. For example, only use terms such as 'recent graduate' or 'highly experienced' when these are actual requirements of the job as these can discriminate against age.

Changes to job description and person specification may have Job Evaluation implications. Should an existing role require changes please discuss with [HR](#). Very minor amendments that do not change the essence of the job description or person specification may be made by the Lead Officer.

Job Description and Person Specification (non-teaching school vacancies)

Contact [Education and Learning Workforce Planning Team](#) for generic job descriptions and person specifications for non-teaching school vacancies.

Redeployment Check

The Council aims to retain staff who are facing potential redundancy from their post. There may be other instances where redeployment is required e.g. in cases of ill health or disability, etc. Lead Officers should work with HR to explore redeployment opportunities prior to proceeding to advertise the vacant post.

The Lead Officer should email [HR](#) to check whether there is a suitable employee on the Redeployment Register that could fill the vacancy (unless the post is inappropriate due to hours, location, or job type).

Modern Apprenticeship Scheme

The Lead Officer should consider whether the post is suitable for a Modern Apprenticeship. This may be a longer-term solution that will align with Service Workforce Plan. For more information, email THCMA.Centre@highland.gov.uk.

EATR Process

Completing an EATR Form

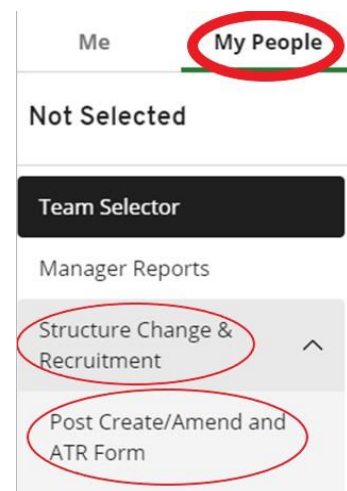
To advertise a vacancy the online '**Post Creation and/or Amendment and/or Authority to Recruit**' form (referred to as '**EATR**' form) must be completed.

To complete an EATR form Lead Officers will require access to the My People section in [My View](#). To check if you have access to 'My People', log into your My View account where you should be able to see 'My People' tab, as shown. If you do not have this, email [HR Systems Team](#) to request a link to the HR Forms.

To complete the EATR Form, either follow the instructions below or watch the People Development video [Introduction to HR Forms](#) (skip forward to 5 minutes 50 seconds where the EATR Form is discussed).

- log into 'My People' via My View
- select 'Structure Change and Recruitment'
- select 'Post Create/Amend and ATR form'

This will take you to the EATR (Post Creation and/or Amendment and/or Authority to Recruit (v2) form).



The Lead Officer must have the Post ID (if applicable), Manager's Post ID, Funding and Budget information prior to completing the EATR form. The EATR requires full justification for filling the vacancy.

All posts should be advertised internally in the first instance. Only Highland Council employees (including those employed on a casual basis), NHS employees, High Life Highland and Agency Staff working for Highland Council are eligible to view and apply for internal vacancies.

All fixed term posts should be advertised as secondment opportunities for permanent staff members and the HR Transactions Team will specify this in the internal advert. Employees wishing to apply for a fixed-term vacancy on a secondment basis must seek approval from their Line Manager before applying.

If there is a need for the post to be advertised externally, the Lead Officer should provide a justification for external advertisement in the field provided on the EATR form.

The Lead Officer should determine whether a Disclosure Check or PVG is required for the vacancy.

A Job Description and Person Specification are required to be uploaded and a structure chart where appropriate.

Once the EATR form has been submitted the Lead Officer will receive an automated acknowledgement.

Service Approval Stages

The EATR will proceed through Service approval stages. Once it has been approved by the Senior Manager/Chief Officer it will proceed to the HR Transactions Team for processing.

The Lead Officer should be aware that the Approval Stages can take some weeks and should take this into account when planning their recruitment timescales.

If a person other than the vacant post's Line Manager completes the EATR, an automated email will be sent to the Line Manager seeking approval to proceed. Without Line Manager approval the EATR will not progress to the next approval stage. Where the Line Manager is not available to approve, please email the [HR Systems Team](#).

All Education and Learning Service posts are processed through the Education and Learning Workforce Planning Team.

Advertising the Vacancy

Where the EATR form has requested the vacancy is advertised, the HR Transactions Team will process as follows:

***TalentLink** is the recruitment portal used by Highland Council and access will be automatically granted once you complete the EATR form in My View/My People. A confirmation email will be sent to you with further instruction.

****myjobscotland** is the national recruitment portal advertising Scottish local authority vacancies. It is supported by TalentLink, the system which provides users the ability to manage the recruitment process.

Vacancies usually go live on the myjobscotland recruitment portal every second Tuesday, please see the [Vacancies page](#) which details advertising dates.

Any EATRs approved and passed to the HR Transactions Team by 12 noon on Monday of the previous week will be included in the next advertising cycle. If the deadline is missed, the EATR will be included in the following advertising cycle, 2 weeks later.

Vacancies are usually advertised for a 2-week period on myjobscotland; however, this can be extended upon request to the HR Transactions Team.

Additional Advertising Options should be discussed with the Line Manager and can include:

- Highland Council Social Media platforms (promoted posts on Facebook/Twitter). Please use a pro-forma for this under Request a Service on the [Corporate Communications page](#). This cost is met by the Service, and you will require the budget code to complete the form.
- external publications pertinent to the type of vacancy being advertised. Advertising costs are met by the Service.

After the closing date the HR Transactions Team notifies the Lead Officer if there are applications for review on TalentLink. If there are no applications for a vacancy, the Lead Officer will also be notified, and the vacancy may be readvertised again by emailing the HR Transactions Team rather than going through the EATR process again.

Where an Identical Vacant Post Arises

Where a vacant position has been advertised and another position becomes available, it may be possible to appoint to both positions from one advert and one set of interviews if the following criteria are met:

- the interviews have not taken place for the initial vacant position advertised
- the second vacant position is the same job title, grade, section and Service as the original vacant position advertised (see below for Contract Type/Hours)
- there are at least two appointable candidates
- appropriate approval has been given to appoint to the second vacant position.

If interviews have already taken place for the initial vacant position advertised or any of the other above criteria are not met, then the full recruitment process must be undertaken for the second vacant position.

Where all the above criteria are met, at the interview the Lead Officer must:

- inform all candidates that there are now two vacant positions
- make the candidates aware if there is a difference in contract **type** or contract **hours** (see below)
- ask the candidates if they wish to be considered for both vacancies.

Contract Type - it must be noted that where the initial vacant position advertised was temporary and another position becomes available that is permanent the second (permanent) position must go through a full recruitment process.

Contract Hours – where the initial vacant position has fewer hours available than the second vacant position, a full recruitment process must be undertaken for the second position.

This fair and equitable process ensures that where a second vacant position arises that has more favourable terms than the initial vacant position it must go through a full recruitment process to be made available to all potential interested parties.

Application Review and Shortlisting

Where applications have been received for a vacancy, the Lead Officer and Interview Panel Members should aim to shortlist within 5 working days of receiving notification from the HR Transactions Team.

Shortlisting and Interview Panel

Prior to shortlisting the Lead Officer should appoint an appropriate Interview Panel that is representative of the level of the post and also considers the diversity balance of the Panel (for example gender and race). Panel Members should be chosen based on their knowledge, skills and experience, and responsibilities in accordance with the post to be filled.

It is mandatory for the Lead Officer to have undertaken both the e-learning and the in-person Recruitment and Selection Training. All panel members must complete the e-learning Recruitment and Selection Training. They may also wish to undertake the in-person training to develop their practical recruitment and selection skills. To ensure fairness there should be at least two panel members and usually no more than four including the Lead Officer.

The Lead Officer should email Recruitment.Enquiries@highland.gov.uk giving details of the Interview Panel Members requesting their access to the vacancy on TalentLink.

All Recruitment Panel Members will be able to log into TalentLink to view applications online and carry out shortlisting. The Lead Officer is responsible for updating TalentLink.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Applications

As AI tools become more accessible, it is increasingly likely that applicants may use AI to help them when completing application forms, including personal statements and work experience.

Hiring managers must ensure recruitment practices are transparent, fair and consistent by applying the principles outlined below:

Transparency and Ethical Considerations

- Applicants may use AI tools for legitimate support, such as grammar correction, formatting, or improving clarity. These uses are generally acceptable and an applicant should not be penalised where this applies.
- Applications who are suspected of using AI in their application to fabricate experience, qualifications or competencies could constitute misrepresentation and this is not appropriate or acceptable
- AI detection tools should not be used when screening an application, unless fully disclosed and agreed with the applicant
- It should be noted that AI tools are known to have limitations when screening applications, including the possibility of incorrect positive results; therefore, they

should not be depended on. Managers should not attempt to replace their own knowledge, judgment, and human decision-making with AI tools, as these remain critical for fair and effective selection.

Evaluation Best Practices

- Hiring managers should apply consistent evaluation criteria during screening to minimise bias and ensure fairness, especially when AI-generated content is suspected. For example, avoid penalising applicants for poor grammar or spelling—focus instead on their skills, experience and potential they could bring to the Council.
- If unsure whether AI has been used and the candidate meets the selection criteria, consider validating their experience during the interview. This may include incorporating a practical assessment within the interview to help verify the candidate’s actual skills and knowledge.

Supporting Neurodiverse Applicants

- Hiring managers should be aware that some applicants, for example those who are neurodiverse, may use AI tools as a form of reasonable adjustment to help articulate their experiences more clearly.

Hiring managers should apply consistent standards to all applications and focus on assessing genuine skills through structured interviews and practical tasks (where applicable). When AI-generated content is suspected, fairness is key and applications should be evaluated based on demonstrated ability, not writing style. If you need further advice on an individual case or application, please contact [HR](#).

The Armed Forces Covenant

The Highland Council has attained Gold Member status of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) and supports applicants from the Armed Forces Community through the Employer Recognition Scheme.

Talentlink Points System

The Highland Council uses a points-based system within Talentlink to indicate to managers when specific actions are required for an applicant. These points are not a reflection of application quality but serve as operational markers to support fair and consistent recruitment practices.

Applicants who have indicated on their application form that they are currently, or have been, a member of the Armed Forces (Regular or Reservist) or are a spouse/partner or dependent of serving Armed Forces personnel will be awarded 100 points on Talentlink. If the applicant meets the essential criteria for the vacancy, the Lead Officer must invite them to interview in accordance with the Armed Forces Covenant - Guaranteed Interview Scheme.

Applicants whose results are 330 points on Talentlink are identified as potentially requiring an Overseas Criminal Record Check (OCRC). The Lead Officer should inform the candidate and request that they should provide the OCRC at or before the interview

Where a Candidate is Known by an Interview Panel Member (Declaring an Interest)

The Lead Officer and Interview Panel Members must declare an interest where:


- they are in a close personal relationship with a candidate e.g. husband/wife/spouse, civil partnership, co-habitant
- they are a relative of a candidate e.g. daughter/son, sibling, parent, aunt/uncle, cousin etc. including in-laws and step relatives
- they are a close personal friend of a candidate. e.g. someone known personally and on a social basis outside of work
- they are living in the same household as a candidate. e.g. lodger, stepsibling etc.
- they have previously had a relationship with a candidate e.g. ex-wife/husband/partner etc.

In such circumstances the panel member should withdraw from the Interview Panel and a replacement member substituted. If, for business purposes this is not possible then the balance of the Interview Panel must be considered and a minimum of 2 panel members are required. The Lead Officer should manage this process. If the Lead Officer declares an interest their Line Manager should assume control. Guidance regarding the composition of the Interview Panel can be sought from [HR](#) where necessary.

The selection process must be conducted fairly and equitably with full transparency thus protecting the Lead Officer, candidate and Council from any allegations that personal relationships influenced an appointment of a member of staff.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting is a very important part of the process and Interview Panel Members should be aware of and manage any unconscious bias. Interview Panel Members should initially review application forms individually against the essential criteria as per the



person specification of the vacancy to help prevent bias. The Interview Panel Members should check that each application form fully details work experience. If there are any gaps, or any reasons for leaving a previous employer that gives cause for concern, this should be explored at interview if the candidate is shortlisted. The acceptance of late applications is at the Lead Officer's discretion providing it is prior to the shortlisting taking place.

The Interview Panel Members must not exclude or include candidates from the Shortlist on the basis of:

- personal information such as name or address
- a reason connected to a protected characteristic such as gender (unless an occupational requirement applies to the post), race, religion or any of the other protected characteristics
- assumptions about applicant's home and/or family life and how it would affect their work
- assumptions about how an applicant's disability or health record will affect their work
- Trade Union membership or non-union membership
- convictions spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (other than for exempt posts, employments and occupations)
- present employment status, contract status (e.g. fixed term or temporary employment), or previous redundancy
- a candidate's wish to work in a flexible way. For further guidance see [Flexible Working Arrangements](#)
- political activity, except where the post is specifically politically restricted under the Council's rules of governance.

The Lead Officer co-ordinates the Interview Panel Members to agree a Shortlist of suitable applicants to interview, then updates the status of all applicants on TalentLink to inform which candidates are to progress to interview, and which are unsuccessful. Candidates that are not shortlisted will receive an email to inform them.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Officer to book the facilities required for the interview, and the interview location including the post code is required for the Interview Arrangement Form.

If there is only one candidate who meets the essential criteria in the person specification it is acceptable to shortlist that one individual for interview. The Lead Officer may also contact the HR Transactions Team if they wish to re-advertise. The HR Transactions Team will arrange this and inform the original candidates that their applications will be carried forward.

Once the Shortlist is finalised, and TalentLink updated, the Lead Officer should complete the 'Interview Arrangement Form' via [My View](#)/My People. The interview arrangement form asks whether a presentation is required, the Lead Officer should complete details if required. The 'Interview Arrangement Form' should be completed 10-14 days in advance of interview date to allow the HR Transactions Team to arrange interviews and for the Interviewees to prepare.

Where the job is a regulated role, an overseas criminal record check (OCRC) may be required for any individual applying to undertake such a role with the Highland Council who has lived or worked outside the UK. Where this applies to a shortlisted candidate, the OCRC should be requested in advance of the interview by the Lead Officer. See [Overseas Criminal Records Check](#) for further information.

Interview Process

The HR Transactions Team will use the information provided by the Lead Officer in the Interview Arrangements Form to invite shortlisted candidates to attend interview either virtually or in person. Interviewees are given the option to request Reasonable Adjustments if required due to a disability to enable them to attend the interview. It is the Lead Officers responsibility to arrange any requests made.

The HR Transactions Team send out the Job Pack to the Interview Panel Members approximately 2 days before the interview. This includes the application forms, interview timetable, the Selection Record Form and a Selection Record Summary Form (which the Lead Officer completes). These forms can also be found on the [Recruitment and Selection page](#).

The purpose of the interview is to:

- provide the Interview Panel with further information regarding how well the
- candidate's attitude and behaviours meet those in the essential criteria of the Person Specification
- explore any questions that the application form did not fully detail (e.g. gaps in employment history)
- give the candidates more information about the Job Role, Service, Employment Provisions and working for the Highland Council
- demonstrate the Highland Council's fair and equitable recruitment process and provide a positive experience for all candidates
- identify the most suitable person for the job.

Preparation prior to Interview

The Interview Panel should meet beforehand to discuss the process to be followed and questions to be asked. A list of questions to be asked of all candidates should be agreed. Additional but related question may be asked to probe for more information, establish facts or confirm details that may not have been clear from a candidate's application form. Interview Panel Members should produce questions that address all the essential criteria in the person specification and take care not to include questions that cannot be justified. Questions should not be leading, prompting or helpful to certain candidates.

Where the demands of the job include standby rota/weekend working or similar it is appropriate to check with all candidates that they understand that this is a requirement of the role as detailed on the job description (see [Final Steps of Appointment Process](#)).

When the list of questions have been agreed with the Interview Panel, the Lead Officer should complete the Selection Record Forms to note evidence at interview.

Candidate Preparation Opportunity

Depending on the nature of the role and the type of questions being asked, it may be beneficial to provide candidates with the interview questions shortly before the interview begins. In such cases, candidates can be invited to arrive approximately 30 minutes early and given a quiet space to review the questions. This approach is particularly useful when seeking detailed, experience-based responses, as it allows candidates time to reflect and prepare, leading to more insightful and relevant answers. The Interview Panel should agree in advance whether this approach is appropriate for the role in question.

Neurodiverse candidates may request to see interview questions in advance as a reasonable adjustment. Where this is requested, all candidates should receive the questions in advance to ensure fairness. The timing of this should be considered carefully, taking into account the job role and length of the interview. For some roles, providing questions 1 hour before the interview may be sufficient, while more complex interviews may require a longer preparation period. The Interview Panel should agree on the timing and ensure consistency in how this is applied. For further guidance please contact [HR](#).

Candidates may wish to bring notes into the interview to help structure their responses. Allowing notes can support candidates in presenting their experience more confidently and can be particularly helpful for those who benefit from additional processing time or

structure. The Interview Panel should ensure that this is applied consistently and fairly across all candidates.

Selection Tests/Presentations

Presentations or selection tests may be used to supplement the evidence gained from the application form and interview processes. Presentation or tests may include:

- a presentation on an appropriate topic to test the candidate's ability to present information and ideas clearly and persuasively
- test to ascertain candidate's knowledge of industry standards e.g. UK vs European driving legislation
- preparation of a written report to test the candidate's ability to research and report on a specific topic
- presentation of a portfolio of work to evidence relevant work experience.

Conducting a Structured Interview

It is the Lead Officer's responsibility to start, direct and close the interview, ensuring that the Council is represented in a way that promotes good employment practice and a professional work environment. Candidates should be informed that notes will be taken during the interview and that they will have the opportunity to ask any questions at the end. The Lead Officer should explain that a decision will be reached after all interviews have been completed and that they will be contacted with the outcome of the interview. The Lead Officer should outline the Council terms and conditions of the job role, including starting salary.

Where a candidate requires (but has not yet provided) an Overseas Criminal Record Check (OCRC), this should be requested at the start of the interview. If the candidate is unable to provide an OCRC, the procedure outlined on page 21 must be followed. The interview process must give all candidates an equal chance to provide evidence of their match to the person specification.

Panel members should share asking the interview questions and complete each candidate's Selection Record Form before commencing the next interview. Assessments on individual candidates should not be shared until all interviews are complete.

Reaching a Decision

When all interviews are complete the Lead Officer should initiate the decision-making process. The Interview Panel should assess which of the candidates is the best match to the essential criteria detailed in the person specification.

The Lead Officer should gather the Selection Record Form for each candidate from each Interview Panel Member and these should be used to complete the Selection Record Summary Form. This should be used as the basis for discussion and may assist where Panel members differ in opinion.

Where more than one candidate meets all the essential attributes, the panel should then consider how well each attribute is met. Criteria that are not already detailed in the person specification cannot be introduced. If a unanimous agreement cannot be reached the Lead Officer should make the decision.

Selection Record Forms and the Selection Record Summary Form should be scanned and emailed to recruitment.enquiries@highland.gov.uk for retention for 12 months. The Lead Officer should shred the hard copies along with any other notes taken during the selection process. Should there be a future Employment Tribunal, these documents can be requested so care must be taken in the appropriateness of notes as comments or notations may be challenged.

If none of the candidates interviewed adequately met the essential criteria, then the panel should not appoint to the vacancy. The Lead Officer should review the job and person specification; quality and appropriateness of the advert and timing of advertising before deciding whether or how to readvertise.

Appointment and Conditional Offer

Once the Interview Panel has decided which candidate to appoint, the Lead Officer should contact the successful candidate first.

Conditional Offer

Once the Interview Panel have reached a decision, the Lead Officer should try to contact all interviewees by telephone to update them on the outcome of the interview. The preferred candidate should be contacted first, but all candidates should be contacted within 48 hours of the interview wherever possible.

The Lead Officer should speak to the preferred candidate directly to make a verbal **conditional** job offer that is subject to satisfactory [pre-employment checks](#). The offer should be made on the understanding that the candidate agrees to the main conditions of service associated with the post as outlined in the interview. The Lead Officer should reiterate these briefly before asking the candidate to accept the position. In particular, the Lead Officer should ensure that the candidate is aware of the terms and conditions

of the job being offered (e.g. – a fixed-term contract end date, standby requirement or annualised hours etc). A provisional start date can be agreed; however, pre-employment conditions **must be met before confirming a start date** and the contract will be drawn up thereafter. The Lead Officer can withdraw a job offer if the pre-employment conditions are not met.

If the preferred candidate does not accept the position and there is a 2nd choice candidate who also met the essential criteria for the post, the Lead Officer can offer the position to them, on the condition that pre-employment checks are met.

Where the preferred candidate accepts the job offer, the Lead Officer should update all candidates' Application Status on TalentLink confirming which candidate was 'hired' and which were 'rejected'.

Pre Employment Checks

Pre-employment checks are necessary to ensure a candidate is eligible for the vacancy and this is considered part of the Council's due diligence. Pre-Employment checks must be carried out in accordance with the 6 data protection principles, as set out in the [Data Protection Act 2018](#).

Right to Work Check (responsibility of Lead Officer)

It is the Council's legal duty to carry out right-to-work checks to ensure prospective employees can legally work in the UK. A maximum fine of £20,000 may be imposed on an organisation that employs an illegal worker, so it is essential that Lead Officers undertake the right-to-work check.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Officer to ensure they undertake a Right to Work check This can be undertaken during interview (if appropriate) or when a conditional offer is made.

The Right to Work check is a 3 step manual process and Lead Officers should follow the [Right to Work Checks - Government Guidance](#) process, which includes:

- obtaining original documents from either List A or B of the acceptable documents
- checking that the documents are genuine and that the person presenting them is the prospective employee and the rightful holder
- copying each document and retaining the copy securely, noting the date on which the check was made.

Candidates must be treated fairly and consistently during recruitment, with the same document requirements and checking process applied to all candidates. Assumptions about an individual's right to work in the UK must not be made.

See [Migrant Workers Guidelines](#) for further information on the appointment of Migrant Workers, EU Settled Status scheme and workers from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland.

References

Highland Council do not seek references for Internal Candidates.

References will be sought by the HR Transactions Team following completion of the 'Appoint a New Employee to Post form' for the successful candidate. Two references are required, one must be from the applicant's current employer (or last employer if currently unemployed). If the applicant has never been employed, then two personal references are required. Candidates must be asked to provide an alternative referee if the original referee is a Member of the Interview Panel.

References should be treated with particular care and should only be used to confirm rather than inform a decision to appoint. References should be treated in the strictest confidence with no discussion of content out with the Interview Panel.

Pre-employment Health Checks

If the preferred candidate has identified themselves as having a disability, it is appropriate to ask them questions about their disability and any reasonable adjustments (see [Reasonable Adjustments](#)) they may require to undertake the post when offering the post on a conditional basis. Internal employees may already have a [Reasonable Adjustment Passport](#) that they may wish to share with the Lead Officer.

The HR Transactions Team sends out a Medical Questionnaire once a conditional offer of employment has been made to preferred candidates that are external to Highland Council or for internal candidates where there is a change of Line Manager. The candidate will complete and return to the Lead Officer who should retain in an electronic file.

Certain medical conditions may affect a candidate's ability to carry out the duties associated with a post. The disclosure of any condition that is classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 may trigger the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments

where required to reduce or remove disadvantages faced by the disabled worker to allow them to fulfil the job role.

The Lead Officer should examine the successful candidate's Medical Questionnaire and if required, seek guidance from [HR](#). HR may advise that the Medical Questionnaire should be forwarded to [Occupational Health](#) who will provide advice on the candidate's ability to carry out the job or any reasonable adjustments required. The Occupational Health Adviser will decide whether further medical advice is required by way of a formal pre-employment medical examination.

Disclosure Scotland and Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme

For some roles, a Disclosure Scotland check or Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme membership is required to determine whether a candidate has a criminal record that may prevent them from being employed in that role. These checks are managed by the HR Transactions Team.

The Council does not automatically exclude individuals with previous convictions from employment. For more details, please refer to the [Rehabilitation of Offenders](#) guidance.

Disclosure Scotland checks and shares information about individuals' criminal records to help employers make safer recruitment decisions for roles involving work with children and/or protected adults. The level of check required depends on the nature and responsibilities of the role.

As of **April 2025**, there are four levels of disclosure checks:

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 2 with barred list check
- PVG Scheme

To determine whether a role is regulated and requires PVG membership, please refer to Disclosure Scotland's [List of Regulated Roles](#).

Further guidance is available in the [Disclosure and PVG Guidance](#).

For any further queries, please contact: Recruitment.Disclosure@highland.gov.uk

Overseas Criminal Record Checks (OCRC)

An overseas criminal record check will be required for any individual applying to undertake a regulated role with the Council, where they have lived/worked in any country other than the UK or Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Hungary, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain or Poland.

This applies where the individual:

- was aged 18 years or over at the time
- lived or worked overseas for a (continuous) period of 3 months or more within the last 5 years.

Applicants are responsible for arranging the overseas check and covering any associated costs.

If a candidate is interviewed while overseas and offered a position subject to pre-employment checks (including an OCRC), the OCRC must be dated no more than 3 months prior to the candidates start date in a regulated role with the Council.

Lead Officers should be aware that obtaining an OCRC can take several weeks, depending on the country the candidate has lived/worked in.

The Lead Officer is responsible for ensuring that the OCRC process is undertaken where required. This includes confirming whether the check has been provided, requesting it if not, and ensuring that all necessary follow-up actions are completed.

Where it is not possible to receive a Disclosure Scotland clearance for periods of time candidates have lived/worked overseas, the candidate must be asked specific questions about this period and in particular whether they had any criminal convictions during this time abroad. In addition, if they have not listed an overseas referee, they must supply a character or employer reference to cover this period.

A decision to appoint should not be taken until approval is given by the Cluster Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Officer or delegated Officer.

Where an Overseas Criminal Record Check (OCRC) is required, the Lead Officer must verify the document (or alternative documentation where an OCRC cannot be provided). Once verified, it should be sent to Recruitment.Disclosure@highland.gov.uk along with the PVG and other identification documents for retention in the employee file. In line with Highland Council's data protection guidelines, any personal information held locally for this purpose must be securely deleted once the email has been sent.

Final Steps of Appointment

Once required pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily met the Lead Officer should:

- contact the candidate again to agree a **start date** and ask the candidate for their National Insurance number, personal email address and to confirm their date of birth
- confirm **salary** (normally the first point of the Grade unless applicant has relevant experience in the role. Any increase of spinal column points must be approved by the Chief Officer)
- complete '**Appoint an employee to a Post**' form via [My View](#)/My People. This form should be completed immediately to initiate reference requests where required and to produce a Payroll Number, ensuring no delay in payment to the employee. Clearly detail duration (fixed term/permanent), working pattern and any allowances (stand- by, sleeping in etc.) as this is required for the contract and Payroll purposes.
- complete **ICT requirements** for the new employee via the [ICT Service Portal](#). This must be completed as quickly as possible to allow the request to be processed. A Payroll Number is required to set up a new employee online account (email etc) however hardware may be ordered through the ICT Service Catalogue in advance. For further information log into [MyICTPortal](#) and click on 'Knowledge'
- arrange the [Employee Induction](#) on their start date
- consider inviting the new employee to any upcoming team meetings, events or relevant activities prior to their official start date, where appropriate, as this is good onboarding practice. This can help them begin to feel part of the team, gain early insight into the work environment, and ease their transition into the role
- ensure the new employee's line manager makes contact in advance of the start date to welcome them and provide key information, such as useful resources and an overview of what to expect on their first day.

Interview Feedback

Interview feedback may be requested by any candidate. Any feedback must be handled sensitively and be evidenced based. Wherever possible the Lead Officer should speak directly to unsuccessful candidates to provide interview feedback, highlighting strengths demonstrated during the process such as relevant experience, transferable skills or communication style. Feedback should be constructive and encouraging, with Lead Officers supporting future applications where appropriate.

Additional Recruitment and Selection Considerations

Canvassing or Bribing Members of the Council or Employees

Canvassing of or bribing (in breach of the Bribery Act 2010) Members of the Council or employees of the Council in connection with any appointment in the Council will disqualify the applicant. It may also lead to disciplinary action being taken against the person canvassing, if an employee of the Council.

In the case of a person offering a bribe, promising a bribe, agreeing to a bribe or giving a bribe, this may also lead to criminal action being taken.

Political Activity

Certain posts are restricted by legislation in the political activities that can be carried out by the successful candidate on taking up appointment.

The Lead Officer should ensure that job descriptions for politically restricted posts contain the clause below explaining the restriction to potential candidates:

'The post is defined as being politically restricted and will, therefore, be restricted in terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2004, and by the Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990'.

Please refer to the list of [politically restricted posts](#) for more information on which posts are politically restricted.

Continuous Service

If the preferred candidate has previous Local Government/Public Sector or affiliated service and this is continuous (i.e. without a break of 1 week (7 days, Sunday to Saturday) then this service will count towards the purposes of calculating entitlement to redundancy payments, annual leave, occupational sickness and maternity provisions dates.

Authority/Organisations that this would apply to can be checked in the [Modification Order](#). Details and dates of the previous Local Authority service should be added into the additional information on the 'Appoint an employee to a Post' form and the line manager should tick 'send me a receipt of my choices' in [My View](#)/My People. If it is not possible to for the Lead Officer to confirm previous local authority employment dates

prior to completing this form then advice from the HR Transactions Team should be sought.

Former Employees

If a candidate is a former employee of the Highland Council and terminated their employment through voluntary redundancy or has been retired previously on redundancy or efficiency grounds, the Service Chief Officer must consult the Head of HR before the short listing is undertaken.

Where a candidate has left local government employment due to health reasons, it is essential that a pre-employment medical be carried out. In this situation the Lead Officer should seek advice from [HR](#).

Rehabilitation of Offenders

The Highland Council will not necessarily refuse to employ an individual who has been convicted of an offence. This will depend on the nature of the post and the circumstances and background of the offences, in accordance with the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#) which enables some criminal convictions to become "spent" (i.e. - ignored) after a rehabilitation period.

Spent (protected) Convictions

The amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (2013 and 2020) states that when applying for certain jobs and activities, some convictions and cautions are considered spent (protected) after a specified period of time. This means that they do not need to be disclosed to employers and cannot be taken into account if the candidate discloses a conviction on the application form.

Unspent Convictions

The Highland Council may employ a candidate declaring an unspent conviction depending on the job role and conviction. The application should be considered sensitively and objectively, with focus on the candidate's match to the person specification.

Applicants are given the opportunity to discuss criminal records with the Lead Officer outside of the interview, if preferred. The Lead Officer and Interview Panel should conduct a case-by-case analysis of any convictions and cautions disclosed and consider any relevance to the position sought. Factors to consider include:

- the nature of the conviction and its relevance to the job in question, the reason for the offence, and when it took place

- how old the person was at the time of committing the offence(s) and the number of offences committed
- whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour
- whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour
- any risks identified to the Council's business, clients and employees.

Before short listing a candidate with a criminal record, you must take advice from [HR](#).

Exempt Posts

Certain posts are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exclusions and Exceptions) (Scotland) Order 2003 and candidates are required to declare convictions that could otherwise be considered spent. Exempt posts are classed as 'regulated work' which require a PVG Membership (eg – Social Worker, Teacher etc.).

For posts which involve a high degree of contact with Children and/or Vulnerable Adults (regulated work) there is a need to see a person's full criminal history to assess suitability for the position. Applicants are asked to declare information regarding criminal records in the application form. Failure to reveal information relating to any investigations, convictions, cautions, warnings, bindovers or reprimands may result in a withdrawal of an offer of employment.

Youth Recruitment/Employment Programmes

The Council is committed to supporting youth recruitment and operates a number of programmes that provide opportunities for young people in the Highlands to gain employment experience with the Highland Council and to promote both career and personal development. Before making a request to fill a post it is important that the lead officer fully considers the suitability of the post for filling through one of the below programmes:

- Modern/Graduate Apprentices (no age limit)
- Youth Trainees
- Graduate Interns.

Some government funded employment and training programmes may target particular age groups, geographical areas etc. Where this is the case, Lead Officers should consult the specific Programme Manager and [HR](#) for guidance. For further information please email THCMA.Centre@highland.gov.uk or the [Employability Team](#).

Quick Links

The Hyperlinks listed here will redirect you to the related guidance, letters, information, and relevant organisations mentioned in this policy.

[HR Microsite](#)

[Access to Work](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant](#)

[Corporate Communications page](#)

[Disclosure and PVG Guidance](#)

[Employee Induction](#)

[Equal Opportunities Policy](#)

[Flexible Working Arrangements](#)

[Highland Council Vacancies page](#)

[Job Description and Person Specification new format](#)

[Job Evaluation process](#)

[Migrant Workers Guidelines](#)

[MyJobScotland](#)

[My View](#)

[People Development Training Calendar](#)

[Politically Restricted Posts](#)

[Reasonable Adjustment Passport](#)

[Recruitment and Selection Page](#)

[Secondment Policy](#)

[Traineasy](#)



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