



ADVICE

on

Advice on recruitment, selection and induction

February 2016

This guide provides practical advice and guidance on recruitment, selection and induction. This guide also includes sample forms to use in the recruitment and selection process. These sample forms should be tailored to suit the needs of each organisation. If you need more help, you can contact us (our contact details are at the front of this booklet).

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Introduction

This booklet is designed to provide employers with guidance in carrying out recruitment, selection and induction activities. Recruiting employees can be a time-consuming and costly exercise so it is important that employers take all necessary steps to ensure that they select the best person for the job based on merit and ability taking into account equality of opportunity.

The steps outlined in the flowchart on page 7 and discussed in the guide provide a framework for the recruitment and selection process. The relevance of anti-discrimination legislation is mentioned, though the guide is not designed to provide an authoritative statement of the law on discrimination in recruitment and selection activities. For specialist information and advice on discrimination and equality of opportunity it is recommended that you seek specific advice and information from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland whose contact details are given at the back of this guide.

Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 came into force on the 01 January 2000 placing a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

While this guide is designed to provide general guidance which may be of use to all employers, it is recommended that Public Sector Employers seek further advice from the Equality Commission in relation to their recruitment and selection processes.

Training and guidance in carrying out a recruitment and selection process is provided by both the Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) and the Equality Commission. Contact details are available on page 32 of this guide. In addition a new publication from the Equality Commission, entitled a “Unified Employment Guide”, addressing equality

legislation in employment is due out late 2008. This guide will be available for downloading from the [Equality Commission's website](#).

Recruitment, Selection and the Law

While there is no individual and specific piece of legislation that applies to recruitment and selection processes it is nonetheless an area of employment which is heavily influenced by the law and good practice, including a number of Codes of Practice produced by the Equality Commission. Employers must ensure that their recruitment and selection practices are objective, free of bias and that individuals are selected for employment on the basis of merit and ability.

Anti-discrimination legislation

There are a number of different pieces of legislation which make it unlawful for an employer to fail to short-list or appoint an individual if the reason for doing so is discriminatory. Examples include reasons relating to the individual's gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religious belief or political opinion, marital status/civil partnership status or because they are undergoing, about to undergo or have undergone gender reassignment.

Employers must ensure that they do not discriminate directly – by failing to short-list or appoint a person because of their gender, race, disability, etc, or indirectly by, applying a criteria, practice or provision which, although applied to all applicants, could put an individual or group of individuals at a disadvantage and cannot be justified. For example, an employer who requests that applicants must adhere to a strict uniform/appearance rule could potentially discriminate against individuals of specific race/religious belief where the conspicuous wearing of certain items of clothing or accessories are central to their beliefs.

In addition, employers must ensure that they do not victimise individuals by failing to short-list or appoint employees who have taken or assisted another individual in taking a claim to the Industrial or Fair Employment Tribunal or raising a complaint of discrimination through company grievance procedures.

Affirmative and Positive Action

An employer may, as a result of an internal review or upon a recommendation from the Equality Commission decide to undertake an affirmative or positive action programme. The rationale for such a programme is to help promote equality of opportunity and remove the barriers that hinder access to employment for certain groups of people. For example, an employer may have an under-representation of females in management positions and so may put a welcoming statement in recruitment advertisements to encourage greater numbers of female applicants. Further advice and guidance on affirmative and positive action programmes is available from the Equality Commission.

Disability Discrimination

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. The Act makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against disabled employees and job applicants. Therefore, extra consideration must be given to the needs of disabled employees and job applicants throughout recruitment and selection processes. Employers may need to make reasonable adjustments to enable existing employees and job applicants to apply for and participate in the recruitment process. Examples of reasonable adjustments could include:

- providing application forms in a number of different formats and text sizes;
- providing the services of a sign language interpreter for an applicant who has a hearing impairment to facilitate a recruitment interview;
- ensuring premises where interviews are held are accessible to all applicants including those who have mobility difficulties, eg, wheelchair users;
- providing ability or psychometric tests in different formats and text sizes.

Employers are advised to seek assistance from the Equality Commission in relation to making reasonable adjustments to recruitment and selection processes for disabled employees and job applicants.

Less Favourable Treatment

Employers must not fail to short-list or appoint individuals because they are employed on a part-time or fixed-term basis. For example, an employer who advertises a post that states that only permanent or full-time employees could apply could be viewed as treating part-time and fixed-term individuals less favourably.

Detrimental treatment

Employers who fail to short-list or appoint an individual for one of the reasons listed below could be viewed as subjecting that person to an unlawful detriment. The detriment occurs if the unlawful treatment was because the individual asserted or sought to assert their rights in relation to, for example:

- Trade Union related reasons;
- Health and safety reasons;
- Working Time Regulations;
- Claiming Tax Credits.

This is not an exhaustive list and further guidance is available from the Agency's Helpline on 028 9032 1442 option1

Monitoring Requirements

Statutory Monitoring

The law requires employers with a workforce of more than 10 full-time employees, who work more than 16 hours a week, to register with the Equality Commission and to monitor the community background and gender of their workforce. This includes employees, applicants, appointees and apprentices. In addition public authorities and employers with more than 250 employees are required to monitor the community background and gender of employees who are promoted and employees who leave employment.

For the purpose of the registration requirements of the legislation a full-time employee is defined as someone who normally works 16 hours per week or more or as someone personally contracted to carry out any work or labour.

The principal method of determining the community to which applicants and employees belong is simply by asking directly, in writing, if they are members of the Protestant or Roman Catholic community or neither. In the case of external job applicants this question could be sent to the applicant by post with the application form, accompanied by a pre-paid reply envelope.

A sample Fair Employment Monitoring Form using the direct question method is set out in Appendix 1.

Monitoring information on employees must be retained for at least three years after the employee leaves. Monitoring information on job applicants must be retained for at least three years after the date of the application.

Further information on these requirements and on disclosure is contained in the [Fair Employment Code of Practice and Step by Step Guide to Monitoring](#) available to download from the [Equality Commission's website](#). Advice on all aspects of equality of treatment is available from the Equality Commission, whose contact details can be found on page 32 of this guide.

Other Equal Opportunities Monitoring

While employers are not legally required to carry out monitoring on grounds other than community background and gender, it can be a useful practice to do so. Monitoring on other equality grounds, such as nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status can be an important means of demonstrating and implementing a commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. It can provide employers with important information to help determine whether existing policies and practices adopted for the purposes of promoting equality of opportunity are successful or not. In addition, comprehensive equal opportunities monitoring can assist employers to develop positive action plans to help address an under-representation in their workforce.

Advice and guidance on carrying out more comprehensive equal opportunities monitoring is available from the Equality Commission, whose contact details can be found on page 32 of this guide.

Recruitment and Selection Flowchart

The flowchart below sets out the main stages in the recruitment and selection process. Each of these steps is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

Vacancy Arising



Preparing a Job Description



Drawing up a Personnel Specification



Advertising the Vacancy



Issuing Application Form(s)



Short-listing



Assessing Suitability for Employment



Selecting the Best Person for the Job

Vacancy Arising

Vacancies can arise in organisations for many reasons, for example, it could be a replacement position because someone has left, or a new position. A vacancy may be permanent or temporary, for example, to cover a period of absence or meet a temporary increase/rise in

organisational activities. Before starting the recruitment process consider carefully how this position can be best filled, for example, could it be filled by an existing employee by internal transfer, or by a part-time employee who wishes to increase their hours. However, employers are cautioned that the use of internal transfers etc, where there is already an under-representation within the workforce in relation to gender, religious belief, etc, could exacerbate the problem and be viewed as discriminatory.

Consider also in the event of a replacement post whether to replace the post-like-for like or whether it may also be appropriate to consider the post as a job share or as a part-time post.

Preparing a Job Description

A job description is a document which provides information for an individual about the nature and duties of their job. It can also help potential candidates decide whether the job is suitable for them or not. When drawing up the job description consider:

- job title;
- who the job-holder reports to – this provides candidates with an understanding of the seniority of the post;
- which, if any, employees report to the job-holder;
- a short description of the job – an outline summary of the main purpose of the job;
- a list of the main duties that the job-holder would be expected to undertake – when drawing these up try to be as specific as possible using active verbs like ‘repairing’, ‘calculating’ rather than vague terms like ‘dealing with’, etc. The list of duties should give candidates an indication of what the job involves. For example, the management of people or tasks, levels of responsibility and accountability, etc.
- date – to indicate when the job description was last updated/reviewed.

A pro-forma is set out in Appendix 2 and can be used as a guide to completing the job description. A technique for assisting in the preparation of the job description, Job Analysis, is discussed on page 10.

Drawing up a Personnel Specification

Once you have analysed the job and drawn up the job description the next step is to determine what the necessary skills, aptitudes, qualities, qualifications and knowledge are necessary to perform the job. The criteria should be:

- **Job-related** – they must be specifically related to the requirements of the job as laid out in the Job Description.
- **Ability-based** – they must identify the necessary skills or qualities that the ideal candidate should have, eg, presentation skills, knowledge of relevant processes etc.
- **Measurable** – it is important that the criteria are capable of measurement in some way in order to enable the assessment of candidates.

You may also decide that some criteria are essential, ie, candidates must have these and some which may be desirable, i.e. not essential to performing the job, but which can be a useful aid in short-listing and selecting candidates where they all meet the essential criteria.

To help avoid discrimination at this stage of the selection process, consider carefully the points discussed below.

Type and duration of work experience: In order to avoid discriminating against younger workers. For example, requiring candidates to have five years relevant work experience for an administrative post could disadvantage younger workers who have less experience, but who could, with one to two years previous experience be capable of performing the job.

Requirement for physical fitness: Unless the job specifically requires a specific level of physical fitness it is unwise to include this as a criterion, as it could disadvantage some disabled candidates. Employers are obliged to make reasonable adjustments to enable a suitable disabled candidate to perform the job, through for example the provision of appropriate facilities or equipment.

Requirement for a specific gender: There are very few jobs where an employer could justify a need for a member of a particular gender to perform the job. Where this is a requirement it can be viewed as a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) and is discussed below.

Requirement for candidates to be flexible/travel as part of the job:

Unless specifically required this could potentially disadvantage more females than males as females are more likely to have caring responsibilities, eg, for children, elderly parents and relatives or disabled people, and are more likely to be unable to work excess hours and travel abroad.

Genuine Occupational Qualifications

A genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) is a requirement by an employer for a job-holder to hold a specific qualification or legal characteristic, eg, necessity for people working in a bar in the United Kingdom serving alcohol, to be aged 18 and above, or a requirement for employees in a Thai restaurant to be of Thai origin for authenticity of service and experience. While the setting of such qualifications or characteristics appears to be discriminatory an employer can avoid a finding of discrimination if they can demonstrate that the GOQ is necessary to perform the job. However, it will clearly be very difficult to justify the use of a GOQ and it is recommended that employers seek advice from the Equality Commission before undertaking recruitment and selection using a GOQ.

A pro-forma is set out in Appendix 3 and can be used as a guide to completing the Personnel Specification.

Techniques for preparing Job Description and Personnel Specification

Job analysis is a process by which the existing or new job is analysed in order to generate detailed information about the tasks, skills and requirements of the job. This information can then be used to form the basis of the job description and personnel specification discussed above. There are a number of ways to carry out a job analysis and a few of these are discussed below.

Observation – where an existing member of staff is observed carrying out the job. This may be more appropriate for routine tasks where the duties and necessary skills are apparent.

Interview – this could involve a general conversation with the job-holder to describe their job, the skills required and how the job fits into the organisation. This process could be improved by taking a structured

approach where a number of questions/areas are addressed, eg, responsibility level, interaction with customers/staff, administrative tasks etc. In addition, interviewing the Line Manager could help provide a more rounded view of the job.

Job Analysis Questionnaire – this requires a job-holder to answer a number of pre-set questions in writing around the structure and requirements of their job. The questions could contain a number of set examples or descriptions or be left blank to enable the job-holder to give relevant examples. The questionnaire could be developed by the employer or generic questionnaires could be purchased.

Other methods – an example includes the use of a work diary, where the job-holder keeps a daily diary of their tasks etc. This can be used to generate an awareness of the day to day tasks required by the job.

Advertising the Vacancy

Once you have determined how best to fill the vacancy and drawn-up the Job Description and Personnel Specification the next step is to attract a pool of applicants. Any recruitment activity should be aimed at attracting as broad a pool of applicants as possible. This not only ensures that there is a good pool of applicants to select from but can also ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants and the creation of a more diverse workforce in terms of gender, age, nationality, etc. Employers must consider any recommendations that form part of an affirmative or positive action programme to promote equality of opportunity when advertising vacancies.

Internal Advertising

Vacancies may be advertised internally or externally or both. Caution should be exercised when deciding to advertise internally only or having a set policy in this regard. While it provides opportunity for promotion and development of existing staff, it has the potential of exacerbating a problem if there is already an under-representation in the workforce in relation to gender, race, religious belief, etc. For example, if the number of females in your workforce is substantially less than the number of males and the number of females in management positions is also less, then in deciding to advertise management positions internally only you

may be adding to an imbalance that exists already - as there is a greater probability that a male employee will be promoted. In this situation it is advisable to advertise externally to a wider pool to promote equality of opportunity. Employers who are contemplating internal advertisements are advised to seek advice from the Equality Commission.

External Advertising

Advertising externally potentially opens up your vacancy to a much wider and more diverse pool of applicants. You should ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that you make all eligible and suitably qualified persons aware of vacancies and encourage them to put themselves forward. Therefore, you should ensure that external advertising is not limited to a publication, agencies, schools or geographical area which is likely to be viewed or read only, or mainly, by a particular community. However, if you are undertaking an affirmative or positive action programme you may also want to encourage applications from an under-represented community. It is important to remember that you should also advertise vacancies internally as well as externally so that existing employees also have an opportunity to apply. External sources of advertising include:

- newspapers, local and national;
- magazines;
- trade and professional journals;
- job centres;
- the internet.

The decision as to which source to use will depend on a number of factors, including:

Seniority/salary level - the greater the salary for the post the more likely it is that people will travel further for an interview or to undertake the post so you may need to use national or regional newspapers or a number of sources.

Financial considerations – the funding you have available for advertising will be a primary consideration in deciding where to advertise as national newspapers in particular will be a significant cost. Your vacancy can be circulated to a wide area at no cost using your local Jobs and Benefits office or [Job Centre online](#)

Nature of the job – your vacancy may be specialised and so you may feel it is more appropriate to use a professional journal to advertise in order to attract an experienced and qualified pool of applicants.

Duration of post – if the post is temporary you may decide that it is more cost efficient to use an employment agency or the services of an employment business, or recruitment consultant to fill the post. The Conduct of Employment Agency and Employment Businesses Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 (as amended) sets down a number of important rules that such organisations must adhere to, including the provision of Terms of Business to both hirers (your organisation) and work-seekers. The Terms of Business should clarify what the employment status of the work-seeker is and what costs are involved in the recruitment process. A guide on these regulations is available at [Employment agency rules](#) for employees or [Employment agencies and employment businesses](#) for employers.

The Advertisement

The wording of the advertisement is very important in ensuring that you not only attract candidates who meet your criteria but also to ensure that you do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group. Using language such as “mature”, “youthful” or “energetic” could indicate that you are looking for candidates of a particular age and could be viewed as discrimination on the grounds of age. A useful publication entitled [Recruitment Advertising, A Good Practice Guide for Employers for Promoting Equality of Opportunity](#), published by the Equality Commission provides detailed guidance for employers in ensuring that their recruitment advertising is free of discrimination.

The level of detail you place in the advertisement will vary depending on where you decide to advertise as the cost will vary with things such as the word count. It is suggested that the following information be included in the advertisement:

- name of your organisation or company logo;
- job title;
- location;
- hours of work, full or part-time, capable of job-share, flexible working and whether post is temporary or permanent;
- summary of job including main duties;
- essential criteria and, if appropriate desirable criteria;

- terms and conditions, eg, salary and other benefits;
- equality statement, eg, “We are an equal opportunities employer” It may also be appropriate to include a more targeted equality statement as part of an affirmative or positive action programme, for example, you may be under represented in young female employees so will include a statement to indicate that you particularly welcome applications from this group;
- closing date;
- application details – eg, contact telephone number or address to request/return application forms, or website address for on-line application forms.

All advertisements, internal or external should carry the same information.

Issuing Application Forms

The use of application forms rather than, for example, curriculum vitae’s (CV’s) has the benefit of standardising the process so that it is easier to compare applicants against the criteria outlined in the personnel specification. An organisation could chose to use a standard application form for all posts or amend the standard form to suit each vacancy. The advantage of the latter is to allow the organisation to gather more detailed information where it is appropriate which will help in the selection process. The aim of the application form is to enable systematic and fair selection processes, so the information requested in the form should be for this purpose only. In addition, the application form provides a record of relevant qualifications and experience as stated by the applicant.

The introduction of legislation outlawing discrimination on the grounds of age encouraged employers to re-think the format of application forms. Although it is not unlawful to ask for an applicant’s age or date of birth, it is no longer viewed as good practice to do so, unless there is a genuine occupational requirement to do so, for example, to ensure that applicants are aged 18 and above to work in a bar environment serving alcohol. One way of keeping application forms age neutral is to ask for the applicant’s age or date of birth on a separate monitoring form along with other sensitive personal information like gender, marital status, nationality and religious belief. This form should be separated from the

application form to ensure that those involved in the short-listing and interviewing process do not have access to this.

A pro-forma Application Form is set out in Appendix 4 and can be used as a guide in developing an application form for your organisation.

Criminal Convictions and Applications Forms

It is quite common for employers to ask applicants to declare if they have a criminal conviction. This allows the employer to carry out a risk assessment to ensure that any declared convictions are not incompatible with the job. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Order (Northern Ireland) 1978 sets out a period of time from a date of conviction which will allow certain convictions to become spent. Once a conviction is deemed spent the individual does not have to declare this on an application form. Convictions which lead to a prison sentence of more than 30 months can never become spent. In addition the Rehabilitation of Offenders Exceptions (Northern Ireland) Order 1979, as amended, identifies a number of occupations for which all convictions, spent or otherwise must be declared. These occupations include working with children and young people and vulnerable adults and in occupations where issues of national security may be important.

It is important to remember that a declared conviction does not automatically make an individual unsuitable for employment. The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) can provide guidance for employers in working with applicants with convictions. NIACRO recommend that disclosure of convictions is sought after the short-listing process and for the preferred applicant only. An objective risk assessment can then be carried out at this stage considering the following factors:

- when the offence occurred;
- seriousness of offence;
- frequency of offending;
- the individual's circumstances at the time of the offence;
- duties of the job;
- level of supervision of the job; and
- access of applicant to customers/clients, etc.

AccessNI, is a service within the Department of Justice which has responsibility for providing criminal history information about anyone seeking employment in certain areas, eg, working with children or vulnerable adults. Further information about AccessNI service and rates is available at www.accessni.gov.uk. Guidance on working with convictions is available from NIACRO on 028 9032 0157 or www.niacro.co.uk.

Recruiting people with conflict-related convictions

The Good Friday agreement and the St Andrews Agreement recognised the role of prisoners in the peace process and their influence in wider peace building processes. It is estimated that 30,000 people have spent time in prison due to the conflict and the vast majority of these were young men when convicted.

Voluntary Guidance for employers on recruiting people with conflict-related convictions can be downloaded at the [ofmdfmi.gov.uk website](http://ofmdfmi.gov.uk).

The guidance is designed to assist employers follow best practice in recruiting people with conflict-related convictions. Those are convictions arising directly from the most recent period of conflict in Northern Ireland. Generally, they are offences listed in the relevant schedules to the various Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Acts pre-April 1998.

Employing Foreign Nationals

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence to employ a person who is not legally entitled to live or work in the United Kingdom. There are three categories of foreign national workers:

1. Nationals of countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland can live and work in the UK without needing to apply for permission under the UK's points-based system. From 1 May 2011, nationals of the following countries can work here without any restrictions;

Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Irish Republic, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

2. Nationals of Bulgaria and Romania (known as the 'A2 countries') may need to obtain an **accession worker card** before they can work here, and their employer may need to obtain a **work permit** for them.
3. Those who are nationals of countries outside the EEA and who are required to have a Permit to work in the UK.

Further guidance on this subject is available from the Border and Immigration division of the Home Office at <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/> or the Employers Helpline on 0845 010 6677. Practical guidance to assist employers to determine whether they are employing migrant workers legally is available at <http://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/bdotg/action/layer?site=191&topicId=1086853634>.

While employers have a responsibility to ensure that they check the eligibility of individuals for working in the UK to avoid illegal working, it is also important that employers do not discriminate in this process, eg, if an employer only asks applicants who they assume to be foreign nationals to provide evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK he/she could face claims of racial discrimination, ie, treating persons less favourably because of their nationality/race. The Border and Immigration Agency provides guidance for employers in avoiding discriminatory recruitment practices like this in their Anti-Discrimination Code of Practice which can be downloaded from the website shown above.

Short-listing

The purpose of the short-listing stage of the process is to select those candidates for assessment (ie, Interviewing or testing) who meet the established criteria outlined in the personnel specification.

Short-listing should be carried out in a systematic and objective basis with a panel of 2 or more individuals. The policy and process for short-listing should be agreed well in advance of any

short-listing activity being carried out and should not be deviated from during the process. Where possible it is desirable the panel is diverse in relation to gender, religion, race, etc. It is recommended that the same panel conduct interviewing or testing to improve the consistency of the process. A short-listing matrix, as set out in Appendix 5, can assist with the process. In the matrix the essential and desirable criteria are placed along the top of the form and the applicants names (or, to keep it anonymous, the applicant's allocated reference number) are placed down the side and ticks are allocated where the individual meets the criteria. Those candidates who meet the short-listing criteria should then proceed to the next stage in the recruitment and selection process. It is good practice to inform all candidates of the outcome of the short-listing process including those candidates who were not short-listed.

Guidance and appropriate training should be provided for the short-listing panel to assist them in both interpreting the criteria and making decisions when they are uncertain. For example, if an essential criterion is to have 5 GCSE's or equivalent, the panel should be given guidance on what the equivalent qualifications are so that they can determine whether applicants meet this criterion or not. Guidelines on equivalent qualifications can be obtained from <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk>.

To avoid claims of discrimination or bias in the short-listing process it is good practice to ensure that the panel do not have any personal information about the applicants. This provides an extra safeguard to ensure that selection takes place solely on the basis of whether the applicant has demonstrated that they meet the criteria for the job and is not influenced by knowledge of applicants' personal characteristics.

Assessing Suitability for Employment

Once you have short-listed a manageable number of candidates the next step is to assess their suitability for employment. Assessment methods include selection interviews, ability and psychometric testing, assessment centres, etc. A few methods are outlined below. The selection interview, by far the most common method, is discussed in some detail. It is advised that you seek advice from the Equality Commission concerning the

equality impact of the selection methods outlined below, before you commence selection activities.

Ability Tests

Ability tests may seek to test generic or job-specific abilities. Examples of generic tests include literacy/numeracy tests. Examples of job related abilities include, eg, a driving ability test, a Microsoft Word test or presentation. The use of tests in a selection procedure should be objectively justifiable and reliable and related to the requirements of the job and be used to aid the selection decision. Employers should only use tests which have been assessed as having no discriminatory impact on any of the statutory equality grounds.

Psychometric Tests

The aim of psychometric tests is to assess aspects of personality and intelligence that have been identified as important for the job. The use of such tests is controversial and serious consideration must be given to the justification of such tests before their use. In addition, only reputable tests which have demonstrated good reliability and validity should be used. Employers should only use tests which have been assessed as having no discriminatory impact on any of the statutory equality grounds.

Assessment Centres

Assessment Centres tend to be used in large scale recruitment exercises and generally involve the use of a variety of tests over a period of time. They have been found to be a good predictor of future performance in comparison to other methods alone. However, they can be expensive to run and require a lot of planning and organising. The type of exercises used includes ability tests, psychometric tests, job-play and group exercises, presentations and interviews. The aim is to make a more informed and objective selection decision based on multiple assessments.

Selection Interviews

Selection interviews are the most common method through which suitability for employment is assessed. Selection interviews have a number of purposes:

- to assess the candidate's suitability against the requirements for the job and predict future performance;
- to focus on aspects of behaviour and performance that cannot be assessed by other methods;
- to supply information to candidates about the organisation and the job;
- to allow the candidate and representative/s of the organisation to relate face to face;
- to create a good impression and provide positive public relations about the organisation through fair and objective interviews.

The reliability of the interview method in achieving the objectives detailed above will be dependent on the level of planning and preparation that is given to the process. It is recommended that a structured approach to interviewing is adopted to ensure consistency and reduce the risk of discriminatory practices occurring.

Interview questions should focus on assessing the candidate's suitability for the job against the requirements set out in the job description and personnel specification. Questions should not be asked about a candidate's personal information, eg, marital status, children, age, etc. Avoid the use of leading, closed and multiple questions. Recommended question formats are:

- Open questions – which encourage the candidate to talk and demonstrate their knowledge, relevance of experience, etc.;
- Probing questions – allow the interviewer to develop a candidate's response further and to test depth of knowledge, experience, etc.;
- Behavioural/situational questions – to ascertain whether a candidate's behaviour/experience in a relevant situation is appropriate to the job, e.g. "Can you give us an example of a time when you had to make a difficult decision";

- Hypothetical questions – to check candidate’s theoretical knowledge and approach to the example given.

The points detailed below provide a guide for conducting effective interviews.

Prior to the interview

- The interview panel should be the same as the short-listing panel and made up of 2 or more people of mixed gender and community background. Panel members should have received relevant training to ensure they are competent in conducting interviews.
- The panel should meet following the short-listing process to draw-up the interview questions.
- The panel should determine in advance whether to create a reserve list of candidates who are suitable for appointment and how long the reserve list will last for. It is not recommended that a reserve list should last for any longer than 6-12 months.
- The panel should decide in advance the order of questioning and which panel members will ask which questions.
- The panel should decide in advance whether the candidate will be required to undertake a test in addition to the interview and what format this should take. In addition the panel should consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to facilitate disabled candidates.
- A standardised scoring system should be agreed in advance to enable the assessment of a candidate’s responses against the pre-set questions.
- Letters should be sent to candidates inviting them to the interview specifying the date, time and location of the interview, including if appropriate, a map. The letter should indicate the status of the interview, eg, first or second interview and give some general information about the format and potential duration. The letter should provide contact details for candidates requiring special assistance or reasonable adjustments related

to a disability. For example, disabled access requirements or when an applicant does not have English as a first language, details of the provision of interpretation/translation facilities and which if any documents candidates need to bring with them, eg, proof of qualifications etc.

During the Interview

- Ensure that waiting areas are comfortable and give candidates an indication of how long they may have to wait. Do not keep candidates waiting for a long time as this presents a negative image of the organisation.
- Welcome candidates to the interview and introduce the panel members. Give an outline of the format that the interview will take and when the candidate will have an opportunity to ask questions.
- Ask questions in pre-arranged order, taking care to ask only one question at a time. Ensure all candidates are asked all questions and try to ensure you adhere to the pre-set time limits.
- Ensure that candidates are not asked questions of a personal nature which could lead to perceptions of discrimination, eg, asking an older worker how they feel about managing younger workers, or asking a younger worker how they feel about managing a team of older workers.
- Avoid throwaway comments or annotations of a stereotypical nature, eg, “We don’t get many females applying here”.
- Allow candidates an opportunity to ask any questions they may have.
- Close the interview by thanking the candidate for attending and give an indication of the next step in the process.
- Record notes on candidates’ responses against pre-set questions, remembering that anything you write anywhere should be competence-based and could become evidence in an Industrial or Fair Employment Tribunal case.

Following the interview

- Complete the interview assessment form for each candidate at the end of each interview. It is recommended that each panel member completes an assessment form for each candidate.
- Ensure that all interview documentation is kept confidential following the interviews.

An Interview Assessment Pro-forma is set out in Appendix 6.

Selecting the Best Person for the Job

The final stage in the recruitment and selection process is the most important – choosing the best person for the job. The decision should be based solely on the candidate's suitability (based on merit and ability) for the job as assessed by the interview and/or other selection tests. Important points to consider at this stage are discussed below.

- The panel should complete assessment forms individually and then discuss their results for each candidate with other members of the panel. This should ensure that a more objective decision is reached, where large discrepancies between panel member's assessments can be reviewed. The eventual decision can be reached in a number of ways. A few suggestions are detailed below:
 1. Adding all the panel members scores together and reaching a final score;
 2. Agreeing by consensus an individual score for each question and combining these to reach a final score.
 3. Each panel member scores each candidate individually and then reaches agreement on candidate's final position collectively.

The method used should be agreed in advance of the interview process and documented, and must be fairly and equally applied

to all candidates. The importance of appropriate training for panel members in recruitment and selection activities is especially important here in helping to avoid wide variations in individual panel member's scores which could skew the result.

- Inform all candidates of the outcome of the interview, including those who were unsuccessful. Inform those candidates that are to be placed on the reserve list and when applicable, their position on the list, the duration of the list, the circumstances that could lead to the list being employed and what action will be taken in those circumstances.
- Inform the successful candidate whether the offer of employment is subject to completion of a satisfactory medical and/or references and arrange for these to be carried out, taking into account whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made for disabled candidates.
- Ensure all relevant administration is complete and retain the records for at least 12 months following the date of interview.
- While an employer is not obliged to provide feedback for candidates who are unsuccessful it is beneficial for candidates to have feedback as it can enable them to improve their interview performance and make a more informed decision as to why they feel they were unsuccessful.

Medical Examinations

If the job calls for special physical requirements, e.g. strength or good eyesight (which can be objectively justified and where reasonable adjustments in the context of disability have been considered) or involves the handling or preparation of food, a medical examination may be necessary or desirable. You can generally make standing arrangements with a local doctor or perhaps share the services of a medical officer used by other businesses in the area. If a medical report reveals a disability, the offer should not be withdrawn solely on that basis. Good practice and legislation indicates that you should first assess the effects of the disability and make reasonable adjustments to enable the applicant's appointment.

References

In general employers are not under any legal obligation to provide a reference for an existing or former employee, with the exception of those working in financial services.

However, it is common practice that references are provided to enable individuals to obtain new and future employment. Employers should have a clear policy on the provision of references including whether they are provided, verbally or in writing, by whom and in what format and what information is provided. A consistent approach to the provision of references could avoid any claims of discrimination around the non-provision or provision of inaccurate references.

While references can be useful to a degree, they should be regarded with care and it should be borne in mind that not every employer/person giving a reference will always give a comprehensive picture, especially if the reference is provided to the applicant directly or the reference is tick-box in nature only.

It is recommended that, when references are sought, structured guidance of the job for which the candidate is applying, including the job description should be provided to referees. Specific questions should only be asked about the candidate's abilities and skill levels relevant to the job. It is recommended that comments of a personal nature should not be asked about candidates. No reference should be sought from a present employer unless the applicant has given specific consent to do so.

Employers who are providing references for current and former employees should ensure that they are true, accurate, fair and not misleading in order to avoid any legal action, such as post-employment discrimination, by employees. Employers should also be aware that information provided in a written reference is subject to Data Protection Principles (Data Protection Act 1998) and may be accessed by an individual through a subject access request. Further information and advice on data protection issues is available from the Information Commissioner's website, <https://ico.org.uk>

Confirming Offer of Employment

It is recommended that the offer of employment is confirmed in writing to the candidate to enable them to make a decision as to whether to accept it or not. The letter should include the job title, duration of post (whether temporary or permanent), proposed start date and an outline of the main terms and conditions, e.g. salary and benefits, holiday entitlement, etc. The letter might also include details of how the offer is to be accepted and by when, eg, verbally or in writing using an enclosed acceptance form.

Once the start date has been agreed it is important to prepare for the new employee's commencement through the preparation of a comprehensive induction programme.

Probationary Periods

It is often useful to place new employees on a period of probation to ensure that they are continually assessed during that time in respect of their suitability to do the job. This probationary period can be written into the contract of employment and can be of varying duration depending on the training period. However, the majority of employees are unlikely to require more than a six month probation period. You can make it clear that employment may be terminated either during or at the end of the probationary period if their work performance is not satisfactory, though every effort should be made to assist the new employee during this time. A decision to terminate the employment of an employee either during or at the end of a probationary period should be given full and fair consideration. In any event, the Statutory Dismissal and Disciplinary Procedure should be carried out when terminating an individual's contract of employment regardless of their length of service. Information and guidance on the statutory procedures and good practice in handling dismissals is available in the Agency's [Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures](#) and the [Advisory Guide on Handling Disciplinary and Grievances at work](#)

Induction

Induction is a process that facilitates the introduction of new employees to an organisation. It is essential in raising awareness

of important information about the organisation with employees and providing them with guidance to help them settle into their job. A number of research reports suggest that poor induction is one factor which leads to high turnover of new employees in the first few months of commencement of employment. Therefore, induction is important in creating the correct impression of the company with the employee as well as making them feel valued and welcomed. It is also important to remember that employees who have changed jobs/departments within the organisation should also be given some form of induction to help them to settle into their new job.

Duration

The recommended duration for the Induction Programme is that it should be conducted over at least 2 weeks to avoid new employees receiving more information in their first few days than they can handle.

Format

The format of Induction Programmes is likely to vary considerably from organisation to organisation but a suggested format is to consider that induction should take place at three levels - the organisational level, the departmental level and the individual job level. This ensures that the individual is given all the necessary information and guidance. These three areas are discussed in more detail below.

Methods

Individuals will vary in their learning style (that is the method by which they learn best) and it is important to bear this in mind when developing an Induction Programme. A mixture of methods utilised in the induction process will facilitate greater learning among all participants. Such methods include, one-to-one sessions where information is given and discussion is generated; classroom-based learning; “e-learning” (utilising computer based learning where available); presentations; briefings and work-shadowing with a range of employees to gain a better understanding of all organisational activities. The individual can be given supporting documentation for future reference, regardless of

the method used, including, eg, organisation charts, employee handbooks, etc.

Who to involve

It is recommended that an organisation involve a range of other employees in the induction process. This provides the new employee with an opportunity to meet colleagues, superiors and subordinates as well as members of the Human Resources team (if the organisation has such a dedicated resource). If there is a dedicated Human Resources function they are probably best placed to co-ordinate the induction process and cover some of the contents of the programme, whereas colleagues and members of the management team can provide information and guidance relating to departmental and job-specific issues.

Use of Buddies

In a buddy system a new employee is paired-up with an existing employee who can introduce them to other staff members and deal with any minor questions the employee may have. There are important social reasons for using a buddy system as a new employee is likely to feel intimidated, eg, in using staff catering facilities. A buddy can assist them by taking breaks with them for the first few days, introducing them to other employees and giving them guidance on how the facilities work. The buddy can also provide the new employee with general information on social activities, etc. In selecting employees to act as buddies it is important to pick those employees who can communicate easily with others, who have a positive attitude and who are voluntarily willing to undertake the task. The buddy should also be given guidance on what their job should include.

Information Packs

It is suggested that an information pack is issued to new employees to provide them with essential information about organisational policies and procedures but to which they can also add information they gather during the induction process. This can be a very simple ring binder which is divided into different sections and which can include the following: a copy of the staff handbook; a map of the building; an organisational chart; copies of forms, eg, holiday request form, self certification form, etc, and details of

terms and conditions of employment. This should be accessible for all employees, eg, in different languages (as appropriate) and in an accessible format.

Checklist

A suggested checklist of issues to be covered during the induction process at the organisational, departmental and job level is set out below.

Organisational Level

It is suggested that the responsibility for these issues should lie with the Human Resources Department, other relevant departments and members of the management team.

- Welcome and Introductions
- History and development of the company
- Culture and mission statement
- Products and services
- Organisational chart
- Future developments
- Organisational tour
- Introduction to organisational health and safety policy

- Terms and Conditions of employment
 - Payment issues
 - Hours of work, overtime policy
 - Holiday entitlements
 - Pension arrangements
 - Probationary period
 - Sickness entitlements and absence reporting procedure
 - Emergency contact information
 - Staff handbook

- Company rules
 - General codes of conduct, eg, dress codes, smoking policy, acceptance of gifts, etc.
 - Disciplinary rules
 - Grievance procedure
 - Time keeping/attendance
 - Car parking

- Confidentiality policy
- Use of telephone, email, internet, other resources
- Trade Union arrangements/membership (TU representative)
- Collective agreements

Departmental Level

It is suggested that the Department Head and Line Manager take responsibility for this area.

- Introductions to management and staff within department, including buddy
- Structure of department – reference to organisational chart
- Functions and jobs within department
- Relationships with other departments
- Location of desk/work area
- Location of resources, eg, photocopiers, etc.
- Training and development opportunities
- Health and safety issues
 - Safe working practices, rules
 - Identification of hazards, risks
 - Location of first aid equipment, accident book
 - Reference to safety notices
- Specific holiday arrangements within the department
- Specific absence reporting procedures
- Performance appraisal processes
- Probationary review process
- Frequency and dates of team meetings
- Familiarisation with business plans

Job Level

The purpose of the induction process at this level is to provide the individual with information and training to enable them to undertake their job competently. It is suggested that the Line Manager and colleagues take responsibility for this part of the induction process.

- Review of Job Description and discussion of job
- Identification of targets/outputs
- Location of resources relevant to job

- Work-shadowing colleagues
- Health and safety issues
 - Protective clothing/safety equipment
 - Hazards/risks relevant to job
 - Specific safety rules relevant to job
- Provision of relevant training – shadowing, instruction, e-learning, external courses, etc.

This is a suggested checklist and may include items which are not relevant to all organisations. A suggested pro-forma to co-ordinate the induction process is set out in Appendix 7.

Summary

Selecting the best person for a job is one of the most important decisions an organisation will make. Employers should ensure that their recruitment and selection activities are fit for purpose and provide equality of opportunity for all. Therefore it is essential that policies, procedures and practices relating to recruitment and selection activities are reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate and comply with current legal requirements. Further information and advice is available from the Labour Relations Agency on 028 9032 1442 and the organisations listed on the next page.

Useful Contacts

Labour Relations Agency

Belfast Office

2-16 Gordon Street
Belfast, Bt1 2LG
028 9032 1442
www.lra.org.uk

Regional Office

1-3 Guildhall Street,
Londonderry BT48 6BB
028 7126 9639
www.lra.org.uk

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Equality House
7 - 9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
028 9089 0890
www.equalityni.org

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)

Amelia House
4 Amelia Street Belfast
BT2 7GS
028 9032 0157
www.niacro.co.uk

Information Commissioner– Northern Ireland (for guidance on Data Protection Issues)

51 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FE
Telephone: 028 9026 9380
Fax: 028 9026 9388
Email: ni@ico.gsi.gov.uk
Helpline Number: 01625 54 57 45
www.ico.org.uk

Appendices

A number of sample forms are set out in this section to facilitate the recruitment, selection and induction process.

Fair Employment Monitoring Questionnaire – Pro-forma

Ref No:

Private & Confidential

MONITORING QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION:

We are an Equal Opportunities Employer. We do not discriminate against our job applicants or employees and we aim to select the best person for the job.

We monitor the community background and sex of our job applicants and employees in order to demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity in employment and to comply with our duties under the *Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998*.

You are not obliged to answer the questions on this form and you will not suffer any penalty if you choose not to do so. Nevertheless, we encourage you to answer these questions. Your answers will be used by us to prepare and submit a monitoring return to the Equality Commission, but your identity will be kept anonymous. In all other regards your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence. We assure you that your answers will not be used by us to make any decisions affecting you, whether in a recruitment exercise or during the course of any employment with us.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND:

Regardless of whether they actually practice a religion, most people in Northern Ireland are perceived to be members of either the Protestant or Roman Catholic communities.

Please indicate the community to which you belong to by ticking the appropriate box below:

I am a member of the Protestant community:

I am a member of the Roman Catholic community:

I am not a member of either the Protestant or the Roman Catholic communities:

If you do not answer the above question, we are encouraged to use the residuary method of making a determination, which means that we can make a determination as to your community background on the basis of the personal information supplied by you in your application form/personnel file.

SEX

Please indicate your sex by ticking the appropriate box below:

Male:

Female:

Note: If you answer this questionnaire you are obliged to do so truthfully as it is a criminal offence under the Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations (NI) 1999 to knowingly give false answers to these questions.

Job Description Pro-forma

Company Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Reporting To: _____

Responsible for: _____

Location: _____

Main purpose of the Job: *(General statement of job to be done)*

Key Duties: *(list the main duties that the job holder is expected to undertake)*

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____

Any other duties as may be reasonably required from time to time by your employer.

Personnel Specification Pro-Forma

Company Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Reporting To: _____

Responsible for: _____

Location: _____

Essential Criteria: *(list all of those criteria you deem essential that candidates must possess to carry out the job)*

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____

Desirable Criteria: *(list any criteria that you deem desirable for candidates to possess but which are not essential to carry out the job)*

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Application Form Pro-Forma

Job Title: _____ **Reference no:** _____

Name:	
Address:	
	Postcode:
Contact telephone number(s):	
E-mail address:	

Qualifications

Level (eg, GCSE, Degree)	Title/Subject	Grade attained

Membership of Professional Body

Employment History (starting with your current /most recent employer)

Name of employer	Dates	Job Title/Duties	Salary	Reason for leaving

Other relevant competencies (you may wish to use this section to gain information from candidates about how they meet the essential skills outlined in the Personnel Specification. It is recommended that this be amended to suit each job. Some examples are given below)

Communication skills

Managing a team

Skills relevant to the job, eg, Information Technology, driving skills, etc.

Referees

Please give the name and contact details of two referees, one of whom should be your current/most recent employer. Please note that we will not contact your current employer before an offer of employment is made to you.

Name:	Name:
Job Title:	Job Title:
Contact address:	Contact address:
Contact telephone number:	Contact telephone number:

Special Requirements

Please list below any special requirements or reasonable adjustments if you are disabled that you may have if you are called for interview.

Declaration

I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge the above information is correct. I accept that providing deliberately false information could result in my dismissal/withdrawal of employment offer.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Short-listing Matrix Pro-forma

Guidelines for use of the short-listing matrix pro-forma

The pro-forma shown on the next page can be used to assist in the short-listing process.

In column 1 of the pro-forma employees names or reference numbers are written. The numbers 1 – 8 under essential criteria and 1 – 5 under desirable criteria refer to the criteria listed under the personnel specification. During the short-listing process each candidate should be assessed to determine whether they meet the essential and desirable (if you have specified any) criteria. If a candidate has demonstrated that they meet the relevant criteria place a tick (✓) alongside their name under each criteria. You may chose to place an x rather than a tick if the candidate has not demonstrated that they meet the criteria.

Candidates who meet the criteria specified should then be selected for the next stage in the recruitment process – assessing suitability for employment.

Short-listing Matrix Pro-forma

Applicants	Essential Criteria <i>(as specified in the personnel specification)</i>								Desirable Criteria <i>(as specified in the personnel specification)</i>					Outcome/comments Interview Y/N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	
1.														
2.														
3.														
4.														
5.														
6.														

Interview Assessment Pro-forma

Guidelines for Use of Interview Assessment Forms

Weighted System for Interview Marking

First decide:

- criteria to be marked, and
- total marks available (eg, 100), and
- how they should be allocated to each criterion

It is suggested that the total marks available should be 100 and marks should be allocated or weighted to the factors (key areas) considered the most important in terms of ability to carry out the job effectively.

If, for example, relevant experience, special aptitudes, knowledge of a particular subject, use of equipment and communication skills are considered equally important then it is likely that these criteria will command 25 available marks each. Other key criteria considered less important will be allowed 5-15 available marks.

The following assessment sheet should be available for completion at interview by each member of the interview panel.

The following guidelines should apply:

- use a standard form;
- identify key areas;
- relate questions to key areas;
- as far as possible record candidates' responses to questions under appropriate headings;
- be objective and consistent.

Sample Interview Assessment Pro-forma

Name of Candidate: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

	RATINGS		
Criteria	Marks Available	Marks Awarded	Comments
Qualifications/Attainments <i>(specify relevant qualifications etc)</i>			
Relevant Experience & Competencies <i>(detail each and state marks available)</i>			
Skills <i>(detail relevant skills)</i>			
Knowledge <i>(specify knowledge to be demonstrated)</i>			
Other			
Total marks	100		

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Induction Programme – Pro-forma

The suggest pro-forma set out below can be used to plan the induction programme in advance, setting out when an areas should be covered and by whom and can then be issued to all parties involved in the induction programme to facilitate the implementation. An example is shown on the pro-forma.

Subject	Timescale (week/day/time)	Personnel (eg. Line manager etc.)	Date Completed	Comments
<i>Welcome and Introductions</i>	<i>Day 1: 09.30 - 10.30</i>	<i>Personnel Manager</i>	<i>13/10/08</i>	<i>Department Head absent, need to reschedule introduction</i>

Labour Relations Agency

Head Office, 2-16 Gordon Street, Belfast BT1 2LG

Phone 028 9032 1442

Regional Office, 1-3 Guildhall Street, Londonderry BT48 6BB

Phone 028 7126 9639

Website www.lra.org.uk

E-mail info@lra.org.uk