

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough: Recruitment Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This policy is designed to enable Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to recruit the best possible people, to take account of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Equal Opportunities Policy and to comply with current legislation.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough values the lived experience of being a carer, or having a sensory impairment, mental or physical health conditions, and will see that lived experience as a positive attribute.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure that this policy is followed. It will be reviewed and amended to reflect any changes in legislation subsequent to the adoption of this policy.

Approval for the establishment of a new post or the filling of a vacancy must be obtained from the Chief Executive before recruitment commences.

New Jobs and Job Vacancies

When any post becomes vacant the necessity for that post, its duties, responsibilities and salary are reviewed against the needs of the organisation. Posts may or may not be replaced, amended or new posts created depending on the current or identified future needs of the organisation.

When a vacancy or new post arises, consideration will be given to any staff whose posts are being made redundant and for whom redeployment is being sought. Staff at risk of redundancy, if shortlisted, will be considered before any decision is taken to recruit externally.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is committed to developing staff and volunteers and will support people to progress within the organisation. All vacancies will be advertised internally and appropriate support given to people who are interested in applying.

Job Profile

The job profile is a key document in the recruitment process, it must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the process. It should clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the job and must include:

- Job title and purpose
- Location of the job
- Manager to whom the postholder is responsible
- Posts reporting to the postholder
- Duties and responsibilities
- Special working conditions (e.g. unsocial or shift working patterns)

Person Specification

The person specification will be part of the job profile and will reflect the skills, knowledge and experience that are required, stating which are essential and which desirable. These should be specific, related to the job, and not unnecessarily restrictive. The inclusion of criteria that cannot be justified as essential for the performance of the job may be deemed discriminatory.

Essential criteria are those needed to perform the job; desirable criteria are those that may add value to the role, enable the candidate to perform better or require a shorter familiarisation period.

Knowledge can be derived in a number of ways, for example through education, training, or experience

- Where qualifications are deemed essential these should reflect the minimum requirements necessary to carry out the job to an acceptable standard.
- Experience required should be specified; but stipulating the length of this should be avoided if possible, because the quality of experience is more important than its length.

Details for Applicants

The details of a vacancy, including any necessary skills, experience and knowledge will be included in the job profile, as will any other important information that a potential applicant needs to decide whether to apply. Further particulars should include the following:

- Details of the main terms and conditions of employment (including salary, holiday and pension arrangements, flexible working.)
- Information about Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Closing date and time for applications and interview date
- The name of the person to whom the application should be sent
- Where posts are subject to a Disclosure and Barring service check, this should be specified
- Notification of how Healthwatch will use the data provided and how long it will be kept on record.

All applications will be via application form only and the pack should contain a reminder that CVs are not acceptable

The application pack should be made available electronically and in hard copy.

Recruitment Plan

A timetable for the recruitment should be in place prior to advertising the vacancy with dates for shortlisting and interviews scheduled, and in the panel members diaries.

Publicising the Vacancy

The Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough website will be used for advertising and use made of local networks, Jobcentre Plus and various media, including social media such as Twitter.

The advertisement should contain the following and use the Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough template:

- Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough name, logo and company number
- Job title
- Salary
- Brief details of the job
- Brief details of the person specification
- If a Disclosure and Barring Service check is needed
- The period of contract, if fixed
- How /where to obtain further information
- Closing date for applications
- Date of interview

Processing Applications

Care must also be taken that all applicants are treated in the same way and provided with the same information. If an applicant or potential applicant would like to visit Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough this can be offered to all applicants. The person showing them round should not be involved in the interview process.

Staff members who answer the telephone should be made aware that the vacancy is being advertised and briefed on how to issue application packs and deal with callers requesting further information.

The confidentiality of applications must be respected by all of those involved in the selection process.

Selecting the Interview Panel

All interviews must be conducted by a panel of at least two people and may consist of staff, Directors and/or external partners. Familiarity with the vacancy is very important when deciding who to include.

Panel members must also be available for the shortlisting and interview process in order to maintain consistency. They must declare to other panel members if they already know a candidate.

Shortlisting

As soon as possible after the closing date has passed the interview panel should assess the applications to determine which applicants are to be called for interview.

Each panel member should work individually in assessing applications and take part in a discussion about who to interview at the end of the process. The panel should agree the scoring system in advance.

Shortlisting decisions should be based on evidence that the applicant has met the requirements of the person specification. Panel members should avoid dismissing applicants who appear to be over-qualified. Assumptions should not be made about their reasons for applying for the post as this may eliminate an otherwise exemplary candidate.

The original applications for all applicants, together with a written note of reasons for shortlisting or rejecting applicants must be retained for a minimum of 6 months from the date that an appointment decision is notified, in case of complaint to an Employment Tribunal. Following this time all details should be destroyed.

Selection Tests and Presentations

Consideration should be given to using job-related selection tests or asking candidates to give presentations as part of the selection process. If tests or presentations are relevant to the role and to be used, all candidates should be given the same written information as to how long they should take, the topic areas they will cover and what - if anything - they should prepare in advance.

Ensure thought is given to any reasonable adjustments that may be required to ensure fairness.

Arrangements for Interviews

Letters or e-mails to shortlisted candidates should include:

- Date, time and place of their interview
- Instructions on how to find the interview venue
- Details of any test or presentation required and anything they should bring with them (e.g. examples of work or proof of qualifications).
- A request to confirm their attendance
- A request for them to advise if they have any special requirements /reasonable adjustment requests in relation to the interview.

Interviewing

Interviews should be held as soon after the closing date as reasonably possible. Decide in advance who will chair the panel and what questions are required to cover all the elements of the person specification.

The same questions should be covered with all candidates and assumptions must not be made regarding the expertise or abilities of candidates because of their employment history. Interview questions should be phrased so that they do not favour any one candidate or group of candidates. Supplementary questions should be used to probe for further information or clarification where answers are incomplete or ambiguous. Care must be taken to avoid questions that could be construed as discriminatory e.g. questions about personal circumstances that are unrelated to the job. It is, for example, legitimate to ask for confirmation of whether individuals can comply with the working patterns of the post, but not to ask details of their domestic or child care arrangements etc. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to ensure that such questions are not asked.

Those conducting interviews must be aware that, although questions asked may not in themselves be discriminatory, the interpretation of answers by the panel could exhibit prejudice. Information regarding personal circumstances which is offered in an application form or at interview must not be taken into consideration in reaching a selection decision.

Interview notes must be taken to help the panel to make an informed decision based on the content of the interviews. Such notes must relate to how candidates demonstrate their knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications in relation to the person specification. The Data Protection Act allows applicants to request disclosure of such notes in the event of a complaint and an Employment Tribunal would expect Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to have notes of every selection decision. The lack of such notes would seriously impede the organisation's ability to contest such a complaint. Any inappropriate or personally derogatory comments contained within the notes could be considered discriminatory and are unacceptable.

Making a Decision after interview

The information obtained in the application, the interview and any selection tests will allow candidates to be assessed against the person specification and a selection decision to be made. The Chair of the panel must ensure that a written note of the reasons for selecting the successful candidate and rejecting others is made and placed on the recruitment file, together with the original applications and notes of all panel members, for a minimum of 6 months after the appointment decision has been notified to the candidates.

Interview proceedings are confidential and interviewers are free to divulge to others the decision reached only once the appointee has accepted the post.

“Reasonable Adjustments”

Where the candidate being interviewed has a disability for which adjustments may need to be considered, the candidate's requirements should ideally be discussed with him/her once the decision making is complete. The outcome of these discussions must not influence the consideration of the candidate's application. If the disabled candidate is considered the best person for the role, advice must be sought after the interview regarding any reasonable adjustments required.

In any situation where those adjustments could not be accommodated or the adjustments/ or adaptations needed would not be deemed to be 'reasonable' under the Equalities Act the Chair will draft a letter to the applicant explaining why the adaptations cannot be made. These must be reasonable and justifiable.

Feedback to unsuccessful candidates

Unsuccessful applicants should be notified as soon as possible after the interview and feedback offered. Feedback must be specific, relating to the person specification and honest.

References

References should be requested after the post has been offered and accepted, using the template letter. A copy of the job description and person specification of the post being offered should be enclosed. Employers have no legal obligation to provide a reference and Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would employ a suitable candidate for a probationary period even without two references. In the event of a reference describing a potential candidate as unsuitable the Chief Executive would make a decision about the appointment, having due regard to possible legal consequences.

Written references are preferred but a telephone reference may be obtained where time pressures or the location of referees dictate that this may be appropriate, you should ensure that you are certain as to the identity of the person to whom you are speaking. When conducting a telephone reference, it is helpful to plan the conversation beforehand and to have a list of questions ready. A file note should be made at the time of the telephone conversation and written confirmation should be requested.

References are confidential and must be sought in confidence. However, applicants do have the right to request to view any references supplied. They should be retained on the personnel file which is kept locked under the supervision of the Chief Executive.

Appointment

The offer letter should be issued as soon as possible, and should specify that the appointment is subject to:

- Receipt of satisfactory references
- Appropriate Disclosure and Barring service check (if needed)
- Evidence of eligibility to work in the UK
- Confirmation of relevant qualifications

A National Insurance number is not evidence that an individual is eligible to work in this country.

The written terms and conditions of employment must legally be issued to the new employee within eight weeks of starting employment, but in practice, the document should be issued before the employee commences employment.

Induction

All new employees will have a planned and comprehensive induction. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that all new members of the team have a plan that sets out:

- An introduction to our Healthwatch
- How HR systems work
- Meeting key colleagues
- Organisational information including policies and escalation processes
- Basic GDPR and safeguarding
- All the requirements and expectations of the role

Probationary period

All new staff are subject to a six months probationary period and will receive support and feedback on their performance and ability to meet the standards required of the post at regular intervals during that period. Prior to or at the end of the probationary period the line manager will hold a review meeting at which the postholder may be confirmed in post, the probationary period extended or the employment terminated.

If the period is extended an action plan, with targets and timescales, will be agreed with the postholder. Further extension or termination of employment are both possible should the targets not be met. Postholders whose employment is terminated will receive reasons in writing within 10 working days.

Approved by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board of Directors

Date: July 2021

For review: July 2024

Responsible Officer

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough