

**UNIT 5**

**Recruitment Manual – step by step guide**

**PREPARING THE PERSON SPECIFICATION**

###### Why does the Council need to prepare a person specification?

Whilst there is no legal requirement to do so, if the job advertisement, short-listing and subsequent selection assessment process are to produce the right candidate, a profile of the candidate you need must be realistically defined in a Person Specification. It will also be an important document in terms of evidence that recruitment and selection decisions have been based on non-discriminatory factors.

The use of a sound and realistic Person Specification in conjunction with the Job Description will ensure consistency of approach and fairness in defining the factors to be measured and help to ensure only the realistic requirements of the job are assessed as part of the recruitment and selection process.

The Person Specification should always be compiled before decisions are made about drafting an advert for the job.

###### What should the Council include in the person specification?

The Person Specification is the keystone of fair and sound selection. It should identify and describe in **measurable** terms the factors/attributes necessary for the successful performance of the duties and responsibilities set out in the Job Description and to the level and standard required.

The Person Specification helps considerably by ensuring that you focus on the essential factors and attributes required and supports the implementation of an effective selection process whilst also reducing the risk of claims of discrimination. To avoid the latter in particular you should always ask yourself why you are including the factor or attribute in the specificationin order to ensure that you are not directly or indirectly discriminating and/or stereotyping.

It is recommended that whilst ensuring that you do not exclude any groups unnecessarily the Person Specification should therefore include a number of key factors such as:-

* **Qualifications and experience** - What specific full or part professional or technical qualifications are necessary? Is there a statutory qualification requirement? Is there any particular occupational or job related training required? What level and type of experience will have equipped the right candidate for the job? Is there any specific task or industry related experience required?
* **Knowledge** - What does the job-holder need to know to do the job in terms of work processes, procedures, systems, legislation, regulations, equipment etc?
* **Personal qualities and attributes** - What sort of person is required to do the job and fit the team? Does the job require some special behaviours or personal characteristics e.g. creative, analytical, flexibility, sensitivity, self-motivation, loyalty, competitiveness persistence, self-reliance etc? Are there any particular physical or health requirements to do the job e.g. strength, vision, appearance etc? (N.B. Take care these are not discriminatory as you may need to justify your inclusion of a requirement that excludes a protected group from applying.) If you include restrictions also consider if with training, adjustments, aids or adaptations the job could be performed.
* **Skills or abilities** - What particular skills or aptitudes are needed e.g. creative, numerate, verbal and written skills, interpersonal, social, computer literacy, supervisory, management, organisational etc? What degree of accuracy is required?
* **Special conditions** - Does the job involve any special working conditions e.g. unsocial hours of work, working weekends/bank holidays, working abroad, possession of driving licence etc? Are there any health risks?

When preparing the Person Specification you should also take account of the following guidance:-

* use only the factors as appropriate to each job
* use criteria which are performance based, realistic, measurable and understandable (only use technical terminology when really needed)
* make sure any knowledge, skills, aptitudes or experience specified are appropriate to the job
* do not specify years of experience as this may discriminate on the grounds of age
* ensure that you can justify a requirement by reference to the job itself and do not include any potentially discriminatory issues (ensure that you are be aware of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics/groups)
* do not make the specification too restrictive and differentiate between those factors/attributes which are:-
* ***essential*** for the successful performance of the job i.e. a candidate should not be appointed without it; or
* ***desirable*** - namely those that it would be beneficial but not critical for the successful candidate to possess i.e. if a candidate could meet the attribute on the job or with training it should be considered to be desirable
* ensure that the factors/attributes are the minimum necessary to do the job
* do not describe an ideal but possibly unattainable candidate as over-specifying can mean that potentially good candidates do not apply or recruits have higher aspirations than can be met in the job
* if appropriate, weight those factors that are most critical to the selection – you may need to do this anyway as it may help in the selection assessment if you have more than one candidate meeting all the criteria
* do not simply model the person specification on the previous job-holder
* do not use a qualification level in order to control the number of applications – only require a qualification if it really is a genuine requirement
* do not specify any physical requirements that cannot be truly justified to ensure the successful performance of the job
* consider which factors can be used for short-listing i.e. those which can be assessed primarily from the application form or informal meetings (as long as candidates know the content could be used for selection purposes)
* consider how each part of the Person Specification may be tested and assessed during the selection process for example:-

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| * qualifications | - verification of certificates, application form,  interview, work examples, references |
| * knowledge | - application form, interview, tests, work  examples, references |
| * skills and abilities | - interview, tests, practical exercises,  work examples, references |
| * qualities and attitudes | - interview, references, personality profiling |
| * special conditions | - interview |

You could also add an additional column to induce what evidence would provide the information as listed above.

* 1. **Specimen Person Specification**

In summary the Person Specification should be designed to help you prepare a picture of the right candidate you will be seeking to appoint.

A specimen Person Specification for the post of Clerk to the Council is enclosed at **Appendix 5 (a)** and based on the requirements of the specimen job description provided elsewhere in the Manual. It is designed to enable you to specify and subsequently evaluate the key factors and attributes required of the successful candidate and may be customised to suit each individual Council.

Although the specimen enclosed is job specific the principle is the same for all posts on the Council’s establishment and in addition a specimen person specification for the post of Responsible Financial Officer is also enclosed at **Appendix 5 (b)** for your adaptation and use as it may be customised to suit each individual Council. If your post of Clerk to the Council is also the Responsible Financial Officer then some of the key items from the latter person specification may be included in a combined person specification.

* 1. **Further Help**

If you require training, help or any other assistance with your recruitment and selection processes or have any questions on anything in the Recruitment Manual please email your county association.

Updated September 2022

**Appendix 5 (a) - Specimen Person Specification for the post of Clerk to the Council**

**XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX COUNCIL**

**CLERK TO THE COUNCIL**

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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| **Factor** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Qualifications and experience | * Must hold the Certificate in Local Council Administration or be prepared to work towards obtaining it on appointment within 1 year of commencement. * Level 2 or 3 literacy and numeracy education/training/experience which demonstrates high literacy and numeracy skills. * Evidence of policy and strategy advice and development. * Relevant organisational and administrative experience in a structured environment. * Leadership and staff management experience. * Demonstrable experience of formal Committee work, agenda preparation and minute taking. * Experience of budget setting, monitoring processes, controls and financial management reports. * Successful implementation of equality and performance management systems. * Project management experience. | * Educated to degree or HND level. * ACIS qualified. * Previous experience of working for local authority or similar body. * Experience of dealing with the public and working on own initiative. |
| **Knowledge** | * Knowledge of local government responsibilities, system and procedures. * Knowledge of the governance, operational and legal framework in which the Council operates including local authority planning procedures. * Knowledge of employment and health and safety law and data protection. * Knowledge of relevant accounting procedures. | * Knowledge of local area. * Knowledge and understanding of importance of good public relations and how to raise the Council’s profile in the community. |
| **Qualities and Attitudes** | * Self-reliant and self-motivated with the drive, determination and initiative to achieve results and motivate others with minimal supervision. * Flexible, pro-active and hands on approach to tasks. * Supportive - demonstrating loyalty and commitment to the organisation and staff in past employment. * Trustworthy with confidential information. * Ability to demonstrate tact and diplomacy. * Community focussed. * Ability to develop and maintain good relationships with staff, councillors, external bodies, contractors and the public. * Commitment to the delivery of quality service. * Demonstrable ability to work as part of a team. | * Ability and enthusiasm to adapt to change. * Enthusiastic with innovative qualities. * Business perspective and acumen. * Ability to interpret political drivers. |
| **Skills and Abilities** | * Ability to communicate effectively with others at all levels both internally and externally. * Excellent written and oral communication and presentational skills. * Ability to form and maintain sound working relationships. * Strategic level organisational and administrative skills. * Formal agenda preparation and minute taking skills. * Ability to produce understandable and concise written reports on complex topics. * Ability to develop, implement and monitor effective systems and procedures. * Ability to organise and prioritise own and others work. * Management skills with ability to monitor performance of others to achieve targets and meet deadlines. * Be able to show ability to work in a logical manner and to strict deadlines. * IT literate (Level 3 IT qualification or equivalent) with sound working knowledge of MS Office, Excel and Windows packages. | * Articulate speaker in public. |
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| Special Conditions | * Willingness to work and/or attend Committees and other meetings and functions in evenings. * Prepared to work varied hours to meet the needs of the post. * Willingness to undergo training to acquire relevant new skills or knowledge relevant to the job. |  |

**Appendix 5 (b) - Specimen Person Specification for the post of Responsible Financial Officer**

**XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX COUNCIL**

**RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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| **Factor** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Qualifications and experience | * Strategic financial management experience in a complex environment. * Sound budget preparation, management and financial control systems experience. * Experience of financial forward planning. * Previous experience of working for local authority or similar body in a financial role. | * Ideally be at least CIPFA, ACCA or equivalent part qualified and be prepared to work towards obtaining the full qualification within 1 year of commencement. * Experience of Committee work or similar. |
| **Knowledge** | * Knowledge of local government financial systems and procedures. * Knowledge of the governance and financial framework in which the Council operates. * Knowledge of budget setting, audit and monitoring processes and financial management reports. * Knowledge of insurance procedures and financial risk assessment. * Working knowledge of accounts and payroll systems and procedures and computer packages. * Working knowledge of procurement processes within a public sector setting. * Implementation of financial systems and controls to prevent bribery and corruption. * Knowledge of KPI and other performance measures. | * Knowledge of the operating environment of the Council. |
| **Qualities and Attitudes** | * Self-reliant and self-motivated with the drive and determination to achieve results and influence others. * Flexible, pro-active and hands on approach to tasks. * Supportive - demonstrating loyalty and commitment to the organisation and colleagues in past employment. * Trustworthy. * Ability to develop and maintain good relationships with relevant external bodies. * Be able to show ability of being a good team worker. * Commitment to quality service delivery. | * Enthusiastic and willingness to adapt to change. * Ability to interpret political drivers. * Business perspective and acumen. |
| Skills and Abilities | * High numeracy and analytical skills. * Sound written and oral communication skills with the ability to communicate effectively with others at all levels both internally and externally. * Ability to form sound working relationships. * IT literate with sound working knowledge of MS Office, Excel and Windows packages. * Ability to produce high quality reports on complex topics. * Ability to organise and prioritise own workload. * Ability to work in a logical manner and to strict deadlines. | * Ability to develop, implement and monitor effective systems and procedures. * Good presentational and reporting skills using relevant IT programmes. * Flexibility and ability to respond quickly to situations. |
| Special Conditions | * Willingness to work and/or attend Committees and other meetings and functions in evenings. * Willingness to undertake training. * Prepared to work varied hours to meet the needs of the post. |  |