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Recruitment and Selection Factsheet

1. What is recruitment?

Recruitment is the process of attracting suitable candidates to apply for a vacancy within the organisation, and then selecting from within that pool of applicants to appoint the person who has the best skills, ability, experience and qualifications to carry out the role. It is about finding the right person for the job.

In most cases the recruitment process can be simple, with stages that can be followed each time recruitment takes places. These stages are usually as follows:
1. defining the role
2. attracting applications
3. managing the application and selection process
4. making the appointment

Each of these stages will be explored in more detail below.

2. Why is recruitment so important for an organisation?

Acas reminds us that employees are any organisation's greatest assets, and that the success of the organisation depends on having the right number of employees with the right skills and abilities. A carefully planned recruitment process, combined with a well-thought out induction programme, is vital in ensuring that any new employees become effective within the shortest time. Effective recruitment is central and vital to the successful day-to-day functioning of any organisation, not only to fulfil current needs but also when planning for the future.

Recruiting people who are wrong for the organisation can lead to:
• lack of flexibility and commitment
• increased employee turnover
• increased costs for the organisation
• lowering of morale in the existing workforce

Acas point out that extra time will then need to be spent on further recruitment exercises, when what is needed in the first place is a systematic process to assess the role to be filled, and the type of skills and abilities needed to fill it. The process should always be efficient, effective and fair.

It is a good idea for any organisation to plan its labour force requirements, and a skills audit of existing staff will increase knowledge of the skills the organisation has available and those which are lacking, and thus help pinpoint areas for future development. A simple human resource plan involves

forecasting staffing requirements against business objectives and can help organisations to:

- assess future recruitment needs
- formulate training programmes and produce career development policies
- develop a flexible workforce to meet changing requirements
- assess future requirements for technology, equipment and premises

Recruiters need to keep abreast of changes in the labour market and assess the supply of people available to meet their requirements. This way employers will ensure that their recruitment efforts are not wasted. Skill shortages may occur unexpectedly and recruitment and training processes need to be kept flexible. If recruitment is difficult in certain jobs or for specific skills, then consideration may need to be given to re-designing the job to make it a more attractive prospect. Employers also need to encourage a good 'work-life balance' within the organisation by giving consideration to more flexible ways of working and ensuring that family-friendly policies are in place.

Successful recruitment is all about finding people with the right skills, expertise and qualifications to deliver organisational objectives and the ability to make a positive contribution to the values and aims of the organisation.

3. Who will be involved in the recruitment process?

Some organisations will have a dedicated HR team who will oversee the recruitment process. In other cases the responsibility for recruitment will be given to senior staff, head of departments, line managers or supervisors.

Even where an organisation does have a HR team it is usually still necessary to involve other staff from across the organisation in the recruitment and induction process (see section 8.7 below). It is important that the line manager/supervisor is involved right through from developing the job description and person specification, to the interview stage and final selection decision. Gaining the commitment of the immediate manager/supervisor by involving them in the selection process can be vital to ensuring that the new employee is settled successfully into the organisation.

It is important that all those involved in recruitment activities are aware of the principles of good practice, and are fully equipped with the appropriate knowledge and skills.

4. Diversity and Discrimination

The employer has the legal responsibility to ensure that no unlawful discrimination occurs in the recruitment and selection process on the grounds of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief.

Selection decisions should only ever be based only on a candidate's skills to do the job, ability to make a contribution to the organisation's effectiveness and potential for development. A diverse workforce which reflects all groups within the local community is to be encouraged.

The importance of diversity should be taken into account at each stage of the recruitment process. Processes and systems should be regularly reviewed to ensure that:
- hidden bias is removed
- talent is not being blocked from entering the organisation

Everyone taking part in activities such as shortlisting and interviewing should be aware of relevant legislation and the importance of avoiding discrimination. Discrimination can occur both directly and indirectly in the recruitment process. For example:
- untrained interviewers can make subjective judgments based on non job-related criteria
- some forms of advertising may discourage or fail to reach potential applicants from certain groups

Organisations should monitor their recruitment processes continuously to ensure their validity, and that they are non-discriminatory.

Organisations should be also be aware that the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 not only make it unlawful to discriminate against disabled individuals without justifiable reason, but also require employers to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace or working arrangements.

Equality of opportunity is an essential part of the recruitment and selection process and, therefore, employers may offer training and encouragement to any under-represented groups. For example, pre-application assistance for those who do not have English as their first language. Job advertisements may also state that the employer encourages applications from groups that are currently under-represented.

5. STAGE ONE - Defining the role
5.1 Job analysis
A new or vacant post within an organisation provides the opportunity for reflection on the position that is shortly to be filled. It presents a chance to consider restructuring or to reassess the requirements of the job. It is important to invest time in gathering information about the nature of the job.

This includes thinking about:
- the content (such as the tasks) making up the job
- the job's purpose
- the outputs required by the job holder

- how it fits into the organisation's structure

Time should also be spent asking questions such as:
- has the function changed?
- has new technology or new products altered the job?
- are there any changes anticipated which will require different skills from the jobholder?

Answers to all these questions should help to clarify requirements of the job and how it fits into the rest of the organisation. Exit interviews can also produce good ideas about useful changes.

This analysis should form the basis of a job description and person specification.

5.2 Job description
The job analysis leads to writing a job description. The job description has a number of purposes including:
- explaining the job to the candidates, and allowing them to assess themselves against the requirements
- helping the recruitment process by providing a clear guide to all involved about the requirements of the job
- helping with induction and training
- communicating expectations about performance to employees and managers to help ensure effective performance in the job
- providing a benchmark for judging achievements

A good job description should include:
- main purpose of the job
- main tasks of the job
- scope of the job – expanding on the main tasks and the importance of the job, such as number of people to be supervised or the degree of precision required

5.3 Person specification
The person specification allows the organisation to profile the ideal person to fill the job. A person specification or job profile states the essential and desirable criteria for selection including:
- qualifications
- experience
- knowledge
- skills and abilities

It is very important that the skills, abilities and knowledge included in the specification are related precisely to the needs of the job. Unnecessary requirements should not be included because:

- there is a risk that someone will be employed on the basis of false hopes and aspirations, leading to disappointed on both sides
- they may discriminate against particular groups of potential applicants

The person specification helps the selection and subsequent interview to operate in a systematic way, as bias-free as possible, by providing a clear set of requirements to assess candidates against.

6. STAGE TWO – Attracting applications

This stage is all about the search for suitable candidates. Successful recruitment is dependent on generating interest from a decent selection of good quality candidates. The process of marketing needs to be undertaken carefully so as to ensure the best response at the least cost to the organisation. There are a number of methods to consider.

6.1 Internal methods

It is important not to forget the internal talent pool when recruiting, and to ensure that existing employees are giving the opportunity to express an interest or apply for vacancies and new posts.

Internal recruitment can have the advantage of building on existing employees' skills and training, and provides opportunities for development and promotion. Providing opportunities for career progression can be highly motivating and increases employee engagement and retention. It is important that there is a clear internal process in place to avoid any claims of favouritism.

6.2 External methods

There are many options available for external advertising. A survey carried out by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that some of the most popular methods include:

- Promoting a vacancy on the organisation's own website
- Use of recruitment agencies
- Advertising via professional networking sites such as LinkedIn

Advertising in the recruitment section of a newspaper also remains a popular method of generating interest from external candidates. Advertising in the national press is expensive, but likely to produce a good response for specialist vacancies. Specialist and professional journals should also be considered for certain posts as they are less expensive than national newspapers and are guaranteed to reach a precise group of potential applicants.

The internet is also a widely used recruitment medium, for example via recruitment websites such as Total Jobs or Charity Job.

However, decisions regarding external advertising can be very much dependent on an organisation's culture, the advertising budget available, and also they target audience they may be trying to reach. Therefore, other effective methods, which may fit with a smaller budget, include advertising via:

- Local libraries and community centres
- Supermarkets and local shops
- Community newsletters and local newspapers
- Local radio
- Local colleges and universities
- The Careers Service
- Jobcentre Plus who will display employers' vacancies and refer potential recruits
- Organisational Open Days or events

Word of mouth and recommendations can be a very cheap form of attracting applicants, but can lead to a very small pool of applicants, and does not always satisfy equal opportunity requirements.

Any advertisement needs to be designed and presented effectively to ensure the right candidates are attracted. Advertisements should always be tailored to the target audience, and should be clear and easy to understand.

The following details should be included when composing the advertisement:

- Organisational logo where relevant
- Job Title
- Key details of the job – job title, location, hours, reward package, contract length (where necessary) etc.
- Basic background to the organisation including nature of the organisation's activities
- Brief description of what the job involves
- Necessary and the desirable criteria for job applicants (to limit the number of inappropriate applications received)
- Details of how to apply – whether this is by CV, application form, on-line, in person etc.
- If job details can be provided on tape on in braille format etc.
- The closing date for applications
- Contact details for further information

Employers may want to look at the style of advertisements displayed in newspapers and on-line etc. to look at layout, information included and overall design. This will help the organisation to see what works well, and what doesn't work so well, and also to decide on the style of their own advertisement.

The text should be as short and concise as possible, whilst ensuring that the key details of the job are included. Specific details should be provided where possible, and generalisations such as 'attractive salary' should be avoided to reduce the number of unsuitable applications.

Jobs adverts must be non-discriminatory, and should avoid any gender or culturally specific language. Where possible the organisation's statement of commitment to equal opportunities should be included, which will make it clear that applications are welcome from all sections of the community.

6.3 External recruitment services

Many organisations choose to use external providers, such as recruitment agencies or recruitment consultants, to assist with their recruitment. These providers offer a full range of services including attracting candidates, handling applications, screening and shortlisting, or running assessment centres on the employer's behalf. If using a recruitment partner it is essential to ensure that they develop a good understanding of the organisation and its requirements.

Using external recruitment agencies can prove expensive, and so won't always be a viable option for every post, and sometimes just isn't necessary. However, for certain positions, especially for more senior or specialist roles, it is certainly worth exploring the services on offer.

7. STAGE THREE - Managing the application and selection process

There are two main formats in which applications are likely to be received:
1. curriculum vitae (CV)
2. application form

It is now common for both these types of applications to be received electronically with some organisations asking for all applications to be submitted this way. However, paper applications are still widely used.

7.1 Application forms

Application forms are favoured by many employers as they ensure that all applicants have an equal opportunity to provide the information required. Also, because the information is presented in such a consistent format, it makes it much easier to collect all the details systematically, and then to compare like with like and objectively assess the candidate's suitability for the job.

Employers should be wary of asking too many questions in an attempt to create a personality profile of the applicants. The form should concentrate on experience, knowledge and the necessary skills for the job. Employers should always ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate how

they fulfil the requirements of the person specification which should be key when assessing the applications.

The main disadvantage of application forms is that some potential candidates may dislike completing forms and so will be put off applying. Therefore it is important to consider the design and language of the application form. A poorly designed application form can mean applications from some good candidates are overlooked. For example, devoting lots of space to present employment could put a candidate who is not currently working at a disadvantage, and likewise for those potential applicants who have not had a traditional education or may not have qualifications.

Any information such as title (marital status), ethnic origin or date of birth requested for monitoring purposes should be clearly shown to be for this purpose only, and should be on a separate sheet or tear-off section. Such information need only be provided on a voluntary basis.

7.2 CVs
The main advantage of CVs is that they give candidates the opportunity to sell themselves in their own way and means that applicants aren't restricted to the questions or space available on the application form. However, this also means that candidates can include lots of additional material. This can cause real difficulties when attempting to assess the applications consistently, and can result in reading through lots of irrelevant information to pull out the important details. CVs also make it very easy for applicants to apply, as they don't take the time and effort that completing an application does. This can result in a higher number of unsuitable candidates who may just send off their CV without much consideration to the requirements of the role.

7.3 Dealing with applications
All applications should be treated confidentially and circulated only to those individuals involved in the recruitment process.

Acknowledgment of all applications received is good practice and presents a positive image of the organisation. However, for some organisations the recruitment budget means it is not possible to respond by post to every application, especially where a high number has been received. Alternatives include:
- asking applicants to include a SAE for a response
- responding via email
- giving applicants a clear deadline after which time they will know they have not short-listed (this option should really be a last resort)

7.4 The 'candidate experience'
It is important to remember that recruitment is a two-way process. At the same time as the employer is identifying suitable employees, the candidates

are finding out more about the business, and considering whether the organisation is actually one that they would like to work for. Therefore it is vital to consider the experience of the candidates at each stage of the recruitment process, and think about how this will impact on their view of the organisation.

7.5 Selecting candidates

Selecting candidates is a crucial stage in the overall recruitment process and involves two main procedures:

1. shortlisting
2. assessing applicants to decide who should be offered a job

As this is such a key stage of the overall process employers need to be mindful of the following:

- There should always be a structured and thorough approach to selecting candidates, but at the same time allowing for a degree of flexibility where required to ensure that the approach taken is appropriate for both the candidate and the post in question
- Selection decisions should only ever be made after using a range of tools appropriate to the time and resources available to the organisation
- Care should be taken to use techniques which are relevant to the job and the objectives of the organisation
- All tools used should be validated and constantly reviewed to ensure their fairness and reliability
- All of those who are involved in the selection process have (1) received appropriate training, and (2) are aware of the need to avoid unfair discrimination and the potential legal implications and risks of a tribunal claim

7.6 Short-listing

Whatever form the applications may take there is usually a need to short-list or sift through all the applications that have been submitted. This allows the organisation to select the most suitable candidates for interview by matching the applicants as closely as possible to the person specification to produce a short-list.

To avoid any possibility of bias, short-listing should be undertaken by a minimum of two people. This should always involve the direct line manager/supervisor and one other suitable person who may be the CEO (in smaller organisations), another appropriate member of management, a HR representative, a Trustee or member of the management board etc.

The short-list of candidates will then be invited for interview, or other form of assessment (see below). The invitation letter should:

- advise candidates of the arrangements for the day including times, location, who the assessors will be and how long assessment will take
- ask candidates to advise the organisation in advance if any particular arrangements need to be made to accommodate them on arrival or during the interview; for instance, ramp access or lighting levels
- clearly state whether the organisation will pay the candidate's reasonable travel expenses for the interview and, where relevant, whether lunch or refreshments will be provided during the day

Written records of the short-listing process should be made, and organisations may find it useful to develop a standard form for recording purposes which allows those short-listing to match the applicants against the person specification.

7.7 Assessment Methods

There is a wide range of methods available to assess candidates. These methods all vary in their reliability as a predictor of performance in the job. The most traditional, and maybe most obvious assessment method, is interviewing. However, this is not always as reliable as employers may think and it is certainly worth taking the time to explore other options, or considering whether it is possible to combine interviews with another assessment technique.

Ultimately the chosen method may depend on the budget available, and also the ease of the overall process for the organisation. However, whatever method is used it is important to ensure that:

- candidates are assessed fairly and consistently, and that the final decisions made can be backed-up by written records
- candidates know in advance what to expect from the selection process, so they are clear on the type of assessment they are going to undergo, the length of time it will take and any preparation that is required
- applicants are asked whether there is any need for adjustments due to a disability

A number of selection methods will now be explored in more details below – selection interviewing, psychological testing and assessment centres.

7.8 Selection interviewing

Most jobs are still filled through interviews. Interviews are very widely used in the selection process and remain popular because, as well as providing information to predict performance, interviews also give an opportunity for the employer to meet all candidates in person. Interviews are also fairly straight-forward to organise and can be carried out on a small budget.

For the candidate, the interview is an opportunity to:

- Meet the employer and learn more about the organisation, including a visit to the organisation's premises in most cases
- Find out more about the job and what it involves
- Decide if the job seems right for them, and whether they would take it if an offer was made

For the organisation, the interview is an opportunity to:
- Provide background on the organisation, and its aims, objectives and values.
- Explain how the vacancy or new post has come about
- Describe the job and the responsibilities in more detail
- Ask questions to assess candidates' ability to perform in the role
- Discuss with the candidate details such as start dates, and terms and conditions, employee benefits etc.
- Give a positive impression of the organisation to the candidates

However, despite the popularity of interviews as an assessment method, there are a number of disadvantages that employers should be aware of. Firstly, a poorly conducted interview can leave the candidate with an unfavourable impression of the organisation. Candidates who have been through a bad experience at the interview stage are very likely to share this information with other potential applicants and customers. Care must be taken to compose relevant questions related to the person specification, and thought should be given to the candidates overall experience on the day.

The other main disadvantage of interviewing as a selection technique is that the traditional interview is a very poor predictor of a candidate's actual performance in the job. This is because information is often gathered from the interview in a relatively unsystematic manner, and judgments may be made on candidates for a variety of reasons.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development describe Anderson and Shackleton's research which draws on a wide variety of studies to summarise the reasons why interviews are often criticised as a reliable method. These include:

1. **The self-fulfilling prophecy effect**. Interviewers may gain initial impressions of the candidate, prior to interview or during the early stages, and then ask questions designed to confirm these impressions.

2. **The stereotyping effect**. Interviewers sometimes assume that particular characteristics are typical of members of a particular group, and can make decisions based on these assumptions. This effect occurs in the case of all kinds of social groups, but in the case of sex, race, disability, marital status or ex-offenders, decisions made on this basis are often illegal.

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3. **The halo and horns effect**. Interviewers can sometimes reach favourable or unfavourable conclusions about a candidate early in the process, and then go on to rate candidates as 'good' or 'bad' across the board.

4. **The contrast effect**. Interviewers can allow the experience of interviewing one candidate to impact on the way they interview others who are seen later in the selection process.

5. **The similar-to-me effect**. Also known as the 'mirror-image' effect. This is where an interviewer looks for similarities to themselves in the candidate. They may come across a candidate that they perceive as having a similar background, career history, personality or attitudes to themselves. They can then go on to give this candidate preference throughout the process - a subconscious subjectivity.

6. **The personal liking effect.** Interviewers may make decisions on the basis of whether they personally like or dislike the candidate.

There are measures that can be put in place to ensure interviews become a more reliable method of assessing candidates. Most importantly the interview needs to be structured to improve its ability to predict performance in the job.

A 'structured interview' means that:
- questions are planned carefully before the interview
- all candidates are asked the same questions, and are given the same opportunity to demonstrate their suitability
- all candidates have the chance to ask questions of the employer
- answers are scored using a rating system
- questions focus on the qualities, skills and behaviours needed in the job

Use of a structured scoring system can be particularly helpful during the interview process, and helps to avoid the pitfalls discussed above. Structured scoring enables the organisation to weight some elements or skills where necessary, and to compare a candidate's score with the 'ideal' score based on the person specification. However, employers may want to high-light crucial areas to ensure that a certain level of score is achieved for these elements, otherwise a high overall score can mask a low score in a crucial area.

There is a risk, however, that a very structured and overly rigid approach means there is little opportunity to ask the candidate supplementary questions and the candidate does not feel at their ease. So a balance needs to be made.

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Acas explains that each candidate should leave with a sense of being treated well and fairly and having had the opportunity to give of their best.

7.9 Planning and conducting an interview
Those on the interview panel should prepare by:
- reading the application form, job description and person specification
- planning suitable questions that are relevant for the post
- familiarising themselves with the scoring system
- being ready for the candidates' questions, and trying to anticipate what additional information they may seek

Those interviewing should never ask:
- for personal information
- for views irrelevant to the job
- potentially discriminatory questions such as those regarding plans to have children etc.

It is important to ensure that the interview takes place in a quiet environment that is free of interruptions and ringing phones. This will allow candidates to focus and give of their best.

When the candidates arrive they should be:
- welcomed
- shown the toilet facilities
- given a brief tour of the workplace where possible
- introduced the possible colleagues where appropriate

Where an applicant has indicated a disability and/or asked for adjustments to be made, then the necessary steps should be taken. This may include checking that candidates with hearing impairment can clearly see the interviewer as they are talking, and has the necessary communication support, or relocating the interview in cases where access to the building is an issue. It is very important that applicants are not put at a disadvantage because of a failure to make simple changes.

Candidates are often nervous and the interviewer should encourage the candidates to settle into the interview, so that conversation flows easily. The aim is for the candidate to do most of the talking so they are able to demonstrate their suitability for the job. The following pointers may be helpful in conducting the interview, and allowing both parties to relax. The interviewers should:
- introduce themselves
- give some background information about the organisation and the job
- structure the questions to cover all the relevant areas

- avoid closed questions and try to ask open-ended questions that encourage the candidate to speak freely – they often begin 'what', 'why', 'when' or 'how'
- avoid leading questions
- listen, and make brief notes
- have a time frame and keep to it
- allow sufficient time for candidates to ask any questions
- make sure the candidate is familiar with the terms and conditions of the job, and they are acceptable
- tell the candidate what will happen next and when to expect to hear the outcome

7.10 Psychological testing
The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development describes psychological tests as tests which are:
- systematically scored and administered
- supported by a body of evidence and statistical data which demonstrates their validity
- used in an occupational setting to measure individual differences (for example in ability, aptitude, attainment, intelligence or personality)
- designed and developed by occupational psychologists

The tests are accompanied by detailed manuals which provide the data to establish the reliability of the test and the normative information (i.e. what is usual in a defined population, or the 'average' score) against which test results may be compared. The normative information allows employers to compare their candidates against the scores of a normal population of similar people.

There are a range of psychological tests available which assist the employer in measuring aspects of personality and intelligence. However, they are not widely used, and tend to be used by larger organisations. Acas describe some psychometric tests as 'controversial', particularly those that assess personality.

Administering tests and analysing the results is a skilled task which requires specific training. This is not normally an assessment method that can be carried out in-house, unless the organisation has staff who are qualified. Therefore there will be cost implications if external experts need to be brought in to administer the tests. Any organisation should ensure that they have they have skills and resources available before considering the use of psychometric tests.

Scoring of tests is often complex and exactly how it is done will depend on what the test is trying to measure. With personality tests there are no right or wrong answers as they are designed to present a profile of an individual.

When considering psychological testing employers need to consider:
- whether it is appropriate to use a test and whether it will actually provide any additional relevant information
- whether there are sufficient resources in place to carry out testing effectively
- whether the tests are relevant to the job description and person specification
- equal opportunities issues
- how else the candidates will be assessed (as psychological tests should never be used in isolation as the only selection technique)
- how the results will be used and what weight will be given to them for decision-making purposes
- who will have access to the results
- the policy and provisions for giving feedback

Those administering the tests should ensure that individuals receive:
- advance notice that they will be required to take tests, and how long the tests are expected to take
- adequate time to allow them to make any practical arrangements to enable them to take the tests
- access to an appropriate environment free from interference in which to take the tests
- adequate information about the requirements of each test they will be asked to complete
- the opportunity to raise any queries they have before taking the tests
- feedback on the outcome of the tests, preferably by a trained professional

7.11 Assessment centres

Assessment centres involve candidates completing a number of different tasks as part of the overall selection process. The idea behind an assessment centre is that it should reflect the reality of the job and the organisation, and the tasks set should clearly link with the job description and person specification.

Assessment centres tend to be used by larger organisations for senior positions or graduate programmes. The assessment usually takes place in an external venue, and can often be residential and set over a number of days. Any assessment centre must be fair as a selection process regarding the time taken, the number of tasks set and the opportunities for candidates to show different aspects of their abilities.

Depending on the nature of the job, the tasks might include:
- individual or group work

- written and/or spoken tasks set in advance such as preparing a report or presentation
- written and/or oral tasks carried out on the day such as in-tray exercises, analytical work, problem solving, group discussions, tasks which match business activities and role-play exercises

Overall the group exercises should:
- be as real as possible
- set goals
- have a limited time
- require candidates to share information and reach decisions
- require the candidates to read the brief very carefully

It is vital that employers consider how the exercises and tasks will be assessed, and the whole process should be perceived as fair by the candidates. There should be a number of observers/selectors to ensure greater objectivity through a range of views. It is important that the selectors are trained to observe, listen, record and rate behaviour, and seek evidence accurately and objectively against the job description and person specification.

Feedback should always be offered and, where possible, this should be provided by someone who is trained to deliver professional feedback.

7.12 Practical tests and assessment exercises
Many employers may consider assessment centres to be outside their budget as they often can involve hiring external venues, and can seem very daunting in terms of planning and the resources required. However, employers can still use the overall principle behind assessment centres by using a range of methods and, therefore, supplementing the results of the traditional interviews with other assessment exercises and practical tests.

For example candidates may be asked:
- to bring along a report to be discussed during the interview
- to prepare a presentation in advance
- to carry out a number of tasks before or after the interview, such as an in-tray exercises or problem solving activities

In some cases all candidates may be brought together for part of the day to participate in group exercises, before or after the individual interviews. Practical exercises can be particularly useful if the job involves practical abilities as word processing or telephone skills.

It is always useful to carry out a range of assessment exercises where possible to build on the results of the interviews, and to allow the assessors to develop a more rounded picture of the candidates and their abilities.

However, as always, it is vital that any assessment exercises are:
- fair and free of bias
- scored objectively and consistently
- related to the requirements of the job
- have clear objectives
- designed so that all candidates have an equal opportunity to participate
- are efficient in terms of method and cost
- workable with the number of candidates involved
- are beneficial in terms of the overall assessment process

7.13 Use of technology
Technology now plays an increasingly important role in recruitment at all stages of the process. For example:
- on-line recruitment
- use of electronic techniques to manage applications and slim down the number of potential candidates
- carrying out interviews virtually via video link or Skype
- carrying out testing on-line

8. STAGE FOUR - Making the appointment

8.1 Making the decision
A final decision about whom to employ should be made as soon as possible after the assessment stage is complete. If there seems likely to be any delays, then candidates should be kept informed. Unsuccessful candidates should also be informed promptly.

Notes should be written up immediately after the interview while it is still fresh in the interviewer's mind. These notes, and the scoring system, should be referred to when making a decision.

When making written records employers should be mindful of

- the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, which will enable the candidate to ask to see interview notes where they form part of a 'set' of information about the candidate – for instance, the application form, references received and so on, or the full personnel file if the candidate is already working for the organisation
- discrimination legislation, and that reasons for appointing or not appointing a particular candidate may be challenged

Feedback should be given to unsuccessful candidates. This should be positive feedback and should help candidates to improve on certain aspects for future success. All applicants should be treated fairly and courteously because there may be future job vacancies for which they would be suitable.

It is also important to remember that applicants and their families may be customers or service users, so it makes good business sense to ensure that they maintain a favourable view of the organisation.

8.2 References
The purpose of references is to obtain information about a candidate's
- employment history
- qualifications
- experience
- suitability for the post in question

Prospective employers may seek information on matters including:
- length of employment
- job title
- brief details of responsibilities
- abilities
- overall performance
- reason for leaving

Candidates should always be informed of the procedure for taking up references, how they will be used and at which stage in the recruitment process they will be taken up. Employers should also be clear on the procedure for references that are not returned or are deemed to be unsatisfactory. These rules should be applied consistently.

It is good practice to state on the application form exactly when references are being taken up, and the current employer should never be approached without the candidate's permission.

References are usually sought after the successful applicant has been given a 'provisional job offer', and are normally requested from the applicant's current or most recent employer, with a second, additional reference also being employment based. However, some organisations realise that this can be quite restrictive, especially where the candidate is not currently working or has other experience outside of employment. Therefore, some employers offer some flexibility and allow references from other appropriate and relevant sources such as:
- support worker
- volunteer co-ordinator or person overseeing a voluntary project
- work-placement officer
- priest or minister
- college or university lecturer

It is not usually appropriate to allow personal references from family or friends and, where possible, other suitable referees should be identified.

A standard form, or letter, is often used to request the information, and to ensure this information is gathered consistently. A Job Description should also be included to allow the referee to see exactly what the job involves.

These days referees can often be reluctant to provide a subjective opinion on abilities, conduct and performance and, therefore, it is increasingly common for many employers to just provide a minimal and factual reference which will just include details such as dates of employment, job title and general duties etc.

However, employers should also remember that it is inappropriate to ask for personal information or expect the referee to speculate or make assumptions about performance in the new role. At the same time it is important to consider that references can be very time-consuming to complete, especially when questions require a detailed responses. Therefore, with all this in mind, there may be times where basic reference information will be sufficient.

However, in cases where there has been an act of gross misconduct, or other serious matter relating to the employee's conduct or performance, then this information should always be disclosed accurately to the new employer.

Employers should be cautious of making job offers that are 'subject to satisfactory references being received'. It can often be the case that referees fail to provide a reference, and the employer should be clear on the process and policy if this should occur. For example, is the candidate responsible for chasing up the reference? Or are other referees approached? Acas suggest that a probationary period may be the most suitable way to proceed in situations where references are not provided.

Likewise, employers should be extremely careful about the decision to withdraw a job offer based on an unsatisfactory reference as this could result in legal action. Again, there should be a clear policy in place for dealing with unsatisfactory references. The referee may have wrongly indicated that the candidate is unsuitable, and it may be worth following up their initial reference to gain further clarification.

8.3 Pre-employment checks
As well as applying for references employers also have a responsibility to carry out other pre-employment checks. These include:
- Checking that applicants have the right to work in the UK
- Asking for proof of qualifications, training or licences that may be necessary
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for relevant positions where the job or role is eligible. Eligibility for DBS checks is strictly regulated by the law and checks can only be obtained for

certain roles which are usually those that involve working with children or vulnerable adults

8.4 Medical examinations

In the past many employers would carry out a medical check or examination before offering a job, or ask questions regarding an applicant's previous sickness record on the application form.

However, the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to ask about a candidate's health, or to request that the candidate completes any kind of medical questionnaire, before a job offer is made (either conditional or unconditional).

However, there are certain circumstances when employers can ask pre-employment health-related questions before offering the position, but these are limited. Therefore, employers can only ask health-related questions to:
- determine if a candidate can carry out a function which is essential to the job
- ask whether candidates need special arrangements for any part of the application process
- anonymously monitor whether candidates are disabled
- take positive action to assist disabled people
- check that a candidate has a disability where this is a genuine requirement of the job

Employers should also make sure that any particular physical or medical requirement is made clear in the job advertisement or other recruitment literature.

Employers need to think creatively and innovatively about where they can make reasonable adjustments, such as flexible working, where someone has a disability. It would be highly risky to withdraw an offer to a disabled person unless it is beyond doubt that the health issues revealed mean that the role was impossible for them to do even after any reasonable adjustments were made.

8.5 Employment offer

Offers of employment should always be made in writing, usually in the form of a 'job offer letter'. However, many employers don't realise that a spoken offer of employment made in an interview is as legally binding as a letter, and so need to be cautious about making casual verbal offers without careful consideration. It is also important to remember that, once an offer is made, there is a legal contract in place which exists even before the employee commences employment.

The job offer letter will normally set out the basic terms of the offer including:
- Job title

- Start date
- Any pre or post offer conditions that exist
- Salary, and details of arrangements for payment
- Details of any fixed-term
- Work location
- Working hours
- Holiday entitlement
- Details of any probationary period
- Notice period
- Any action the candidate needs to take, e.g. returning a signed acceptance

A copy of the Written Statement of Employment Particulars is often sent with the job offer letter so that the successful applicant can familiarise themselves with the full terms and conditions of employment. Employers need to be aware of the legal requirements regarding exactly what information should be given in the written statement, and should take advice on this where required.

8.6 Documentation
It is essential that the recruitment process is documented accurately throughout. Access should just be limited to those involved in the recruitment process. It is also good practice to monitor applications and decisions to ensure that all groups are being reached and that equality of opportunity is being allowed.

Information should be kept for sufficient time to allow for any complaints to be handled. For many types of personnel records, including those related to recruitment such as application forms and interview notes, there is no definitive retention period and it is up to the employer to decide how long to keep hold of the information. An employer needs to consider what would be a necessary retention period for them, depending on the type of record, and it is often a question of judgement rather than there being any definitive right and wrong. Time limits on claims should also be taken into consideration. The usual recommended period for retaining recruitment records is 6 months to a year, with a year being more advisable. The documents for the successful candidate should be transferred to the personnel file.

Unsuccessful candidates should be notified promptly in writing and if possible given feedback. As a minimum, feedback on any psychometric test results should be given.

8.7 Induction
It is important to remember that the selection process is only the very start of the employment relationship, and the future of that relationship very much depends on how the new employee is settled into the job. As soon as the job offer has been accepted the organisation should start to prepare for the new

employee's arrival and induction. Lack of preparation can create a poor impression of the organisation as an employer, and can un-do the good work that has been done throughout the recruitment process. A good induction programme makes business sense whatever the size of the organisation, and whatever the job.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development describes induction as the whole process whereby employees adjust or acclimatise to their jobs and working environment, and become integrated into the organisation. It is about the employee familiarising themselves with the organisation and settling into the job. A well thought-out induction programme can be beneficial for both employer and employee as it will:

- ensure that new employees feel welcome
- increase the speed at which new employees become fully operational and ready to contribute
- increase staff retention as most turnover is among new employees

It is important that the induction process is:

- well-planned and carefully considered
- tailor-made depending on the complexity of the job and the background of the new employee
- not just a standardised 'one size fits all' course
- planned so that it provides the necessary information without overwhelming the new employee, or distracting them from the overall integration into the organisation

The induction process will begin before the employee's first day at work, as they will usually be sent documentation along with their offer letter, such as the Written Statement of Employment Particulars or the Employee Handbook. It is then important that the induction continues on the first day at work by ensuring that the new employee spends time with the line manager and/or HR manager. This provides an opportunity to complete further documentation, provide information about the organisation and working practices, discuss training and development, and also to provide important health and safety information. It is also a chance to inform the employee about who they can approach for help and advice if required.

The remainder of the induction programme may be spread over several days or weeks. The induction process does not have to be particularly formal, but it needs to be properly managed. It is good practice to have a written checklist of all the items to be covered during the induction programme. This will give the whole process a clear structure, and will allow both employee and manager to see what has been covered and what remains outstanding.

The induction will normally be carried out or coordinated by the employee's line manager. However, depending on the size of the organisation, there may

be other people involved in the planning and delivery including the HR manager, a Health and Safety adviser, training officer, department manager, trade union representative etc. It can also be useful to have a colleague to act as a guide and advisor, even if the organisation does not have a formal 'buddy' system.

A good induction programme usually contains the following elements:
- a clear outline of the job requirements – including standards expected, introduction to co-workers, details of supervision and appraisal
- explanation of terms and conditions – hours, breaks, payment, holidays, sickness provisions, probationary period, notice period, pensions etc.
- employee benefits – e.g., discounts, uniform, parking, transport, medical services
- equal opportunity policy and worker development
- organisation rules – smoking, dress code, use of internet and telephones etc.
- physical orientation – layout of the building and describing where the facilities e.g. toilets, canteen, rest room
- health and safety information - this is a legal requirement (see below)
- details of the organisation's history, its culture and values, and its products and services
- organisation orientation - showing how the employee fits into the team and how their role fits with the organisation's strategy and goals
- an awareness of other functions/teams within the organisation, and how the employee fits within that
- meeting with colleagues, key employees and other workers with whom they may have less day-to-day contact

Where several employees start work at once it may be appropriate to hold group induction sessions on common topics.

Health and safety information is particularly important as all employees need to be able to work in a safe and healthy manner. Depending on the nature of the job a health and safety induction will normally include:
- risk assessment
- emergency procedures
- awareness of hazards
- safety rules
- first aid
- location of exits
- dangerous substances
- reporting accidents
- personal hygiene

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If there are special health and safety requirements then it is important to make sure that the new starter fully understands their importance otherwise there is the risk of being exposed to unnecessary danger or endangering their co-workers. All employees must know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency.

There are certain employees who may need special attention during the induction process, and employers should consider their needs carefully.

These include:
- School or college leavers who are starting their first job
- People returning to work after a break in employment
- Employees with disabilities

Further guidance for employers on Recruitment and Selection can be found in the Acas guide 'Recruitment and Induction' which can be downloaded at: www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1371
This advisory booklet also includes:
- a framework for a job description
- a person specification template
- an induction checklist

Information on recruitment and disabled people can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/recruitment-disabled-people

Information on employing people for the first time can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people/recruiting-hiring
This covers the main things for a new employer to consider when employing people for the first time or if they have never hired an employee before.

Information on the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check and at: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about

Information on the right to work in the UK can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/legal-right-work-uk and at:
https://www.gov.uk/check-an-employees-right-to-work-documents

General information on checks employers may need to make on job applicants can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/employers-checks-job-applicants

Guidance on ex-offenders and employment can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/exoffenders-and-employment
This includes a link to download a Guide to Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Employers' responsibilities for equality monitoring and preventing discrimination can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/employers-responsibilities-equality-monitoring and https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination

Notes compiled by Clare Cooper with information from the following sources:
1. CIPD
2. Acas
3. GOV.UK

Updated April 2014