

Employer's guide to recruitment

Part 3: Shortlist and interview



Find the right person for the job

All too often recruiters still hire in their own image, which prevents organisations from increasing their diversity and gaining from the new ideas, experiences and insights that inclusivity brings.

“Will they fit in the team?” is an instinctive question to ask yourself – but preconceptions about people or their backgrounds can negatively influence our perceptions of them.

While it is tempting to go with our “gut”, we may miss out on the best talent. Instead consider all the applicants’ skills and experiences objectively to see if they would be suitable for the role.

Remember direct discrimination is against the law. You cannot reject an applicant based on age, disability, gender (including transgender), pregnancy, marital status, race, religion/belief or sexual orientation. Candidates should be judged solely on their ability to carry out the role.

Recruiting people who have different backgrounds or experiences to your own leads to better performance, creativity, adaptability, innovation and profitability, along with improved retention of staff.

Good practice

Don’t make assumptions about someone’s name, background, disability or where they gained their qualifications.

Your shortlist should be based on how closely candidates match the skills required for the post – and not how they compare against each other.

Don’t jump to conclusions about gaps in CVs – focus on the information provided.

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Before the interview

Level the playing field even more with these cost-free steps:

- Be clear on the process – tell them what format and how many stages the interview will have and when they can expect to hear back
- Tell candidates how formal the interview will be so they can dress appropriately
- Offer them an informal visit prior to the interview if possible
- Consider given a named contact rather than a generic email if applicants have any questions
- Give people a call before the interview to check they know where they are going. Directions are also a good idea.

The interview



Check the date

Does the date of the interview clash with a major cultural event or religious festival? A quick online check will keep you right. Can you also be flexible and offer more than one option?

How diverse is your recruitment panel?

If your interview team are all the same gender or ethnicity, are you sending a signal about who will “fit” in? Try to represent how inclusive your workforce is from the earliest stages.

Maximise the experience for everyone

Ask candidates if they require any adjustments for their interview. This will allow all candidates to perform at their best. Everyone is individual, however some examples of adjustments might be:

- Dim the lights for someone with epilepsy
- Where are your panel sitting? If they are placed in front of a bright window a hearing-impaired candidate might not be able to see their mouths to lip-read. Put them in front of a blank wall and ensure they take turns to speak
- If a deaf candidate needs a BSL interpreter it might be helpful to provide the interpreter with the questions beforehand to prepare
- Don't make presumptions eg that a hearing-impaired person will want the questions written down for them. This could cause unnecessary offence
- Explain what candidates can expect at the interview to support individuals with anxiety or autism
- Be punctual when it comes to the interview time for candidates with autism. If you're running late keep candidates informed or consider rearranging the interview for another day.
- Remember an interviewee with autism may respond better to closed questions
- Change the time of the interview for someone who may need longer to travel
- Provide more time on written tasks for people with dyslexia.

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Funding support for interviews

Access to Work can pay for reasonable adjustments at interview stage for disabled people.

For more information on this programme please see our [funding](#) page.

Appropriate questions – and ones to avoid

Always check why you are asking a question. Is it relevant to the role?

DO NOT ask about any health conditions or plans to have a family as this is discriminatory.

Think beyond conventional interviews

Offer alternatives for people who have different ways of learning – or little or no work experience – to showcase their abilities.

- If you hold a more informal interview explain how the information gathered will fit into the selection process.
- Work trials can allow candidates to show their skills – not just talk them up.
- Role play, presentations or exercises can also help them express their talents in a fairer or less restrictive format.

When candidates are of equal merit

In this instance, you can choose to appoint the candidate from a group that is under-represented or disadvantaged within the workforce. This is called “positive action”.

Here is an example taken from Gov.uk:

A bank has a vacancy for one of its senior jobs. All the other jobs at that level are done by men. The bank conducts a recruitment exercise and at the end of a stringent and objective process finds that two applicants – a man and a woman – could do the job equally well. The bank could decide to take positive action and give the job to the woman. But the bank couldn't give the job to the woman if the man would be able to do the job better than her – that would be unlawful direct discrimination against the man.

You can find out more about Positive Action from the Government's [quick start guide](#).



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Quick reminder

Have you done these things?

- Set your date – does it clash with any major cultural or religious events? Can you be flexible?
- Inform candidates about the interview process.
- Provide a named contact.
- Offer support where required – and give candidates examples of the help available.
- Ask questions only relevant to the role and score people according to their match to the job.
- Ensure all candidates are given the opportunity to present their skills or suitability for a role.
- Check you are not judging people on your own preconceptions of certain groups.
- Be clear on what applicants can expect after the interview, and when they will learn of your decision.
- Be able to show how you scored people fairly if they ask for feedback.

A note on transgender candidates

Apply the same good recruitment practice as you would during any other interview – and do not discriminate based on someone's gender identity.

It is best not to assume someone's gender simply by their appearance. Do not press a candidate to disclose if they are transgender as they may not wish to reveal this information.

Maintain a candidate's confidentiality. The gender identity of a candidate is no one's business within your organisation. It is unlawful to disclose someone's transgender status to other people without their express consent.

Remember that a person's gender identity doesn't affect their ability to do the job. Focus on their skills and abilities and don't ask questions you wouldn't direct at other candidates.

Tips from the trans community

- Use the name the candidate has provided on their application form or in emails – even if this is different to the one used on official documents.
- Some applicants might wait until the interview stage to tell you they are transgender and go by a certain name.
- If you're not sure what pronoun to use, ask rather than guess, eg "What are your correct pronouns?" If you slip up, apologise and move on.
- Candidates may advise recruiters that it is their intention to transition. If so, you can thank them for being open, offer support for the individual and remain focussed on how their skills match the job.

For more advice check out this [guide](#) by the Government Equalities Office.