

Recruitment Policy & Procedure

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About this policy

PHSO recognises that the people who work here are fundamental to the success of the organisation. To do this we need to attract and recruit a diverse and talented workforce that reflects the communities we serve. This policy sets out the approach to recruitment.

This policy is not contractual and may be amended in line with legislation or to reflect best practice.

Who this policy applies to

This policy and procedure applies to all recruitment campaigns for directly employed appointments at PHSO. It does not cover agency roles, external consultants or volunteers.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion are vital to the way we work. We recognise the importance of having a workforce made up of individuals with their own unique identities. A diverse and inclusive workforce helps us understand how we can better engage with the communities we serve.

We strive to create an inclusive culture where:

- individuals are respected and treated fairly
- diversity is celebrated
- everyone can be themselves at work and perform at their best.

Actions we take to support this are:

An anonymised shortlisting process which removes any reference to personal details to make sure we have a fair, transparent and unbiased shortlisting process.

PHSO is a Disability Confident employer playing a role in changing attitudes, behaviours and cultures for the better. We will:

- make sure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- progress disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria to the next stage of the recruitment process
- provide reasonable adjustments
- support existing employees.

Positive Action

PHSO is committed to building a workforce which reflects the diversity of the communities in which we serve. A more inclusive workforce enables us to be a more effective and efficient organisation, better understand and respond to the needs of our customers.

Positive action as detailed in the Equality Act 2010, allows measures designed to help improve equality in the workplace and create a level playing field for all, whilst still employing everyone based on merit.

Where we identify areas of underrepresentation, we will use positive action initiatives for the campaign. The campaign will be reviewed at all the main stages of the process to check levels of underrepresentation and action may be taken to address this.

Initial Planning

Recruitment campaigns start when a vacancy arises. Hiring Managers are responsible for their recruitment while being supported by the People and Talent Team. The Hiring Manager and their HR Business Partner will discuss workforce planning options, e.g. recruit, restructure, re-arrange work, cost savings, opportunity for early careers and then agree the most suitable approach.

Any campaigns that increase headcount, and/or have organisational design or budget implications, will need to have relevant approvals in advance of campaign planning. This approval could be part of the normal annual Business Planning activity or if unexpected/unplanned during the financial year, then the Change to Establishment process will need to be followed obtaining approval from People and Talent, Finance, and relevant Assistant Director/ Director before the start of the recruitment campaign.

Campaign Planning Meeting

The People and Talent Team will work with the Hiring Manager to plan a recruitment campaign. The planning meeting will be an opportunity to explore and agree:

- whether any suitable candidates exist in the talent pool
- where and how to advertise
- the job description and advert
- define shortlisting criteria
- timescales for recruitment campaign
- what assessment methods will be used
- the stages of the interview process
- panel members involved in the assessment process, including consideration of the diversity of the panel
- roles and responsibilities during the campaign

Advertising vacancies

If a role becomes vacant within six months of being advertised, the Hiring Manager will be able to consider any suitable applicants from the last recruitment campaign, if applicable.

If the role is readvertised within a six month period, the advert will specify that previous applicants will not be considered

Although most roles are advertised both internally and externally, there are some campaigns that might be advertised internally only. This will be discussed with the People and Talent Team in the initial planning meeting.

Internal candidates should let their line manager know before they apply for any internal role.

All temporary roles will be readvertised if the role is made permanent. This will be discussed with the People and Talent Team.

External vacancies are advertised on jobs boards specifically targeted for success; these usually include PHSO's careers site, LinkedIn, Civil Service jobs and Ombudsman Association. Posts will be advertised for a minimum of 5 working days.

A tailored search on LinkedIn Recruiter can also be undertaken to proactively source both active and passive candidates.

Applications

Once a vacancy has been advertised, candidates will be required to complete an online application form on PHSO's careers site. To make sure that candidates are eligible to work in the UK and have the Right to Work in the UK they will be asked screening questions. Proof of eligibility will be required from successful candidates as part of pre-employment checks.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

With the increasing use of AI tools in recruitment, guidance about the acceptable and unacceptable use of AI during the recruitment process will be provided to candidates at application stage. The panel will also be provided with this guidance to raise awareness and understanding of AI contributions utilised during all stages of the recruitment process.

Long/ Shortlisting

Applicants will be measured against the defined criteria from the job description and the values of PHSO.

Hiring managers will:

- undertake long and/or short listing
- confirm outcomes including candidates to be invited for assessment, placed on hold or rejected at this stage
- organise logistics, including booking rooms for assessment and interview, securing panel members
- develop competency/values-based interview questions and scoring matrix
- give feedback to internal candidates, if requested

People and Talent Team will:

- provide the shortlisting matrix and applications
- notify applicants of outcomes, once confirmed by the Hiring Manager
- send out rejections at all stages of the process
- invite and confirm candidates to attend interview/ assessment
- support the development of competency/values based interview questions and scoring matrix

Psychometric testing

Some campaigns may include ability or personality tests which will be relative to the job, free of bias, and administered and validated by a suitably trained person.

Work based assessments

Some campaigns may include other work-based assessments, for example a presentation on a work specific subject, a written assessment or role play exercise.

Interviews

Interview panels will consist of a minimum of two people and should be representative. Interviews will focus on the role and the skills needed to perform it effectively. To maintain fairness, questions asked will be consistent in all interviews.

Interviews are normally held face to face, in some cases, we will hold interviews remotely.

Each member of an interview panel is accountable for ensuring they complete the assessment paperwork, taking appropriate notes so that feedback can be provided to candidates as requested.

Completed paperwork is sent to the People and Talent Team to be retained for a period of twelve months. The appointed candidate's paperwork will be retained on their employee file.

Offers

Hiring Managers should discuss any offer with the People and Talent Team before it is made, and complete the offer form.

It is the Hiring Manager's responsibility to make a verbal offer to the successful candidate and inform them that this is subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.

The People and Talent Team will inform all external candidates who have not been successful of their outcome.

Feedback

Feedback will only be provided to external candidates following the interview stage and only if requested.

To support the ongoing development of internal candidates, verbal feedback can be given by the Hiring Manager at the shortlisting, assessment and interview stages. Candidates can request a feedback session with the Hiring Manager to help with their future personal development planning.

If during the course of the recruitment process a candidate needs to contact the team our contact details are provided on the careers site, adverts and at all stages of the process.

Talent pool

If a candidate is appointable, but is not offered a role, they will be given the opportunity to join the talent pool for a period of six months, after which time the candidate records will be destroyed. Internal colleagues will remain in the talent pool indefinitely.

If suitable roles become available at the same grade or of a similar skills set, we will try to appoint via this pool in the first instance, which would be discussed with the Hiring Manager during the Campaign Planning Meeting.

The People and Talent team will manage the talent pool and will engage with candidates in this pool.

Identifying Future Talent

PHSO will identify future talent through networking events and expressions of interest to build a future talent pool.

The future talent pool will consist of candidates who demonstrate the skills, values and desire to work for PHSO and will be applicable to both internal and external candidates. They will remain in the pool for a period of 12 months.

Pre-employment screening and onboarding

All offers are subject to relevant pre-employment checks, which include references going back 3 years, a basic DBS and a fitness to work health check. The People and Talent Team will manage this process. Once the pre-employment checks are complete, the manager will be informed, and they will then be able to agree a start date with the candidate.

Getting ready for your new colleague

The Hiring Manager is responsible for liaising with colleagues from ICT, Learning & Development and Facilities to make sure that the new starter has all the equipment, training and information they need to join PHSO.

Resolving concerns

If a candidate is dissatisfied with any aspect of the recruitment process they can contact the PHSO recruitment team - recruitment@ombudsman.org.uk where their query or complaint will be dealt with by a member of the team, within a timely manner.

Policy Information

Authors: HR Shared Services Manager

Related policies: Disability Confidence guidance

Version control

Date	Author	Version	Content/changes made	Review and Approval
April 2025	HR Shared Services manager	0.7	Draft	AD of People and Talent

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April 2026	HR Shared Services Manager

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