



Introduction

Homemaker Southwest is committed to promoting equality in employment, offering fair and open recruitment and selection to all applicants based on their skills and ability to perform the role. It believes that all applicants should be treated in a reasonable, equitable and transparent way, without regard to age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, or disability.

The Policy describes how this commitment will be met, and illustrates the standards, practice and procedures which will be followed to ensure that no discrimination takes place, working within the legislative framework and the principles of the organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Homemaker uses a standard application form for all positions; applications received in other formats will not be considered. The application form is reviewed and updated as necessary.

Job Description

There is a job description for every post, which will be reviewed and updated whenever a vacancy arises; describing the main purpose of the role, together with major responsibilities and duties. A copy will be included in the application pack, and attached to the contract of employment.

Job descriptions may subsequently be updated with changes agreed at annual appraisals, or following any other review process. A copy of the updated job description will be given to the staff member and added to their personnel file.

Person Specification

The person specification is a crucial document within the recruitment process, as it highlights the essential and desirable qualities required to enable the job to be carried out effectively. The person specification will define the skills, qualities and knowledge essential to implement the tasks of the job description. It will be reviewed and up-dated whenever a vacancy arises, and will be used in constructing the job advert, planning the selection process, shortlisting and appointment.

Homemaker will make all reasonable efforts to adapt the working environment to ensure access for those with disabilities. However, as caseworker posts involve home visiting, such access cannot be guaranteed, and candidates for these posts will need to be able to access a range of premises, although alternative arrangements for meetings may be considered where appropriate. The person specification will need to include this information.

Advertising Vacant Posts

A post will become vacant because either an existing employee is leaving, or because additional money has been identified for a new position.

In all cases, the management team will consider whether it is appropriate to advertise the post internally initially, for example to allow existing staff the opportunity to apply for

a new role, or to increase their hours in a similar role. Where this course of action is agreed, a process will be drawn up and notified to staff accordingly.

Where an internal selection process is not considered appropriate, or where such a process fails to make an appointment; the post will be advertised externally.

A decision about where to advertise a particular post will be made with regard to the seniority of the position, the catchment area of the work, the hours involved, etc.

The Director/Deputy, in conjunction with the Line Manager, will draw up the advertisement, briefly describing the major responsibilities of the post, the minimum skills or experience required, the closing date for receipt of completed applications (which would normally be no less than two weeks after publication), a contact telephone number, website details, and the anticipated interview date. A statement that Homemaker is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all sections of society will be included in all adverts.

Application Packs

Each applicant will be sent electronically a comprehensive pack that will include as a minimum, an up-to-date application form, equal opportunities monitoring form, job description, person specification, salary/hours and any other useful information specific to a particular post, together with a covering letter. In order to reduce our carbon footprint we will no longer send paper copies except where for diversity reasons this may be necessary, similarly all responses should be received electronically. Applicants may also request a pack by email from details included on the website.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring forms will be separated from application forms as soon as they are received, and subsequently analysed to ensure no discrimination was applied during the process.

Shortlisting

The Deputy/Director will agree the composition of the interview panel with the Line Manager. Ideally there will be at least two people on the panel: including where appropriate, someone from a relevant external agency for casework positions, and a Board member for management posts. Where possible, and appropriate, a gender balance will be sought.

In advance of shortlisting, application forms will be checked for factual information (e.g. appropriate referees, employment status), gaps (e.g. incomplete employment history) and other concerns (e.g. apparent high level of absence). Notes of these comments will be made on the shortlisting grid.

The interview panel will shortlist together, using the person specification as the major tool. A written grid will be drawn up to show clearly the criteria by which applications were measured. Anyone who meets the essential criteria will usually be shortlisted. Where a large number of applicants meet the essential criteria, it will be necessary to take into account the desirable criteria to reduce the list to a manageable number. Candidates will not normally be shortlisted if they do not meet the criteria on the person specification, although this may be reviewed in exceptional circumstances where there has been a particularly poor response and readvertisement is not an immediate option.

Methods of Selection

A range of selection methods will be considered in order to test competencies identified in the person specification, for example, a written exercise and/or a presentation, in addition to the formal interview.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the process to accommodate the needs of applicants with a disability.

Invitation to Interview

Invitations to shortlisted candidates will clearly state the time and place of the interview, the names of panel members, the format of the interview, and details of any additional exercise or presentation. Candidates will be asked to confirm their attendance, and to advise of any special requirements. Requests for travel expenses will be considered in exceptional circumstances (payable at the rate of the second-class rail fare). No relocation expenses will be payable.

The Interview

All members of the panel will agree in advance the content and format of the process, and draw up the interview questions. A graded sheet to record answers will be used, to assist later in the decision-making process. Questions will be standardised, although supplementary information may be sought to clarify any queries on a particular application form, for example, an apparent high sickness record, or apparent gaps in employment history, or to explore any areas of doubt and concern. The process will not normally take more than one hour. Candidates will be advised at the end of the interview of when they will be notified of the outcome – normally the successful candidate will be contacted as soon as possible by telephone.

The Decision

Following the interview, panel members will 'score' each candidate's answers individually before collectively comparing their scores. The successful candidate would normally be the candidate whose performance at interview and in the exercise(s) most effectively demonstrated their strengths against the person specification.

The selected candidate will be contacted first, and their verbal acceptance of the job offer confirmed before contacting the other candidates. All job offers will be subject to satisfactory written references (and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service where appropriate), and this will be made clear to the candidate. Confirmation of starting salary will be given at this stage, together with a provisional commencement date.

On request, unsuccessful candidates will be given feedback on their application and interview performance. A member of the panel will use the shortlisting information and the panel's interview notes as a basis for feedback.

Documentation on the successful candidate will form part of their personnel file. Records on unsuccessful candidates will be kept for one year.

References

Each applicant will be asked to provide details of two referees, one of whom must be the current or most recent employer. The other will be someone able to comment on the candidate's abilities in a work situation, not in a personal capacity.

When an offer of employment is made following interview, such a verbal offer will clearly state whether or not satisfactory written references have been received. If not, it will be emphasised that the offer is subject to receipt of two satisfactory written references, and that these would be requested forthwith. Where the applicant's current or last employer has not been included as a referee on the form, details of this person must be obtained and contacted.

Requests to referees will be made in writing, enclosing the reference pro-forma, job description and person specification. On receipt of written references, these will be checked carefully by the Line manager, and where there is any cause for concern, the referee will be contacted by telephone for clarification, before a final decision is made.

Once two satisfactory references have been received, the successful applicant will be contacted and offered the position formally (subject to a Disclosing and Barring check if appropriate).

Disclosure and Barring Checks

Legislation requires that employees working directly with vulnerable people to undergo a disclosure check, carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Under Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, "spent" convictions for people working with vulnerable people are still considered. Therefore, once satisfactory references have been received, any prospective caseworker must be asked to complete a Disclosure Application Form.

The timescale in which the disclosure applications are completed varies from two weeks to many months, and it therefore may be necessary for the applicant to commence employment before the result of the check is known. It is very important in these circumstances that the employee is not allowed to visit clients alone until clearance is received. If the check reveals undisclosed past convictions, such lack of disclosure would amount to fraud, and dismissal would therefore be likely, whatever the actual circumstances of the offence itself.

All staff will be informed of their responsibility to advise their line manager of any subsequent convictions received during their employment with Homemaker.

Certification and Verification

Prior to commencement at work, new employees must be asked to provide documentary evidence to confirm information given on their application form, including birth certificate, relevant qualifications, eligibility to work in the UK, driving licence (for posts involving travel) and P45/P60.

Contract of Employment

All new members of staff must be provided with a Contract of Employment within two months of their start date.

Induction

The line manager must ensure that all new staff are given a thorough induction, planned and carried out in accordance with an agreed programme, and that any training needs identified are addressed through the induction process. Progress on induction and addressing training needs will be monitored at each supervision session during the probationary period. The line manager will make clear to the new staff member the progress required to successfully complete the probationary period. This will be clearly documented and a copy kept in their personnel file.

Probationary period

The performance of new staff will be rigorously monitored during the probationary period, with all performance issues and training needs addressed. See full details of the probation process in the Staff Review policy.

Date policy last reviewed and approved: January 2016

Date for next review: January 2017