

Strategic HR Forum – Discussion paper JSCC December 2021 – The Modernisation of the Recruitment Process

What are the benefits of a modernised recruitment process?

Effective recruitment means filling a vacancy with a candidate with all the required skills, experience, and qualifications for the job. Technology has enabled the modern workplace to develop new ways to screen applications and to interview potential candidates. Modernising our recruitment processes cuts time and costs for NHC, helping to streamline this HR process and effectively recruit the best potential candidate possible at a time of high labour turnover and a competitive market.

- **Candidate experience:** Almost all candidates will now expect to search and apply for jobs online and want easy access to information on employers' websites. With our online system, candidates can pause an application and amend it before submitting. They have confirmation of receipt of their application and can be updated of its progress.
- **Employer brand:** The Council website acts as our "shop-window" to prospective employees and allows us to promote NHC as a good employer. Having a strong brand image online is increasingly important in a competitive employment market and helps to attract good quality candidates.
- **Automation:** Having an online recruitment system has reduced administration tasks for HR through system generated emails, and allowing recruiting managers to self-serve, easing the workload and removing the need for paperwork to be printed.
- **Speed and efficiency:** Recruiting managers can access candidates' applications by logging onto a system rather than having to collect paper applications. The click of a button confirms shortlisted or successful candidates, without the need to complete separate forms or emails. Faster processes ensures that communication is swift and vacancies are filled in a timely manner.
- **Flexibility:** Applicants can access the online recruitment portal via their computer or mobile phone and receive email notifications relating to their recruitment wherever they are. Recruiting managers are able to access the system to review applications whether they are working from their home, the office or another remote location.

North Herts Recruitment in 2021

Applications

Since 2014, we have had an online recruitment system which allows candidates to view and complete applications online via the jobs page of the Council website. The system also allows managers to complete shortlisting online. This resulted in a reduction of HR administration workload as applications were no longer needed as paper copies. All administration contact with the candidate throughout the recruitment process is done via email, including interview invites and outcome letters, which is more time efficient and has reduced administration costs.

Advertising

All our vacancies are advertised using the intranet and open to all staff including those on casual or temporary contracts. External vacancies are also advertised on the NHC website which continues to attract a good volume of visitors. We aim to maximise the use of free recruitment pages including the Job Centre, Indeed, as well as the Council's Twitter and LinkedIn pages which assists us in reaching wider

audiences whilst keeping advertising costs to a minimum. In 2020 we created our own recruitment video to share on the website, created in house by our Digital Communications Officer, and hope to complete to same for our Apprenticeship page in the future.

Positive Action

We have supported the recruitment of disabled applicants for many years via the government's *Positive about Disability* scheme. More recently this has been updated and we are proud to be *Disability Confident* employers and we display the logo on our adverts, applications, and Jobs pages.

At the end of 2020 we also updated our application form to make it more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. Under the equalities data section, candidates can declare their gender as 'non-binary' or 'prefer not to say' as well as 'male' and 'female, which had previously been the only options available.

Employment Checks

We have also modernised our process for DBS checks which are now completed by an external provide (Experian) who manage the process on our behalf via the use of an online portal. Candidates are emailed a unique link to the portal, enter their own details, and HR are kept informed of the application process until completion. We have also been trialling the use of a similar process for our reference checks. This is proving to be a very effective process and has increased the speed of completing these tasks as well as reducing administrative time.

Video interviews

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, all interviews and assessments were moved to a virtual platform with immediate effect, using Zoom or Teams. Managers and candidates have adapted to this new way of working with relative ease and it has allowed us to reach a greater number of diverse candidates without the usual barrier on location. As the world slowly returns to a new normal, we will continue to offer a virtual interview process when needed, alongside the traditional face to face interview.

Careers fairs

For several years, we have taken the opportunity to raise our profile at apprentice careers fairs and school careers events, positioning ourselves as a desirable local employer. These events have allowed us to speak with young people from local schools who may not previously have considered a career at NHC and therefore attracting new talent into the organisation.

Future developments

- A review of the NHC employer brand as presented to candidates on the website to ensure NHC vacancies attract the best candidates, including our Apprenticeship recruitment video and applicant pack to interested candidates
- Further development of the recruitment tool to include reminder emails to be sent to candidates who start an application but do not complete
- The Transformation team are working on a modernised new starter process to cut down administration burden for recruiting managers. Once established we propose to review how this can link into the recruitment process
- Continued monitoring to ensure that the systems remain effective and non-discriminatory