

Working towards more inclusive recruitment



What is inclusive recruitment?

Inclusion is proactive, thoughtful and considered. It means ensuring that everyone feels part of the process, policies and frameworks. The way to achieve this is to make sure we all assess our behaviour and actions to ensure we are not excluding anyone.

The NHS Long Term Plan and NHS People Plan, both centre inclusion as an aspiration for the organisation and as a way of improving retention and attracting high calibre candidates into the workforce. Inclusive recruitment is a strategy that has been shown to enable this, by considering how different backgrounds, approaches and thinking styles can help deliver innovative services and develop the organisation into one that reflects the diversity of the public it serves.

Where are we now?

The majority of people involved in the recruitment and interviewing process in the NHS have not been trained in inclusion strategies. Therefore, they are more likely to leave their unconscious biases unchecked and therefore recruit people who seem to 'fit' or who reflect their thoughts, ideas and appearances. This reduces the ability of the organisation to recruit, retain and attract diverse people to fill posts across professions and bands. The evidence for this can be found in Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) indicators, Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) indicators and annual equality reports.

How can this document help?

By providing you with guidance and suggestions on inclusive recruitment, you will be able to fine-tune your process and improve the diversity of candidates who apply for jobs in the NHS and who are offered those positions. Remember that the NHS has a Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination, foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity and that this must be done across the 9 protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. The 9 protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.



Step 1 Discussion about the post

Discuss the post with the interview panel prior to writing the advertisement and job description. Ensure you do not include characteristics in the job description which are not necessary for the job itself. Check that you use inclusive terminology throughout. Do an equality impact assessment for the job, job description and advertisement and interview process. Do you need help doing this? Make sure to get input from your equality advisor to guide you.

Your discussion should also include:

- ✓ Analysis of current workforce for the role. Is the composition of the workforce skewed towards a particular protected characteristic? If so why? What strategies can you use to diversify the workforce? Perhaps you can consider where to place your advertisement or get another team/department to look over your job description.
- ✓ Interview panel – make sure it is diverse, not just in terms of gender or race, but also in terms other intersectional characteristics such as disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and so forth.
- ✓ Length of time for the advert (at least two weeks)
- ✓ Ensure consistency of coordination of calls/emails from potential applicants.
- ✓ Do you have arrangements for those who require the job description in other formats or help with the application process?
- ✓ Make sure all interviewers have 15-minute slots in their diaries to have conversations with candidates ahead of the interview should they request it.
- ✓ Agree on a shortlisting closing date.
- ✓ Agree on your strengths and weaknesses as interviewers – which questions should be asked by whom and how will you make sure to ensure all candidates have the opportunity or are prompted to discuss their core skills.
- ✓ Interview date, ideally two weeks after shortlisting.



Step 2 Things for interview panellists to consider

- ✓ Make sure disabled applicants have the opportunity to declare and ask for adjustments. Ensure there is one point of contact for this and that interviewers are notified well in advance.
- ✓ Decide on how to write interview questions that reflect the job specification. If you are new to the interviewing process, check with those with more expertise to guide you in the best styles of questions to ask.
- ✓ Make sure the length of the interview is not prolonged unnecessarily. Aim for 7 questions, with 5 minutes per question and discussion time. In total you should allocate slightly over 45 minutes to the interview.
- ✓ Ensure there is a process for candidates to report on the application process. How will feedback be captured and relayed back to the advertising team or recruitment team for future improvements?
- ✓ Ensure the interview location is impact assessed and meets accessibility standards. If the interview is being conducted online, follow the guidance in Appendix 1.

Step 3 Shortlisting process

- ✓ Depending on the volume of applicants at least two people should be involved in shortlisting to check each other for bias and provide evidence of impartiality. If there are more than 10 applicants a larger panel will be required to ensure that the quality of the shortlisting is achieved.
- ✓ Do not rush the shortlisting process and make sure you stick to the requirements of the job specification and candidates being able to demonstrate this.
- ✓ There is a set process of how to shortlist on trac and this process will be adhered to and documented. Keeping trac of all your applicants and their scores will be important for the feedback process.
- ✓ For those that were not shortlisted the recruitment team can customise the email response to state that they can have feedback as to why they were not shortlisted. Applicants have a right to feedback on the shortlisting process. The shortlisting panel can elect to provide that feedback themselves.
- ✓ Write to the shortlisted candidates and invite them for interview. Clearly state the date, time and location and ensure coordinators are available to answer any questions from candidates. Have support to hand for people who require it. If you are unclear about how to support a disabled candidate check with your equality advisor to ensure there is no breach of employment and equality law.
- ✓ If there are any improvements that can be made to the shortlisting process from an inclusion standpoint, make sure to make a note of it and raise it with HR and the HRD. This is an important part of your role as an interviewer to ensure that the NHS works towards being an inclusive employer.

Step 4 Preparing for the interview

- ✓ Ensure all interviewers are up-to-date on their statutory and mandatory equality training.
- ✓ If possible, make sure all interviewers have had unconscious bias and intercultural communication training.
- ✓ Space out your interviews. Ideally your shortlist should consist of 6 people and the interviews should not be run back-to-back with no rest for the interviewers. This practice which is common in the NHS puts pressure on the interviewers, compromises their decision-making and cognitive ability due to tiredness and is not fair to the candidate. If you need to, run the interviews over a series of days to make sure everyone has a fair chance and that the panel are fresh and alert throughout the process.
- ✓ Discuss strategies you will use as an interview panel to get the best from the candidate. How will you make sure they stick to the question? How will you nudge them for more information? How will you make sure they stick to 5 minutes per question? Ensure there is a lead interviewer on the panel who keeps everything in check.
- ✓ Do not put together a panel at the last minute. Make sure the interview panel has had enough time to go through the questions together, are familiar with the job specification and that they know what the post entails. Make sure they know to check each other for bias and that the panel is as diverse as possible.
- ✓ All candidates must be given the same information of the job advertised/ shortlisting process and outcome process.



- ✓ Ensure you check the names of the candidates ahead of the interview. Some candidates have names that you may find difficult to pronounce. Practice ahead of the interview. Accept that the candidate will correct you, if you are wrong. Remember, being inclusive is about everyone and trying to make sure you have considered all 9 protected characteristics throughout the recruitment process. If you need help ask for it from an equality advisor ahead of the interview.
- ✓ Questions should be printed off and given to the candidate so that they can read it back before they respond. For online interviews present the question in the chat box or on the screen.

Step 5 Scoring and selection

- ✓ The interview panel should record all discussion about scores and agree on the selected candidate.
- ✓ If there is a tie-break consider using positive action to improve the diversity profile of your team. Make sure that you know what this means; if not check with the equality advisor or someone competent in equality legislation.
- ✓ The panel should also agree on who will give feedback to each candidate and agree points from each panel member as their feedback.
- ✓ The panel must make notes of any concerns or improvements for the interview process that they find.
- ✓ Continue to check each other for bias during the scoring process. Ask questions and keep a close eye on the job specification and the skills you are looking for.
- ✓ Remember that you are scoring against the job description and against the questions you derived to reflect the job description. You are not scoring one candidate against another.

Step 6 Measuring and Monitoring

An organisation must consider a range of factors to build an inclusive recruitment process. These include:

- ✓ Percentage of diverse applicants have reached each stage of the recruitment process.
- ✓ Percentage of organisations interviewers who have completed recruitment training and enhanced equality and inclusion training that includes bias awareness and mitigations.
- ✓ Percentage of diverse interviewers on panels for different professions and bands.
- ✓ Percentage of advertised roles that have been equality impact assessed by a trained equality advisor.
- ✓ Percentage of advertised roles that are inclusive by design, specification and have been checked for bias.
- ✓ Percentage of interview panels who have been assessed against the decisions made during the recruitment process. It is important to audit the performance of interview panels frequently to make sure your inclusion measures are being followed. This will also help provide evidence should there be a complaint from candidates. It will also contribute to demonstrating progress on the Public Sector Equality Duty, Equality Act 2010.
- ✓ How well has the selected candidate fitted in? What was their retention period? How was their onboarding? Was this a successful hire? Make sure to check the efficacy of your selection process.

Appendix 1 Best practice for online interviews

- ✓ Ask the candidate to log in 5 minutes before the interview and make sure someone is with them in the waiting room. This will give them a chance to check their video and audio. It is also a way to ensure the candidate does the join the call when the panel are mid-conversation.
- ✓ Remember that d/Deaf people process information in smaller chunks. Make sure you adjust your pace of interview in line with the needs of d/Deaf candidate and their British Sign Language interpreter.
- ✓ Ensure that your interviewers have a professional backdrop on their screens and that they are not interrupted by people in their homes or by the telephone.
- ✓ Ensure that your interview panel have checked their connectivity and can go ahead with the interview in a professional manner. If there are connectivity issues and you are interrupted during the interview, make a note of this in your scoring document and allocate more time to the candidate as needed.
- ✓ Do not cover your mouth with your hands while speaking; some candidates may need to lip-read.
- ✓ Throughout the process check that your candidate is comfortable and can hear you. It is quite common for connectivity problems to affect the process.
- ✓ Make sure there is no strong light behind you as this will make it hard to see you – you will be in the shadow and your face will not be visible enough to lip read. It will also make it harder to see your facial expressions which can help candidates feel less anxious.
- ✓ Be mindful that although you will spend most of your time writing while listening, pause now and again to make eye contact with the candidate, especially at the start of the interview when people are most nervous.

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