

Digital Recruitment

Guide for Local Authorities Recruiters

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Appendices

1. Authorities using SMS



1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document is intended to act as a useful guide to provide recruitment teams with advice and suggestions in the continuation of recruitment for business critical roles during the current challenges, with options for recruitment activities to be delivered virtually.
- 1.2. In an emergency such as the one currently being experienced from the Covid 19 pandemic there may be a necessity to adopt new selection and assessment processes whilst ensuring there is no risk to safeguarding measures.
- 1.3. It is recognised that during such a situation, functions which are not identified as a core critical function may have a reduced service or have to stop service delivery altogether. IN this situation we would recommend recruitment to these services is paused. Core critical functions should continue wherever possible, but it is recognised that they may be impacted by staff shortages including HR support to manage recruitment exercises. Support may be available from other councils where there is a necessity to recruit on mass to similar posts (further information on how local, regional and sub regional pools can be put in place will follow).
- 1.4. This guidance document sets out the options available to assist you in a safe and robust recruitment practice, providing employers with a virtual process and candidates with a supported fair and engaging user experience.
- 1.5. This document should be used in conjunction with local recruitment plans where you have applicant tracking systems and other technology available to assist.

2. Using a digital recruitment process

2.1. Key considerations

- 2.1.1. In an emergency where business critical roles need to commence, or to continue with a recruitment activity, managers will assess:
 - a) Whether it is necessary for longer or shorter advertising timeframes to be applied; there are no restrictions on timeframes for adverts on WMJobs, the Guardian has extended timeframes for up to 6 weeks at no additional costs, and when you book an advert in The MJ they are offering for the advert to be repeated on a date of your choice. Other niche job boards maybe offering more cost effective offers too.
 - b) Consider including at least one exercise within the process where the candidate needs to present (either pre-recorded or live) to assess these skills.
 - c) Depending on service requirements and the availability of any necessary supporting technology, you will need to assess the feasibility of interviewers (including members) being able to work from home or come together under safe social distancing protocols to undertake virtual interviews at the outset of designing your approach and timetable. (this may include regular checks as to who is available, who will be available as 'contingency' support, what flexibility individuals have for supporting out of typical business hours 9am-5pm).
 - d) Checks for accessibility requirements may need to be widened at point of assessment process to give considerations to issues such as;



- technology as this may need to be adapted accordingly
- availability of candidates working from home with childcare commitments.

2.2 Communication

2.2.1 It is critical at this time that we take into consideration that personal circumstances of candidates who may have caring responsibilities or those who need to self isolate during the recruitment process will be changing continuously. Hence regular communication is key.

2.2.2 To communicate with candidates we recommend the following for consideration;

- **SMS text messages** (Talentlink provides this),
- WhatsApp

a list of organisations who have SMS switched on is provided in **Appendix 1** as a reminder for you to share with colleagues as part of wider communication as tools available for use.

2.3 Longlisting and Short listing

2.3.1 Finding quick, easy, and accurate ways to review candidate applications and make decisions on whether to invite for interview will be important.

Longlisting and shortlisting is often the most challenging and time-consuming step in the recruitment process. We understand that for some, this would have involved panels diarising a date and time to physically get together, review paper copies of the application forms and make decisions on who to invite to interview. Whilst it's currently not possible to longlist or shortlist in the more traditional way, you can still conduct this stage of the recruitment process as a panel whilst working remotely.

- a) You can simulate the same longlist/shortlisting meeting you would have held back in the office with your hiring panel in a virtual way. We would recommend you use one of the following online tools; Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, or RingCentral, which will enable you to share and discuss in real time the applications you have received.
- b) Consider increasing levels of engagement with candidates whilst no face to face interaction is possible. **Video screening questions** within your application allow candidates to record and upload answers to your questions using their Mobile, Laptop or Tablet making the process easier and more efficient for them and also for you.
- c) Instead of printing the application forms/CVs, use your ATS to review **Applications/CVs online** and complete your online short listing form at the same time. Upload it to Talentlink so your Resourcing Team can organise interview invitations to be sent.

2.4 Conducting Video Interviews

2.4.1 Video interviews allow the best of both worlds, candidates don't have to leave their own home and will save money and time, but you will still be able to assess a candidates suitability through their presentation, skills and experience in the same way a face to face interview would have been carried out. It is important to consider when conducting Video interviewing, some people may find it difficult to look into a camera, which can make it difficult to establish rapport and maintain good



eye contact. So with this in mind, we have devised the following best practice guidance:

- a) **Choose the type of Video Interview:** There are two types of video interviews: one-way and two-way. In a **one-way interview**, you send your candidate a list of questions and they send a recorded response back. We would recommend a two-way video interview as this enables you to interact with the candidate, giving you a better indication of their soft skills and cultural fit, but be mindful over a video link you may not be seeing the candidate at their best and you may need to make adjustments in your assessment
- b) **Choose your platform:** When conducting a video interview, there are a number of options available, including Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and FaceTime video calls. These allow for conference interviews, so if required multiple interviewers can speak to a single candidate.
- c) **Test run:** Check your technology and software is working correctly.
- d) **Your presentation and environment:** In the same way you would dress to reflect your workplace culture in a face to face interview, continue to do this with a virtual one too. Try to conduct the interview in a clean and quiet location with no distractions in the background and consider the lighting in the room, ensuring the candidate can see you.
- e) **Touch base with your candidates:** Confirm to the candidate prior to the interview, how long it is likely to take, the technology being used and how many panel members will be present. Use your ATS to send them a text message the day before to ensure they are happy with the arrangements and deal with any questions
- f) **When conducting the Interview:**
Ensure you have agreed prior to the interview, which panel member is going to ask each question and share this with the candidate at the beginning. This will help the flow of the interview and assist the candidate with feeling more at ease. Depending on the software you are using, ask the candidate to blur their background so you can focus solely on the candidate and the responses they are providing. Make sure you look at the camera and not the screen, so it appears as though you are talking directly to the candidate. Ensure you formally end the interview and allow the candidate to ask any questions of any of the panel members.
- g) **Candidate presentation:**
Pay attention to how they communicate, are they engaged?, are they clear and concise in the responses they provide?. Ensure you avoid making judgements based on the candidate's own environment and appearance in this process.
- h) **Take notes:** All panel members should take notes during the interview. However, we would advise the interviewer who has asked the question continues to hold good eye contact with the candidate, whilst other panellists take notes.
- i) **Review candidate's performance:** After the interview, panel members should discuss the interview and review the notes made and agree a scoring.
- j) **Smile 😊:** Put the candidate at ease by smiling early and often Remember, the interview process is a two way street. You're interviewing the candidate with the intent of making a hiring decision. The candidate is also interviewing you with the intent of making an employment decision. Have the candidate leave with a positive experience.



2.5 Conducting Virtual Assessment Centres

An assessment centre is a process, using a variety of assessment techniques, designed to determine the suitability of candidates for a specific job within your organisation. We know that not all roles will require an assessment centre and a standard interview will be sufficient. We recognise for some of you this is the time of year where there would have been a flurry of activity recruiting to your Internship, Apprenticeship and Graduate programmes, where full day assessments would have been scheduled. Digitally delivering these assessment centres is still possible and you may want to consider the following;

- a) An online Video conferencing tool – Choose an online tool, on a cloud platform so it is easily accessible to both recruiters and candidates. Zoom Rooms is the original software-based conference room solution used around the world in board, conference, huddle, and training rooms, as well as executive offices and classrooms and would be ideal for this type of scenario.

- b) What type of assessments can be delivered virtually –

Presentations/In Tray Exercises: Inform the candidate of the presentation topic/In-Tray Exercise and length of time they have to deliver in advance of the assessment day, and ask them to record a video of them delivering their presentation and to post on a private YouTube Channel, which you can then review prior to the assessment day. This allows you and the hiring panel to view the presentation at a convenient time and as many times as you would like. Alternatively, if you are using a Video conferencing tool, you can ask the candidate to prepare their presentation or undertake an In-Tray exercise and deliver this to the panel on the day. You will need to ensure you create a comprehensive schedule, which allows enough time for this to take place.

- c) Virtual Candidate and Interview role play – Typically, the candidate will interact with role-player, who is an assessor and candidates will have the opportunity to generate behaviour that demonstrates the required competencies. Scenarios vary from something that is very typical of the role, for example a more general role-play that involves a problem that the candidate needs to deal with or for managerial positions, the candidates are required to conduct one-to-one meetings which could even be an individual development meeting. This can also be conducted via a Video conferencing tool and candidates will need to be made clear as to who is playing the part of the role-player in the scenario.

- d) Psychometrics – Whilst we are unable to meet candidates face to face, being informed of candidate's preferred work behaviours will enhance your understanding of their personality to enable you to make a fully informed decision about recruiting the right person in for the role. There are a range of personality tests that organisations may typically use in assessment. These assessments measure personality traits, preferred behaviours in the workplace and/or leadership style. These tests are completed online and are normally not rigidly timed, which means the candidates can work through the questions without any time pressures. Candidates can be asked to complete a psychometric assessment prior to the assessment day or once a decision has been made as to whether they should progress any further in the process.

2.6 Executive Recruitment

You can continue to either advertise or appoint to those executive roles you require to fulfil your senior management teams. We recognise that ordinarily for Executive roles an assessment centre and Final Members Panel would normally form part of your process, which are conducted face to face. There is no reason why you can't continue to recruit to Executive roles but in a virtual way. We are already digitally enabled to deliver digital recruitment programmes to support



executive recruitment including Executive Search. You can find out more about our Executive Recruitment Service [here](#)

3. **Temporary workers, volunteers and additional resources**

The council may need to consider engaging additional employees, agency workers and/or volunteers in emergency situations. Local Authorities are developing emergency recruitment protocols in order to allow speedy and safe recruitment recognising that existing procedures (including DBS checking, procurement and financial approval processes) for engaging such resources may need to be relaxed.

4. **Mutual aid and partnership working with multi-agencies**

4.1 Emergencies may require public service organisations to co-operate in providing essential services. During such an event the council may need assistance in terms of external staff and resources and may request support from partners such as the NHS, council contractors and other agencies. The council may in turn be requested to help another public service organisation and to provide staff and/or resources. This may mean that staff are asked, temporarily, to work within a partner organisation or undertake work not normally within the remit of their council.

5. **Recruitment Training**

5.1 Recruiting in a virtual way will be for the majority, if not all, a new and different experience for both hiring managers and elected members. With interviews and assessment centres now taking place via video conferencing, recruitment and selection training will need to be reconsidered and updated accordingly. WME have resources, training and support including recruitment training for elected members and hiring managers, that can help and support you with delivering your virtual recruitment .

6. **DBS Checks**

6.1 Temporary changes to DBS ID checking guidelines have been put in place to enable ID documents to be viewed over video link and scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted. We are aware you would ordinarily capture this information once a successful candidate has been offered the role, however you may want to consider obtaining this information at an earlier stage in your process to prevent any delay in obtaining it from the candidate later. Talentlink will allow for the scanning of documentation by the candidate at any stage in your recruitment process. This will better enable fast-tracking of staff into critical roles. A link to the DBS guidance on DBS ID checking is available [here](#)

7. **So how can WME support you?**

Service	How
Manage your recruitment campaigns	The Resourcing Team are highly experienced in supporting organisations with the scheduling and delivery of recruitment campaigns and will work with you to understand what your requirements are.



Set up video Interview questions in your recruitment process	Our ATS technology – Talentlink can provide this.
Organise and host virtual interviews	We can use our Video conferencing tool to set up and invite candidates and panel members to interviews.
Host and attend virtual employment committee meetings	We use Microsoft Teams and Zoom to host and deliver these meetings, which have proven to be very successful.
Create content and deliver your virtual assessment centres	We are experienced in creating the content to meet and draw out the experience and skills you require from your candidates for the role.
Provide access to online Psychometrics	We have a suite of online Psychometrics, for your to be able to use. Please just let us know if you would like to know more.
Provide virtual candidate feedback	Candidate care is of paramount importance and we have always provided this service.
Host and deliver virtual Elected Member interviews	We will schedule, set up and host virtual elected member interviews using our video conferencing tool. We can also act as an independent advisor to the panel too.
Design and deliver virtual recruitment and selection training	

We are digitally enabled to deliver the services above, should you wish to discuss any of this further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

8. **Conclusion**

8.1 Local Authorities have various statutory duties in delivering its services including at times of emergency. This guide supports the councils will to continue with other recruitment of posts virtually with potentially a pro-longed start date as and when needed, supported by an online onboarding process. All this together will support you to have successful recruitment outcomes, maintain ongoing communications and engagement with these new appointments and enable you to be ready to deliver your services.

Chantelle Wooldridge
Principal Consultant – Resourcing

T: 0121 569 2070 M: 07788795411 E:c.wooldridge@wmemployers.org.uk



Appendix 1

Organisations using the SMS Text Messaging Service

1. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
2. Walsall Council
3. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
4. Wychavon District Council
5. Telford and Wrekin Council
6. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
7. West Midlands Combined Authority
8. City of Wolverhampton Council
9. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

