

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment is the overall process whereby an organisation appoints staff to fill vacant or new posts. Selection covers the series of activities used to best identify the most suitable candidate for any particular vacant post on the basis of their job-related merits and abilities.

This policy aims to make sure that SPSO attracts, selects and retains the most suitable candidates by using the most appropriate, efficient, fair, open and effective recruitment and selection processes. We have a legal responsibility to ensure that no unlawful practices occur in the recruitment and selection process. As an Equal Opportunities employer, the SPSO has processes in place to meet its obligations in relation to the following legislation:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1976)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010

No job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions, trade union activity or be disadvantaged by any condition or requirement that cannot be shown to be justifiable. Job applicants will be selected on the basis of their job-related merits and abilities.

The SPSO will achieve the aims of the Recruitment and Selection Policy by ensuring that:

- vacancies reach as wide a pool of potential applicants as is practicable;
- there are clear, concise job descriptions and objective person specifications for each post;
- the procedure for recruitment and selection for appointment or promotion, is followed by every Manager and Employee involved in recruitment and selection;
- staff members involved in the recruitment and selection process are given adequate training on the SPSO's policies and procedures and their responsibilities;
- unlawful and unfair practices are not introduced, through the regular monitoring and reviewing of the policy and procedure; and
- positive action is taken to make the policy effective including steps to encourage applications from under-represented groups.

All applicants with a disability, who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy, must be included on the shortlist for interview and considered on their abilities.

Staff who are contracted to work part time hours, or are employed on temporary or fixed-term contracts will have the same employment conditions and rights as staff contracted to work full-time hours and/or staff on permanent contracts.

In cases of short-term appointments (of less than 1 year's duration), where it may not be appropriate to follow the full recruitment process, the most appropriate and cost-effective method of filling these appointments will be determined by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

Establishing a Vacancy

A vacancy presents an opportunity to critically examine the gap in the workforce that the vacancy has created. The SMT will first decide whether recruitment is the most appropriate solution to filling a vacancy. This decision will be made as soon as a resignation has been received, a job move has been agreed or a fixed term contract comes towards an end. Alternatives to recruitment include reorganising work distribution, increasing the responsibilities of an existing staff member, redesigning job tasks, restructuring, redeployment, secondment or using agency temporary staff for short-term assignments.

If recruitment is the appropriate solution, then the SMT will decide whether the vacancy is to be filled internally or externally. Consideration will always be given to filling vacancies internally, for example, if the required skills are available from current staff or where a member of staff has previously carried out the same role responsibilities before. If the requirements of the existing job have changed, the relevant job description and person specification will be reviewed by the recruiting manager and revised as necessary. Any new roles will be developed by the manager with support from the HR Officer. Please see the [Grading Policy](#) for further information on the development of new roles.

Consideration will also be given to whether the job could be advertised as suitable for part-time work or job sharing, with reference to the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.

Forming a Recruitment Panel

A recruitment panel will be formed for each recruitment exercise. There must be at least 2 people on the panel, including, wherever possible, the recruiting manager and an HR representative. The panel should be as diverse as possible to reflect the relevant functions of the SPSO and may include non-management members of staff provided they are at a salary band above that of the post being recruited.

Panel members from outside the SPSO may be used where all the candidates are well known to SPSO staff and/or there is a need for particular expertise or technical knowledge/experience that is not obtainable within the SPSO.

The panel must have received the appropriate recruitment and selection training, including the equal opportunities aspects of recruitment and selection and the relevant legislation.

Wherever possible, the same panel should be involved throughout the recruitment process. However, panel members may withdraw from the process and be replaced if their connection with an applicant (such as a family member or close personal friend) is such that they cannot maintain objectivity. Panel members must also declare any personal knowledge or relationship with an applicant. If a substitute panel member is required at any stage, then they need to become familiar with all the applications and receive a thorough brief on the process to date.

Each panel will have a Chair, usually the recruiting manager, who will co-ordinate the recruitment process and ensure that it is carried out in accordance with this policy. The Chair of the panel will be responsible for agreeing a recruitment plan.

Agreeing a Recruitment Plan

The panel will start work by agreeing time-scales for the recruitment process. As a guideline, the closing date for applications should be 2 weeks after the job has been advertised, the short-listing meeting date should be within 1 week of the closing date and the candidate should be given at least 1 week of notice to attend an assessment and/or interview. The proposed assessment and interview dates (if different) should be included in the job advertising information. These timings may be subject to review, depending on availability of the panel members.

The SPSO assessment and selection methods are competency-based and may take account of SPSO values to the advertised post. The panel agrees the job description, person specification, including the competencies required for the post and the assessment and interview strategy. The purpose of the assessment and interview are to gather the evidence needed to assess the job-related requirements of the post and to select the most appropriate candidate. All strategies will include a structured interview which is designed to assess the competencies, and where appropriate the values, of an applicant, it is the principal method of determining the match between the job and the candidate and it gives the candidate information about the job and the SPSO.

Other methods of assessing competencies may include presentations, psychological/psychometric testing (by a formally qualified person), work simulations (such as 'in-tray' exercises) and practical assessments to determine technical ability (such as IT skills). The choice of assessment methods will flow from the requirements of the job in question. Any tests must be free of bias and relevant to the requirements of the job. The panel must ensure that the methods are fair to all applicants, including those of minority groups, people with disabilities and members of non-British races and cultures.

Finally, the panel should establish the resources needed to carry out the assessment and selection strategy (such as who will carry out the assessments, where will the assessments and interviews take place and what materials are needed), and take the necessary steps to put these resources in place.

The HR Officer will provide appropriate advice and support to the recruitment panel throughout this planning stage.

Attracting Applicants

The panel will decide how applicants are to be attracted to the job. This may include some or all of the following: external advertising in appropriate media (including professional and trade journals), use of the internet and social media, professional networks, use of agencies and employment services. Vacancies will be published as widely as possible to attract a diverse range of applicants.

The panel will also consider the resources needed to administer the advertisement and initial short-listing processes, and whether these resources can be met in-house. If necessary, the panel will seek to obtain SMT approval to use an external recruitment agency to handle some/all of these processes. Advice and support is also available, if required, from the HR Officer.

The relevant job description and person specification will be the basis for the recruitment advertising. The following will be included in SPSO advertisements:

- SPSO name and logo
- Job title
- Salary range
- Short paragraph about the SPSO
- Brief details about the job, including responsibilities and required competencies
- Closing date for applications
- Interview date(s) (where specific dates are known, alternatively the week that interviews will be likely to commence)
- Contact details of the person handling recruitment enquiries
- An appropriate short statement on equal opportunity

All posts will be advertised internally at the same time as externally. Each applicant will receive the same details and information about the vacant post in the form of an SPSO recruitment pack. The pack will contain the following as a minimum:

- SPSO application form
- Equal opportunity monitoring form
- Application guidance note for applicants
- Job description and person specification

The recruitment pack will be available to download from the SPSO website. Alternatively, should an applicant request that a recruitment pack be sent to them directly, this can be done electronically or by hard copy/post. Recruitment enquiries should be responded to within 2 working days.

All applicants are required to complete the standard SPSO application form. If an applicant with a disability asks to submit an application in an alternative format (such as a CV, large type or audio format), then every effort will be made to accommodate this request.

Short-listing Applicants

Shortlisting is the process of matching the information given on the application form with the requirements of the job. Where the short-listing process is handled in-house, a completed application form should be returned to HR by the closing date. The form will be date stamped and receipt indicated in writing. An applicant whose form is received after the closing date will be advised, in writing, that their application will not be considered.

HR will keep the original forms and, immediately after the closing date, give copies of the forms to each of the recruitment panel members. To avoid bias or discrimination, all personal details and equal opportunity monitoring forms will be separated from the application forms before they are passed to the

panel members. The equal opportunity monitoring forms will be retained by the HR Officer. All original and copied forms will be treated as confidential and kept securely.

The HR Officer will produce applicant short-listing forms and the panel should prepare for the short-listing meeting by reading through the applications and completing the applicant short-listing forms. At least 2 panel members will assess each application against the required competencies.

A short-listing meeting will be held and should involve the full panel to ensure consistency in the process. At the short-listing meeting, the panel uses the applicant short-listing forms to identify how well each applicant meets each of the job-related competencies. Applicants who meet the agreed essential criteria will be short-listed. If the number of applicants short-listed is greater than the number that it is feasible to interview, then other criteria, such as desirable criteria, will be used to reduce the numbers. The HR Officer will ensure that all applicants who have identified as having a disability, and who meet the essential criteria for a job vacancy, are included on the shortlist for interview and considered on their abilities.

The HR Officer will retain completed applicant short-listing forms, together with the applications of unsuccessful applicants. The HR Officer will then contact all unsuccessful applicants (normally in writing) to advise them that they have not been short-listed for the interview stage of the process for the selection reasons above. The letter will also explain that SPSO does not provide detailed feedback to applicants who have not reached the interview stage of the process. However where the applicant is an SPSO employee, if requested, feedback on an application will be provided to support the individual's ongoing learning and development whilst in employment.

At this point, the HR Officer will advise the panel of the names of the successful applicants, so that any conflicts of interest can be identified and dealt with before the next stage of the process.

Assessing and Selecting Candidates

Successful applicants (now referred to as candidates) will be sent an email/letter from the HR Officer inviting them to assessment and/or interview in which all candidates will be required to demonstrate how they meet the competencies specified for the job. The invitation will include details of the assessment and/or interview process (methods to be used, time and date, panel members), and details of how the candidate can confirm their acceptance of the date and time of assessment/interview. The invitation will also include details of the assessment and/or interview location, a copy of the job description and person specification and links to other relevant material such as the SPSO Annual Report. Candidates with a disability will also be asked to notify the HR Officer of any reasonable adjustments to the process that may be required. .

The SPSO will reimburse travelling expenses up to £100.00 for attendance at assessment and/or interview. Reasonable travelling expenses will be agreed as part of reasonable adjustments for a disability. The invitation will ask candidates to notify the HR Officer if they intend to make a claim for travel expenses. Candidates will be asked to provide receipts as proof of purchase and will not be reimbursed without a receipt.

The Chair of the panel will be responsible for ensuring that any reasonable adjustments required by candidates with disabilities have been incorporated in the selection process.

The panel will agree both an interview plan/structure and the interview questions. The agreed structure will include how topic areas are covered, the order in which interviewers will question the candidate and the time allocated to each section.

The HR Officer will produce an interview structure/assessment form for each candidate and pass these to the panel in advance of the assessment/interview.

The panel will prepare for the interviews by reading through the applications to identify areas that may need further exploration or clarification. Panel members must make themselves familiar with the job description and person specification and the evidence sources for the agreed competencies.

Individual panel members will make detailed, objective and clear notes on the interview form, either throughout the assessment and interview or immediately after. Candidates may request access to these notes.

As soon as possible after the assessment/interview, the panel members should meet to review candidates' performances during the selection process and reach their decision based on the evidence gathered in the assessment and interview process. Selection decisions recorded must be fair and objective and based on the competency requirements of the job. In the event of any claims of discrimination being made, valid reasons for declining a candidate should be recorded.

The completed interview assessment forms will be passed to the HR Officer together with copies of assessment tests/exercises and copies of the application forms for all candidates. Any duplicate materials such as copies of application forms will be destroyed immediately.

Unsuccessful candidates will be contacted (normally in writing) to advise that they will not be offered the role with an offer of feedback on their performance at interview and assessment. The candidate will be asked to request feedback within an agreed date and normally this will be done verbally with written feedback being provided only in certain circumstances. The HR Officer will normally provide this feedback.

If there are several suitable candidates, it may be appropriate to 'hold' rather than reject until the outcome of the offer to the most suitable candidate is known. To assist in the final decision, candidates may be invited for a second interview and/or assessment. Candidates will be informed if there is a further interview and/or assessment and any delay in making an offer.

Making an Offer

The HR Officer will prepare the terms of an offer (including contract type/duration, and any starting salary proposals in line with the **Pay and Pay Arrangements** policy) which will be authorised by the Director or Ombudsman. A provisional oral offer may then be made to the successful candidate which will be followed up in writing. This should happen as soon as possible after the selection decision is made. If possible, a provisional start date will be confirmed with the candidate. Candidates must be advised not to resign from their current employment until a written and non-provisional offer of employment has been received from the SPSO.

It must be explained to the successful candidate that the provisional offer is subject to all necessary checks required as part of the selection process to verify and validate evidence already gathered. This may include obtaining copies of qualifications, identification, checking eligibility to work in UK and all offers are made subject to SPSO obtaining satisfactory reference and Enhanced Disclosure checks.

Appointment

The HR Officer will ensure that a formal offer letter, security application forms and pension questionnaire (for the purpose of enrolling a new employee in the appropriate pension scheme) are sent out to the successful candidate. The offer letter enables the specifics of the job to be re-stated, with the basic terms and conditions, any pre-conditions (such as subject to satisfactory references and Disclosure Scotland checks) or post-conditions (such as subject to a satisfactory probation period) to be set out.

The successful candidate is asked to indicate their acceptance or decline, by completing and returning the copy offer letter, along with any documents required.

The Written Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment along with a pension pack and other new starter information is usually provided to the new member of staff on their first day. Further details of new start arrangements can be found in the **Induction** and **Probation** policies.

References

References must be obtained for external successful candidates.

The request for a reference should be specifically designed to elicit information about the applicant which is directly relevant to the post and the essential and desirable selection criteria of the person specification. When contacting referees, a copy of the job description should be enclosed. In addition, it should seek the confirmation, or otherwise, of the basic factual information already provided by the candidate, i.e. job title, attendance record etc.

A reference may be sought at any stage during the application and selection process; however references will not be sought without first obtaining the candidate's consent. Normally the candidate consent is reflected in the application form, however where consent is not given the candidate will be contacted. An offer of appointment is normally made subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

All references will be treated as confidential, and will not normally be divulged to any third party without the approval of the referee, although compliance with the Data Protection Act may preclude this, in certain circumstances. (See [References Policy](#) for more information.)

Where anyone directly involved in the appointment process is listed as a referee for any candidate, they must either decline from acting as a referee, with an appropriate alternative being indicated by the candidate, or take no further part in the interview process.

The contents of references will be considered within the selection process, and any issues arising from the references should be clarified by telephone with the referee and with the candidate as appropriate.

This section of the policy should always be read in conjunction with the SPSO's separate References Policy.

Monitoring and Record Keeping

Once the recruitment and selection process is completed a monitoring report for the job will be prepared by the HR Officer. This will include where the job was advertised, gender of applicants, age of applicants, number of applicants with disabilities and profile of ethnic origin. The report will include information in the following categories:

- all applicants;
- all short-listed candidates; and
- successful candidate(s).

Accurate record-keeping is an essential part of recruitment for feedback purposes, to enable accurate and objective investigation of complaints as speedily as possible and to enable an accurate and speedy response in cases where applicants invoke their statutory rights. The following documents help SPSO to achieve these objectives:

- the original application forms and any related documents;
- equal opportunity monitoring forms;
- applicant short-listing forms;
- interview assessment forms;
- selection decisions; and
- candidate's written exercise responses, test score sheets, presentation handouts (if available).

The application form of a successful candidate will be kept on their SPSO personal file. Copies of references received for a successful candidate are kept on the personal file for 1 year. Equal opportunity monitoring forms will be retained on the recruitment file for that particular job vacancy. All other recruitment documents detailed above are retained by Human Resources for a period of 1 year from the date of interview. Manual records will be kept in locked filing cabinets and electronic files kept in secure locations. All documents that are not to be stored will be destroyed immediately. Stored documents will be destroyed after the required storage time (see [Managing Personal Data Policy](#)).