

# Describing a Job

## A Guide for Managers

The job description provides applicants or current employees with information on what is expected in the job role. It is also important to keep job descriptions up to date as it is not likely for them to remain accurate over a long period. Therefore, job descriptions should be discussed and updated, if necessary, as part of the annual appraisal process.

### Creating a Job Description

Unclear descriptions can cause confusion and this, in turn, can lead to disagreement between an employer and employee. Therefore, it is essential that enough time is taken to make the job description clear, informative and honest. There is no right or wrong way of compiling a job description; however the template should be used as this will help to capture all the relevant information so as to make clear the expectations of someone taking on that role. It is good practice to describe each accountability or activity that is explained in the job description with a verb that conveys the level of authority and responsibility attached to the job e.g. 'to manage' a budget implies a higher level than 'to monitor' a budget. In addition, these accountabilities should be carefully worded to avoid indirect discrimination unless they can be objectively justified e.g. the request to be energetic may indirectly discriminate those who are not energetic yet who may be able to perform the job role equally well.

Whenever writing a Job Description it is best practice to seek input from those who undertake the role, who manage or are involved with the role and those who have close links to the work undertaken e.g. the manager(s) of a related position(s) or element of work.

### Writing a Person Specification

Along with the job description, it is important to specify the skills, knowledge and general abilities that are required to do the job. This person specification should set each of the skills, knowledge and general abilities as 'essential' or 'desirable' in order to fully deliver the job role. Essential criteria are those, which the post-holder must have in order to carry out the job effectively. The desirable criteria are those that will enhance job performance, but are desirable and so do not necessarily mean that those lacking such attributes should be excluded from consideration.

There is no right or wrong way to write a person specification but the Corporate Template must be used. It is also good practice to consider some key points, including;

- Only qualifications that are relevant should be included, e.g. a driver may need a driving licence but it is unlikely that he/she will need higher academic qualifications
- Only objectively justifiable experience requirements should be asked for, e.g. for a switchboard operator, it would be inappropriate to ask for two years' experience working in a local authority as it is not important for their role
- Be careful not to exclude applicants by terminology. 'Must be able to drive' may exclude a proportion of the community who travel effectively and efficiently by other means

However, any special demands should be reflected in the person specification, e.g. the need to work unsociable hours or travel widely



## **English language requirements for public sector workers**

A new legal duty was launched in November 2016 which requires all customer/public-facing public sector workers to speak fluent English in England. Workers (including permanent and fixed-term employees, apprentices, self-employed contractors and agency temps) who, as a regular and intrinsic part of their role, are required to speak to members of the public in English or Welsh are considered as working in a customer/public-facing role.

Warwickshire County Council is under a duty to ensure that all staff in customer facing roles are fluent in spoken English to the extent necessary to enable them to perform the role effectively. The level of fluency required must match the demands of the role and be communicated to potential job applicants in job adverts and person specifications as assessed as part of the selection process.

A new Code of Practice is available that aims to provide assistance to public authorities to determine the necessary standard of spoken English (or English or Welsh in Wales) to be met by their public-facing staff, the appropriate complaints procedure to follow should a member of the public consider that the required standard has not been met and the appropriate forms of remedial action which may be taken if a member of staff falls below the standard required. Public authorities must have regard to this Code when fulfilling their statutory duty under Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016.

The full code can be found here [Link to the Code of Practice on the English language requirements for public sector workers Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016](#)

### **Using a Streamlined Job Descriptions**

Streamlined Job Descriptions have been introduced to simplify the complex and highly detailed way in which individual jobs have been defined over time. Streamlined Job Descriptions are templates that include a Generic Role Profile which is designed to describe the role in a broader format, and so cover a multitude of different roles within one determined set of skills, or series of responsibilities and accountabilities. For example; an Administrator Level 2 generic role profile can cover a great number of general administrative positions and so can be used to group staff by type on the same grade and where the accountabilities and responsibilities are the same. The broader range of tasks will generally reflect those in the job description; however it does mean that the post-holder will be expected to work flexibly within the parameters set out in the role profile and be able to undertake any role with the same generic role profile.

When using Role Profiles, the only element that can be amended is the specific role profile (which describes the specific role or job) and desirable criteria. Under no circumstances can the generic role profile or essential criteria be changed as these are the elements that have defined the grade, and changes to these elements would mean the post is likely to be unique and so should be considered separately using a non-streamlined Job Description.

### **Consider Flexible Working**

A prime consideration in recruitment is to make the role as attractive as possible to suitably qualified candidates. For many, the opportunity of flexible working hours will be a significant factor in deciding whether to apply. It is the policy of the Council that all jobs should be open to flexible working arrangements and advertised as such, unless there are compelling and objectively justified reasons to the contrary. Flexible working arrangements include the Council's 'flexi-time system', part-time, term-time and job sharing arrangements. The latter involves 'splitting' a full-time job into two part-time roles. Therefore, all job roles will be advertised generally and all candidates should be considered unless a compelling argument can be found for making the job role full-time only.

### **Politically Restricted Posts**

Political restrictions exist to stop a conflict of interest, particularly where an employee may be involved in political activity whilst working in a local authority. It has long been the case that elected members of a local authority cannot also be employees of that same authority. However, it is also the case that senior

local government employees, and other employees who regularly deal with the press or media, are not permitted to participating in any public political activity. Therefore, it is important to establish when describing the job role if this is likely to be politically restricted. The Recruitment Centre can provide advice on this. If a Councillor or other political activist applies for a politically restricted job then it would need to be discussed with Human Resources prior to a decision being made.

### **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults**

We are committed to Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those we serve, as well as complying with best practice in the application of safeguarding. Therefore, where a role requires a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) as part of the pre-employment checks this should be stated on the Job Description.