

Guidance Notes

For Completing Your Standard Application form for Positions Requiring an Enhanced Criminal Records Check

If you would like this information in another format please contact:

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Introduction

First of all, thank you for applying for a job with Cornwall Council.

We have designed these guidance notes to help you complete your application form.

If you find the form difficult to complete, you may ask someone to do it on your behalf. If you have a disability and would prefer to submit your application on tape you may do so. Your recording should follow the format of the application form. We are here to help you and if you would like some advice or assistance on filing in the form, please do not hesitate to contact us or ask someone to call on your behalf on 0300 1234 100.

The application form is purposely printed in a print size that helps people with dyslexia or sight problems. If you require this document in an alternative format, such as a larger print, Easy Read, Braille, or audio tape, please do not hesitate to call us on 0300 1234 100. Please be aware that this may result in a short delay.

General Comments

Our application form has been designed so that all applicants present their details in the same format. In this way we can be sure that all applicants are treated fairly and equally. For this reason we do not accept curriculum vitas.

Completing the application form is an important part of the recruitment process. Sometimes our jobs need practical hands-on skills instead of administrative or office skills, so you do not necessarily have to be good at filling in forms and completing paperwork. However, the better you are able show and explain your

experience to us on your application form, the easier it will be for us to initially assess your suitability.

The basic duties and requirements of the job are set out in the Role Profile which describes the function of the job and how we expect a person to perform.

Please check before starting to complete your application that you have a Role Profile. If you do not have one, please contact us on the details provided at the end of this document. It will be very difficult for you to complete your application form properly without the Role Profile, as you will not be able to give us details of your relevant experience and skills.

Presentation

We encourage applicants to submit applications electronically and if doing so you will receive an automated response when your form has been received. Otherwise, please use a black pen or type so your application can be scanned into our electronic vacancy file for that job.

If completing the application form offline, remember to sign in the relevant places to declare that the information you have provided is correct.

If you are invited to interview, we will contact you with the details and explain what you will need to bring with you to your interview. This is done electronically unless you do not have access to the internet, in which case we will phone you and may send confirmation in the post. As well as any essential certificates, please note that you will also have to bring certain documents such as proof of National Insurance Number, birth certificate

and/or passport etc which confirms your identity and your eligibility to work in the UK.

Completing the Application Form

About the Role

When submitting your application online, this will automatically be filled in for each position. However, when completing an application form offline, you will need to enter this information.

This section is important for us to know which position you are applying for. The Role Applied for, Directorate and Location can all be found on the Role Profile and the job advert, whilst the Reference Number can be found either on the job advert or on the application pack covering letter we sent to you.

About You

Enter your personal information fully and clearly so that we can contact you about your application.

Your current or most recent employment

If you have recently left school or college, or a training programme and have not yet had a job, you can either provide details of any work experience that you have had, (including any holiday or voluntary work), or you can go straight to the next section.

Previous employment or experience

Details of your current employment should not be included here as these should have been detailed in the last section. Start by giving us the details

of the job prior to your current job and then work backwards.

All gaps in employment must be explained so for example, if you took a break from work for whatever reason, please explain the circumstances.

You can attach an additional sheet if you need to.

Qualifications achieved from secondary, higher and further education

Please list all of your qualifications and examinations (with results) which you think are relevant. The role profile will say which qualifications are essential to the post that you are applying for. Wherever possible, please try to add what your qualification is equivalent to, for example, a CSE Grade 1 is the same as a GCSE Grade C.

You will be asked to bring your original certificates or qualifications with you to your interview, so be prepared to ensure that you can locate them or ask the appropriate establishment for copies.

If you have qualifications which are not required for the job, you do not have to include them but you can do if you want to.

You can continue on a separate sheet if you need to.

Other training, courses and self development

You may have gained professional knowledge, skills and abilities by undertaking further training and/or personal development courses or kept your skills up to date in other ways. Please let us know in this section.

We will take full note of any education or qualifications gained overseas or as part of an employment training scheme.

Membership of Professional Bodies

If membership of a particular professional body is required or expected in connection with the job for which you are applying, you will be asked to bring your relevant membership documents to your interview.

Your Supporting Statement

This is a really important part of your application as you get to explain and show us your skills, knowledge and experience.

✓ *Tip: Draft your supporting statement before filling it in on your application form.*

Your supporting statement should explain how you believe your experience, skills and personal qualities could make you suitable for the job in relation to the Role Profile for the position. This is your opportunity to sell yourself and present your experience in the best light.

The first few sections of the Role Profile explain the role and what you are expected to do. To complete your supporting statement, you need to refer to the *"Competencies and other Requirements"* section. This explains what we are looking for; each requirement is called a competency.

There are three types of competencies: *"Behavioural Competencies"*, *"Functional Competencies"* and

"Qualifications, training and other requirements".

✓ *Tip: Read this first and think about how you meet the criteria before starting to write.*

Functional competencies

Functional competencies are specific to the role for which you are applying.

Behavioural competencies

The behavioural competencies describe what we want our employees to demonstrate when performing the role. These form part of our employees' performance management and development system, so we may not always need to see evidence of how you meet behavioural competencies during the selection process (which will be shown by a blank "recruitment and selection" column).

What should I write?

You need to provide examples of situations that you have experienced, either within work or in your personal life, that demonstrate what is asked for. You must provide at least one example for each competency.

✓ *Tip: We advise that you always use the STAR approach when completing an application for a role profile.*

The STAR approach

A helpful approach to completing your supporting statement (and preparing yourself for an interview) is to use the **STAR** model, which helps you build your examples in a structured way.

Situation	Set the scene. Describe the situation or problem.
Task	Outline the task required to solve the issue or problem.
Action	Describe what you actually did. How and when you did it, the rationale for the choices you took and the key things that you did to overcome the issue or problem.
Result	What the outcome was and the difference it made.

Example Behavioural Competency:

"Focusing on customers"

An applicant might write: "Throughout my work I have always ensured I put the customers' needs first".

However, the following provides an example using the **STAR** approach: "In my current role I receive queries by telephone from customers regarding their invoices. I received a call from a customer who was angry that she had been charged twice for an item. I listened patiently until she had explained everything that she felt was important, before asking questions to obtain the information I needed. I calmly explained that I would investigate this and get back to her ASAP. Unfortunately, I found this could not be resolved easily and needed to be escalated. As I realised it would take 2-3 days for our escalation team to investigate, I phoned her and explained why I was escalating the case and who she could contact if she

had any queries in the meantime. I asked her if there was anything else I could help with. The customer seemed pleased with my efforts thanked me for getting back to her so quickly."

Example Functional Competency:

"Knowledge and understanding of computerised database systems in order to input data, edit records and extract information (produce reports)."

An applicant might write: "I have experience of working with databases, mainly Microsoft Access".

The following uses the STAR approach: In my previous role as Administrative Assistant, I used Microsoft Access on a daily basis to manage our pool cars. I created new records when we had a new employee/car, edited information such as the car MOT due date and 'booked out' the car to an employee when requested. I then produced monthly management reports on how many cars had been booked and by whom.

Before you finish:

✓ *Tip: Think about the person reading this. Is your statement clear?*

✓ *Tip: Do you explain why you would be good at the job?*

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

The Council is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and has adopted a rigorous recruitment process to continue to do so. Therefore, you are required to give examples of how you would contribute to ensuring our schools and services remain a safe environment for children

using your experience and knowledge. These may be discussed further at interview.

How do we decide who to interview?

The shortlisting panel will score how well you have demonstrated that you meet the competencies being assessed at the application stage of the process.

✓ *Tip: If you do not meet all of the criteria it may still be worth you applying, because if we do not have enough applicants who meet these criteria, we may interview the applicants who meet most of the criteria.*

Interview Requirements

We are a non discriminative employer and will make reasonable adjustments to help a person with disabilities through the application and selection process. If you have any specific requirements for attending an interview, please tell us about them here.

Please see the information provided towards the end of this document for further information.

References

All job offers are made subject to receipt of two satisfactory references, one of which must be your current employer.

If you have worked with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the past, but are not currently; this **must** be the most recent employer by whom you were employed to work with these groups.

If you are not employed or are unable to provide an employment reference please give the name of someone you have known in a professional capacity or in connection to any voluntary work. We do not accept any references from members of your immediate or extended family. If this is your first job, you could ask a Teacher/Tutor from your most recent educational establishment. Please state each referee's relationship to you i.e. Previous employer, current employer etc.

Declaration of criminal convictions

If you are applying for a role working with children or vulnerable adults, you need to provide details of any criminal convictions you have had – whether they are deemed “spent” under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 or not.

If you are selected for an interview, we will ask you to bring proof of your identity and you will be required to complete a Criminal Records Disclosure Check.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) - Filtering of old and minor cautions, convictions, reprimands and warnings

At the end of January 2013 a Court of Appeal judgement stated that the disclosure of all cautions and convictions on a DBS certificate was incompatible with Article 8 of the Convention for Human Rights.

As a result of this judgement, from 29 May 2013, the DBS will be removing certain specified old and minor offences from criminal record certificates issued from this date. The filtering rules are as follows:

For those 18 or over at the time of the offence:

An adult conviction will be removed from a DBS criminal record certificate if:

- 11 years have elapsed since the date of conviction; and
- it is the person's only offence, and
- it did not result in a custodial sentence.

Even then, it will only be removed if it does not appear on the specified list of offences that will never be filtered. If a person has more than one offence, then details of all their convictions will always be included.

An adult caution will be removed after 6 years have elapsed since the date of the caution – and if it does not appear on the specified list of offences that will never be filtered.

For those under 18 at the time of the offence:

- The same rules apply as for adult convictions, except that the elapsed time period is 5.5 years

The same rules apply as for adult cautions, except that the elapsed time period is 2 years.

The filtering rules, together with the list of offences that will never be filtered, are available from www.gov.uk/db

For more information, advice and guidance on safer recruitment, criminal record checks and the Disclosure and Barring Service, please contact the P&OD Safeguarding Team on 01872 324130 or email hrsafeguardingteam@cornwall.gov.uk

Disclosure of Interest

These questions inform us of your eligibility to work for us and allow us to adapt our recruitment and employment processes where possible, e.g. if you have a relationship (personal, financial or professional) with a proposed interview panellist and/or manager.

How we protect your information

This section explains to you how we handle and store your application and details.

Your Declaration

Please make sure that you have signed and dated the application form to confirm that your details are correct and complete. Please note that applicants who conceal or misrepresent relevant information at any stage will be disqualified from appointment, or if appointed, may be dismissed without notice.

Equal opportunities monitoring form

We would appreciate you completing the form as this enables us to assess the effectiveness of our policies. This form is confidential and you are not required to state your name or any other identifying information.

A note on Data Protection

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 all information given on the application form will only be used to determine an applicant's suitability for the post and will be kept only for those purposes and equal opportunities monitoring.

Additional Information

We have made a commitment to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities and have adopted the Employment Department's Disability "Two Ticks" Symbol "Positive about disabled people". This means that we have undertaken to interview all applicants with a disability who meet the essential shortlisting criteria for a job vacancy and as such as consider them on their abilities.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments where, compared to a non-disabled person, a disabled person is substantially disadvantaged by either working arrangements (which include the recruitment process) or the working environment.

A person has a disability under this act if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities, or if they have a history of such a disability. Included in this definition are:

- Physical impairments
- Mental impairments relating to mental functioning, including learning difficulties and mental health issues which are either clinically well recognised or which can be substantiated by a medical practitioner.
- Sensory impairments such as hearing and/or visual impairment (which is not correctable by glasses or similar aids)
- Severe disfigurement
- Progressive conditions such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy or HIV infection

- People who have had an impairment (covered by the act) in the past but have since recovered.

An impairment has a substantial effect if it affects mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, hearing, eyesight (excluding those who wear glasses/contact lenses), memory and/or ability to concentrate, learn or understand.

Long term means has lasted, or is likely to last for at least 12 months, or for the rest of the life of a person.

Examples of reasonable adjustments are: making adjustments to the premises; allocation of work; being flexible about working hours; providing training; using modified equipment; making instructions and manuals more accessible; using a reader or interpreter; and appropriate supervision. There are no prescribed rules as to what adjustments can and cannot be made as individuals' circumstances can vary so much. However, the Council is open to considering all requests for reasonable adjustments.

...and finally

We thank you for your interest in working with Cornwall Council and wish you the very best with your application.