

Guidance for applicants

Your job application

All job applications are submitted to PCS via CVMinder. It allows us to securely share only the essential details from your application between permitted recruitment panel members. It ensures that recruitment panel members who are involved in the review and shortlisting of applications cannot access protected characteristics and other sensitive information. This ensures a fair process that is free of bias.

Before you start your job application

Study the advert, job description and person specification.

Your application will be assessed upon the strength of your evidence which should indicate how you meet all of the essential criteria on the person specification.

Think about how this relates to your work, outside activities, voluntary activities and so on.

- Can you talk to colleagues in similar jobs to get an insight into the day to day work?
- Jot down your examples as you go.
- Complete the application with clear and concise examples.
- Keep to the maximum word limit.

A good answer to a question will be based upon experiences that are both recent and relevant to the post. Your answer will evidence what **you** have done. Think about the structure of your answers. They should include:

- Beginning – briefly outline the scenario (10%)
- Middle – demonstrate your skills, knowledge and experience (80%)
- End – what was the outcome/result? (10%)

A note on word limit

Most of our application forms ask you to keep to a word limit within a section.

Typically this will say:

“In no more than 450 words under each of the following headings, consider the Job Description and describe how you meet the following essential criteria.”

Note the section heading and the bullet points for the criteria. Complete each section, covering all of the criteria under that heading, without exceeding the word limit.

For example, there might be five bullet points under the heading of Experience. Your answer should demonstrate your experience of the five bullet points, using no more than 450 words.

Once you have completed your job application

Once you have answered all of the questions, check you have fully completed the application.

Tip: Ask someone else to check your application before you submit it.

Tip: Don't leave it to the last minute. There is no advantage in being the last person to apply and you risk missing the deadline if your internet connection fails or you are called away.

Your application is also an indication of your attention to detail and ability to manage your time.

Our recruitment & selection shortlisting process

Your application is considered by a panel of three to five people, trained in the PCS recruitment and selection policy and our procedures. They will individually assess and score the strength of your evidence demonstrating how you meet all of the essential criteria on the person specification. Please note the panel members have no access to personal information about applicants, such as your name or protected characteristics.

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Applicants are shortlisted for interview based on the collated scores of the panel.

Where a high number of applications is received for a vacancy, a process of long-listing may be used to reduce numbers prior to full shortlisting. This will assess and score the strength of your evidence demonstrating how you meet the most important of the essential criteria on the person specification.

The HR team will ensure the process followed is appropriate and takes account of PCS' commitment as a Disability Confident employer and follows best practice principles.

Interviews

If you have been successful at the shortlisting stage, you will be told in advance how long your interview will take and whether a presentation is required. You will also be given advance notice of any skills test or other assessment.

During your interview you will be asked around 4 or 5 questions and will be assessed on the strength of your evidence in meeting all of the essential criteria on the person specification. Prepare for questions and rehearse your answers, allowing around 5 or 6 minutes for each question.

It is usual for PCS to provide the questions during the interview. The questions will appear in the chat function on Zoom or will be made available in the interview room. You may want to write down the questions. This helps to focus your answer. Ask for clarification if you are unsure.

Demonstrate your experience, skills and knowledge by giving specific examples to the question asked (same as the application stage).

Keep your application form handy and don't be afraid to mention what you have already said at the application stage.

- Don't assume the interview panel already know all about you or your experience.
- Mention transferable skills, e.g. voluntary work.
- Remember to say what **you** have done.

If time permits, you will be asked at the end if you have anything to add in support of your application. This is your opportunity to take a minute to remind the panel why you are the person for the job. You may wish to prepare this in advance making a list of about 5 bullet points.

Consider questions to ask after interview that relate to the role or what it will offer you.

Interview presentation

If you are asked to prepare a presentation, you will be given the details in advance. Ensure you know what you are being asked to present on and ensure you keep to time.

Research the main topics and ensure your presentation observes the generally adopted format:

- Introduction – yourself/presentation topic
- Middle – Findings
- End – conclusion/recommendations

Tip: Discuss the presentation with others before preparing your presentation. You may gain other points of view on the presentation question.

Tip: Rehearse and time yourself - you will be asked to stop if you go over and it will also be an indication of your time management skills. In PowerPoint there is a function in slide show called rehearsal coach that may be helpful.

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A prompt at 9 minutes will be given, to say you have one minute remaining. Once 10 minutes have elapsed, you will be asked to stop. You will not be asked questions on your presentation, unless you have been told in advance.

Disability Confident

A Disability Confident employer will generally offer an interview to any applicant that declares they have a disability and meets the minimum criteria for the job as defined by the employer. It is important to note that in certain recruitment situations such as high-volume, seasonal and high-peak times, the employer may wish to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered to both disabled people and non-disabled people. For more details, please refer to the GOV website.

Reasonable adjustments

We want all candidates to be able to demonstrate their best selves at the application or interview stage. If you require us to consider reasonable adjustments, please ensure that they are noted on your application by declaring a disability and the adjustments required.