

Guidance Notes to help you complete the application

The application form is an essential part of the recruitment and selection process, and acts as a guide for the selection interview itself.

The following guidance notes relate to all the sections of the application form. They are intended to help you complete your application and it is important that you read them carefully.

Job Description and Employee Profile

Every job has a Job Description and Employee Profile, which will list the experience, skills, competencies and where appropriate, qualifications that are required for the job.

Make sure you read the job description and employee profile carefully before completing the form. It is sometimes helpful to prepare a draft, which will give you the opportunity to check that you have covered each element before completing the form. Consider how your skills, aptitude and experience compare to each element of the employee profile. Harlow Council carries out the shortlisting by comparing how applicants' skills/aptitudes/experiences compare to the competencies set out in the Employee Profile. This profile has specific areas against which relevant information from your application form is evaluated. Essential criteria are required for each post. Desirable criteria are advantageous for the post but not necessarily crucial.

Section 1

Please complete personal details.

Eligibility to Work in the UK: if you are shortlisted, you will be asked to provide evidence that you are eligible to work in this country as required by the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

Section 2

Give the name and address of your present/last employer, and the main duties of the job you currently hold.

The question relating to redundancy payment or retirement benefit relates to The Redundancy Payment (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc.) (Modification) Order and will only be relevant for candidates who previously were made redundant/early retired from Local Government.

Section 3 & 4

Please detail your employment history as well as any experience or voluntary work you think may be relevant to the job you have applied for. The job may require certain qualifications. Please read the Job Description and Employee Profile before completing this section.

Section 5

Please list any relevant training and development undertaken which supports your application form.

Section 6

Remember to use the Job Description and Employee Profile. This is one of the most important parts of the application form and is where you need to promote yourself to the Council. Consider the job you are applying for, what it will entail, and why you are interested in it. Use your past experiences, whether they are in a work or personal environment, during paid work or in a community or voluntary role, and use these to describe how your skills, experience, knowledge and competencies make you a suitable candidate for this job.

Section 7

The Council's policy requires all shortlisted applicants to declare criminal convictions that are unspent as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Order legislation. It additionally requires a declaration of 'spent' convictions for employment involving access to certain categories of vulnerable persons, as allowed for by and defined by the Exemptions Orders associated with the legislation.

For some jobs involving substantial unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults, criminal record checks are made on criminal records through the Criminal Records Bureau. For jobs involving vulnerable people, checks are also made by Social Services and Learning Services against lists of 'persons considered unsuitable' for such appointments.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

In this section you are asked to provide details of any criminal convictions that you have. You should read the following guidance notes before doing so. We will not discriminate against ex-offenders, and if you have to give details of previous convictions this will not automatically prevent you from getting the job. We will consider how previous convictions could affect the job you are applying for. These will only be taken into account if the offence is relevant to the work you would be doing.

Please note: some of the following wording is taken directly from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

What is a 'spent' conviction?

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, if someone has been convicted of an offence and is not convicted again during a specified period, the conviction becomes 'spent'. A spent conviction need not be mentioned on your application form or at interview unless you are applying for a post in one of the following areas: Solicitor, Chartered or Certified Accountant, working with people under the age of 18 or over the age of 65, people suffering from serious illness or mental disorder of any kind, people addicted to alcohol or drugs, people who are blind, deaf or speech impaired and people who are substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or deformity; work relating to leisure or recreational activities for people under the age of 18 if you would have access to people under the age of 18.

If the post you are applying for does not come under one of the above categories then you do not need to tell us about any convictions that have become spent. However you must give details of convictions that are not spent.

How long are the rehabilitation periods?

A conviction becomes spent after a certain length of time which depends upon the sentence and your age at the time of conviction.

Sentences of two and a half years are never spent. It is the sentence set by the court that counts (even if it is a suspended sentence) not the time actually spent in prison.

Specific information will be sent with your application form to inform you whether or not the post you are applying for is covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Any information given will be kept confidential and used only in connection with the application.

We may withdraw an offer of employment if you do not give details of previous unspent convictions or spent convictions where appropriate.

Section 8

Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults

If the post you are applying for involves unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults you must give us permission to carry out a police check (CRB Disclosure). You will not be able to start work until your Disclosure has been undertaken by the Criminal Records Bureau and 'clearance' has been given by the appropriate officer in the appointing department. (Please be aware of the existence of the CRB Code of Practice, a copy of this is available on request from Human Resources). In addition such posts are not covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act so all convictions must be declared on the application form. The cost for this CRB check is currently £36.00 (free for volunteers).

Section 9

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

Under the Disability Discrimination Act, employers must:

- Make sure disabled people receive fair treatment when applying for jobs and while working for us.
- Make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled applicants to compete to the best of their ability during the recruitment process and to help them in their work with us.

In order to do this we will need to ask questions about your disability. Please remember that although you are not obliged to tell us about your disability, any details you provide will help us to help you. Any information you give us will be confidential.

On your application form we ask whether you consider yourself to be a disabled person and to give details to any needs you may have to enable you to attend an interview. This information is important because it helps us to make sure that you have every opportunity to demonstrate your true abilities.

At your interview you may be asked questions about how your disability may affect the performance of a particular job. This helps us to establish what adjustments we may need to make to help you do that job. You can be accompanied by a support dog both at the interview and, if you are offered employment with the Council. If you need to submit your application in a different format, we would be pleased to help. You should contact Human Resources for more advice.

Section 10

All candidates invited for interview will be asked to complete and bring to interview a medical questionnaire. This will not be opened by Harlow District Council staff, but sent to the Council's medical advisors if you are offered the post. This questionnaire will be destroyed unopened if unsuccessful.

Section 11

The referees listed on the application form must be one from your most recent employer (if applicable). Your second reference should be from your previous employer (if applicable). Your referees will be informed that Harlow Council operates an open reference and open file policy and that you may have access to any information within the reference.

Section 12

Information from the Monitoring Form is confidential and will be kept within the Human Resources department. This information is needed to ensure that our Equal Opportunities Policy is working effectively.

Section 13

Providing false information or knowingly omitting or concealing any relevant fact about your eligibility for employment will result in your name being withdrawn from the list of candidates. If such a discovery is made after you have been appointed, then you will be normally dismissed. If appointed you will be required to provide an original copy of your birth certificate or passport and if required for the post, proof of professional qualifications.

Finally

Remember to send back your signed application form by the closing date, and to the correct address. Applications may also be made through the Council's website under www.harlow.gov.uk