

Name of policy / procedure:
Status:
Approved by:
Date of approval:

Code of Practice: Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of staff
In place
Management Committee, 30 March 2009
March 2011



**For better
mental health**

Richmond Borough Mind

Code of Practice: Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Staff

1. Purpose and aims

Richmond Borough Mind (hereafter known as 'RB Mind') is committed to fair and open recruitment procedures in line with its commitment to equal opportunities and accountability.

RB Mind acknowledges its responsibility under the Law to ensure that it does not discriminate against any individual or group within Society and also commits itself to implement best practice when recruiting new staff to the organisation.

RB Mind affirms its belief in the value of recruiting appropriately qualified, experienced and skilled staff and its belief that its procedures should enable the right choice of applicant to be made for the benefit of the organisation and its service users.

To this end, this policy aims:

- To ensure equality of opportunity for all people applying for paid work within RB Mind
- To enable the appointment of the best person for each position
- To give clear structure and guidance to recruitment panels on the recruitment, selection and appointment of staff.

2. Preparation

i. Basic preparation before recruiting

- The recruitment and selection process should not start until a full evaluation of the need for the new or existing post has been made
- An evaluation can include of the aims and objectives of the post, the service it provides and the salary attached to it
- An evaluation will be conducted by the line manager of the post and their findings will be discussed with the Link Trustee for the service before recruitment commences
- In the case of an existing post, the outcomes of any exit interviews should be considered
- In the case of new posts the job description, person specification and salary will be consulted on with the Personnel Committee
- The budget and timeframe for the recruitment should be confirmed before the process starts

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- Administrative staff, who manage the administrative side to the recruitment process, should always be involved in the setting of timescales
- Job descriptions and person specifications should be evaluated against the values and organisational aims of RB Mind.

ii. Guidance on drawing up job description and person specifications

Job descriptions

- Components of the job description should be as specific as possible. This will help ensure clarity and accountability
- Job descriptions should be reviewed annually through the appraisal process and any exit interviews
- Any requirements such as the ability to work unsociable hours, to travel or hold a valid drivers license, should be outlined in the job description
- If the post involves essential car use parking permit benefits should be outlined.

The job description should always include the following statements:

- To adhere to RB Mind's policy portfolio
- To accept line management from the designated manager
- To undergo training and development as is necessary to maintain appropriate performance in the post
- To undertake any other reasonable tasks consistent with the grade and purpose of the post.

Person specifications

The person specification should relate directly to the job description. The person specification will be used as the basis for short listing and interviews. Managers should:

- reflect on the person specification carefully to ensure that it includes the qualifications, knowledge, experience, skills and ability necessary to perform the tasks of the post
- take care to ensure the elements of the person specification do not directly or indirectly discriminate against a minority; however, positive discrimination should also be avoided
- keep the number of 'desirable' elements to a minimum

3. Advertisements

The process of advertising posts should be open and public. Job adverts should:

- be written in an accessible manner, avoiding the use of jargon
- make the position sound as attractive as possible, without misleading the audience about the nature of the job
- project a positive image of RB Mind as an employer.

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The job advert should always include:

- MIND logo and the title: Richmond Borough Mind
- Job title, salary and any benefits e.g. annual leave allowance, flexible working and training allowance
- main responsibilities as defined in the job description
- main criteria for applicants, as described in the person specification
- equal opportunities strap line
- timetable, i.e. closing date, interview date
- what to do to obtain an application pack

Equal opportunities strap line

All adverts should include the following statement:

“Richmond Borough Mind values diversity and difference. We welcome applicants from all sections of the community, particularly people with lived experience of mental distress.”

In recognition of structural inequality in the job market, and the barriers to the recruitment of groups of people that society oppresses (including minority ethnic groups, women, disabled people, mental health service users, lesbian women, gay men and older people), where possible the placement of adverts should be targeted. As far as resources allow, job adverts should be placed in publications and places that are wide reaching and accessible to all individuals and groups in the local community. Wherever possible, this would include:

- Local and national press
- Press targeting minority ethnic groups e.g. The Voice, The Bangla Express
- Race Equality Council mailings
- Disability Equality mailings e.g. WECODP / WECIL
- Job centres in the local area
- Gay and Lesbian Press e.g. The Pink Paper
- Flyers in local organisation's community press, e.g. RCVS mailings
- On-line advertising

Exemptions under equal opportunities legislation

Both the Race Relations Act 1975 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1976 allow an employer to advertise for candidates of a specific ethnicity or gender under certain circumstances. This may apply when recruiting to posts for ethnically specific projects, but advice should always be sought from National Mind's Employment Law advice service. Exemptions do not allow an employer to make up shortfalls in either the gender or ethnic mix of the organisation.

4. Application procedure

To conserve resources, applicants should be encouraged to log onto the RB Mind website for an application pack, email the RB Mind recruitment address or write to the office for an application form, enclosing an SAE as detailed in the advertisement.

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Application packs should include:

- Cover letter
- Job description
- Person specification
- Equal opportunities statement & monitoring form
- Recruitment of ex-offenders policy and declaration form
- General RB Mind information leaflet
- Publicity leaflets / background relating to the service, where possible

All applicants must fill in the standard application form and all questions asked in the application form should be relevant to the recruitment process. CV's will not be considered and this should be made clear in the covering letter.

To ensure equality of opportunity, the first page of the application form will include all personal details. All application forms will be given a reference number. For short listing purposes this first page will be removed to ensure the identity of the candidate remains unknown. The equal opportunities and rehabilitation of offenders' forms will also be referenced and removed.

5. Recruitment panels

Where at all possible recruitment panels will include:

- the new post holder's line manager
- a service user who has been trained in recruitment and selection procedures

The panel should also reflect a balance in terms of gender and minority ethnic backgrounds wherever possible.

A member of the Personnel Committee or the Link Trustee for the project should be involved in the recruitment to all posts above project worker level.

All panel members should have received training in equal opportunities, recruitment and selection, and should be issued with this code of practice at the beginning of the recruitment procedure.

The panel should always be chaired by the person who is going to manage the post holder. The role of the Chair is to:

- ensure that this code of practice is adhered to at all times
- ensure that all panel members have received the relevant training
- ensure that all panel members have a fair opportunity to put their points of view on the candidates
- keep accurate records of the proceedings
- ensure that no discrimination or other bad practice occurs.

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Declaring relationships

If a member of the recruitment panel becomes aware at any point that they have a close or familial relationship with an applicant they must declare this as soon as they are aware of the individual's application. It would normally be necessary for this member to avoid any involvement in the recruitment and selection process. Guidance should be sought from Mind's Employment Advice service should this issue arise at any point.

6. Short listing

Every candidate who submits an application form will go through the short listing stage. Each candidate will be short listed by each panel member independently.

To score, the panel member will isolate evidence in the application form that demonstrates that the applicant meets the requirements of the person specification.

Each element of the person specification will be marked on a scale of 0-3. 0 will be given when no evidence is provided -that the applicant possesses the required knowledge, skills or experience - 3 will be given when the applicant has demonstrated a complete fulfillment of the requirement.

No discussion of the applicants will take place until every panel member has marked every application.

When every application has been marked the Chair should collect the total number of marks for essential elements of the person specification. The addition of these marks to form an aggregate mark for the panel as a whole will give a running order of applicants.

A discussion should then be held, chaired by the panel Chair, on each candidate, to establish whether or not a candidate should be interviewed.

In the event of many candidates meeting all the essential criteria, the decision to invite to interview or not will be based on the degree to which the desirable criteria are met.

It is not good practice to pre-set the number of interviewees before short listing, however, it is usually no more than six, and it is accepted that there can sometimes be practical limitations as to the number of people that can be interviewed.

Once a decision has been reached on who to invite to interview the Chair will give the details to the Administrative Assistant who will send out invitations to interview. Initially telephone contact will be made, which will be followed up with a written confirmation. An annual report, directions and details of any timed tests will be sent to the prospective candidates with this written confirmation.

7. Interviewing Procedures

Informal visits

The practice of offering informal visits works against equal opportunities unless all candidates are given the same experience. To ensure fairness, no informal visits are

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offered or all short listed candidates are invited to visit at the same time, on the clear understanding that the visit will be considered as part of the interview process.

Informal visits should be conducted by the staff and users who will work most closely with the successful candidates. None of the selection panel may participate in this part of the process. Feedback will be given to the panel only after a preliminary decision has been made by the selection panel. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the recruitment panel to ensure that all people who are involved in informal visits are aware of the person specification criteria. Only feedback that is in relation to these criteria will be admissible.

Interview questions

Interview questions should relate to the person specification and should be set in advance of the interview. All candidates should be asked the same questions by the same person. Questions should be open and easily understood.

If a question is misunderstood or is not clear, panel members may rephrase it. Supplementary questions may be asked by panel members only if they are relevant to the assessment of the person specification area and aim to clarify the candidate's experience, skill etc. in that area.

The interview experience

The recruitment panel should aim for the interviews to be a welcoming and positive experience, aiming to get the best out of each candidate.

Interviews will be chaired by the panel Chair and will normally consist of the same people as the short listing panel. It is not best practice to introduce new panel members at this stage though circumstances may occasionally necessitate doing so.

Arrangements should be made for someone to greet the interviewees and this person should be briefed on the need for confidentiality. Candidates should be treated with courtesy and each candidate, as far as practicable, should be treated in the same manner. Certainly no candidate should be given more or less information about the interview itself than the other. It is not intended, however, that a rigorous procedure should be in place whereby ordinary human discourse is not possible and candidates should always be provided with as much support as is consistent with fairness.

There should be no interruptions and water should be made available. Panel members should ensure that every effort is made to ensure that interviews run on time to avoid the anxiety created by delays and long waiting times.

At the start of the interview, the panel Chair should ask the panel to introduce themselves and then provide the candidate with the following information:

- The fact that the interview is an equal opportunities interview and that all candidates will be asked the same set of questions
- That panel members will each ask question in turn and will be taking notes whilst the candidate is speaking
- That a particular length of time (e.g. 45 minutes) has been allocated for the interview

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- That, at the end of the interview, an opportunity will be provided in which candidates can both add points to answers they have already made and ask questions of the panel

Any exercises should normally be taken at the start of the interview and should be strictly timed.

At the end of the interview candidates should be advised as to how successful and unsuccessful candidates will be notified, and when.

Scoring at interview

A scoring form will be provided to assess the candidate on each question, 5 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest. Each panel member will fill in a form independently.

An appointment can be made on the basis of the highest score if all panelists agree on the highest scoring candidate. In the event of a mixed response, the Chair should encourage the panel to systematically re-assess the highest scoring candidates and reach a consensus score, detailing the evidence agreed upon for each score. The Chair will complete in a final scoring sheet detailing how the appointment was made.

No score will be allocated for questions that the candidate may ask of the recruitment panel.

A panel can decide to undertake a second interview or re-advertise a post if the field is felt to be too weak or the need to choose between the top two candidates necessitates further investigation into their skills. In the event of a re-advertisement, a decision should be made at that point about whether applications from previous applicants are welcome or not.

8. Interview outcomes

It is normal practice to telephone the successful candidate on the evening of the interviews, or as soon as a decision has been reached, and to write to other candidates as soon as possible thereafter.

When offering a candidate a post, it is very important to explain whether or not the offer is subject to any conditions. It will almost always be subject to satisfactory references and criminal record check, but there may be other points which need to be satisfied in addition to references e.g. health.

Posts should only ever be offered at the salary which they were advertised, if a band has been given then it usual to start a person at the bottom of the band, though this is negotiable depending on experience.

On advice from the Chair, letters of rejection and appointment are issued by the Administration Assistant, who should be made aware of the outcomes of interviews and a prospective employee's terms and conditions as soon as possible. The line manager is responsible for taking up – and any necessary follow up of - references and a criminal record check.

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Procedure for criminal record checking

Richmond Borough Mind is committed to complying with the Criminal Record Bureau code of practice and to having open, honest and confidential criminal record checking procedures.

Where necessary, RB Mind checks the criminal record status of all prospective employees and all prospective employees are informed that we will do this within the job application pack.

Applications for the criminal record status of a prospective employee is applied for at the same time as the employee references: after a job offer has been made, before the person begins work, with final appointment to that post being dependent on satisfactory references and criminal record status.

What happens to the information?

Information received from the Criminal Record Bureau is only seen by the employee's line manager and the Administration Assistant within RB Mind. A copy of the information is also sent, automatically, by the Criminal Records Bureau, to the prospective employee.

Information received is stored in a confidential envelope within the Personnel file.

Should a candidate have a criminal record; the line manager and Director complete a risk assessment as to how relevant this information is to the job description that makes up the post.

Which level of disclosure?

There are two levels of disclosure, Standard and Enhanced. RB Mind applies for Enhanced disclosure for all employees that are going to have one-to-one and possibly unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults. A person who uses RB Minds services to support them with their mental health is judged to be a vulnerable adult. Sometimes only a Standard level of disclosure is applied for, for example for administrative staff.

Vulnerable adults

RB Mind define a vulnerable adults as: "People aged 18 or over in receipt of care services who have a 'condition' as follows: a learning or physical disability; a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; a reduction in physical or mental capacity".

Appointment

The successful candidate will be asked to respond to the initial appointment letter with written confirmation that they wish to take up the post. Once satisfactory references, criminal record check and, where necessary, other queries have been resolved, written confirmation of the offer, employment contract and induction procedure will be sent by the line manager. The line manager for the post is responsible for agreeing a start date with the new staff member.

Feedback

It is normal practice to give feedback only once a candidate has attended for interview; however, the panel Chair may decide to give feedback at the short listing stage for more senior posts. The Chair will normally give feedback over the telephone, unless requested otherwise. Feedback may consist of comment on the candidate's areas of

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strengths and weaknesses – as detailed in their scoring sheets – and a general assessment of interview performance. All feedback should be based on actual responses given in the application form / interview and actual behaviour demonstrated in the interview.

9. Internal candidates

Applications from all internal candidates will be accepted and processed on their own merits and their applications treated in the same way as all other candidates. An internal candidate will be given the same information as all other candidates, fill in the same application form and be asked the same questions at interview. They will be offered face to face feedback with the Chair of the recruitment panel, from the short listing stage if the internal candidate is not invited to interview.

An internal candidate may be a member of staff, current volunteer or a member of the Management Committee. If they are a member of staff they will not need to provide references.

No internal candidate may work on the recruitment procedures for that post or any concurrent recruitment procedure.

RB Mind is committed to the development of people who use its services, volunteers and staff, therefore if a post is for a short term contract (e.g. for less than one year) and in some exceptional cases (e.g. due to funding restraints), posts will only be advertised internally with a view to attracting applicants from the internal recruitment pool.

10. Retention of records

The Chair of the recruitment panel must ensure that all records relating to the short listing and interviewing of candidates are collected, retained and handed to the Administration Assistant immediately after the recruitment procedure has been completed. In line with the 1998 Data Protection Act, these documents will be held securely for one year, before being destroyed – *check archiving procedure*. Candidates have the right to review all recruitment documents relating to them, including references (unless the referee states that the reference should not be seen by a third party).

11. Monitoring and review

Reports on recruitment trends, statistics and the effectiveness of RB Mind's recruitment procedures will be provided to the personnel sub committee on an annual basis by the Director.