



Information and help with applying
for externally advertised posts



Introduction

The purpose of these guidance notes is to assist you in completing your application form.

These guidance notes are structured for ease of reference as follows:

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If you require any further assistance with completing your application form, please contact us at the Human Resources Section, Chief Executive's Department, The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BP, telephone number 028 9027 0640.

I Recruitment documentation

Before completing your application form, please make sure that you have access to, and have read, the following recruitment documentation:

1. The welcoming letter from the Chief Executive

2. These guidance notes which will assist you in completing the application form.

3. The job description and employee specification for the post

The job description provides an overview of the main purpose of the job and a summary of responsibilities and personal duties. The employee specification includes the criteria that you **must** possess in order to be eligible to apply for the job. This criteria includes qualifications, experience or skills which you **must** possess in order to be short-listed to the next stage of the selection process. The employee specification may also include some additional criteria, if applicable, which we reserve the right to apply. The additional criteria may be applied if a large number of applications are received for a particular post. The employee specification is very important and you need to continually refer to it when you are completing your application form. You will only be short-listed to the next stage of the selection process if the information you have provided in your application form clearly demonstrates, by way of personal and specific examples, that you meet the criteria which you **must** possess within the employee specification.

4. The terms and conditions of employment

The terms and conditions of employment include information relating to the rate of pay, annual leave entitlement, hours of work, etc.

It is also important to check that you are eligible to apply for the post, for example, some jobs are internal council trawls open only to Belfast City Council employees.

II Completing the application form

Please ensure you answer all questions. If you are completing your application form in hand-written format please make sure your writing is legible and use black ink. Alternatively you can download and type an application form in Word format (using Arial font size 11).

The job-related criteria, that is, the qualifications and experience requirements, may be different for each recruitment campaign. Therefore, please ensure that you complete the application form which has been specifically produced for the job which you are applying for.

Please enter your name, address and preferred contact telephone number on the front page of the application form.

Section 1: Personal Details

Belfast City Council employee: indicate if you are currently employed by the council. If so, please provide your staff number. If you are working in the council through an employment agency, please tick 'no' as you are not directly employed by the council. If you are working in the council as a casual worker, please tick 'yes'.

Previously employment with Belfast City Council indicate if you were previously employed by the council. If so, please state your reason for leaving.

1. Your details:

- (a) Title: state the title which you want us to use in all correspondence.
- (b) Forename: state all your forenames (as this information may be used for verification of identity purposes).
- (c) Preferred name: state the name you wish to be known by.
- (d) Surname: state your current surname.

2. Your contact details:

- (a) Telephone number: include a telephone number on which you can be contacted.
- (b) Mobile number: include a mobile number on which you can be contacted, if you have one.
- (c) Preferred contact number: indicate the number you would prefer us to contact you on.
- (d) Email address: include an email address on which you can be contacted, if you have one.
- (e) Address 1 include the address of where you currently live and where
- (f) Address 2 correspondence can be sent to you.
- (g) Town: include your current town of residence.
- (h) County: include your current county or state of residence.
- (i) Postcode: include your current postcode address.

3. Other information

National Insurance Number: include your national insurance number. Please note that temporary national insurance numbers cannot be accepted.

Section 2: Qualifications and employment history

Qualifications (if applicable):

Please provide the following information for each qualification that you possess:

- (a) **Year:** the year that you were awarded the qualification;
- Examining body / University / College:** for example, CCEA, EdExcel, AQA, SQA, RSA/OCR, Institute of Leadership and Management, University of Ulster, Queen's University etc;
- Level of qualification obtained:** for example, GCSE, OCR Stage 2, A-Level, NVQ, HNC, Degree; Post-Graduate Diploma etc;
- Subject:** for example, English Language, French, Business Studies, Word Processing, Integrated Business Technology, Supervisory Management etc;
- Mark or Grade:** for example, A, B, C; Pass, Merit, Distinction, 2:1, with commendation etc.
- (b) If you are applying for a post on the basis of a qualification which is not specifically detailed in the employee specification for the post, but which you consider to be a relevant equivalent qualification, you must provide specific evidence to demonstrate its equivalency in comparison to the qualification that was specifically detailed in the employee specification. It is therefore your responsibility to demonstrate on the application form how the qualification you possess is deemed equivalent to the qualification(s) detailed in the employee specification. You must submit clear evidence in respect of the subjects/modules you have undertaken, the examining body which has verified its equivalency for you and the breadth of overlap. If you do not provide this 'equivalency information' the panel will not be able to consider your application further.
- It is important to be as specific as possible as the possession of relevant qualifications may be used as part of the short-listing process. If the information relating to your qualification is incomplete, for example, you do not state the grades for your GCSEs, the panel will not be able to consider your application further.
 - You must possess any relevant qualifications and/or membership of a professional body, if this is required in the employee specification, at the closing date for receipt of application forms. If you are currently studying for or waiting for exam results, the panel cannot consider these. Similarly, if you have completed a degree or Masters qualification but have not yet graduated, we cannot consider this.
 - Please note that Belfast City Council deems a third level qualification to be equivalent to NVQ Level 4.
- (c) **Professional qualifications (if applicable):**
Please include full details of the professional body or organisation, the current professional qualification and the date of attainment.
- (d) **Current membership of professional bodies (if applicable):**
Please include the name of the professional body or organisation, the type of membership you hold, for example, Graduate, Associate, Fellow, etc, and the date when this grade of membership was obtained. If the membership has lapsed, please state this on the application form.

Employment history: Please provide the following information:

Details of present employment: include the name and address of your current employer, the exact date your employment started (that is, the date, month and year), the title of the position you hold and your current salary or scale of post. It is important to state your exact dates of employment (that is, date, month and year) because this is calculated to the exact day for short-listing purposes.

Details of previous employment: include the name and address of your previous employers, the exact start and end dates of employment (that is, date, month and year), the title of position(s) you held and the salary or scale of post. Please include all previous positions which have you held with previous employers.

Section 3: Possession of a driving licence (if applicable) and demonstrating evidence of your experience

Possession of a driving licence:

- Depending on the position you are applying for, this question may not be included on the application form.
- If you are applying for a post which requires you to drive a council vehicle or requires you to drive your own vehicle as part of your daily duties, for example, Environmental Health Officer, Quality Officer, Security Team Leader, Assistant Manager (Cleansing), Dog Warden etc you are required to hold a full, current driving licence which enables you to drive in Northern Ireland, and a car for official business, or, access to a form of transport which will enable you to meet the requirements of the post. Please be advised that this alternative, i.e. access to a form of transport, is a 'reasonable adjustment' specifically for applicants with disabilities who, as a result of their disability, are unable to hold a full, current driving licence. Given the business need for the post-holder to carry out specific duties, the 'reasonableness' of this adjustment will be thoroughly considered prior to any appointment being made.
- If you are applying for a driving post, for example, LGV Driver, Tractor Driver etc, you are required to hold a full, current driving licence which specifically allows you to drive that type or category of vehicle in Northern Ireland, for example, Class C.
- In both cases, above, you should indicate your response on the application form by ticking either 'Yes' or 'No' option.
- For verification purposes please state your licence number and the start and expiry date of your driving licence. By providing this information you are consenting to Belfast City Council verifying your licence details with the Driver and Vehicle Agency (NI).

Experience

- Please state the start and end dates of your relevant experience (that is, date, month and year) and check the accuracy of these dates before submitting your application form. It is important to state your exact dates of employment (that is, date, month and year) because this is calculated to the exact day for short-listing purposes. If you provide insufficient detail about the dates of your experience, you will not be short-listed.
- You must possess the required length of experience at the closing date for receipt of application forms as the short-listing and interview panel will only consider experience up to this date.
- Please note that the panel can only make a decision to invite you to the next stage of the selection process, i.e. assessment centre, selection testing, interviews etc, based on the information you provide in your application form and how this matches the criteria in the employee specification. You must complete the relevant information relating to your experience in the relevant section/'box' provided. The selection panel will not 'read across' the various section/'boxes' of the application form.

If you submit this information in another 'box' or in a different section of the application form, it will not be considered by the selection panel. Never assume that because the short-listing panel know you, or your work, or because you have worked in the council for a long time that there is no need to provide detailed information in your application form. It is your responsibility to demonstrate sufficient evidence, by way of personal and specific examples, that you meet the criteria in the employee specification. If you supply insufficient detail, by way of personal and specific examples, you will not be short-listed.

- You must complete the application form in either typescript (Arial font size 11) or legible hand-writing using black ink. You must limit your text to no more than one A4 page per criterion. You must not use continuation sheets. If you submit more than one page per criterion, the short-listing panel will only consider the first page of information and you may not be short-listed.
- You must not delete alter the format of the application form, for example, remove the criteria detailed at the top of each page.
- Please do not attach additional sheets or extracts from CVs rather than completing the appropriate boxes on the application form. These additional sheets will not be considered by the short-listing panel.
- You will be required to demonstrate, by giving personal and specific examples on your application form, how you meet the experience as detailed in the employee specification. What we mean by personal and specific examples is evidence of your personal involvement in this experience and relevant examples to show the breadth of your experience.
For example, to demonstrate your personal involvement, you should use 'I', not 'we', when completing your application form. Using 'I' portrays your personal involvement more and lets the panel know exactly what your personal involvement was and what you were personally responsible for doing. 'We' gives the impression that you did not personally undertake the duties or that you were somehow involved but didn't really have ownership or responsibility for the experience – it does not tell the panel about your personal experience, only that of a team or the organisation. It is your individual personal experience that the panel is looking for.
You should also provide specific detail of your experience (that is, how you went about gaining the experience, what you did etc) and provide examples (that is, incidents which displayed your experience) which demonstrate the breadth of your experience.

For example, if you are asked to demonstrate, by way of personal and specific examples, that you have one year's experience of managing staff, it is not sufficient to simply state "We manage staff well in our organisation" "I have experience of managing staff" or "I feel I am capable of managing staff" or "It is important to be able to manage staff" – vague, text book answers are not sufficient. An example of a good, clear response is "I have more than one year's experience of managing staff. I have managed staff from (exact dates: from – to). I directly managed 5 staff members from (exact dates: from – to). To do this effectively, I (demonstrate how you managed the staff) scheduled weekly meetings where I allocated and monitored workloads. I also held monthly one to one meetings to discuss individual performance and personal development. At these meetings, I gave the staff updates on new developments and we discussed how our work impacts on the work of the organisation and how we could improve things. When problems occurred, I spoke to my staff to resolve the problem as soon as possible. An example to demonstrate my experience of staff management is how I handled one staff member who was under-performing in his job. I met with him to discuss his performance and to ask if there were any issues that were affecting his performance. He told me that he had some family issues and was finding it difficult to concentrate in work. We agreed on what was expected from him in terms of performance and we came up with some interim options that would help him achieve the current work priorities and start work earlier and leave earlier to enable him to spend a little more time at home. We agreed on the timeframe and I met with him every week to discuss his performance. I also spoke to the other staff members about the arrangement but ensured his personal information was kept confidential. After 3 weeks, which was our agreed timeframe, he thanked me for being flexible and resumed his normal working hours. I feel that I managed this staff management issue well because I was able to help the member of staff and ensure that his performance at work remained stable".....etc etc.

- Again, for example, if you are asked to demonstrate, by way of personal and specific examples, that you have one year's experience of dealing effectively with customers, it is not sufficient to simply state, 'Customer are important in our organisation' or 'I deal with customers in my current job' or 'I know how to deal with customers.'

An example of a good, clear response is: "I have more than one year's experience of dealing effectively with customers. I have dealt effectively with customers from (exact dates: from – to). To do this effectively (demonstrate how you dealt effectively with customers) I was always polite and responsive and made sure I only gave them accurate information. I gave them my full attention and was as helpful as possible. When I worked in the supermarket, I was required to deal with customers on the shop-floor. As part of my daily duties, I had to direct customers to items in the shop and deal with customers when operating the cash tills. When I was promoted to Duty Officer (exact dates: from – to) I was required to work on the Customer Service desk. I had to deal with many irate customers and situations including exchanging faulty goods and completing refunds for unsatisfied customers. An example to demonstrate my experience of dealing effectively with customers was how I managed an irate customer who had a complaint about a faulty DVD. He was very upset because this was the second DVD that he had to return. Even though I had not dealt with him on the first occasion, I listened carefully to his complaint and empathised with his situation. I apologised on behalf of the store for the faulty product and offered him a full refund or exchange. He was still not happy with the store's service so I advised him to complete the company's customer complaints form while I contacted my manager. I assured him that his custom was important to us and that I would do whatever I could to make sure his complaint was dealt with. I advised him that I would ring the manufacturer as a matter of urgency and that consideration could be given to recalling all of those DVDs. He seemed a bit happier with this and asked for a full product refund. By the time my manager arrived, I had dealt with the situation effectively. The customer explained the whole situation over again to my manager but added that he felt I had dealt with his complaint patiently and fairly and that, whilst he still wanted to progress his formal customer complaint form, he was happy with the way he had been treated and with his full refund. When he left, my manager thanked me for dealing with the situation so effectively" ...etc etc.

Section 4: Other information

- Notice period:** Please provide details of the period of notice that you need to give to your current employer.
- Standing orders:** The council's standing orders currently require any relationship to a councillor or employee of Belfast City Council to be reported to committee for notation before you can start employment. If you are related to a councillor or an employee of Belfast City Council, please give details of their name, position and their relationship to you, that is parent; grandparent; son or daughter; grandson or granddaughter; brother or sister; uncle or aunt; nephew or niece.
- References:** If you are not currently a Belfast City Council employee, please provide details of two people that we can contact for a reference. These people must not be related to you. One of your referees must be a previous employer (if you have had any), and both people should be able to comment on your ability to carry out the particular tasks of the job. Please ensure that you provide a contact telephone number and an email address for each referee.
- Declaration:** After you have read the declaration please sign and date in the appropriate boxes. By signing this box you are certifying that the information you have provided is correct and that any false or misleading information, if proved, may result in your application not being progressed, or, if appointed, dismissal from the service of the council.

If you email your completed application form and you are successful in being invited to the next stage in the selection process you may be asked to sign your application

form at a later stage.

The information on your application form is required by Belfast City Council for the purposes of processing your application. The information will be processed under the purposes notified to the Information Commissioner in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. By signing this form indicates that you are giving your consent for the Council to collect, retain and use the personal data you provide in accordance with this application process. Your signature is deemed to be your authorisation to permit the council to process the information for the purposes stated.

III Completing the equal opportunities monitoring form

Applicants are requested to complete this questionnaire to make sure that the council meets its legal obligation and complies with the Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations (NI) 1999.

This questionnaire:

- will be removed from your application form and will be strictly controlled in accordance with the Code of Practice on Monitoring agreed with the trade unions; and
- will not be seen by either the short-listing or interview panel.

Personal details: Please provide the following information:

Date of birth: state the day, month and year of your birth.

Sex: indicate your gender as either male or female

Family status: indicate your current marital status from the options of single, married, divorced, co-habitant, separated, other, not disclosed. If you chose 'other', please give details in the space provided. You can choose not to disclose this information.

European Union national: we must make sure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom. In addition, certain nationality requirements apply to positions in the council.

You must be either:

(i) A UK national

This is any person who is a British citizen (including persons from the Isle of Man), a British subject under Part IV of the British Nationality Act 1981 having the right of abode in the UK or a British Dependant Territories citizen acquiring his/her citizenship from connection with Gibraltar

(ii) A Commonwealth citizen

This is any person who has the status of a Commonwealth citizen under the British Nationality Act 1981, not covered by the 'UK national' definition above. This includes British Dependant Territories citizens (other than Gibraltarians), British Overseas citizens and, from 1986, those persons in the category British National (Overseas).

(iii) A British Protected Person

This is any person who is a member of any class of persons declared to be British Protected Persons by Order in Council under British Nationality Act 1981, or by virtue of the Solomons Islands Act 1978.

(iv) An EEA national.

This is any person who is a national of one of the following countries:

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| • Austria | • Greece | • Norway | • Belgium |
| • Hungary | • Poland | • Cyprus | • Iceland |
| • Slovakia | • Czech Republic | • Italy | • Slovenia |
| • Denmark | • Latvia | • Spain | • Estonia |
| • Liechtenstein | • Sweden | • Finland | • Lithuania |
| • United Kingdom | • France | • Luxembourg | • Germany |
| • Malta | | | |

NB nationals from Switzerland also have the same free movement and employment rights

(v) A person who is not an EEA national, but is a family member of an EEA national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State for an approved purpose

'Family member of an EEA National' is:

- (a) that national's spouse
- (b) a direct descendant, for example, child, grandchild, etc, of that national or his/her spouse who is under 21 years of age or is their dependant; or
- (c) a dependant relative in the ascending line, for example, parent, grandparent, etc, of the EEA national or his/her spouse.

- Ethnic group:** Please indicate your ethnic group from the options provided. If you choose 'other' give details in the space provided. You can choose not to disclose this information.
- Nationality / Citizenship:** Please indicate your nationality / citizenship, for example, British, Irish, Canadian, American, etc in the space provided.
- Person with and without a disability:** Under the Under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), a person has a disability if he or she has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'
- Please indicate if you have a disability. If you consider that you have a disability, please indicate, from the options available, which best describes the nature of your disability. If you choose 'other,' please give details in the space provided. You can choose not to disclose this information.
- Please also indicate if you have ever had a disability because if you have had a disability in the past, you have rights under this legislation. (For additional guidance on applicants with a disability please refer to Section IV).
- Person with and without dependants:** Please indicate if you are currently caring for anyone and indicate if this person is your child, a relative or other. If you choose 'other,' please give details in the space provided. You can choose not to disclose this information.
- Perceived religious affiliation or community background:** This information is required by The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 to monitor the perceived religious affiliation or community background of its employees and applicants. Indicate your religious affiliation or community background from the options provided.
- Religious belief or tradition:** Please indicate your religious belief in the space provided. You can choose no religious belief or you can choose not to disclose this information.
- Additional Information:** To help the council monitor the effectiveness of its advertising, please indicate where you saw the post advertised from the options available. If you choose 'other,' give details in the space provided.

IV Additional guidance

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

We welcome applications from people with disabilities and operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme. This scheme states that any job applicant who has a disability, and meets the essential criteria of the post, as detailed in the employee specification, will be guaranteed an interview. If you apply for a job within the council, your application will be considered like all others, by measuring it against the criteria as set out in the employee specification.

If you wish to be considered under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme please contact our Helpline on (028) 9027 0640 and we will send you a form to complete.

Helpline

If you have a disability, or your first language is not English, and you encounter any difficulties with any aspect of the recruitment process, please contact our Helpline on (028) 9027 0640 during office hours (9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday, closed bank and other public holidays)

Reasonable adjustments

Please contact us on our Helpline if you require any reasonable adjustments for any part of the recruitment and selection process. Please do not assume that because you have indicated on the Equal Opportunities monitoring form that you have a disability that reasonable adjustments will automatically be made. As previously stated, this form is detached prior to being viewed by the selection panel. Therefore, if you do require reasonable adjustments, please contact the Helpline on (028) 9027 0640.

Criminal conviction vetting

Belfast City Council is committed to equality of opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions. Under the legislation listed below the council may carry out a criminal conviction check if this is a requirement of the post. We will only carry out the checks as part of the pre-employment process and only after you have been recommended for appointment. Therefore, any information you provide in respect of criminal conviction(s) will not be taken into account by the short-listing and interview panel.

The relevant legislation is as follows:

- Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978;
- Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1979 (amended by 1987, 2001 and 2003 Orders);
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and should you require any guidance at this stage, please contact NIACRO's (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) Employment Advice Line on (028) 9032 0157 who will be able to answer your questions in confidence.

V Returning your application form

You must return your completed application form to us no later than 4pm on the closing date for receipt of applications by:

- (1) Hand delivering or posting it to The Head of Human Resources, The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BP
or
- (2) Emailing it to jobs@belfastcity.gov.uk
Application forms returned electronically must be submitted as an email attachment. Due to the council's Computer Use Policy and security protocols, storage services such as SkyDrive are not accessible. Applications submitted as a link to a storage service will not be accepted.

Please note the total size of a single email, including attachments, sent to the council should not be more than 5MB. Emails larger than 5MB will be rejected by the council's email server and you will receive an undeliverable message. Receipt of application forms delayed because of the total size of the email being in excess of this limit which are not received by 4pm on the closing date for receipt of application forms will not be accepted. We accept no responsibility for application forms being delayed or not received for this reason.

- Application forms, including those submitted electronically, which are received after the closing date or time (even by 1 minute) will not be accepted.
- Please ensure that you retain the original format of the application form at all times. We accept no responsibility for checking forms upon receipt and/or notifying candidates if forms are unreadable or incomplete for technical reasons, or otherwise.
- We do not accept application forms by fax.
- Please do not send us CVs or attach additional sheets to your application form as these will not be considered by the short-listing panel.
- Please make sure that all questions are fully answered before returning your application form to us as we cannot accept any additional or supplementary information after the closing date for receipt of application forms.
- If you return your application form by post, it is your responsibility to make sure that you have sufficient postage on your envelope as insufficient postage may delay your application form reaching us. We will not accept any application forms where we have to pay the shortfall in postage. If you are returning your application form by Royal Mail, you should note that first class post does not guarantee next day delivery and that it is up to you to make sure that your application form is received in the Human Resources Section by 4pm on the closing date for receipt of application forms. Please also make sure that your application form is delivered to the Human Resources Section, Ground Floor, The Cecil Ward Building. If it is hand delivered to a council officer who does not work in the Human Resources Section or delivered to another council section (that is the section in which the vacancy arises) and is not in turn re-directed to the Human Resources Section by 4pm on the closing date for receipt of application forms, it will not be accepted.

After the closing date:

- Due to the volume of application forms we receive, we are unable to acknowledge that we have received our application form, but we will write to you once the short-listing exercise has been completed to invite you to the next stage of the selection process or to advise you that your application has been unsuccessful. This will usually take place within 5-10 working days.
- If you are recommended for appointment, you must provide official original proof that you possess, at the closing date for receipt of application forms, all qualifications and/or membership of any relevant professional bodies which you relied on to support your application form.

If you are recommended for appointment, you must provide official original proof that you possess, at the closing date for receipt of application forms, all qualifications and/or membership of any relevant professional bodies which you relied on to support your application form.

For details of all Belfast City Council vacancies, visit our jobs website www.belfastcity.gov.uk/jobs.

If you have a disability or your first language is not English, and you encounter any difficulties with any aspect of our recruitment process, please contact our Helpline on (028) 9027 0640.