



**Aberdeenshire** *housing partnership*

# **RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND RETENTION POLICY**

**AUGUST 2005**



**Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership believes that the effective recruitment, selection and retention of excellent staff is central and crucial to the successful functioning of the Partnership. It understands that it will only operate efficiently and effectively if it has the right people in the right place at the right time. To achieve this it must recruit people with the necessary skills, expertise and qualifications to deliver the Partnership's objectives and the ability to make a positive contribution to the values and aims of the company.**

**List of Contents**

Paragraph		Page
1	Policy Statement	1
2	Before advertising	1
3	Job Description	3
4	Person specification	4
5	Advertising	5
6	The Selection Panel	6
7	Shortlisting	6
8	The Interview	8
9	The Induction	11
10	Retention	12
11	Monitoring	14
12	Review	14

## **1. Policy statement**

- 1.1 It is Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership's policy that all recruitment and selection procedures will be carried out with due regard to both the spirit of Equal Opportunity and the letter of current legislation. All vacant posts will be advertised. The only exceptions, subject to Board approval will be job sharing where one member of is already an employee, or where a flexible working is received and can be met through internal resources. All applications will be processed in exactly the same way and no applicant will be discriminated against on the grounds of age, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability or marital status.
- 1.2 Any information on Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will be held confidentially for monitoring purposes only. No information on the form will be passed to the Recruitment Panel.
- 1.3 The selection process will be carried out appropriately with written evidence relating to the recruitment and selection process held on file.
- 1.4 All staff and Board involved in the recruitment and selection process will receive appropriate guidance in fair interviewing and selection procedures.
- 1.5 All candidates will be informed of the outcome of their interview within 1 week of the interview taking place.
- 1.6 Any applicant (internal or external) who feels that they have not been treated fairly in the recruitment and selection process should contact the Chief Executive who will then investigate the matter.

## **2. Before advertising**

### **Review the need for the post**

- 2.1 The recruitment & selection process starts with the resignation or temporary absence of an existing employee, or when a new post is established.
- 2.2 The following questions need to be asked by the Chief Executive, in conjunction with appropriate Manager, in filling an existing post:
  - Does the Team need the job to continue in exactly the same manner? Is it fulfilling its purpose?
  - Has the job changed from what was originally envisaged?
  - Is there the budget to pay for the post?
  - Is the existing job title, role specification and person specification appropriate for the post?
  - Does any information from an exit interview need to be taken into account?

2.3 Where a new post is being established, the following areas need to be considered with the Chief Executive/Manager:

- If it is a new post, has it been evaluated and funding agreed?
- What is the source of funding?
- Has the funding been secured?
- Has a job and person specification been drawn up?

**Employee feedback**

2.4 Where a vacancy occurs through the resignation of an existing member of staff, the member of staff should be encouraged to give feedback on their role, responsibilities and other associated issues in order that useful information can be obtained and taken into account in any revision of the job or person specification.

2.5 When an employee resigns they will be given the option of having an exit interview (using the exit questionnaire) with a member of the Management team (not their line manager) before they leave, or completing an exit questionnaire within 3 months of their leaving the Partnership.

2.6 Exit interviews for the Management team will be conducted by a Board member, though for Managers not the Chair of the Committee that they service, and for the Chief Executive not the Chair on the Board.

**Job requisition form**

2.7 The decision to fill a vacancy, create a new post or vary the established structure must be agreed by the Chief Executive, and Board approval sought if required by the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

2.8 The Chief Executive will need to be satisfied that:

- There are sufficient budget/resources available to cover the full cost of the post.
- The role specification for the post is up to date, taking into account any additions or deletions to the duties and responsibilities and having regard to the needs of the company.
- The length of the Contract to be offered is appropriate to the needs of the company and complying with employment legislation.
- A job evaluation has been carried out on any new or revised post and that it has been graded appropriately.
- The person specification has been compiled, having regard to the skills, qualifications, and experiences needed to adequately fill the post as specified in the role specification.

**How should the vacancy be filled?**

- 2.9 Information regarding vacancies within the Partnership should be easily accessible and open to current employees. In line with this policy, ALL vacancies will be advertised on the EVH website in addition to any other type of media selected. This will enable both external and internal candidates to apply for the post and will create a fairly selected pool of applicants from which the most appropriate can be selected.
- 2.10 If the need to fill the post is immediate it may be deemed necessary to use temporary staff until the role is filled through the standard recruitment procedure. At this stage, consideration needs to be given to any budgetary control measures and to the financial and staffing implication of any temporary arrangements considered.
- 2.11 If temporary arrangements are required for only a short period of time whilst the recruitment process is under way, the Manager can consider and undertake the following:
- Offering additional hours to part-time staff.
  - Cover arrangements offering development opportunities with existing staff.
  - Employment of agency staff.
- 2.12 If the temporary arrangement exceeds four weeks, then after the initial four week period staff may qualify for an additional payment to reflect additional responsibilities / workload undertaken.

**3. Job Description**

**What should be in it?**

- 3.1 The responsibility for reviewing/drafting/confirming the job description rests with the Management team.
- 3.2 The person specification should represent a statement of what a person is expected to do. It should contain:
- An accurate job title.
  - The main purpose of the job, and this should clearly relate to the purpose and objectives of the service.
  - The statement 'any other duties commensurate with the post' is not acceptable under the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, unless accompanied with a clause stating that any adjustments would be made in line with the Disability Discrimination Act, i.e.

*“commensurate with the grade of the job and with regard to the Guidelines contained in the Code of Practice for the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment against disabled persons or persons who have a disability”.*

- The main duties and responsibilities. These should be comprehensive and meaningful and should be appropriate to the perceived grade of the post. It will also be helpful to have considered what the previous post holder did/what they should have done/what new developments need to be added or whether any of the existing responsibilities and duties could be better carried out elsewhere. (Care should be taken to neither over or under-spec the level of post as this may result in a poor candidate match).
- The date the role specification was approved.
- If there is a budget responsibility, the amount of the budget involved.
- If there is staff management responsibility, the number of staff involved.
- The duties and responsibilities as specified should be strictly relevant to the requirements of the job.

### **Job evaluation**

- 3.3 The responsibility for reviewing/drafting/confirming the job description rests with the Management team.
- 3.4 Each post in the Partnership is required to be evaluated by the Management Team to have an appropriate grade attached to it. No advertising of a post can be undertaken until an evaluation has been agreed by the Board if it is proposed that the grade be amended.
- 3.5 A good role specification is vital to the success of the recruitment and selection process, as it is the foundation upon which the person specification, evaluation, the advertisement, the interview, testing and assessment procedures will be derived.

## **4. Person specification**

### **What is a person specification?**

- 4.1 Having established the duties of a job through the process of drawing up a role specification, it is necessary to clearly establish what attributes a person needs to be able to fulfil the duties of the job.
- 4.2 The person specification is a statement which describes the knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and qualifications needed by the individual to carry out the duties of the job, as described in the role specification.
- 4.3 The criteria specified under these headings should be measurable and justifiable, as they will form the basis of the selection process.
- 4.4 The person specification should only stipulate the necessary requirements to fulfil the duties of the job. The person specification must give regard to the provisions of Equal Opportunities legislation, and the Disabilities Discrimination Act. The advantages of a clearly defined person specification are that it:

- reduces subjectivity and bias and promotes objectivity
  - clarifies what we are looking for from candidates, often resulting in more successful appointments
  - it provides clear information on the basis of which the advertisement can be written
  - provides the information necessary to help design the selection process, ie methods of testing
  - provides clear information for the shortlisting panel to ensure a shared understanding from the outset
  - effectively presents the interview panel with a list of questions to ask, and areas to be explored.

### **Measuring how well the candidates meet the criteria**

- 4.5 It is important that any attributes included in the person specification are measurable in as objective a way as possible.
- 4.6 The most common method of identifying attributes possessed by the candidates is the use of information on the application form which is then tested out or further explored at interview.
- 4.7 Other methods should be considered and, wherever possible, practical selection techniques used. Examples of these other methods include, typing test, group exercises, in-tray exercises, aptitude and psychometric tests etc. The most important consideration is identifying valid means to test out information and confirm competency. This increases the objectivity of the selection process. However, tests should not be used for the sake of it and care must be taken to ensure that they are not discriminatory in format, and do not disadvantage disabled applicants.
- 4.8 It is important that the language is precise and jargon free, that the person specification is realistic and appropriate and leaves no scope for unfair and discriminatory bias.

## **5. Advertising**

### **Preparing the advertisement**

- 5.1 Adverts are drafted using the information from the job and person specifications. The Finance and Business Support Manager will draft the wording of the text. The Chief Executive will be required to sign off their agreement to the text and, where appropriate, the cost of the advertisement (if proposed to advertise in places other than EVH website and Press and Journal).

### **Advertising process**

- 5.2 Careful consideration should be given to where to place the advertisement. The Finance and Business Support Manager in consultation with the Chief Executive will

advise on the most appropriate and cost-effective media, bearing in mind that the cheapest media is not always the most appropriate. The placement of the advertisement is influenced by the type of post, the financial investment involved, the need to attract applicants from disadvantaged groups, the potential market area and the necessity to have regard to cost effectiveness.

- 5.3 Unless otherwise specified, all advertisements will carry a closing date of 14 working days from the date on which it appears.

### **Information pack**

- 5.4 An Information pack will be sent to all enquirers (an electronic version is available on the EVH website or from AHP via email) and will include.

- Covering letter stipulating closing date for applications.
- Job Description.
- Person Specifications.
- Equal Opportunities Monitoring form.
- Any additional Information Sheets as provided by the recruiting Manager. NB if information is to be sent in a pack it MUST also be available in electronic format or it will not be included.

## **6. The Selection Panel**

### **Size and composition of panel**

- 6.1 It is the Partnership's intention to ensure that all Managers and Board members involved in the recruitment and selection process receive training.
- 6.2 The panel must consist of a minimum of two people, three where possible. One person will be designated the Chair and will have overall responsibility and accountability for the whole process and should ensure that the recruitment process is planned and conducted properly. The Chair will also be deemed to be the appointing officer. The Chair should have undertaken training in recruitment and selection.
- 6.3 The panel should, except in exceptional circumstances, remain consistent throughout the recruitment & selection process.

### **The panel's role**

- 6.4 As soon as the membership of the Panel is identified they should meet to plan and set dates for the whole recruitment process. The Panel should:
- decide how each item on the person specification will be assessed.
  - agree recruitment & selection methods.
  - shortlist applications.

- plan the selection process and develop interview questions.
- conduct the interviews and other selection methods.
- make the decision.
- It will be the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the proformas provided by Finance and Business Support are completed and returned.

## **7. Shortlisting**

### **The process**

- 7.1 The Selection process has to be conducted in a systematic and objective manner. In order to ensure this, all applicants must be evaluated against the selection criteria.
- 7.2 All members of the interview panel should be involved in the shortlisting process. The shortlisting panel (same as the interview panel) will be accountable for all their shortlisting decisions.
- 7.3 At least two people must be involved in the shortlisting process. People with disabilities who meet the essential minimum job requirements as outlined in the person specification, will be guaranteed an interview. A shortlisting proforma will be produced to help the panel record their individual views on each applicant, which must be kept as a written record of the decisions taken.
- 7.4 The panel should then discuss the final shortlist. A maximum of six candidates should form a short list.
- 7.5 On completion of all the documentation the appropriate forms along with the applications should be returned to Finance and Business Support. This will enable Finance and Business Support to prepare the interview packs for the panel before the interview date. (You should note that all documents are auditable and therefore must be completed and returned to Finance and Business Support).

### **Quality and quantity**

- 7.6 Where there are insufficient applicants who meet the essential criteria, the Panel should diagnose the reason for this and make a decision about how to resolve the problem i.e. consideration may need to be given to the media selected, the time of placing the advert, what information was given, the closing date, the grade of the post. This will inform the Panels decision on how they wish to proceed with the process. The Panel will need to determine whether they would accept late applications. The shortlisting process should be based on the information contained in the application form. At this stage assessment can only be made on the basis of the evidence provided by the candidate in the application form.
- 7.7 If only one candidate meets the essential requirements, the panel should consider whether or not the job requirements or method of advertising have excluded other

suitable applicants. If this is the case the Panel may wish to re-advertise and carry forward the shortlisted applicant.

- 7.8 If however, the Panel are satisfied that this is not the case, the panel can interview the one candidate. If the Panel are unable to appoint, the post should be re-advertised.
- 7.9 Application forms from applicants not shortlisted, along with those who were unsuccessful at interview stage, will be kept for six months by Finance and Business Support. Internal candidates who have not been shortlisted will be notified verbally by the Manager involved in the recruitment process within 2 working days of the shortlisting date. Internal candidates will be offered the opportunity to receive feedback on their application.

### **Informing the candidates**

- 7.10 Once the shortlisting has been agreed, candidates will be informed by letter, and/or telephone that they are invited for interview. Wherever possible, the interview date will be stated in the job advert.
- 7.11 The following information should be sent to the shortlisted candidates:
- Date, time and venue for interview (including directions and car parking access if relevant). Timetable and details of any selection tasks to be undertaken.
  - Questions to candidates on whether they have any particular needs to enable them to participate in the interview process.
  - Contact person (for interview arrangements or informal discussion).
  - Interview expense claim form.

## **8. The Interview**

### **Planning**

- 8.1 Planning for the interview is crucial. It not only ensures that all candidates are treated in a fair and equitable manner, but are also left with a positive and professional image of Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership. The panel should therefore determine how the interview will be structured, the nature and scope of the questions and who will be asking which ones.
- 8.2 When planning for the interview, the Panel needs to consider:
- the time required to notify candidates
  - an appropriate and accessible venue.
  - Candidates may have particular needs i.e. mobility/communication, which should be met to enable them to participate fully in the interview process. The timetable is devised so that each panel member and the candidates know the timing, purpose and content of each stage of the process. The same amount of time is allocated to each candidate's interview.

- Panel members should remain consistent throughout the selection process.

### **Selection methods**

- 8.3 Whilst the interview process will form the basis of the selection decisions, there may be other selection methods that might enhance the decision-making.
- 8.4 The selection process may be a combination of the following:
- written exercises.
  - presentation.
  - group exercises.
  - psychometric testing.
  - preliminary interviews.
  - individual interviews..
- 8.5 Any additional selection methods used should clearly be related to the person and role specification and be capable of assessing a candidates competencies in performing the particular job.
- 8.6 The Panel should ensure that any tests developed are not either directly, or indirectly discriminatory and their validity and reliability are established.

### **Preparing questions**

- 8.7 The purpose of the interview is to assess candidate's suitability through fair and efficient questioning techniques which are focused on obtaining relevant evidence on which to make a decision. All candidates should be questioned about the same matters, although it is not necessary to ask precisely the same questions. Supplementary questions are reasonable to ask on the contents of the candidate's application and exploring areas of concern.
- 8.8 It is important that before the interview the Panel determine the areas of questioning to be covered during the interview and allocate each Panel member a clear role. Areas of questioning should be developed to cover the criteria on the person specification, divided up according to expertise and knowledge among the Panel members.
- 8.9 Panel members should consider the information and evidence that they are looking for in a candidate's response.

### **References**

- 8.10 References provide the panel with a further source of information in respect of the preferred candidate and should be used to confirm factual details in support of a person's application.

8.11 The Finance and Business Support Manager will take up written references on the preferred candidate prior to the interviews where practicable, and provide the Chair of the panel with copies of the references.

**The interview**

8.12 No interview will take place without at least one member of the Panel member having some awareness of the good practice guidelines for recruitment, selection and interviewing.

8.13 The purpose of the interview is:

- to provide the selection panel with relevant information beyond that already contained in the application form and about the candidates suitability for appointment
- to allow the candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and abilities against the person specification
- to provide the candidate with more information about the job and the company
- to identify any areas of weakness/training and development needs.

8.14 Panel members should not ask disabled candidates about the nature of their disability and how it will affect their ability to undertake the job (Disability Discrimination Act 1995). Any information needed to facilitate the employment of a disabled person should be followed through after the appointment has been offered. All questioning should be relevant to the skills, abilities and experience required in the post. Candidates of either gender should not be asked questions relating to their personal lives, child care arrangements etc. Panel members should also be careful that questions do not unfairly advantage internal candidates.

8.15 Each panel member will have an assessment sheet for each candidate which will be retained as a record of the interview, and should clearly illustrate the personal assessment of each interview in detail.

8.16 The interview is part of the decision making process. The selection panel need to keep an open mind on all candidates and a decision only made after all candidates have been interviewed and assessed against the person specification.

8.17 The panel needs to be clear about why candidates were not selected and ensure that their notes reflect the decision making process and how the decision was arrived at.

8.18 As in the case of the shortlisting process, the application forms along with signed assessment sheets from panel members must be returned to Finance and Business Support (FBS), within 2 days of the interview. These notes are retained and are auditable

**Procedure to be followed after the interview**

8.19 The procedure is as follows:

- FBS to take up references on preferred candidate, if this has not been actioned already.
- FBS to offer post to successful candidate.
- FBS to inform unsuccessful candidates of outcome within 4 working days of the interview.
- The Chair or Manager to offer feedback to unsuccessful candidates, where requested.
- The Chair of the panel to complete the recruitment proformas and panel assessment sheets and return to FBS.

### **Starting salary**

8.20 All checks, including references, qualifications, and confirmation of starting salary details will be undertaken before an offer is made.

8.21 The appointing manager, in consultation with the Finance and Business Support manager, should consider the starting salary with reference to the experience, skills, qualifications and market value of the successful candidate.

8.22 Any starting salary that is over the grade mid-point must be approved by the Chief Executive **before any offer, formal or informal, is made.** It will be the responsibility of the recruiting Manager to request this approval. No offer either informal or formal may be made to a candidate before this approval is obtained.

8.23 As the verbal offer of employment forms the basis of the Contract of Employment, care must be taken to verify particular details i.e. salary before a verbal offer is made. The Appointing Officer, with the Finance and business Supports guidance, should also determine the candidate's eligibility for financial assistance towards relocation.

8.24 Formal offers of employment will be made in writing and will be sent within 7 working days of the interview by Finance and Business Support.

### **Offer of appointment**

8.25 Finance and Business Support will issue an offer letter, contract of employment and other pertinent paperwork to the successful candidate. If references have not been received by the time the offer letter is sent out, the letter must state that the offer is subject to satisfactory references. Finance and Business Support will also send 'regret' letters to the unsuccessful candidates.

8.26 If it is established that the candidate has provided false information in respect of their application AHP reserves the right to withdraw the offer of employment or, if already in post, to consider disciplinary action, including the possibly of dismissal

## **9. The Induction**

### **Induction programme**

- 9.1 Following the appointment to the post, the Manager will develop an induction programme for the successful candidate. The induction programme must be geared to the particular needs of the individual and these must be identified by the Manager before the start date, wherever practicable. The induction programme should be documented and completed within three months of the start date. The induction schedule should be signed by the employee and the Chief Executive.
- 9.2 Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership's induction aims to:
- enable new members of staff to have a clear understanding of AHPs aims and objectives.
  - enable new members of staff to have a clear understanding of their role
  - make new members of staff feel an integral part of AHP, so that they can contribute to AHP's aims and objectives as quickly and effectively as possible and develop their full potential.
  - ensure that new members of staff settle into their jobs as quickly as possible and that any training and development needs are identified and acted upon • build motivation and confidence in members of staff joining the company or moving to new roles within the company.

## **10. Retention**

- 10.1 AHP recognises that our success depends in large part on our ability to attract, develop, motivate, and retain high quality staff. In recruiting, we seek staff with the motivation, drive, and commitment to quality that fuels our continued growth.
- 10.2 In retaining our employees, AHP recognises that most professionals seek challenges, opportunities, recognition and learning. An organisation that is not galvanized to provide those will face higher staff turnover than most. Therefore, although the Board cannot prevent departure, they can learn to manage turnover so that it does not bring business to a halt. Retention is an art, not a science. Success depends on the Management team knowing the profile of their employees and on recognising the risk factors in their environment. The cost of replacing professionals is high compared with the cost of keeping them.
- 10.3 A company cannot prevent the departure of professionals. A certain percentage of people will leave for reasons outside the organisation's control. The remainder, however, may choose to stay or leave based on factors over which AHP has control. Staff retention is essentially a risk management process. The following items include top reasons for employee turnover:
- **Lack of acknowledgment and recognition** – The Management team will conduct an assessment of the employee's performance annually as part of the employee review process. Employees will receive support to achieve their personal development plans, in accordance with our Training policy. Employees with

mandatory CPD (continuing professional developments) requirements will be supported. It is the aim of AHP to develop clear career paths for staff and to provide support for professional qualifications, as outlined in the Employment Manual, where such qualifications assist AHP meet its business objectives.

- **Inequities in salary (perceived and actual)** – AHP will follow EVH (Employers in Voluntary) grading structure to ensure that salary is in-line with industry expectations.
- **No sense of long-term purpose or vision** – The Board of AHP has approved a Strategic Plan which outlines the vision for AHP. Staff will be consulted on the delivery of this plan and amendments to it. This allows each employee to have valuable input into the vision, which quite naturally lends itself to ownership of the vision and objectives by the employee.
- **Insufficient opportunities for professional and career development** - AHP takes employee development seriously, and sees ongoing training as a key factor in professional and career development. Another key factor is ensuring formal communication mechanisms are in place so that the employee is provided with sufficient information related to their performance and its impact on their professional and career development plan.
- **Mismatches between reality and promises** - AHP strives to ensure that an employee's expectations match those of the company. Of course, the annual review process only provides a formal communication mechanism. AHP has an 'open door' policy where the employee can discuss any of their concerns or issues at any time.

Most employees seek challenges, opportunities, recognition and learning. An organisation that is not galvanized to provide those will face higher turnover than most. So, although AHP cannot prevent departure, we can manage turnover so that it does not bring business to a halt. The following lists those steps that AHP will take to ensure that each member of staff is challenged and recognised:

- **Communication** - Using our employee review process and one-on-one meetings, AHP Management finds out what keeps the staff involved in the company, what threatens their involvement and what would motivate them to stay or to leave. Annual Board/Staff Away days and staff questionnaires give staff an opportunity for dialogue and involvement in the business direction of AHP.
- **Maslow's hierarchy of needs** - asserts that human beings feel a higher need only after the immediate lower need is satisfied. Similarly, people feel a lower need when the one above is no longer satisfied. For example an employee who hears rumours of financial instability may sense that their job is in jeopardy; hence the basic need for safety is unfulfilled. Everyone has a different mix of motivators, and the Management team will monitor staff to ensure these motivators are taken into account.
- **Compensation** - AHP salaries reflect industry expectations.

- **Benefits and Flexibility** - Today's employees look beyond basic remuneration package and expect flexibility that will help them balance their workload against the need for recognition and family life. AHP offers flexitime and flexible working.
- **Recognizing the risk environment** - Potential financial instability, mergers, lawsuits, public image problems all are frightening; they threaten the status quo and they leave most employees unsure about their role, their status and their future. No matter how great the retention program, downplaying the contribution of those factors to employee discontent is foolish.

10.4 Professionals feeling uncertain about their future and getting neither assurances nor straight talk from managers and the Board will feel no loss in moving to another unknown. Straightforward communication is the only option, and one that AHP Board and Management Team will follow.

10.5 Retention is an art, not a science. Success depends on the Board knowing the profile of their employees and on the Management Team recognising the risk factors in their environment. The potential cost of replacing staff is high compared with the cost of keeping them.

10.6 The following are the staff retention critical success factors that AHP will endeavour to provide:

- Remuneration commensurate with grade.
- Esprit de corps.
- Recognition and acknowledgment.
- Professional opportunities and challenges.
- Leadership vision.
- Company stability and financial health.
- Managers skilled in managing people, expectations and resources.
- Provision for training and learning.
- Work Life balance.
- Employee input and involvement.
- Comfortable and amenable work setting.
- Multiple career tracks (technical, relational, managerial and project oriented).

## **11. Monitoring of Recruitment**

11.1 The Board will receive turnover information annually on staff recruitment and turnover as part of the Performance Board, in a format approved by them.

## **12. Review**

- 12.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or in the light of any legislative changes, or Communities Scotland requirements.

## **13. Other Related Documents**

- **Employment Manual**
- **Training Policy**