

GUIDE TO WRITING A PERSON SPECIFICATION

Be specific

The criteria you decide on should relate directly to the duties detailed in the job description and contain the minimum requirements necessary to do the job effectively. The more explicit you are in the person specification the more time you will save and there is a greater chance of attracting the right candidate for the job.

Be fair

You must ensure that you do not include any requirements which may unfairly discriminate on the grounds of race, religion or belief, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage/civil partnership or pregnancy/maternity. These are known as *protected characteristics* and you can find out more from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Be realistic

Care should be taken with overstating the level of knowledge, experience and qualifications required for the job. Make sure that you can objectively justify any qualifications included in a person specification; many talented people may not have the qualifications you are looking for, thus reducing your candidate pool.

Setting Your Criteria

The person specification should be divided into essential and desirable criteria. This should be used in the short-listing process to distinguish between candidates.

- **Essential criteria** are those that are critical for the satisfactory performance of the job. It is expected that applicants will meet all the essential criteria to be considered eligible for appointment.
- **Desirable criteria** are those that enhance a person's capacity to do the job. These are usually not listed as essential because it is expected that they can be acquired once in employment. For example, while specific knowledge of certain equipment or techniques could be of benefit, it can also be learnt.

Factors to consider when drawing up the specification include:

- Skills, knowledge and aptitudes directly related to the job.
- Level and type of experience necessary.
- Education and training, but only so far as is necessary for satisfactory job performance, unless the person is being recruited on the basis of future potential.
- Any criteria relating to personal qualities or circumstances, which must be essential and directly related to the job, and must be applied equally to all groups, irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage/civil partnership or pregnancy/maternity. To do otherwise is potentially discriminatory.