# Inclusive Recruitment – accessible document



The following accessible document has been created based on the content from our [e-book](https://hrod-scorm.s3.nhsla.net/OD_Talent_Team/E-Books/Inclusive-Recruitment/index.html). This word version is created for members who prefer using their screen readers to review all the content in a structured layout.

If you need this document in a different format, please contact the Workplace Adjustments team. For more information about Inclusive Recruitment, please contact the Organisation Development team.

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Welcome

Welcome to the “**Inclusive Recruitment Handbook**” for NHS England. This tool has been developed to support all **line managers** and **interview panel members** when undertaking recruitment within our organisation.

Following the merger into the new NHS England, we have taken the areas of good practice from our legacy organisations to develop a unified and consistent approach to recruitment that ensures every part of the process is.

* Accessible.
* Relevant.
* Fair.
* Consistent.

The content contained within this handbook sets the **baseline expectation** of all recruitment practice going forward, whether you are an experienced recruiter or aspiring to recruit others in the future.

By embracing inclusivity in recruitment, organisations can tap into a **wider pool** **of talent** with diverse backgrounds, **experiences**, and **perspectives**. This diversity **enriches decision making processes**, fosters creativity, and promotes innovation within the organisation.

Principles of inclusive recruitment

### Why is the right approach so important?

**The Future Candidate**

It is important to consider the effect of the recruitment process, managing the process in the right way can help create a positive relationship with the candidate.

**This is particularly important because**.

We want to build a great reputation, being competitive in the jobs market in attracting and recruiting top talent.

We want to support our internal talent pool by providing development opportunities so that team members can progress on to further opportunities within the organisation.

We want to provide candidates with good feedback, supporting them to develop and improve.

Remember today's unsuccessful candidate, could be tomorrow's perfect candidate.

According to the IBM smarter workforce institute, rejected candidates are 80% more likely to apply again is they have had a positive experience.

**Our brand as a hiring organisation**

It is important to recognise we have a reputation to uphold as an organisation. A high percentage (72%) of candidates who had a bad experience told others about it online, or in person. Negative feelings are easily spread particularly via social media, but positive experience can.

* promote recommendations and referrals.
* help us compete with other companies that may be more appealing to candidates.
* help us to attract the best talent.

What does the data tell us?

* **A positive candidate experience** makes a candidate 38% more likely to accept a job offer from a company.
* Virgin Media estimate that **bad candidate experience** was once losing them **£4.4m** per year.

Watch the video on TED TALK about...[This is what makes employees happy at work | The Way We Work, a TED series (youtu.be)](https://youtu.be/PYJ22-YYNW8).

## Principles of Inclusive Recruitment

What is inclusive recruitment?

**What do we mean by inclusive recruitment?**

An approach to recruitment that considers inclusivity and diversity throughout the whole process. from writing job descriptions, advertising roles, shortlisting, interviews through to making an offer to a candidate.

It aims to level the playing field by uncovering and tackling systemic and individual bias (that can be experienced and perpetuated by anyone).

* + - It is about small changes that can have a huge impact.
    - It is about being open and receptive to the best possible candidate.
    - Inclusive recruitment aims to widen access, fairness, and equity. Diversity is the outcome of that.

Link to further reading. Here is a compilation of [inclusive recruitment case studies](https://www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/media/Inclusive-recruitment-leading-positive-change_0.pdf) which provides examples of good practice from the NHS and wider public services (NHS Employers, 2021).

Understanding bias in recruitment

Bias in recruitment is when someone demonstrates prejudice towards another individual: either consciously or unconsciously. Either way, this can influence the selection process of candidates for employment opportunities.

Biases are natural and we cannot help having them. Therefore, it is important that we are aware of our own bias so we can reflect on how these can impact on the decisions we make. Awareness of and reducing the influence of bias supports more objective decision-making.

There are over 176 different types of bias identified, the following is only a small example of those likely to impact on recruitment decisions.

* + **Geographical Bias:** based on the community or country of the applicant’s origin. Immediate perceptions are formed based on this geographical information.
  + **Educational Bias:** for example, preference is shown towards a candidate who is highly educated, even though they may not be as experienced. Or if someone is educated in a different country, their qualification is not acknowledged.
  + **Implicit Bias:** based on our unconscious attitude or internalised stereotypes.
  + **Gender Bias:** higher expectations may be present that are based simply on a person’s gender. They are deemed more competent or skilled because of their gender.
  + **Affinity Bias:** Acknowledging the similarities. A preference towards the applicant that is “like us” is exhibited, as they reflect the same views and life experiences, leading a hiring manager to be more drawn to recruit them for the role.

**Links to Learning and Development that can help with challenging bias.**

* [Recognising Racism](https://nhsengland.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/HR&OD-Events-booking.aspx)
* [15.1 Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI)](https://hrandod.england.nhs.uk/fifteen-to-one/)
* [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Learning Hub (england.nhs.uk)](https://hrandod.england.nhs.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-2/)
* Podcast – Link to CIPD [Unconscious Bias podcast](https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/podcasts/unconscious-bias/)
* Watch the [video on NHS Recruitment](https://vimeo.com/710433835/cde3ef4185), which demonstrates how EDI issues can influence the recruitment and selection process.

Legal and ethical considerations

**Key Provisions of the Equality Act 2010**

It is vital that as an organisation, we embed diversity and inclusion recruitment processes to ensure we comply with legal requirements, in line with the [Equality Act 2010](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance).  
  
The Equality Act 2010 forms the fundamentals of inclusion and when not followed can cause long-lasting and sometimes irreversible damage to individuals and organisations.  
  
For the public sector, it also lays out the [Public Sector Equality Duty](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance-for-public-authorities/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance-for-public-authorities) which places a legal emphasis on the need to **“advance equality of opportunity”**.

This duty can be met by implementing and monitoring an inclusive recruitment process.

### Advance equality of opportunity

As a public body, we have a duty to.

* Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their relevant protected characteristics.
* Take steps to meet the different needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic.
* Encourage participation in public life or any other activity by underrepresented groups
* take steps to meet the different needs of disabled persons.

All recruiting managers should familiarise themselves with our legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010. This page from the Local Government Association on the [Equality Act and protected characteristics](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-workforce/equality-act-and) provides a useful overview and links to further reading.

### Disability Confident Scheme

NHS England aspires to be a Disability Confident employer and therefore has made the following commitments.

* + To implement inclusive and accessible recruitment processes
  + Offer an interview to disabled people who meet all essential criteria.
  + Provide reasonable adjustments.
  + Offer Support to existing employees.

Further guidance can be found [government website](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions).

Watch the video on TED TALK about... [Creating Inclusive Workplaces for All | Catarina Rivera | TEDxRolandPark (youtu.be)](https://youtu.be/wbXxhuraJsE)

Key components of inclusive recruitment

### Writing inclusive job adverts

**Understanding inclusive language**

Tips for writing and inclusive job advert.

* Consider using [neutral adjectives](https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/2021/08/addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruitment-the-role-of-gendered-language/), this means that the way someone is described in a way that is neither positive or negative
* Use tools such as [Hemingway Editor](https://hemingwayapp.com/) and [Gender Decoder](https://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/) to ensure adverts are easy to understand and use neutral language
* Keep the content and information simple, don’t include any information that is not needed. Put yourself in applicant’s perspective: is the information provided necessary?
* Ensure that you mention flexible working policies and any other employee benefits
* Include some day-to-day context around the duties of the role and purpose/function and approach of the team
* Consider where to promote the vacancy. Use additional job boards, where possible, to attract a wider range of talent (LinkedIn, [Evenbreak,](https://www.evenbreak.co.uk/) [BME Jobs](https://bmejobs.co.uk/), etc.)
* Avoid making reference to a requirement for the right “cultural fit”.

#### Inclusive assessment processes

What do we mean by assessment?

The assessment process is the way in which each candidate is evaluated and scored against the required behaviours and competencies of the role. Types of assessment that might be used within NHS England

* Application form.
* Interview.
* Presentation to panel.
* Group discussion.
* In tray exercise.

Whichever methods you choose to assess candidates, you must ensure that they are **consistent**, **fair**, **accessible** to all and **relevant** to the job in question. You can ensure this is the case by.

Defining job requirements. consider what does good look like and what key skills and capabilities are essential for success.

Equip your assessors – ensure that everyone involved in the assessment is.

* Supported to follow the same procedures for all.
* Aware of the criteria being scored against.
* Clear on what good looks like and what positive indicators to look out for.
* Aware of their own biases and stereotypes.

Ensure all candidates and assessors are supported fully to request or access any [workplace adjustments](https://nhsengland.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/Workplace-Adjustments.aspx) to engage with the process.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) offers helpful guidance for carrying out inclusive assessment. See [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development](https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/inclusive-employers/) to check out the section on “Selection Process”.

#### Ensuring diversity in the interview panel

**Advantages of diverse panel**

* Better representation.
* Increased fairness.
* A wider range of perspectives and opinions.

**Impact of a diverse panel**

Diverse interview panels can improve recruitment outcomes by reducing unconscious bias and enhancing decision-making in the recruitment process. Candidates from underrepresented groups may be reassured to see someone like them on the panel. It can also enhance creativity and innovation in the team down the line.

**Challenges in forming diverse panels and top tips for overcoming these**

Where ‘diverse’ staff on the panel are more junior than the other panel members, they may lack confidence and influence in offering challenge on hiring decisions. Combat this by ensuring your assessment process provides equity of input with clear and factual scoring criteria: this will reduce the ability for bias or unbalanced panel influence to creep in.

Where ‘diverse’ staff on the panel are underrepresented in an organisation, their requirement to take part in interview panels could create a disproportionate burden on these groups. Mitigate this by utilising trained panel members from the Change Programme's database. A list of trained panellists is available by contacting [england.internal-edi@nhs.net](mailto:england.internal-edi@nhs.net).

#### Communication and transparency

It's crucial to be clear and fair in the recruitment process. Candidates should know what's expected and have an equal chance to succeed.

This can be achieved by providing accurate job descriptions, obtaining consent for reference requests, sharing interview questions in advance and communicating clearly throughout the process. Transparent recruitment benefits both parties, fostering a smooth and mutually beneficial engagement.

#### Potential pitfalls and how to prevent them

**Lack of Information**

Candidates may feel uncertain or anxious if they lack information about the role, the organisation, or the recruitment process. Ensure job descriptions and adverts are detailed and accurate, provide information about the organisational culture and values. Offer clear communication throughout the process.  
  
**Communication Delays**

Candidates may become frustrated if there are delays in communication or if they feel ignored. Respond promptly to candidate enquiries, keep them updated on the status of their application (where possible), and provide clear timelines in advance for each stage of the recruitment process.  
  
**Bias or Discrimination**

Candidates may worry about facing bias or discrimination during the recruitment process. Ensure you implement fair and unbiased recruitment practices, undertake recruitment training, and offer opportunities for candidates to provide feedback on their experience.

**Uncertainty about Next Steps**

Candidates may feel uncertain about what to expect next in the recruitment process. Provide clear information about the stages of the process, explain the next steps after each stage, and offer support and guidance to candidates throughout.  
  
**Lack of Feedback**

Candidates may be disappointed if they do not receive feedback on their application or interview performance. Offer constructive feedback to candidates, highlighting both strengths and areas for development, and ensure that feedback is provided in a timely and respectful manner.  
By anticipating potential pitfalls before they occur, we can create a positive recruitment experience that reflects well on the organisation and helps to attract/retain top talent.

## Interview Best Practice

Role of interview panel

At NHS England, the best practice for interviews isa diverse interview panel with a minimum of three members.

There must be a designated lead interviewer who must.

* Arrange a diverse panel, ensuring all members are sufficiently competent to engage in a fair process.
* Manage the interview schedule and candidate correspondence.
* Prepare [proposed interview questions](https://nhs.sharepoint.com/:p:/r/sites/X26_CreatingTheNewNHSEngland/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B14956AAF-474D-4CF4-B291-662FAABFFE5E%7D&file=Competency%20Based%20questions%20Resource%20Bank%20-%20November%202023.pptx&action=edit&mobileredirect=true), with further probing questions and positive indicators for each question. (This document was created as part of the Filing of Posts process for Creating the New NHS England, but is still a relevant resource for recruitment as business as usual)
* Arrange and facilitate a pre-meeting to ensure that all panel members understand their responsibilities, the requirements of role, and their role in the interview i.e. asking which questions, recording notes.​
* Confirm any adaptations/reasonable adjustments required for the candidate or panel members.​
* Introduce and close the interview using the panel notes provided. ​
* Facilitate the panel moderation, note down the agreed final scores and constructive feedback. ​
* Collate feedback, ensuring feedback is available to candidates and panel notes are retained in line with retention periods. ​
* Co-ordinate offers, ensuring candidates receive a verbal offer quickly and liaising with recruitment team for formal written offers​.

Interview principles checklist

**Accessible**

* Can all candidates engage fully with the interview process?
* Have all candidates and panel members been supported to request reasonable adjustments?
* Have any requests been acted on promptly?

**Relevant**

* Are all interview questions relevant and core to the role?

**Fair**

* Have the panel discussed bias, what this may look like and how it could be challenged?
* Have panel discussed and agreed what appointable standard is and what good looks like?

**Consistent**

* Have all candidates been provided with the same information prior to the interview?
* Have panel agreed a set of probing questions so that the same prompts are used if needed each time?

Interview Process

**Panel pre-meet**

* Led by lead assessor.
* Proposed interview questions agreed.
* Agree format and who will lead on which questions.
* Confirm and act on reasonable adjustments for candidates or panel members.

**Interview**

* Opened and closed by lead panel member.
* Consistent format used throughout.
* Manage expectations.
* Panel members record own notes during interview and use these to score independently following interview.

**Moderation**

* Panel consistency check.
* Compare scores.
* Share evidence and rationale behind your score.
* Agree scores.
* Agree feedback.
* Lead panel member completes feedback form.

**Feedback**

* Consistent approach.
* Fact-based.
* Verbal with written follow up offered.
* Retained for 12 months.

[Download the interview stills toolkit](https://hrod-scorm.s3.nhsla.net/OD_Talent_Team/Documents/Interview_Skills_Toolkit.pptx)

Interview Skills

#### Key skills of interviewing

* Preparation.
* Presence.
* Questioning.
* Note taking.

#### Preparation

* Check your schedule in advance: time and space to prepare, read JD, person spec, advert and understand your role in the interview (lead or panel member).
* Familiarise yourself with the scoring criteria and notes template.
* Familiarise yourself with the positive indicators for each question.
* Attend pre-assessment meeting to check understanding, clarify queries and agree role.
* Take time to set up (tech works, materials to hand).

#### Presence

* Focus on putting the candidate at ease: remember you want to give every opportunity to get the best out of them.
* Turn up on time.
* Keep your camera on throughout.
* Mute yourself when you are not speaking to reduce any distraction for the candidate.
* Be aware of negative body language: yawning, appearing dis-interested, not listening.

#### Questioning

Well-structured interviews should be objective, consistent, fair and transparent.

* Use clear and relevant questions.
* Ensure questions are asked consistently across interviewees.
* Score each candidate systematically.

Examples of questions.

* **Open:** “ Tell me about a time when you’ve dealt with a difficult customer..?”
* **Closed:** “You were last promoted in 2017?”
* **Hypothetical:** “What would you do if….?” ​
* **Double-headed**: “What options did you consider? And how did you take the project forward?” ​
* **Multiple choice:** “How did you get the team’s buy-in? ​Did you consult with everyone to get their views? ​Or did you emphasise your own ideas?” ​
* **Leading:** “Did you follow-up that programme with an evaluation?”
* Consistent for all interviewees
* State the competency the question is focusing when framing the question
* It may be helpful to position the question to support the candidate to answer fully, this should be applied consistently to all candidates
* **Acknowledge:** non-judgemental

**Being helpful:** “excellent/amazing”

**Not unhelpful:** “Thank you”

#### The STAR Technique.

Candidates may use the STAR technique in framing their answers.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Technique | Questions | Steps |
| Situation | A specific time when you… |  |
| Task | When? What? Who? Your role | Gathering details |
| Actions | What did you do? How? Why? | Gathering behavioural evidence |
| Result | Outcome? Hard data? Feedback? Learning? | Gathering confidence |

#### Note taking

It is important to make notes and record evidence because as humans, we have a fallible memory, the notes provide a useful audit trail for your decision making and are useful in providing feedback to the candidate.

It is important to.

* Inform the candidate upfront that you will be making notes as they answer the questions.
* Take your time to ensure you capture the information accurately.
* Capture “quotes” – again this is useful as an audit trail and for providing feedback to the candidate.
* Do not record judgements or scores. scoring should be done once the interview has been completed.
* Retain your notes (12 months).

#### The ORCE approach

* **Observe:** During the interview or assessment exercise.
* **Record:** gathering evidence and taking objective notes.
* **Classify:** Afterwards – reviewing your notes and scoring.
* **Evaluate:** individually against the criteria.

## Scoring and Moderation

Watch the video on TED TALK about... [Why the best hire might not have the perfect resume | Regina Hartley (youtu.be)](https://youtu.be/jiDQDLnEXdA)

[Download the Interview record template](https://hrod-scorm.s3.nhsla.net/OD_Talent_Team/Documents/Interview_Record_Template.docx)

Use the links on this page to find out more about [our approach to recruitment and guidance](https://nhs.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/Recruitment-approach.aspx) to help you successfully recruit to vacancies in our organisation.

1. Vacancy upload
2. Quality assurance checks and advertising
3. Shortlisting
4. Interviews arranged
5. Assessment and moderation
6. Offer/outcome
7. Internal onboarding
8. External onboarding

Help and support

For recruitment support and guidance, contact the HR recruitment team [england.hrrecruitment@nhs.net](mailto:england.hrrecruitment@nhs.net) or your [directorate/region recruitment specialist](https://nhs.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/Recruitment(2).aspx?source=https%3a//nhs.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/Forms/ByAuthor.aspx#directorate-and-region-recruitment-specialists), view their contact details on the [recruitment homepage](https://nhs.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/Recruitment(2).aspx?source=https%3a//nhs.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandOD/SitePages/Forms/ByAuthor.aspx#directorate-and-region-recruitment-specialists).

Scoring

Top Tips

* Take the time following the interview to independently reflect on your own notes and assign scores: don’t rush it and don’t do it in the interview.
* Stick to the agreed scoring criteria and positive indicators to objectively appraise the candidate’s abilities.
* Examine the facts: use what was said in the interview, not prior knowledge or what you read “between the lines” to remove any element of judging people on your gut feeling and remain objective.
* Interrogate your own thinking, question if any bias or assumption has crept in when assigning your scores.

**By objectively scoring, you will.**

* articulate the good and the bad from the interview.
* provide justifiable feedback to all candidates, including those who have been unsuccessful.
* support improved candidate experience, as feedback will give people tangible actions they can take to improve their performance at their next interview, or, in their current role.

Moderation

Moderation is an important check point to make sure the **assessment criteria have been applied fairly and consistently** by all assessors. The panel discussion should be led by the lead assessor.

In moderation.

* The panel provide their **scores** and discuss the **rationale** and **evidence** for them.
* Provides opportunity for **constructive** challenge between assessors.
* Supports the group to **reach a consensus** if possible.

#### Moderation process

* Compare your scores: are there any differences arising?
* Where different, share the evidence behind your score.
* Reach a consensus based on the agreed evidence.
* Agree your feedback and who will deliver it.
* Save your notes and input your scores.

#### Assumptions to avoid and look out for and challenge in moderation discussion

* **Existing knowledge of candidate:** “I know they can do this job”.
* **Benefit of doubt:** “They meant to say”.
* **Social pressure:** “I’m going to change my score…hearing you I think I’ve been too harsh/lenient”.
* **Comparisons:** “Candidate B definitely isn’t as good as A”.
* **Additional criteria:** “We also need to think about…”.
* **Fit:** “I think A will be a better fit”.

#### Reaching consensus in your panel

It is really important to reach a consensus on each 0-4 score across the panel based on the evidence.

If you do change your score as a result of this then annotate your individual scores so it is clear to the candidate.

In the majority of cases you will reach consensus given enough discussion on the facts without putting undue pressure on others.

However, if you really can't agree then make sure that the lead assessor understands the rationale so that they can resolve at final moderation with leads from other panels.

Delivering Outcomes and Candidate Feedback

Candidate Feedback

According to LinkedIn, 94% of candidates want feedback after an interview.

“After delivering a presentation and over an hour of questioning, a call to advise on an outcome would have been appreciated not just an automated email.”​

​

Interview feedback is the No 1 subject of candidate complaints.

* Candidates want feedback
* How it’s delivered matters

Email is seen as being cold and the popular view is that the employer is unwilling to spend the time on the candidate that the candidate spent on them.

A call, but with little feeling or lack of detail is another major issue as it shows no empathy for the candidate’s position and nothing for them to build on for next time.

### Pre-call

**Be prepared** to own your feedback

**Do.**

* + take time.
  + Review.
  + ask!.

Consider the candidate experience

**Don’t**

* delay.
* pass the 48-hour window.

**Observation vs Interpretation**

**Observation**

Feedback is not interpretation

* “I think …”
* “I feel …”
* “I’m assuming that …”
* “I get the feeling …”

**Interpretation**

Feedback is observable behavior

* “I saw …”
* “I heard you mention …”
* “I noticed that …”
* “I read …”
* “I observed …”

Interpretation

**Introduction to Feedback Call**

**Do**. Start on a positive.

* Thank them.
* Congratulate.
* Set tone.

**Outcome and High Level Feedback**

**Do**. Get to the point!

* Outcome.
* Brief Overview.
* Open to further feedback.

**Detailed Feedback**

**Do**

Consider the impression we want to make.

* Professional & Courteous.
* Empathy & Active Listening.

Be prepared for further questions.

* Consider follow ups.

Remember, observation, not interpretation.

Provide structured, constructive feedback.

* Set context.
* Detailed, accurate, evidenced.
* Constructive.

**Don’t**

* Argue!
* Avoid.
* Personal opinions.
* Accusatory, negative language.

**EEC Model of Feedback**

1. **Example**. Give a specific example of the behaviour you’ve observed
2. **Effect**. Describe what effect it had: positive or negative
3. **Change/congratulate.** Discuss/agree what should be done in the future or congratulate if it is a positive outcome.

* **Context:** Describe the situation. Be as specific as possible. Give the feedback in a timely way.
* **Behaviour:** Describe the behaviour as clearly as possible, as if you were watching a play back of the film. Avoid drawing conclusions.
* **Impact:** What were the results – positive or negative – of this behaviour?
* **Next Steps:** What specific behaviour should be changed or repeated in response to the feedback? Why should this change be made?

**Feedback Do’s and Don’ts Summary**

**Do**

* Use specific behavioural evidence.
* Balance positive and developmental points.
* Retain all paperwork.

**Don’t**

* Over-generalise.
* Go beyond the criteria.
* Share feedback that can't be supported by the paperwork.

**Key tips to successful feedback**

* Review all relevant information i.e. resume, marking guides, interview notes.
* Prepare feedback notes ahead of time.
* Be prompt.
* Be approachable, honest, constructive, and realistic.
* Provide details i.e. expected responses and target levels.
* Discuss gaps: what was missing from applicants’ responses.
* Answer questions.
* Thank candidates for their time, encourage (if appropriate) to apply again in future.

**Ending the call**

**Do**

* Think about the lasting impression.
* End on a positive
* Leave the door open.
* Good luck, thank you and goodbye!