

Guidance notes

on completing the application form



Introduction

First of all, thank you for applying for a job with Cornwall Council.

We have designed this guidance to help you complete the application form

If you find the form difficult to complete, you may ask someone to do it on your behalf. If you have a disability and would prefer to submit your application on tape you may do so. Your recording should follow the format of the application form. We are here to help you and if you would like some advice or assistance on filling in the form, please do not hesitate to contact us or ask someone to call on your behalf on 0300 1234 100.

The application form is purposely printed in a print size that helps people with dyslexia or sight problems. If you require this document in an alternate format, such as a larger print, Easy Read, Braille, or audio tape, please do not hesitate to call us on 0300 1234 100. Please be aware that this may result in a short delay.

General comments

The Council uses one application form for ALL staff covering a diverse range of jobs and professions, so you may find some sections and/or questions on the form do not apply to you. These questions and/or sections are clearly marked. Unless the form states that you are not required to complete a question or section please answer all the questions on the application form.

Our application form has been designed so that all applicants are required to present their details in the same format. In this way, we can be sure that all applicants are treated fairly and equally. If you are asked to submit a curriculum vitae, this can only be regarded as an addition to completing the application form and not instead of.

Completing the application form is an important part of the recruitment process. Sometimes our jobs need practical hands-on practical skills instead of administrative or office skills, so you do not necessarily have to be good at filling in forms and completing paperwork, it's the content explaining your experience that's important to us, so the better you are able to show this on your application form, the easier it will be for us to initially assess your suitability

The application has two parts to it, A and B. **Part A** asks for personal information such as name, address, referees and also includes an Equal Opportunities Monitoring questionnaire, which is completely confidential. **Part B** asks you to tell us about relevant experience and this is the important information which we will look at when deciding whether to select you for the next stage.

The basic duties and requirements of the job are set out in the Person Specification and the Job Description. A Person Specification sets out the type of person that we are looking for and the Job Description sets out what you are expected to do in the job. Some of the Council's jobs do not have Person Specifications or Job Descriptions, as we are now moving towards a new method of describing functions of a job and how we expect a person to perform in a job. This new approach is called a Role Profile.

Please check before starting to complete your application that you **either** have a Job Description and Person Specification, or a Role Profile. If you do not have one or the other, please call the named advertisement contact. It will be very difficult for you to complete your application form properly without these important documents, as you will not be able to give us details of your relevant experience which we need to see whether to take you forward for interview.

Presentation

We encourage applicants to submit applications electronically and you will receive an automated response when your form has been received. Otherwise, please use a black pen or type so your application can be photocopied purely for those people involved in deciding whether to take your application to the next stage.

Remember to sign the form in all the relevant places to declare that the information you have provided is correct. If you submit your application form electronically, you will be asked to sign your form at a later date.

If you are selected for interview, we will write to you with all the details and explain what you need to bring to your interview. As well as any essential certificates, please note you will also have to bring certain documents such as proof of National Insurance Number, birth certificate and/or passport etc which confirms your identity and your eligibility to work in the UK.

Completing the form - Section A

Job and vacancy Id

All our jobs have their own job titles and a unique job reference code. These can be found in the advert; the job description; or the role profile.

Personal details and references

Enter your personal details fully and clearly so that we may contact you about your application.

All job offers are made subject to receipt of two satisfactory references, one of whom must be your current employer. You may submit a testimonial, but you will still be required to supply a current referee for us to contact independently on our own forms.

If you are not employed or are unable to provide an employment reference please give the name of someone you have known in a professional capacity, or in connection with any voluntary work. We do not accept references from members of your immediate or extended family. If this is your first job, you could ask a Teacher / Tutor from your most recent educational establishment. Please state each referee's relationship to you (current employer, previous employer etc).

For applicants applying to work with children one of your referees must include where you have worked within this area before (whether as a paid employee, or as a volunteer), if this is not your first job in this field.

When we request references for applicants applying to work with children and/or vulnerable adults, we have a compulsory question that asks referees to comment whether there have been any disciplinary issues (e.g. conduct and/or behaviour) which may have a bearing upon an applicant's suitability to work in such fields. We

will ask whether there are any penalties which we call "time expired" (e.g. whether there has been a disciplinary matter in the past which may have expired).

If you have any concerns about this please write or call the contact number enclosed with your application details, to discuss this matter in confidence further. If it is decided that the matter is relevant, we may be required to give the details to the panel who decide whether to take the application to the next stage. It may be decided that it is appropriate to request additional referees if a matter remains in doubt.

References will be taken up **before** interview. If you do not want us to take up references before interview, please explain why not.

Additional information required

You must declare if you are related to any Officer or Member of the Council. This includes declaring if you are the wife, husband, common law partner, parent, grandparent, child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece of an existing councillor or employee.

If you have been dismissed from any previous employment, we need as many details as you can provide and we are required to follow this up with the relevant employer concerned.

If you have previously received a redundancy payment from any Council, let us know as this might affect your employment eligibility.

The selection process of applicants is measured on each individual's own merits and abilities. We have made a commitment to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities and adopted the Employment Department's Disability "Two Ticks" Symbol "Positive about disabled people". This means that we have undertaken to interview all applicants with a disability who meet the essential shortlisting criteria for a job vacancy and as such we will consider them on their abilities.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments where, compared to a non-disabled person, a disabled person is substantially disadvantaged by either the working arrangements (which include the recruitment process) or the working environment.

If you have a disability, please identify this in the box provided so that we can make suitable arrangements if you are called for interview and/or work-based exercise / test.

Protection of children and vulnerable adults

If you are applying for a role working with children or vulnerable adults, there is a specific declaration which you must read and sign. Only sign this once you have read and understood the paragraph. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us **0300 1234 100**.

If you are selected for an interview, we will ask you to prove your identity at the interview and you will be required to complete a Criminal Records Bureau check at an enhanced level.

Equal opportunities monitoring form

We would appreciate you completing the form as this enables us to assess the effectiveness of our policies. The Fire Brigade uses a slightly different EO form for all Fire Brigade staff and this will be included separately in the recruitment pack.

Disability

You are asked if you consider you qualify for protection under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995).

A person has a disability under the DDA if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities, or if they have a history of such a disability. Included in this definition are the following:

- Physical impairments
- Mental impairments relating to mental functioning, including learning difficulties and mental health issues which are either clinically well recognised or which can be substantiated by a medical practitioner.
- Sensory impairments such as a hearing and/or visual impairment (which is not correctable by glasses or similar visual aids)
- Severe disfigurement
- Progressive conditions such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy or HIV infection
- People who have had an impairment (covered by the Act) in the past but have since recovered

An impairment has a substantial effect if it affects mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, hearing, eyesight (excluding those who wear glasses / contact lenses), memory and/or ability to concentrate, learn or understand.

Long-term means has lasted, or is likely to last for at least 12 months, or for the rest of the life of a person.

Examples of reasonable adjustments are: making adjustments to the premises; allocation of work; being flexible about working hours; providing training; using

modified equipment; making instructions and manuals more accessible; using a reader or interpreter; and appropriate supervision. There are no prescribed rules as to what adjustments can and cannot be made as individuals' circumstances can vary so much. However, the Council is open to considering all requests for reasonable adjustments.

If you require a reasonable adjustment, a Human Resources Officer and/or a member of our Occupational Health Department will contact you to discuss the requirements you have requested.

Completing the form - Section B

Section B only is sent to the people involved in making the decisions as to whether to select for interview. Please answer all questions unless the form indicates that a question does not apply to you.

Current / most recent employment

If you have recently left school or college, or a training programme and have not yet had a job, you can either provide details of any relevant work experience that you may have had, (including holiday or voluntary work), or you can go straight to the section entitled Educational Qualifications obtained.

Key duties and responsibilities

Under this heading, briefly outline your main duties in your current or most recent job.

Employment history

Details of your current employment should not be included here. Start by giving us the details of the job prior to your current job and then add the details of all your jobs working backwards, so that your first job is at the bottom of the list. **All gaps in employment must be explained**, for example, if you took a break from work, for whatever reason, please explain the circumstances.

You can attach an additional sheet if you wish.

Educational qualifications obtained

Please list all your qualifications and examinations (with results) which you believe to be relevant. The Person Specification/Job Description or Role Profile will say which qualifications are essential to the post that you are applying for. Wherever possible, please try to add what your qualifications may be equivalent to e.g. a CSE Grade 1 is the equivalent to a GCSE Grade C. You will be asked to bring your original certificates or qualifications with you to your interview, so be prepared to ensure you can locate these, or ask the appropriate educational establishments for copies.

If you have qualifications which are not required for the job, you do not have to include them on your application

if you do not wish to do so. You may continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

For posts working with children only, you must state the date you obtained your qualification, otherwise you do not need to complete this column regarding date obtained.

You do not need to complete the final column as this will be completed by us when we check your qualifications and if necessary, we will contact the awarding body who issued you with the qualification.

Other training and development

You may have gained professional knowledge, skills and abilities by undertaking further training and / or personal development courses or kept your skills up to date in other ways. Please use this section to let us know.

We will take full note of any education or qualifications gained overseas or as part of an employment training scheme.

Membership of professional bodies

If membership of a particular professional body is required or expected in connection with the job which you are applying for, you will be asked to bring your relevant membership documents to your interview.

Additional information

Driving Licence

If your Job Description/Person Specification or Role Profile states that you do not need a car for the job you are applying for, please tick **Not Applicable**.

Working Time Regulations

We need to know whether you work for any other organisations, as we are required to fulfil our duty of care to all our employees under the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Safeguarding children

If you are **not** applying for a post specifically working with children or with a school, you can ignore this section and go straight to the section marked "Reasons for applying for the job".

The Council is committed to safeguarding children and has adopted a rigorous recruitment process, therefore, **if you are applying to work with children or in a school, in ANY role**, you are required to give examples of how you would contribute to ensuring our schools and services remain a safe environment for children. These may be discussed further at interview.

For teaching posts only

If you are not applying for a teaching post, please tick **Not Applicable** and go straight to the next section on "Reasons for applying for the job".

Teachers are required to answer all questions, including age groups you are qualified to teach.

Reasons for applying for this job

This is a very important part of your application and is your opportunity to explain why you believe that your experience, skills and personal qualities makes you a suitable candidate for the job. You may want to consider drafting this before you actually enter your chosen information into this section. Consider this section of the application form, as your best opportunity to sell yourself and present your experience, character and abilities in the best light.

Firstly, we would advise you to examine the Job Description and Person Specification or Role Profile and think about how your skills, knowledge and experience match the requirements of the job.

Secondly, think about how the person reading this section will judge whether you are a suitable candidate. Does the information that you have written clearly tell the reader that not only do you want the job but that you could do the job well?

Before you start completing this section, please check whether the role that you are applying for is accompanied by a Job Description and a Person Specification, or, a Role Profile.

If the job has a Job Description and Person Specification, look at each of the requirements listed on the Person Specification and show how your knowledge, skills, abilities and experience gained from paid or unpaid work, domestic responsibilities, education, leisure interests or voluntary work match the requirements identified and give specific examples of things you have done which demonstrate your abilities.

Remember that unpaid work or work at home can be just as valuable and valid as being in a paid job. You may have transferable skills which can be applied to the post, for example if the person specification says 'able to organise self and others to complete projects within deadlines' you should do more than say 'I am a very organised person and can work to deadlines'. You should give an example, by describing something that you have done which proves that you can do it, e.g. 'I organised a fund-raising event for the local playgroup within three months and with a group of five helpers', or give details of a work-related experience.

If we have stated it is essential that you have worked on Excel spreadsheets, explain in what context you have used them.

If the job has a Role Profile then you will want to adopt a different approach to completing the section 'Reasons for applying for this job' and to help you, there will be **accompanying guidance entitled "Guidance on completing a competency application form"**.

As stated on page 1 of this guidance, Cornwall Council is moving toward using competency based recruitment and some areas of the Council are already using competency frameworks. You may have come across this before, however to many people, this is a may be a new approach.

Competencies refer to behaviours that are necessary to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, this section of the form is your opportunity to demonstrate how your past behaviours in a job, will be the best predictor of your future behaviour in a job with us. The person reading this section will be looking for specific examples from you of **when** and **how** you demonstrated particular behaviours.

It may be helpful to you to consider how we see the difference between a traditional Job Description/Person Specification application, versus, a competency-based Role Profile application. The first method should identify an applicant's **potential** to carry out the job. The second method, assesses the applicant's **actual demonstrated ability** to carry out the job.

We would strongly advise you to read the additional guidance regarding competencies.

You may continue on a separate page if appropriate.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on **0300 1234 100** if you want to check on any of these points.

Declaration

Please make sure that you have signed and dated the application form to confirm that your details are correct and complete. If you email your application to us, you will see that we have asked you to tick the box to confirm your information is correct and if you are shortlisted, you will be asked to sign your form at your interview. Please note that applicants who conceal or misrepresent relevant information at any stage will be disqualified from appointment, or if appointed, may be dismissed without notice.

Data protection

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 all information given on the application form will only be used to determine an applicant's suitability for the post and will be kept only for those purposes and equal opportunities monitoring.

Job application advertising monitoring form

You will find this form in your recruitment pack and we would very much appreciate you completing and returning this as it will assist us in monitoring the effectiveness of our advertising. Please enter a cross in the appropriate box to indicate where you saw the vacancy advertised.

and finally ...

Due to the high volume of applications received by Cornwall Council, it is not always possible for us to respond to every unsuccessful applicant. Therefore, if you do not hear from us within four weeks of the closing date, this will mean that you have not been successful on this occasion. We would however, actively encourage you to apply for any other vacancies that you may believe are suitable.

We thank you for the interest you have shown in working with Cornwall Council and wish you the very best with your application.

