

1. Definitions

Healthwatch refers to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

Employees refers to all Healthwatch employees.

CEO refers to the Healthwatch CEO Officer.

The Board refers to the Healthwatch Board of directors.

Interview Panel refers to the employees selected to assess the applicants, hold the interviews, and then decide on the candidate to be offered the post.

Chair refers to the Chair of the Interview Panel, the employee selected to take the lead role in the recruitment process.

2. Scope

This policy covers all aspects of recruiting employees.

3. Summary

Healthwatch is committed to providing efficient, effective, and continuously improving, services to the diverse communities of Brighton and Hove.

To achieve this, we recognise that it is crucial to recruit the right people with the right skills and values to the right job and that these individuals should reflect, as far as possible, the diversity of the local community it serves.

Healthwatch have legal and regulatory responsibilities for recruiting new employees and this policy provides a framework to ensure that we have a fair, objective, consistent and transparent recruitment, and selection process that promotes good practice and supports a proactive approach to equality and diversity.

It is based on the Brighton and Hove City Council [Recruitment & Selection Policy](#).

4. Responsibility

All employees have a responsibility to support the aims and objectives of this policy, though it is the CEO who is responsible for ensuring it is implemented.

5. Aims

5.1 The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote a positive image of Healthwatch as an employer.
- Continually improve and monitor our recruitment processes.

- Set out the standards to ensure that our recruitment processes are fair, consistent, and transparent and comply with relevant legislation and good practice.
- Ensure that new recruits are assessed not only on their technical ability, but also for their compatibility with Healthwatch values.
- Ensure that our workforce more accurately reflects the City's economically active population.
- Increase the diversity of the workforce through the attraction and recruitment of high-quality candidates from across the community, particularly from underrepresented groups.
- Appoint talented people with the right skills, values, and behaviour more consistently.
- Ensure that the right person with the right skills is appointed to the right job, first time.
- Ensure Healthwatch has a skilled, flexible, and motivated workforce that can deliver effective, value-for-money services in line with the organisations's strategic priorities, both now and in the future.
- Balance the benefits of recruiting externally with the aspirations of existing employees to develop and progress within the organization.

6. General principles

- 6.1 The recruitment and selection process must be appropriate to the job concerned and be able to deliver a quality candidate for the job at a reasonable cost.
- 6.2 Safer recruitment practices must be employed for all posts involving contact with vulnerable adults and/or children.
- 6.3 Vacancies to be advertised will be screened against Healthwatch redeployees for potential "matches" in the first instance.
- 6.4 Disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential selection criteria for the job will be guaranteed an interview.
- 6.5 No job will be advertised without having been evaluated.
- 6.6 All appointments must be made on merit following assessment against clearly defined criteria.
- 6.7 The process should be undertaken by competent employees and Board members who have been trained in equalities and recruitment.
- 6.8 The Chair should be at an appropriate grade and at least equivalent one grade higher than the post being recruited for.

- 6.9 The process must be transparent and auditable with written evidence available to support the decision made in respect of each applicant.
- 6.10 The required pre-employment checks must be carried out on all preferred candidates.
- 6.11 No appointee can start work before receipt of satisfactory pre-employment checks.

7. Reviewing the vacancy

- 7.1 On becoming vacant, an existing post will be reviewed automatically by the post's line-manager and the CEO, with any recommended changes being discussed with the employee team and the Board as required.
- 7.2 An assessment of a post may result in a revised Job Description and Personal Specification and salary band, which will be used when the vacancy is advertised.
- 7.3 Before beginning the process to fill any vacant post, managers must review it against Healthwatch's strategic plans to make sure there is still a need for the role in its current form.
- 7.4 In the case of a new post, the CEO and intended line-manager will produce a Job Profile and recommended salary band for consideration by the Board. This will include a Business Case to support the creation of a new post.
- 7.5 If it is not practical to carry out a job evaluation exercise within a reasonable timeframe, the CEO will carry out an interim grading exercise on the post which will act as a salary indicator until a full grading exercise can take place. Any changes subsequently made to the grading once it is assessed will be backdated to an appropriate date.
- 7.6 Healthwatch is committed to helping young people get into work through its student work placements. Managers are, therefore, encouraged to consider creating suitable opportunities that would enable young, unemployed people to gain valuable work experience and skills.

8. Job Descriptions & Person Specifications

- 8.1 All posts must have an up-to-date, accurate Job Description & Person Specification. This is the central tool of the recruitment and selection process as it sets down the experience, knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours that are necessary to enable a person to perform successfully in that job.
- 8.2 It should be written in easy-to-understand plain language, free from jargon and acronyms.

- 8.3 Care must be taken to ensure that it does not include excessive, discriminatory, or desirable criteria. Ideally, it should have no more than 10 -12 key criteria against which applicants are to be assessed.

9. Recruitment schedule

- 9.1 The line-manager and CEO will draw up a recruitment schedule, consisting of the following:

- The date on which the post will be advertised **internally**.
- The closing date for **internal** applicants, not less than two weeks after the date on which it was advertised.
- The date, or first date, if several publications or editions of publications are being used, in which the post will be advertised **externally**.
- The closing date for **external** applicants, not less than three weeks after the first date on which the post was advertised.
- The date by which the interview shortlist is to be drawn up, generally not less than one week after the closing date.
- The date, or dates, for interviews, not less than one week after the interview shortlisting.
- The date by which a decision is to be made on the successful applicant or, if necessary, a second round of interviews, or that no applicant had been successful.

10. Advertising the vacancy

- 10.1 Vacancies will be advertised externally, except where employees have been identified as “at risk” due to restructuring or shrinking services, or where internal recruitment may apply.

- 10.2 Recruitment publicity must positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, we will, as far as is reasonably practicable ensure that:

- Advertising will be designed to ensure that job opportunities are accessible to as wide and diverse an audience as possible and that they attract the strongest possible field of candidates.
- Adverts should not be confined to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular gender, racial group, sexual orientation, age, cultural background, or disability.

- Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular gender, age or racial group, or disability.
- Recruitment advertisements should reflect the realistic requirements of the job with regard to skills, qualifications and experience and shall not include any unjustifiable or discriminatory requirements.
- Adverts should not prescribe any requirements which would put us in breach of Equalities legislation.
- We will not recruit new employees solely on the recommendation of an existing employee member.
- We will include an appropriate statement on equal opportunity in all advertising of vacancies.

11. Internal vacancies

- 11.1 Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from any employee.

12. Information for applicants

- 12.1 All applications must include an up-to-date CV, and a two-page covering letter describing their interest and suitability for the post, and referencing the Job Description and Person Specification provided.
- 12.2 Background material such as a copy of our latest Annual Report and Mission, Vision, and Values, are available on our website, but can be provided if requested.
- 12.3 A covering letter will state the closing date for applications, and any other circumstances or bits of information to be aware of.
- 12.4 A separate, anonymous, Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will also be sent to all applicants.

13. Administration of applications

- 13.1 The CEO or Interview Panel will be responsible for overseeing the administration of applications, except when the post being advertised is the CEO, in which case the Board will be responsible for overseeing the administration of applications.
- 13.2 All completed Application Forms received will be numbered and personal information detached. The date of application will be treated as the date it was received.

14. Shortlisting of applications

- 14.1 Copies of all covering letters and CVs, minus the personal information and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, will be sent to all those shortlisting, along with a copy of the Job Description and Person Specification, and a Shortlisting Form.
- 14.2 Those who are shortlisting will be required to meet and review each application together and assess it against the Job Description and Person Specification, recording their agreed decision and basis for deciding whether to shortlist each candidate.
- 14.3 All those shortlisting must be impartial and be able to add value to the process. Under no circumstances must an individual who is a close friend, family member or has, or has had, a close personal relationship with a candidate, participate in shortlisting or sit on an interview panel. The same would apply if an individual's knowledge of an applicant is such that their objectivity may be compromised. This may have relevance where internal applicants have been shortlisted.
- 14.4 Information presented to those shortlisting should be considered against the criteria set out in the Job Description and Person Specification. No other information or criteria should inform the decision.
- 14.5 Once the shortlisting assessment has been completed, the candidates should be grouped into the following categories:
 - Invite to interview.
 - Decline.
- 14.6 Candidates that are assessed as 'invite to interview' or 'rejected by all interview panel members' will be appropriately processed (see Invitations to Interview section below).
- 14.7 Disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria for the role will be guaranteed an interview.

15. Invitations to Interview

- 15.1 All candidates shortlisted for interview will be informed at least one week beforehand.
- 15.2 They will also be told about the membership of the interview panel, how long the interview is expected to last, and of any presentation or other test they will be expected to give at the interview.
- 15.3 Candidates will be advised that we will reimburse reasonable travel expenses they incur attending the interview - subject to agreed limits which will be agreed in advance. We will not usually provide accommodation expenses.

- 15.4 Interviews will be arranged to accommodate travel arrangements e.g. if someone needs to travel any distance, then an afternoon interview time will be offered. Online interviews using Teams/Zoom will be offered as an alternative to face-to-face interviews.
- 15.5 Candidates will be helped with any special needs they may have in attending the interview, to ensure that the interview process is not indirectly, or directly, discriminating against particular individuals.
- 15.6 If a shortlisted candidate cannot attend on the set interview date, then the interview panel will use its discretion on whether to be flexible in the circumstances and attempt to reconvene on an alternative date. However, we recognise that this may not always be possible and, in a scenario, where an applicant cannot make any of alternative dates offered, they will be informed that their application cannot be progressed.
- 15.7 Candidates who have applied and who are not shortlisted will be notified in writing (by email).

16. Interview Panels

- 16.1 For continuity and consistency, it will be usual for those involved in shortlisting to also sit on the interview panel. Under no circumstances should a manager interview alone.
- 16.2 An employee who is leaving should not be involved in the recruitment of their successor.
- 16.3 To be able to Chair an interview panel, the employee must have successfully demonstrated that they have experience in recruiting from their current or previous role and/or have completed relevant training. This recognises the important role the Chair plays in ensuring that the selection process is carried out fairly and objectively and that the recruitment decision is robust and will stand up to scrutiny.
- 16.4 If a suitably qualified individual cannot be found to chair the interview panel, then the recruiting manager should contact the Board who will assign a Chair.
- 16.5 Observers on interview panels must not participate in the decision-making process. Where a first-time recruiter is involved as part of their management development, there must be at least two other experienced recruiting managers on the interview panel.

17. Assessment and selection process

- 17.1 An interview must form the core part of every recruitment and selection process.

- 17.2 The interview panel will draw up a standard set of questions to ask each candidate at interview. These must relate directly to the Job Description and Person Specification and enable the interview panel to assess each candidate's ability against this.
- 17.3 We reserve the right to ask potential candidates to complete a test as part of the selection process. Where this is the case, will candidates who are invited to an interview be informed of this requirement and be provided with the same amount of time to complete the task. Care will be taken to ensure that any tests related to the selection process do not unfairly discriminate. Where a candidate is known to have a disability that may put them at disadvantage, the interview panel should make reasonable adjustments to the tests to enable the candidate to participate fairly.
- 17.4 The interview must also allow candidates sufficient time to answer and ask any questions relevant to the post.
- 17.5 Scoring against key skills and competencies must be recorded on the Interview Scoring Sheet along with comments on all candidates for the record. The Interview Scoring Sheet should also include the result of each interview. Scoring of the Task will form part of the overall score.
- 17.6 Time will be allowed at the end of the interview process for the interview panel to discuss the merits of the various candidates and decide who they would like to offer the post to.
- 17.7 Where no consensus can be reached by the panel, the final decision will rest with the CEO - or Chair, if the appointment is for a CEO.
- 17.8 Any decision should ideally be made within 24 hours following the last interview and candidates should be informed as soon as possible. Interviews should not be held on Fridays, and candidates should not have to wait over a weekend to hear about the decision. If there is a justifiable reason which delays reaching a decision, then all interviewees must be kept informed.
- 17.9 The decision must be recorded, together with any relevant comments, and should be accompanied by any additional information such as the name of a secondary candidate should the first preferred candidate prove unable to take up the post.
- 17.10 The interview panel is under no obligation to appoint if they consider there are no suitable candidates.
- 17.11 The successful candidate will be asked to respond in writing to a letter formally offering them the post, as soon as is practicable, and give the date on which they expect to start.
- 17.12 All unsuccessful candidates must also be informed of the decision as soon as possible and must be given access to a member of the interview panel should they require

feedback. The only exception to this rule being where there is a secondary candidate and there is a possibility that the first may not be able to take up the position.

- 17.13 In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to vary the above procedure where the post is difficult to fill or during the recruitment process it is identified that the job required is different from the original plan. Any variation will be agreed with the CEO or the Board, depending on the nature and seniority of the post.

18. Post selection checks

- 18.1 Healthwatch reserves the right to undertake such pre-employment checks as are necessary to ensure the suitability of the applicant for the job in question.
- 18.2 This means that before a conditional offer of employment is confirmed, several pre-employment checks must be carried out and the outcomes considered satisfactory.
- 18.3 These include:
- Appropriate written references
 - Health questionnaire
 - Verification of qualifications and/or professional registration where appropriate to the role
 - Disclosure & Barring Service check where appropriate to the post
 - Right to Work in the UK check

19. References

- 19.1 Two satisfactory references must be obtained for an external candidate.
- 19.2 References should be sought from those referees identified on the candidate's application form. One of these should always be the current or last employer. References should ideally cover the last two years of employment. The exceptions to this are where the candidate is a recent school or college leaver, or someone who is reentering the work force after a break, or someone who is applying for their first job in which case references will be obtained from those who can satisfactorily vouch for them. These will be agreed with the candidate.
- 19.3 A copy of the job description and person specification or job role profile must be sent to referees to enable them to make informed comment on the candidate's suitability for the job.
- 19.4 Additional references may be sought where:
- The references provided contain only very limited information on the candidate's experience and abilities e.g. they are addressed "To Whom It May Concern" or only give dates of employment.

- The preferred candidate has had more than two employers in the last three years.
- Where the original referee(s) does not provide a reference.

20. Record keeping

- 20.1 Recruiting managers must keep accurate and detailed records of the recruitment and selection process to be able to provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates and as evidence in case the appointment decision is challenged.
- 20.2 All records including application forms and written evidence to support shortlisting and appointment decisions must be kept confidential and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- 20.3 Records must be retained for a period of twelve months after an appointment has been made in case they are needed to defend an Employment Tribunal claim. After this time, all documents must be confidentially destroyed.

21. Complaints

- 21.1 Complaints relating to any aspect of the recruitment process or decisions made should be made in writing to the CEO in the first instance.

22. Additional Policies & Documents

All Healthwatch policies and documents referred to in them are available at [Policies](#).

Date Policy Reviewed	23 April 2024
At the 15 January 2024 meeting of the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Board of Directors, the Board approved the recommendation to delegate authorisation of operational policies to the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch.	
Date Approved by the CEO	26 April 2024
Next Review Date	April 2026