

COVID-19 EMERGENCY WORKFORCE PLANNING

Recommended Changes to Recruitment Arrangements

The council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure sets out the approach to advertising, recruitment, internal appointments and best practice selection processes. The applications process is managed through My Job Scotland.

The council also has in place guidance on the Management of Fixed Term Workers.

All council policies have been agreed following consultation with trade unions.

If the council is to react quickly, efficiently and flexibly to address gaps in critical services during the pandemic, it will require to deviate from the terms set out in these policies and procedures.

1. Internal Recruitment and Resourcing

To ensure the efficient use of our current staff base, approval is sought to invoke temporary changes to the internal recruitment process for the period of the pandemic, with specific emphasis on allowing:

- Internal movement without the standard advertising, interview and selection process, instead using skills and experience proformas or skills matrixes as necessary
- Internal movement without references
- Employees to work in posts where they do not meet the essential criteria upon appointment but can be sufficiently trained and supported to carry out key tasks for a temporary period
- A review of fixed term contracts across all services to proactively extend contracts in key worker posts to 31 December 2020. It is proposed that the reason for fixed term contract extensions be '*emergency cover for critical services during COVID-19 pandemic*'. If contracts require to be terminated at an earlier point, this can be done following appropriate consultation.

2. External Recruitment and Resourcing

To ensure we are able to maintain sufficient staffing levels, approval is sought to invoke temporary changes to the external recruitment process for the period of the pandemic, with specific emphasis on allowing:

- Decisions to advertise key worker posts delegated to Services Managers or any centralised workforce planning team that may be set up to co-ordinate the deployment of employees and supply workers.
- CV applications accepted to expediate the recruitment selection process
- Use of a range of alternative advertising
- Waiving the 7-day notification period for interview
- Interviews to be conducted through alternative channels, including Skype and telephone
- Recruitment and selection of candidates by one appropriately skilled panel member
- Appointing to one post with the ability to move the employee between posts, where appropriately skills

- Appointment to posts where candidates may not meet the full essential criteria but can be sufficiently trained and supported to carry out key tasks for a temporary period
- Discretion to appoint without 2 references and a pre-employment medical check for a specific post based on appropriate risk assessments and service manager approval.
- The check on eligibility to work in the UK would remain essential.

3. Management of Supply/Locum and Agency Workers

The council will become increasingly reliant on a pool of supply/locum and agency workers to fill gaps in critical service during the pandemic. Increasing concerns amongst supply workers about the financial impact of service changes, such as school closures, and a lack of guaranteed work, may result in loss of individuals who seek temporary work with other local authorities.

In order to mitigate against the impact that a reduction in this staff pool could have, it is recommended that services quickly review requirements in Key Worker posts and offer fixed term contracts to those supply/locum and agency workers who are able to assist critical services during the pandemic.

Engagement of Agency Workers

The process for engaging agency workers is available at:

<https://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/9288/Supplier-Specific-Guidance>

Suppliers on the Temporary and Interim Staff Frameworks are limited. If Services are unable to access needed staff resources through this framework an additional framework is available which will allow services to make a direct award to the supplier while remaining compliant with procurement legislation. The additional Crown Commercial Services Framework (RM6160) is available at: LINK

Where it is necessary to make a direct award to a supplier, a Cost Code reference will still need to be obtained (even if this is done retrospectively for urgent requirements) and IR35 tests completed as required. Services approaching non-contracted agencies should contact Corporate Procurement for further guidance and support.

As noted above, services are encouraged to limit the use of agency workers where possible. The requirement for agency worker contracts should be reviewed on a month to month basis with a view to offering fixed term contracts where appropriate.

HR Services
March 2020