Becoming a
RECRUITMENT
ALLY

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RECRUITMENT ally

Welcome to **Becoming a Recruitment Ally** a pocket guide created to inform recruiters, human resource (HR) teams and occupational therapists (OTs) recruiting newly qualified OTs straight out of education.

This pocket guide will inform and support those who want to create a more inclusive and welcoming experience for all newly qualified OTs and to understand how, working within their existing recruitment practice, they can become advocates and allies for candidates from diverse backgrounds.

The Elizabeth Casson Trust's Observatory project, 'A Focus on Starting Your Career', explored how to enhance the transition experiences of newly qualified OT's from education to employment while also considering how recruiters and recruitment processes could contribute to a more inclusive and culturally informed experience of transitioning into work.

Over the course of several months, we engaged with a range of organisations, including universities and therapy services, and individuals from a range of professional backgrounds, including from HR, to understand how well the bridge between education and employment is working and whether it effectively embraces the needs of all newly qualified OTs regardless of their background. Many participants brought their own personal experiences of being minoritised and a newly qualified OT. Together, the group considered the experiences of minoritised OTs as they transitioned from university to starting their careers and the first two years in practice.

As an OT recruiter, you will already have access to recruitment practices, processes and collateral that you routinely follow. You should consider this guide a 'companion' to your current approach. The guide will help you to think holistically about inclusion at each step of the recruitment process and encourage you to develop and promote the behavioural habits that ensure that every OT you recruit has a positive experience of joining the workforce.

If, as they join, you are not going to be the new recruit's line manager, you may wish to bring this guide to the attention of their new manager or supervisor, where it may also help with their ongoing experience of other employment processes such as general career advice, talent management and career direction, progression and promotion.

Introduction

When we asked occupational therapist recruiters about their understanding of a newly qualified OT's journey from university to employment, they spoke about a 'flaky bridge' - an experience that was often quite protracted, process-driven, sometimes impersonal and lacking real insight into the importance of championing a more inclusive culture for new recruits from diverse backgrounds.

This guide aims to provide additional, practical insights so that everyone involved in the recruitment process has the confidence and emotional and cultural intelligence to become an active advocate for inclusive recruitment. Developing the cultural awareness that ensures every new recruit has a positive experience, regardless of background, and feels not only welcomed but experiences a transition into the world of work that encourages a growing sense of personal and professional belonging and engagement.

What does it take to ensure that every new recruit feels welcomed, understood, and included as a minoritised individual at every stage of the recruitment process?

Crossing the 'Flaky Bridge[1]'

DEALING WITH TRANSITION SHOCK

Making the bridge between education and employment feel enticing and safe.

Most new recruits will find it challenging to adjust to their new role, especially in the first few months of employment. This 'transition shock' may include feelings of anxiety, instability, and lack of personal confidence and competence as the new recruit begins to experience their roles and responsibilities for the first time. They may also feel isolated if they are working remotely within their new team. They will also still be learning at this stage, building relationships, gathering knowledge and refining expectations of themselves as the reality and demands of their responsibilities and caseload begin to crystallise.

ASK YOURSELF:
What support is your organisation offering within this transition phase to help the new recruit make a healthy and sustainable transition?

- What can you do to ensure the transition is a welcoming and positive experience?
- Have you made clear the expectations for the hiring manager and HR? How have you handed over?
- Have the links to support mechanisms been clearly highlighted?
- Have you considered what might need to be offered and when to ensure support is timely for applicants?
- Is it embedded into your recruitment processes and practice?

[1]The term 'flaky bridge' is used in the Reducing Pre-registration Attrition and Retention Report (2018), Health Education England. See www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/reducing-pre-registration-attrition-improving-retention

THE ROLE OF PRECEPTORSHIP Effective preceptorship outcomes are linked to improved recruitment and retention and are important for delivering better, safe and effective care[2]	**ASK YOURSELF:** **How committed are you and your organisation to ensuring that newly qualified OTs have the best possible start as a registered professional?** • Do you have a preceptorship programme? Are the working arrangements of this preceptorship programme outlined? Is it clear to the new recruit how this is accessed? If not, how do you offer the structured support needed to transition their knowledge into everyday practice successfully? • How are new OTs supported to develop the habits of lifelong reflection that help them objectively reflect on their progress and self-identify their continuing development needs? • How are you nurturing the new recruit to increase confidence and a sense of belonging and engagement that helps them feel valued at work? • Is there clarity about whose role it is to provide this support?
EXPLORING BELONGING Belongingness is defined as the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group. There are many definitions of what belonging actually means for the workplace. At its simplest, it is having the same feeling at work as you do in a personal setting. For example, with friends where you feel comfortable to be there, to share your opinions to feel truly cared about and accepted and aren't afraid to be yourself. [2] National Midwifery Council	**ASK YOURSELF:** **What does my organisation do to foster a sense of belonging? What is my role? What does allyship look like in this space? Who are the allies that a new recruit can turn to and access? How do they reach them? Do these individuals have the resources, such as time and the skillset, to meet the new recruit's needs?** • How are the pillars of belonging brought to life in your organisation? Do new recruits experience a warm welcome? Are they 'known' and included by their team and the organisation more broadly? • What processes and programmes are in place to ensure that they feel supported and connected? How is this measured and reviewed? • How does your organisation learn and adjust policies and processes?

A welcoming recruitment and Onboarding experience

BECOMING AN ACTIVE ALLY

Allyship has lots of different definitions. In the workplace, it usually means using personal power, skills, experience and connections to support colleagues from minoritised communities. Allies might use their place in the organisation to support minoritised colleagues' careers and help them develop a sense of belonging. They often listen to understand more about individual needs and amplify their colleague's voices. They speak truth to power, right wrongs, and take action for inclusion enhancing minoritised colleagues' engagement and sense of personal value. Allies routinely influence and create positive change for individuals, and structurally for everyone.

ASK YOURSELF:

Are you an ally? Are you prepared to reflect on your own experiences and consider how they differ from those of colleagues from minoritised communities?

- Are you able to listen to different viewpoints? Do you create opportunities to hear from different groups? Are you able to think critically? Can you explore issues from different viewpoints, focusing on resolution rather than looking for proof that the issue exists? Are you curious to understand more about how others experience your organisation?

- Are you intentionally empathetic and authentic, enabling you to see experiences through the eyes of others and to take action to improve that experience?

- Are you committed to open conversations however uncomfortable? Can you accept new views and perceptions and proactively build them into recruitment and onboarding policies and processes? Whose role is it? When is the right time to ask new recruits for feedback about their experience of joining? How do you collect and use this information to inform your recruitment processes?

- How does your organisation empower its allies to embed the insights and learning they gain into your formal and informal structures? Whose role is it?

UNDERSTADING AND LISTENING

'Listening without bias or distraction is the greatest value you can pay another person'[3].

ASK YOURSELF:

Do you truly understand how your recruitment and onboarding processes are experienced? Do you understand what works and what doesn't? Do you have a process for review and renewal?

- How do you listen to feedback from minoritised communities? How do you use that feedback to enhance the experience? Does your review process help to build a voice for all employees?
- How do you collect diversity data and use it to inform the experience of new recruits?
- Do you really understand the data? What report do you routinely run? Are you creating change that is evidence-based and underpinned by the voice of those who experience it?
- Is the employee able to offer solutions for greater inclusion, for example what adjustments to make to the interview process to make it more inclusive? To offer a more inclusive methodology for monitoring performance through probation, or in communicating with assessors and colleagues?

BUILDING EMPATHY

Empathy can be defined as the ability to recognise emotions and to share perspectives with other people . It helps to build trust and strengthen relationships. There are three stages of empathy:

- **Cognitive empathy** – being aware of the emotional state of another person.
- **Emotional energy** – engaging with and sharing those emotions.
- **Compassionate empathy** – taking action to support people.

Remember that empathy is not about what you want but what the other person wants and needs – any action that you take must benefit them.

Remember that empathy is not just for crises. Seeing the world through the perspectives of others is a great skill that can be used in many situations. Practice these skills often.

Compassionate empathy is the most active form of empathy. It involves having concern for another, sharing their emotional pain and taking practical steps to reduce it.

ASK YOURSELF:

Do you consistently prepare to listen well, giving the situation the best opportunity to be successful?

- Are you in the right physical and mental space? Have you given sufficient time for the conversation?
- Can you give your colleague your full attention, setting aside your own assumptions?
- Does the physical space and the atmosphere you create make your colleague and you feel safe?
- Are you able to acknowledge your colleague's feelings and allow an emotional connection between you?
- Do you listen carefully to what someone is trying to tell you? Do you use your ears, eyes and gut instincts to understand the entire message? Do you listen for key words and phrases? Are you attuned to both what is being said and how it's being said?
- What does their tone or body language tell you about their emotional state? Are they angry, ashamed, scared, excited, optimistic? Do you avoid arguing with what is being said or disputing the facts in the early stages of the conversation?
- Can you examine your own tone and attitude to keep an open mind?

If you are placing too much emphasis on your own assumptions, beliefs and feelings you're not being empathetic.

- Can you see why others believe what they believe and acknowledge it? Are you able to show respect and keep listening, however uncomfortable? Do you ask the individual how they might resolve the issue as a way to understand what they really need?

Example:

A team member is upset and angry because they delivered an important presentation badly. Acknowledging their hurt is important, and reacting by showing signs of those feelings yourself is valuable, but it is essential to their wellbeing to put aside some time for them, offering practical support or guidance on getting through the situation and preparing for next time.

CHALLENGING DECISIONS

Successful constructive challenging involves testing the understanding of everyone involved and ensuring that you have a common purpose and goal i.e., to select the best person for the role without bias and using only relevant selection criteria.

ASK YOURSELF:

Are you prepared to challenge your colleagues' views about the most suitable candidate? Are you prepared to be an ally for diverse candidates, helping others to see their potential and speaking up if someone from a diverse background isn't being given the 'benefit of the doubt' because of embedded stereotypes?

- Are you able to use enquiry methodology to ask penetrating questions that challenge assumptions, stereotypes or bias? Do you ensure that observations or arguments are clear and evidence based? Do you ensure that the only factors taken into account are those in the agreed response grid and marking system?

- Does the organisation's recruitment training cover how to handle differences of opinion on a candidate's suitability?

- Are you comfortable to express opinions confidently and respectfully without being aggressive? Are you able to listen, negotiate, and compromise while making your point and remaining professional if the conversation becomes difficult?

- Is there a mechanism within the recruitment process for handling impasses? Are there sufficient opportunities to ensure that the final decision is entirely evidence-based and relevant?

Attraction
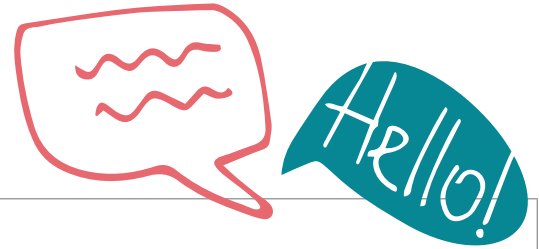
RECRUITING FOR THE JOB	ASK YOURSELF:
	Is your recruitment process on autopilot?
	• Do you challenge hiring managers to review the job description and the competencies attached to it, or are you just trying to replace the last incumbent?
	• How clearly do you describe the competencies and skills required – are they all truly necessary?
	• Have you developed a consistency of language that is expressed in 'plain' English? How accessible is it, for example, for people whose first language is not English or who have dyslexia?
	• Do you carry this through to the advert?
	• Does your advert reflect the potential for longer term career progression within your organisation, or are you just recruiting to fill a current vacancy? Are you offering a job or a career?

ADVERTISING	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Do you review the effectiveness of advertising campaigns?**
	• Ask yourself: Do you review the effectiveness of advertising campaigns?
	• Do you have performance data on which adverts and which advertising medium and route to market (e.g., online, radio or recruitment partner-led campaigns) produce the greatest diversity of applicant?
	• Are you aware of launching campaigns at religiously sensitive times, or with deadlines that might be difficult for applicants with caring responsibilities or for those with a disability?
	• Are you sure accessibility has been embedded into your recruitment strategies? Have you considered the importance of clarity, language, font size, use of colour and contrast, any imagery and reach of medium?
	• Is your inclusion strategy and commitment to inclusivity evident in the advert?
	• Do you offer a contact to speak to potential applicants if they have questions or are unsure of their suitability? Are they able to answer questions on inclusion, for example, religious observance, hybrid working, accessibility and adjustments?
	• Can your organisation's commitment to inclusion be readily found by a potential applicant?
	• Do your adverts and recruitment materials include images that sensitively reflect the inclusive and diverse ethos embedded into your organisation's workforce?
	• Do you use a recruitment agency? Are they aware of your desire to attract diverse candidates and can they help you achieve this?

EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION

Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is an important part of your employer brand. At its simplest, it's the promise between an employer and a potential applicant. It should be based on a philosophy of 'commitment for commitment'. What is the applicant being offered in exchange for their talent, skills, experience and commitment?

EVP is a critical tool in attracting, engaging and retaining prospective talent in a competitive market.

ASK YOURSELF:
Is your EVP clear?

- Can an applicant understand what it might mean for them – is it tangible?

- Is it grounded in fact? Are you able to live up to the commitments made?

- What does this mean for your EDI strategy? Is it accurately reflected in the advert and across the recruitment experience?

- As an ally, what have you done to ensure that people from different backgrounds can engage with EVP commitments? What actions do you and your organisation take to help candidates understand how EVP will contribute to the lived experience they can expect if they are successful? Can you describe policies, programmes and tools that will deliver EVP, for example family friendly policies, life stage policies for example IVF or menopause, wellbeing, reasonable adjustments, leave and bereavement policies or equalisation of pension benefits.

- Do your policies promote inclusion but also offer protection when things go wrong? What is your position on bullying or harassment, employee relations, whistle blowing or discipline?

- Do you review and measure EVP? What do your people and networks/resource groups tell you about what EVP means to them?

EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION

Employee brand describes an organisation's reputation and popularity from a potential employer's perspective, describing the values the organisation offers to its employees. The goal is to help every employee, regardless of background, share a common purpose with the organisation and to develop a sense of belonging and shared endeavour so that employees feel excited and engaged by joining and being a part of the organisation. It is the early expression of organisational culture and therefore employee experience.
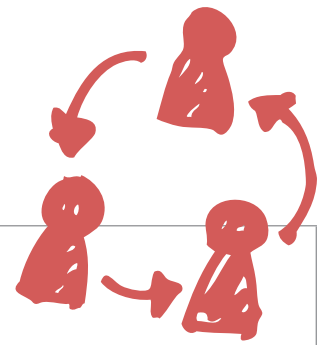
ASK YOURSELF:
How well developed is your employee brand?

- Is it evident in your recruitment material and processes from advert to offer?
- How clear is the proposition?
- Has it been tested with people from diverse backgrounds? Is it truly inclusive? Is it culturally aware?
- Are interviewers able to bring it to life for potential recruits?
- Is it regularly reviewed and refined? Who is responsible for its development?
- Does it set expectations that can be delivered? Is this brought to life by the stories of real employees?
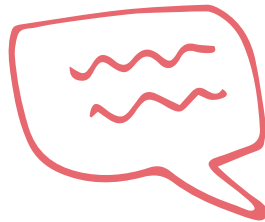
Selection - Sift

PREPARING TO SIFT	**ASK YOURSELF:** **How clear is your organisational and personal commitment to inclusion?** • Does the culture permit or encourage interviewers to challenge stereotypes and to recruit for difference? • Has the organisation been 'primed' to ensure that diverse candidates can be themselves and are not forced to adopt a cultural norm that disadvantages them? • Are you prepared to 'fight' for equitable decisions? How does the recruitment process help you to build an evidenced case? Does your culture allow you to speak truth to power? • As an ally, what action are you prepared to take to ensure equity? Do you feel you have the skills to resolve an inequitable assessment or decision and ensure it does not happen again? • How is learning embedded in your organisation?

SIFT PROTOCOLS AND STANDARDS	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Do your protocols and standards reflect good practice?**
	• What steps are you and the organisation prepared to take to ensure every person has an equal chance to be sifted on merit? For example, do sifters have access to personal data such as names or D.O.B.? Is EDI data collected? If so, how is it used? When is it made available to those involved in the recruitment process?
	• How are those involved in the process introduced to the protocols and standards? What role, if any, does artificial intelligence (AI) play in sifting? Have the system provider's inclusion credentials been taken into consideration? Are you sure that only relevant criteria are used? Is this clearly reflected in sift outcomes?
	• Is the documentation regularly audited to ensure compliance and equity? Whose role is it to review and update standards?
	• Is outcome data captured? What is known about sift outcomes for minoritised communities?
	• Would you proceed if you had an all-white or all-female sift outcome from a diverse pool? Would this be flagged, and by whom? Who would it be flagged to? How would you address any lack of diversity?

SIFT MATERIALS, INCLUDING ANY ASSESSMENT MATERIAL	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Was inclusion 'front of mind' when developing sift materials and assessment activities?**
	• Have any materials been assessed for inherent bias – especially where AI may be involved? How accessible is the experience? Do you seek candidate feedback? Does the candidate know that they may ask for any reasonable adjustments they need? How often are the materials reassessed and updated? Does training for those involved include awareness of bias in these types of recruitment tool as well as broader bias?

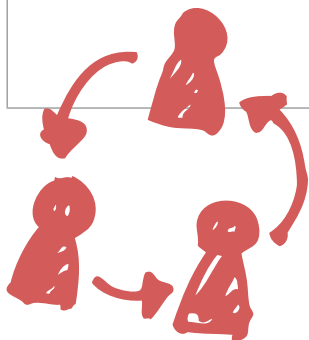| **ONLINE SIFTING OR ASSESSMENT CENTRES**	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Was inclusion 'front of mind' when considering which medium to use, e.g. face to face, online and hybrid?** • If hybrid, how do you ensure that remote candidates have equity of 'time to shine', that the experience is equally accessible and that reasonable adjustments are made? What steps have been taken to ensure that the assessment does not inherently favour those with particular personality traits or cultural norms which might prevent others, for example, a person with a speech impediment or from a cultural background where deference and humility are valued, from being heard? • Who owns this process and is responsible for assuring that the process is equitable and free from bias? • How can the structure of this process be challenged or amended?

TRAINING	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Is training a prerequisite for anyone involved in sifting?** • Does the training provide clarity on inclusion in recruitment? Is it in place for everyone involved in the recruitment process? • How often is training refreshed both in terms of content and frequency of delivery? • Does it cover unconscious bias? • Does it cover how to make decisions based only on relevant factors? • Does it cover the importance of note taking, for example ensuring notes are timely and evidence based.

Inviting candidates to Interview

PREPARING TO SIFT	**ASK YOURSELF:** **How clear is your organisational and personal commitment to inclusion?** • Does the culture permit or encourage interviewers to challenge stereotypes and to recruit for difference? • Has the organisation been 'primed' to ensure that diverse candidates can be themselves and are not forced to adopt a cultural norm that disadvantages them? • Are you prepared to 'fight' for equitable decisions? How does the recruitment process help you to build an evidenced case? Does your culture allow you to speak truth to power? • As an ally, what action are you prepared to take to ensure equity? Do you feel you have the skills to resolve an inequitable assessment or decision and ensure it does not happen again? • How is learning embedded in your organisation?
WORDING OF THE INVITE - ASSURANCES	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Does the invitation feel encouraging?** • Is the language used clear and welcoming? Does it explain how the day will progress? • If the interview will be held online or include assessment of any type, has this been explained? Are there any protocols that candidates need to know about? • Does it offer a contact to speak with? How do candidates know that they may request reasonable adjustments?

YOUR ROLE IN THEIR SUCCESS	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Is there anything else I should do to ensure the candidate is ready?**
	• Do you offer an opportunity for the candidate to ask any questions ahead of the interview? Is there a named contact who may offer support?
	• What are you doing to ensure that there is clarity, flexibility, and an opportunity to remove any worries about what to expect on the day? Do you confirm that any reasonable adjustments requested will be accommodated? Are you prepared to assure the candidate how the adjustments will follow through to induction and employment?
	• How will you ensure that every candidate is treated with respect and equity?
	• Are you prepared to challenge any outcome decision that you believe to be unfair or inappropriate

ORGANISATIONAL BRAND	**ASK YOURSELF:** **What is the whole experience like – is there an obvious alignment to your EDI strategy and EVP at every touch point?**
	• Have your reception staff been trained on EDI? Do your security protocols take into account EDI considerations such as religious dress, physical access, or assistance dogs?
	• How far are you prepared to go to ensure that candidates arrive at the meeting with as little stress as possible? For example, meeting people at the bus stop or as they reach a complex campus or site?
	• Do you offer candidates with learning disabilities, cognitive diversity or speech impediments an opportunity to view the interview questions in advance?
	• Have you tested your literature against the Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark to support candidates with learning difficulties or for whom English is a second or third language?

Preparing to Interview

THE WELCOME	**ASK YOURSELF:** **How will you set candidates 'at ease' and create a successful environment for each candidate?** • Do you have a standard statement for interviewers to read, explaining that you want candidates to have the best opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the role, and what this means in practice? For example, that candidates should feel free to pause for thought when responding or if they lose their train of thought; that they can make notes if it's helpful and that it's OK to ask for a question to be rephrased or repeated. • That candidates will have an opportunity to mention anything they believe is important to their application if not already covered in the standard question set? • Make it clear that panellists will be taking notes and may therefore be looking down from time to time?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS AND STANDARDS	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Is it policy that only trained interviewers can interview?** • Does training include EDI and unconscious bias? Is training available on good note taking? • Are interviews by a single interviewer permitted? What is your policy on the diversity of interviewers? Does each interviewer have a clear role? • Do interviewers understand the need for clear language and simple instructions? • Are you open to interviewees being offered an opportunity to suggest the best way for them to promote themselves? Bringing a carer with them?, Advising you how to make materials more accessible to them so they can perform at their best? If timed, do you allow additional time for people with learning and communication needs, for example, for candidates with dyslexia or speech impairments or for those with English as a second language? • Does your timetable allow sufficient time between interviews to review each candidate? Is there a decision making slot at the end of each day?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	**ASK YOURSELF:**
	Are questions agreed in advance? Are they clear and expressed in simple language, applicable to all, offered in advance of the interview, positively framed and agreed by all interviewers?
	• Are reasonable adjustments available?
	• Are notes taken during the interview? If so, is there a standard agreed response grid and marking system?
	• Do you ensure the candidate has an opportunity to tell you anything else that they believe may support their application that your questioning has not covered?
	• Do you offer an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions about the organisation, employment terms and what happens next, timetable etc.?

ASSESSMENT AND DECISION	**ASK YOURSELF:**
	Are the assessment and decision making processes clear to all interviewers?
	• If there is a scoring mechanism, is it mandatory or is it used only as a guide?
	• Are you confident that only relevant criteria are used? Are interviewers aware of personal unconscious bias, which may lead to reliance on irrelevant criteria, for example, culturally sensitive mannerisms such as eye contact?
	• Are outcome decisions evidence based? Would they 'stand up' to external scrutiny or audit?
	• How are 'dead heats' (two candidates or more who score the same) managed? Is there a reliance on the 'balance of skills'? If so, is there an agreed weighting?
	• How do you use the law to ensure equitable outcomes that support diversity? What do you know about how 'Rooney's law' can be used and the risks this may present? Do you take positive action, for example, 'red ringing' roles for people with disabilities or use of a guaranteed interview system, whilst understanding the risks this may include?

Conducting the interview

WARM WELCOME	**ASK YOURSELF:** **What additional steps should you take to ensure the interviewee feels comfortable and is able to bring their 'best self' to the interview?** • Do you ensure the simple practicalities are not a source of concern? How clear is your signposting to toilets, accessible toilets, fire alarms, evacuation processes, accommodating carers, organise interpreters, dog bowls or the use of a buddy? • Who meets the candidate and takes them to the interview room? • How do the panel introduce themselves and explain how the interview will work? Do you use a standard welcoming statement at the beginning of the interview?

LEVELLING THE FIELD	**ASK YOURSELF:** **What steps do you need to take to ensure every candidate is able to engage in the process to the same degree?** • Do you offer support to all candidates, explaining marking criteria and interview models e.g., STAR , explaining that reasonable adjustments are available, and sharing the types of questions that might be asked? • Do you limit questions about extra-curricular activities which may be inaccessible to candidates from minoritised ethnic or religious groups or those from lower socio-economic backgrounds? Are you clear how questions about extra- curricular activities relate to the skills you are seeking?

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS AND RESPONDING

Some minoritised groups struggle with admissions and recruitment practice if they aren't able to access support systems like career guidance, work experience or extracurricular activities. They may be the first in their family to obtain a degree and take a professional role and have little advice on what to expect or how to integrate into work culture

ASK YOURSELF:

What steps do you need to take to ensure every candidate is able to engage in the process to the same degree?

- Do you participate in work experience initiatives? Do you encourage candidates to speak to staff or staff networks ahead of the interview?
- Have you considered what support may be needed to address barriers and create an equitable experience?
- Do you seek feedback from candidates from minoritised communities and adjust the recruitment/interview experience accordingly?
- Do you provide a 'Work Ready Programme' to connect the candidate to future workplaces, buddy schemes, mentoring and coaching opportunities?

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[5] STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. For more info visit https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice/the-star-method

Selecting the best candidate

DETAILED PREPARATION AT EACH STAGE WILL HAVE HELPED TO BUILD IN INCLUSION AND ENSURE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

At this stage, it is critical that all decision makers reflect on the merits of each candidate's individual performance without any kind of bias e.g. recency, 'like me' bias, 'halo and horns' bias, or confirmation bias.

ASK YOURSELF:

How do you ensure that interviewers are aware of and have reflected on their own bias?

Has every interviewer been through interview training including inclusion and unconscious bias training?

- Has the interview been conducted in line with your interview protocols and marking systems?
- Have notes been taken throughout the process? Have interviewers discussed each candidate at the end of their interview?
- Are there any obvious biases present when performance is considered broadly against any particular questions?
- Would the final decisions 'stand up' to external or internal scrutiny? Are decisions evidence based?
- Are final decisions documented such that they could be audited?
- Has there been an opportunity individual panel members to challenge the decision? Was consensus reached? Was one interviewer an outlier across the selection process? Was this discussed? Were any disparities between interviewers resolved?

INTERVIEWER BEHAVIOURS	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Are you confident that you have remained open minded throughout the interview process?** • Are you aware of stereotyping and any personal bias? Are you confident that your approach aligns with your organisation's EDI principles and EVP statements? • Were you guided by the evidence? Did you feel that the review conversation was open to constructive challenge? • Were you comfortable with the contribution of your fellow interviewers? Would you 'call it out' or challenge their thinking if you were uncomfortable with their approach? Inevitably, there will be different interpretations and opinions. • Have you carefully considered who met the most recruitment criteria as per the previously agreed response grid and marking system? Would you be comfortable should the decision be audited?

FEEDBACK	**ASK YOURSELF:** **What evidence have you captured to ensure that the process has been completed with integrity? Can any learning be applied to future recruitment activity?** • Was the decision on whether each candidate is appointable or not captured at the end of each interview? If there are more appointable candidates than roles, is it possible to create a 'talent pool' or encourage people to reapply? Do you offer feedback to every candidate? How do you ensure that this is a positive learning experience for candidates even if they have not been offered the position? • Remember that statistically some minoritised groups, for example, women, tend not to reapply if they have not been successful and haven't received feedback as to why this was the case.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the process of actively seeking out, finding and hiring candidates for a specific position or job. The recruitment definition includes the entire hiring process, from inception to the new recruit's integration into the company.

Offer letter

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP THE APPOINTEE 'WARM' AND EXTEND THEIR WELCOME TO YOUR ORGANISATION OR TEAM.

ASK YOURSELF:
What action have you taken to ensure the offer letter is engaging and welcoming?

- Have you included reference to your organisation's Employee Value Proposition?

- Have you set out your EDI credentials? Have you referenced your policies on development, flexibility, family friendly pension, and leave, etc.?

- Is there an HR or Staff Handbook? Have you provided the new recruit with access to this?

- Is it clear when the new recruit's next pay review will be? What is the organisation's track record on equal pay and equal value? What assurances can you give minoritised groups on the fairness of the organisation's reward strategy?

- Do you offer the opportunity for the new recruit to be buddied or to join the staff network?

- How will any references be taken, verbally or in writing? Have you encouraged the new recruit to share the job description with their referees?

- Is there a designated point of contact during the offer stage? Who will greet the new recruit on their first day? What equipment will be in place, especially where reasonable adjustments are needed? Does the availability of adjustments determine the new recruit's start date?

STAY IN TOUCH

Build the beginning of a sense of belonging through contact and information exchange. Iron out any worries, for example, regarding employment contracts or accessibility requirements.

ASK YOURSELF:
How can you keep the new recruit engaged and enthusiastic about starting work?

- How are you keeping them up to date on where they are in the recruitment process? How will you communicate with them? In person or via recruitment management systems? Are these systems accessible and intuitive to use?
- Have you considered that the new recruit may have alternative offers and that you are still competing for them at this stage?

Onboarding

Onboarding is the process of incorporating a new employee into a company and familiarising them with the company culture and policies so they can become an effective and contributing member of the team. It is also about providing a welcoming, engaging and inclusive experience that allows each employee to bring their whole self to the workforce, celebrating the unique experiences, skills and attributes that their personal journey and heritage brings to the workforce and allowing it to enhance the service ethos.

FIRST DAY

First impressions are incredibly important. Make sure that the hiring manager has everything they need to ensure a smooth and engaging introduction to your workplace.

ASK YOURSELF:

Does the new recruit have everything they need to fulfil their duties and be comfortable at work?

- Have you covered the basics? This might include information on security badges, access, toilet locations, areas to securely store belongings, working times and breaks, quiet or prayer rooms, as well as restaurants and local shops in the work vicinity.

- Who is responsible for introducing them to as many of their team or co-workers as possible?

- Do you have a buddy scheme?

- It is critical that any reasonable adjustments are in place on day one, especially regarding flexibility and equipment for disabled individuals or carers who need day one flexibility to access the world of work. What processes are in place to ensure this is offered and implemented on day one?

FIRST WEEK

Some certainty about how the first week will go is critical to offering clarity and purpose to the new recruit. Even a couple of anchor meetings or activities over the course of an otherwise variable week can be stabilising and create a sense of continuity and security for someone entering the workplace for the first time.

ASK YOURSELF:

Does the recruit have support to make a plan for the first, seven, 30 and 90 days - including such things as learning and development, on the job training, introductions and job shadowing

- Have you ensured that new recruits understand how they will be assessed if probation is in place? Does the new recruit know who they can speak to about the process and any further help or support they may need?

- Feeling welcomed involves being supported and understanding both the formal rules and informal norms of the organisation. Clarity and certainty, and a named person to clarify any area of the employment experience is therefore important. As a recruiter, it is essential to satisfy yourself that these things are in place before handing over to the hiring manager. How will you do this?

ENGAGEMENT

ASK YOURSELF:

How committed is your organisation to ensuring that being welcomed becomes a feeling of belonging?

- Every manager or team leader should understand that it is their role to support each employee to be happy and productive at work.

- Do you know the whole person? Do you know what motivates and engages them?

- Do you have a 'soft contract' with them to ensure their wellbeing particularly through the first days when even the most basic of tasks can seem impenetrable?

HR ROLE	**ASK YOURSELF:** **Does the HR team play a part in developing belonging and in troubleshooting?** • For example, are 'check- in' calls in place for the end of the seven, 30 and 90 day induction stages? This can provide an opportunity for the individual to confirm any contractual or policy points, provide feedback or explore future development and career options. • It's also a valuable learning opportunity for HR about what works and what else may be needed. Do you provide developmental insight training, for example, on building a personal community, growing personal power or networking with purpose?

Review and Audit

Carrying out regular reviews and audits of recruitment outcomes and the performance of broader recruitment and on-boarding policies increases transparency and the opportunity to build in capacity for continuous improvement. It also encourages employers to detail their approach to policies and strategy, as well as identifying any risks for example adherence to legislation and clear alignment to brand and EVP statements as well as inclusivity and equity standards.

Collecting and mining data creates an evidence base that can be used to measure the impact of recruitment and on-boarding strategy and practice outcomes. It also provides data which can be used to inform decisions on, for example, interview protocols or training and the advertising media which generate the most diverse applicants.

REVIEW AND AUDIT

When combined with good data capture and interrogation regular audit and review practices create greater accountability and evidence of process effectiveness or the need for further development. In turn, this drives a culture of organisational learning and quantifiable improvement in desired outcomes and ensures equitable outcomes.

When reported at senior levels, audit reporting also provides tangible assurance that inclusion and equity aspirations are aligned to practice and evident in decision making

ASK YOURSELF:
Are the organisation's recruitment and onboarding strategies and underpinning policies and processes in place and effective? How do you know?

- What do effective recruitment and onboarding policies achieve? How clear are you about the impact you want these policies to deliver? Where is this reported? For example in Board or Annual reports and inclusion statements are these visible/made available to those seeking to join the organisation?

- How is this measured? Are the measures used underpinned by evidence in the form of clear outcome data such as conversion rates? Do these measures provide evidence of performance from attraction to appointment and retention? Are measures reviewed for impact and their ability to inform strategic approaches to recruitment and on-boarding?

- How regularly are outcomes reviewed? Does this include audit of outcome decisions for any bias? What data is available to assure outcome decisions are aligned to inclusive practice and well evidenced? For example, are interviewers agreed question sets, marking systems and interview notes routinely audited for compliance? If evidence of incongruent decision making is identified during this process, who is informed, how are lessons learned and what action is taken? For example is re-training recommended, are interview frameworks or questions sets modified or replaced?

- Is it possible to disaggregate the data to ensure equity is achieved for minoritised groups? How is process excellence embedded? For example, is training provided to all interviewers on bias and the avoidance of irrelevant factors and stereotypes when reaching outcome decisions?

- Does the data collected include the voice of minoritised groups? Is their lived experience captured as a data set so that this informs future strategy and policies and enhances inclusive outcomes? How do you know what works?

- What is known about whether minoritised groups have representative numbers in talent pools and exit data? Are reviews undertaken after recruitment/campaign activity? Does the review involve feedback from everyone involved? For example, recruitment specialists, vacancy holders, sifters, interviewers and candidates (both successful and unsuccessful)

- How is the audit/review outcome used to inform process and policy changes? How are measures defined and adjusted to support and assure the changes made?

DATA

When combined with good data capture and interrogation regular audit and review practices create greater accountability and evidence of process effectiveness or the need for further development. In turn, this drives a culture of organisational learning and quantifiable improvement in desired outcomes and ensures equitable outcomes.

When reported at senior levels, audit reporting also provides tangible assurance that inclusion and equity aspirations are aligned to practice and evident in decision making

ASK YOURSELF:

Does your organisation use data to learn and continuously adapt and improve its recruitment and selection processes to remove or reduce barriers and ensure greater inclusion?

- Does the data include collection of diversity data? Is this data used to inform decision such as what training is provided to sifters and interviewers or which media reach the most diverse groups?

- Do you review the lived experience of minoritised candidates who have recently gone through the recruitment process? Do you use this data to seek opportunities to improve the experience?

- Do you routinely review the data to understand the conversion rates for example to see how diverse candidates progress through each of the key stages of the recruitment process? Is there a stage in the process where diversity starts to fall away? Are minoritised candidates less likely to be represented at each stage of the recruitment process?

- Did information about reasonable adjustments transfer seamlessly with the candidate or did the candidate have to request adjustments each time?

- Have you explored the data to understand the retention rate of minoritised groups.?

- Do you conduct qualitative exit interviews to understand the reasons why employees are leaving the organisation and to understand if there is a disproportionately high number of minoritised employees in the population who choose to leave or are exited?

LINKS

CIPD Guide to Inclusive Recruitment for Employers, November 2022
The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development.
www.cipd.co.uk/Images/inclusive-recruitment-employers-guide_tcm18-112787.pdf

Inclusive Recruitment, Leading Positive Change, April 2021
A report by NHS Employers and commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement
www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/media/Inclusive-recruitment-leading-positive-change_0.pdf

Supporting Early Career Occupational Therapists
The Royal College of Occupational Therapists 'essentials' for supporting early career occupational therapists, including preceptorship: www.rcot.co.uk/supporting-early-career-occupational-therapists

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES