

# Your application and our recruitment process



## The application form

Your application form is very important - the information you provide in your application form is the only information we will use in deciding whether or not you will be shortlisted for the selection process. The application forms asks you for your personal details, your qualifications and education history and asks you to outline how you think you measure up to the essential requirements for the post

Please do not send in a CV unless the advert for the post specifically asks you to do this – only completed application forms will normally be considered.

*[In line with Lewisham's Environmental policy and our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint we will usually only contact all shortlisted candidates **by email** via the email address provided in your application. Please ensure you access your email account regularly to receive any correspondence from us regarding your application].*

## The job description

The job description outlines briefly what you would be required to do in the job, who you will report to and the responsibilities (for people and resources) attached to the job.

## The person specification

The person specification highlights the essential skills, knowledge and abilities needed for the job. It may also indicate information about the means by which the requirements will be assessed, either via the application form, by interview or by testing. When you complete your application form you will need to explain how you think you meet each of the essential requirements listed in the person specification. Try to give practical examples from either your personal or working life wherever possible. Give examples of the work you have been involved in and write in a positive way. Always remember to write about your individual responsibilities, e.g. 'I was responsible for...'; 'I introduced...'. Always gear your application to the specific job and ensure it is relevant to the person specification.

When you complete the online application form, it will be automatically e-mailed back to us on completion. You will receive notification that your form has been received. Always save a copy of your application form for your own reference.

## Applicants with a disability

We are committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. If you tell us that you have a disability we can make reasonable adjustments at interview, where you work and to your work arrangements. If you have a disability and are unable to meet some of the job requirements specifically because of your disability, please tell us about this in your application. If you meet all the criteria, you will be shortlisted for interview and we will explore jointly with you if there are ways in which the job can be changed to enable you to meet the requirements. This could include adjustment to premises and equipment or job duties.

## Shortlisting

Completed application forms are matched against the essential requirements outlined in the person specification. Only people who have demonstrated in their application form that they have met all the essential criteria on the person specification will be shortlisted for interview. In some cases, if there has been a large response to an advert, the manager may decide to carry out a testing exercise before inviting people who have successfully passed the tests to a formal interview.

## The interview

Hopefully you will have had some experience of interviews at school or college or during your working life to date. If not, you can often book practice interviews with careers advisers to help you get an idea of how the interview will proceed. Before you come for the interview re-read the information sent with the application pack and refresh your memory as to what you put in your application form. Re-read the copy you kept of your application form so that you can remember what you wrote. Read through the job description, person specification, recruitment advertisement and anything else that may have been sent to you with the application form. Are there any areas you do not understand? Make a note of these and ask for clarification at the interview. It is also a good idea to find out about the School by looking on the website and finding out more information. Are there any current/topical issues affecting the school or the area of work you are applying for?

There will usually be a panel of two or three people at the interview to help ensure fairness during the interview process. The questions that they will ask will be around the requirements listed in the person specification. The length of the interview will depend on the type of job you are applying for, but will generally last between 30 to 60 minutes. All interviewers will take notes throughout the interview. This is done so that we can be fair to you and the other interview candidates. The notes will help the interviewers to

remember which candidate said what, and so determine who is the most suitable person for the job.

Make sure you get to the interview in plenty of time! Make sure you know exactly where the interview is taking place, that you know how to get there and how long your journey will take. You should aim to get to the interview at least 10 minutes early. This will give you a chance to relax and compose yourself – it is better to arrive early than late and flustered! If the interview panel is running a little bit late, don't worry – there will be a reason for this but we will not rush your interview.

As you are applying to work in a School one of the areas the interview will explore will include suitability to work with children.

All candidates invited for interview must bring with them as many of the following documents as possible:

1. A current driving license including a photograph and /or passport
2. A full birth certificate
3. A utility bill and financial statement showing your current name and address
4. Where appropriate any documentation evidencing a change of name
5. Your qualification certificates.

Please note that originals of the above documents are necessary. Photocopies or certified copies are not sufficient.

IF POTENTIAL APPLICANTS HAVE DIFFICULTY IN MEETING ANY OF THE ABOVE CRITERIA WE WOULD WELCOME AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS ANY PROBLEMS AND ADVISE ON ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS.

## Interview tips

- Relax, pay attention and look at the interview panel during the interview. Concentrate on what is being said and do not let your mind wander.
- Speak clearly, answer concisely – and try not to 'waffle' when answering questions
- Listen to the questions being asked of you. If you do not hear a question properly – ask for it to be repeated; the panel will not mind if you do this. Do not try and guess what was said.
- Answer the question that has been asked. If you do not understand a question, ask for it to be rephrased in a different way.

- Make sure you understand the job fully and ask about anything of which you are not sure. Get all the information you need to know to decide whether you will accept the job if it is offered to you.

## Questions you might get asked at interview:

You will only be asked job-related questions. All interview candidates will be asked a set of standard questions designed to find out who is the most suitable person for the job. You will not be asked questions about your domestic or personal circumstances which have no relevance to your ability to carry out the job. You will also be asked questions on what you have written on your application form. This could be to clarify areas that you have written on your supporting statement, or it could be to check out your employment history or whether your references are relevant.

Think about the questions we might ask you to find out how well you can do the job. What questions would you ask if you were carrying out the interview? Think about how you will answer those questions. If you can, get someone to ask you the questions you think might come up, and practice saying the answers out aloud.

Know your positive points. What can you tell us about yourself that might make us choose you for the job? What skills, knowledge and experience do you have that will help you carry out the duties of the job. Don't be modest!

## Other selection methods

Sometimes we may use other means of selection for the job you are applying for. You may be asked to do aptitude, typing or IT skills test or you may be asked to undertake an in-tray exercise to demonstrate how you would prioritise work. Sometimes you may be asked to participate in group exercises to see how well you would work as part of a team or give a presentation on a relevant topic. You will receive prior notice if we want you to undertake a test or presentation.

## Making final selection

After the interview, the panel members will look through their notes (and the results of any test you may have been asked to do) and decide who best meets the person specification for the job. The person specification is prepared, and checked, right at the very start of the recruitment process – even before the job advertisement was placed. Only people who meet the criteria shown on the person specification will be considered for appointment and the person who meets them best will be offered the job.

## If you aren't successful

Don't give up! Competition for jobs is fierce and getting to the interview stage is a success in itself. Whether or not you are shortlisted for an interview you can always request feedback as to why you were not offered an interview or a job. You can use this as a guide to what you did well and the things that you need to brush up on for next time.

## If you are offered a job

All posts in Schools or Colleges involve some responsibility for safeguarding children, although the extent of that responsibility will vary according to the nature of the post. Please see the job description for the post for further information.

Accordingly this post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore all convictions, cautions and bind-overs, including those regarded as "spent" must be declared.

Where appropriate you will be required to complete a Disclosure from the Criminals Records Bureau at the appropriate level for the post.

We will seek references on short listed candidates and may approach previous employers for information to verify particular experience or qualification before interview.

If you are currently working with children, on either a paid or voluntary basis, your current employer will be asked about disciplinary offences, including disciplinary offences relating to children or young persons (whether the disciplinary sanction is current or time expired), and whether you have been the subject of any child protection allegations or concerns and, if so, the outcome of the any enquiry or disciplinary procedure. If you are not currently working with children but have done so in the past, that previous employer will be asked about those issues. Where neither your current nor previous employment has involved working with children, your current employer will still be asked about your suitability to work with children, although s/he may, where appropriate answer not applicable if your duties have not brought you into contact with children or young persons.

You should be aware that provision of false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected and possible referral to the police and/or DCSF Children's Safeguarding Operation Unit.

Any offer to a successful applicant will be conditional upon the following:

1. Receipt of at least two satisfactory references (if these have not already been received).
2. Verification of identity and qualifications
3. A check at DCSF List 99 and the Protection of Children Act List, Vetting and as appropriate
4. A satisfactory enhanced CRB Disclosure
5. Where the successful applicant has worked or been resident overseas in the previous five years, such checks and confirmations as the school may require in accordance with statutory guidelines.
6. Verification of medical fitness.
7. Satisfactory completion of the probationary period.

Please do not hand in your notice at your current workplace until we have advised you that we have received all clearances and that you are clear to start work.

**Warning:**

- Where a candidate is found to be on DCSF List 99 or the Protection of Children List or the CRB disclosure shows s/he has been disqualified from working with children by a Court; or
- Found to have provided false information in, or in support of his/her application; or
- The subject of serious expressions of concern as to his/her suitability to work with children

The facts will be reported to the Police and/or the DCSF Children's Safeguarding Operation Unit.

## The Borough of Lewisham

Lewisham is an up-and-coming place with something for everyone. It stretches from the River Thames in the north down to Crystal Palace and Beckenham Place parks in the south. More and more people are choosing to live and work in Lewisham, thanks to the unique mix of urban cultural life and suburban tranquility. The area offers as much peace and quiet or hustle and bustle as you require. It all depends where you look. For much-needed chill out time, there are award winning parks and open spaces to explore.

The Laban Dance Centre, Horniman Museum and Broadway Theatre offer a culture fix. On the other hand, if you're looking to let off steam, then there are plenty of bars, restaurants and cafes. Lewisham is one of London's best-connected areas offering frequent trains to and from Waterloo East, London Bridge, Charing Cross, Blackfriars, Victoria and Cannon Street.

The East London line connects New Cross to Surrey Quays and Whitechapel, while the Docklands Light Railway connects travellers to Canary Wharf, Tower Hill, Bank and the London Tube network. Eurostar trains to France and Belgium are available from Kings Cross St Pancras offering an escape to the continent within two hours.

## What are the pensions benefits?

The Local Government Pension Scheme is an excellent one. It is a 'final salary' scheme which means that your pension benefits are guaranteed – they do not depend on how investments perform. Your employer currently pays 18.50% into the fund on your behalf and if you join you will be covered for a range of benefits which include:

- an index-linked pension
- a tax free lump sum
- ill-health benefits
- immediate death cover
- widow's/widower's/registered civil partner's pensions
- children's pension

Teachers and Lecturers who are eligible to join the Teachers' Pension Scheme - information about the Teachers' Scheme is available from Education Personnel, Laurence House who can be contacted on 0208 314 9964.

**Annual leave** - Generous annual leave (in addition to statutory and public holidays) from 26 days to 34 days depending on length of service. Annual leave for part-time and job share employees is calculated on a pro-rata basis according to the hours worked.

**Flexible working** - The Council positively encourages flexible working and work life balance aimed at supporting individual employee requirements within the context of meeting service delivery needs. A range of schemes are in place including flexitime, part time work, term time work, career breaks, homeworking and jobsharing.

**Family friendly policies** - the Council offers excellent maternity benefits with up to 26 weeks paid leave after 1 year in post and 1 year's unpaid leave after the birth of the child; 10 days paid paternity leave; adoption leave and a subsidised workplace nursery, as well as childcare vouchers. Special leave is also available to deal with family emergencies.

**Interest free employee loans** - employees can take advantage of interest free season ticket, computer and bicycle loans

**Childcare Vouchers** - All working parents with children aged under 16, are eligible for Childcare Vouchers. Tax efficient savings of up to £1196 per annum (depending on individual circumstances) are available to eligible Council staff.

**Employee credit union** - 'Crownsavers' is a credit union which offers easy ways to save via payroll deduction and borrowing facilities at interest rates below those of commercial banks.

**Energy loans** - Lewisham Energy Loans Scheme (LELS) provides interest free loans and advice for the installation of domestic energy efficiency measures and renewable energy, and privately used alternative fuel vehicles.

**Renewable energy grant** - In addition, if you live in the borough and install a solar water heating system, a wind turbine or a solar photovoltaic (which uses energy from the sun to create electricity to run appliances and lighting) you are eligible for a renewable energy grant from the Council of £500.

**Discounts with local stores** - The Council has negotiated an impressive range of savings at local restaurants, cafes, DIY stores, hairdressers, dry cleaners, cycle shops and many more places.

**Learning and development** - The Council believes in "lifelong learning" and is committed to develop the potential of all its employees, not only for their current jobs, but also for their future employability.

**Membership of a trade union/employee groups** - The Council, as a good employer, supports the system of collective bargaining and believes in the principle of solving employee relations issues by discussion and consultation. All employees have the right to join a Trade Union and take part in its activities as well as the employee groups such as the Black Staff Forum and the Disabled Workers Forum

**Probation** - confirmation of appointment and access to interest free loans is subject to a satisfactory probation period of 6 months

**Code of conduct** - all employees are subject to the Council's Code of Conduct which outlines the responsibilities of all employees in this area.

**Health and safety policy** - the Council aims to ensure a safe working environment for all its employees through the implementation and monitoring of its health and safety policy, providing training and guidance of safe working practices where appropriate.

## **Council policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders**

Lewisham Council is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability or offending background.

We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience against the job requirements

As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, the London Borough of Lewisham complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice (a copy of which can be seen on the CRB website using the link

[http://www.crb.gov.uk/PDF/code\\_of\\_practice.pdf](http://www.crb.gov.uk/PDF/code_of_practice.pdf)) and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any person who is the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

A Disclosure is only requested after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a Disclosure is required, all recruitment packs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, successful applicants will be required to complete a CRB form and provide evidence of identity to the satisfaction of the Council. Access to disclosure of criminal convictions will be restricted to those officers nominated for this purpose. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of any offences. In reaching decisions about suitability for appointment, the following will be taken into consideration:

- Whether the conviction or other matter revealed is relevant to the position in question
- The seriousness of any offence or other matter revealed
- The length of time since the offence or other matter occurred
- Whether the application has a pattern of offending behaviour or other relevant matters
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour or the other relevant matters, and
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation(s) offered by the convicted person

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. Information contained

in Disclosures will not be shared with any other person(s) or bodies other than those provided for under the CRB Code of Practice.

### **Policy on CRB checks for non-UK national or UK nationals who have lived abroad for more than 12 months**

For posts where the successful applicant is a non-UK national, an offer of appointment will be made subject to the candidate receiving both a satisfactory CRB Disclosure check (for any period of time spent in the UK) and their providing original copies to the Recruitment team as part of the recruitment process, a satisfactory police record or Certificate of Good Standing (CGS), a Certificate of Good Repute or equivalent from their county of origin or any other country they have stayed in for any period over 12 months outside the UK.

Where the successful applicant is a UK national but has spent a significant proportion of time living in a country outside the UK (usually 12 month), an offer of appointment will be made subject to both a satisfactory Disclosure check and a satisfactory police record or CGS or a statement of good character from the countries lived in. The successful applicant will be required to provide this as part of the employment clearance process and again the authenticity of the document will be checked by the Recruitment team via the CRB website.

### **The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**

This Act formally recognises the principle that people who have been convicted of an offence should not as a result be discriminated against for the rest of their lives.

It puts this principle into practice by setting time periods after which particular convictions are “spent”, and do not have to be disclosed by the individual. Information on “spent” convictions can be obtained using the following link:

<http://publish.lawontheweb.co.uk/rehabact.htm>

However, the provisions about spent convictions do not apply to a large number of occupations. In general terms, these exemptions cover posts involving work with children or vulnerable adults, as well as other sensitive work.

## **Creating an inclusive Lewisham**

A core value of Lewisham Council is to *'draw on the diversity of our communities to create a more inclusive Lewisham'*. We believe that freedom from discrimination and equality of opportunity are fundamental rights and that each person should be valued regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age. Social inclusion

lies at the heart of everything we do as a Council in our roles as an employer, a provider of services and a community leader.

We will develop and promote policies, services and actions that will contribute to making a real difference

We will:

- Develop and provide services for all according to need without prejudice or bias
- Work in partnership with all sections of the community
- Celebrate the variety of lifestyles and cultures within our borough
- Monitor and review our policies and procedures using an equalities perspective supported by equalities impact assessments
- Employ a workforce that represents the makeup of the borough's population
- Provide an accessible and safe working environment that values and respects the identity and culture of each individual
- Provide clear, meaningful information about Council services in formats and styles which best meet people's needs
- Work with others to provide an environment free from harassment and violence
- Find ways to involve all parts of the community in our decision-making processes

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