

STEP 5 : GUIDE TO COMPLETING APPLICATION FORMS

Application forms are used by recruiting organisations to structure the information given to them by job applicants. The information you provide in your application form is the only information the shortlisting panel will use to decide whether or not you will be shortlisted for interview. It is therefore very important that you complete this as effectively as possible. This also applies to NHSBT employees.

Demonstrating that you are a good match

What information is available to you?

- **Job Description:** A job description should contain details about the duties that you will be expected to undertake.
- **Person Specification:** The person specification identifies the skills and abilities, knowledge and experience, qualifications and education you will need.
- **Recruitment Profile:** These are used within the NHSBT for recruitment purposes. They incorporate the Job Description, Person Specification and NHSBT's values and behaviours

All employers will be judging how well your application matches their criteria (e.g. those written in the person specification). Those who most closely match are the ones shortlisted for interview. To stand the best chance of receiving an invitation, you need to demonstrate that you have the skills and experience asked for, and be able to provide clear examples. Most person specifications are divided into essential and desirable criteria. Sometimes, these are not clearly marked – assume that criteria are essential unless stated otherwise. It is important that you try and address all of the essential criteria, explaining specific examples from your own experience. Showing that you meet the desirable criteria will give you an advantage over other applicants, but not being able to meet them will not disqualify you from applying.

If No Job Description and/or Person Specification Provided

If you are applying to a company which does not provide Job Descriptions and Person Specifications, read their advertisement carefully and pull out the key words which will tell you the kind of person they are looking for. You can look for some additional information online (using Google) to help you find out more about the expectations of that role.

Completing an Application Form

Once you have found a position you are interested in, you can prepare your application in advance and tailor it to meet the person specification/recruitment profile.

Gather all of the information you need

You may need the following information to complete your application form:

- National insurance number
- Immigration status (if applicable)
- Qualifications (including grades and dates)
- Professional registration details (if applicable – including registration number, expiry)
- Previous employers (including their addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and dates of employment)

- Contact details of referees covering 3-5 years of employment, with one being your current/most recent employer

Try and gather all of these to make completing your application form easier.

Complete all sections of the form

When you complete your application form, try and read all of the instructions very carefully, and complete all of the sections. Some information in your application will be used to decide if you are shortlisted for interview, whilst the personal information and monitoring information are not used for shortlisting, but are kept for administrative purposes only.

Application Forms in NHS Jobs

This information is written specifically for applying for a role on NHS Jobs, but may be useful if you are applying with other public and private sector organisations. NHS Jobs application forms are split into several sections. If you are applying through NHS Jobs, make sure that you complete and check every section before you submit your form. It might help to get someone to go through it with you.

Pre-application Questions

Before you start an application in NHS Jobs, you may be presented with pre-application questions. Some information on where you have seen the job advertised may be gathered. There may be some other questions listed that are determined by the employer e.g. driving licence or NMC registration. If you answer these questions in accordance with the criteria set, you will be presented with the application form. If not, you will be presented with a message thanking you for your interest in the role, advising that you do not meet the essential criteria. For more information on these pre-application questions, you will need to contact the specific employer directly.

Personal information

Personal information is not used for shortlisting, but is kept for administrative purposes, monitoring and reporting. Make sure that your contact details are up to date, as this will be how you will be contacted if you are successful.

Qualifications

Make sure that you provide information on the educational and professional qualifications you have gained, and/or currently studying in order of the most recent. Make sure that you provide all of the information including the year of study, level, and the grade you obtained. If you are invited for interview, you may be asked for the original certificates.

Employment History

Try and make sure that you give your full employment history, with your most recent first. Your employment history can include job placements, work experience and voluntary work. In each case, give a brief description of your duties and responsibilities. If you have worked for an agency, the agency's details should be given, and a list of the placements that you have taken.

Make sure that any periods where you have not been employed are accounted for in the supporting information. This might include any career breaks or periods of unemployment.

Referees

You should provide referees covering the last 3 years of employment or training. If you have been employed, these should include your two most recent employers. Your referees will need to comment on your work experience, competencies and your suitability for the post. Personal references such as friends and relatives are generally not acceptable.

Supporting Information

On many application forms you will have to complete a section towards the end called supporting / additional information. It is usually presented as a large empty box, and may have a word limit. This section of the application form is very important, as employers will use it to assess how suitable you are for the role, and how well you meet the person specification/recruitment profile. There may also be some additional questions in this section (see below for further guidance on how to approach these). It is useful to read these first before you complete the supporting information – you do not want to repeat yourself.

You will need to the supporting information section (and the additional questions) to convince the shortlisting panel that you have the required knowledge, skills and experience – and make them want to invite you for interview.

You can include things about your

- Duties and responsibilities
- Skills, knowledge and experiences
- Voluntary work
- Explain any employment gaps

It is important that you look at the job description, person specification (or Recruitment Profile in NHSBT) and make a note of the skills and knowledge they are asking for. Try and provide evidence for each of the essential (and hopefully some of the desirable) criteria, giving specific examples of how you have demonstrated these. You may find it useful to create a separate Word document (or a table) for each competency/criteria from Person Specifications for different role you apply for (e.g. demonstrates good communication skills, can work effectively as part of a team) and highlight where you have met this. This will make it easier when you apply for future roles, as you will have a bank of your own experiences to draw upon.

Although it is important to refer to your work experience, remember all of the skills you might have gained through volunteering, or activities outside of work.

How to Phrase Your Examples

When you give your examples, make sure that you describe your experience, the part **you** played, why you did what you did, and what the result was. Instead of stating “I’m great with money and adding up”, it would tell employers much more if you put, “I’ve been in charge of the stationery budget for two years and have been responsible for cashing up at the end of the day”.

After providing an example, reflecting on the experience shows that you can learn from your experiences and are always trying to improve. For example, you could say that “Being in charge of the stationery budget taught you the importance of prioritising, planning ahead and keeping accurate records”.

Additional Questions

For NHSBT positions, there are typically five additional questions asked within the application form. It is very important that you answer these questions concisely and completely to demonstrate your knowledge, skills and experiences relevant to the role. Employers use these, in addition to the 'supporting statement', to assess how suitable you are, and how well you meet the person specification/recruitment profile. You will need to answer these questions within a given word limit, typically 150 words per question.

You should answer the questions thinking of how you have demonstrated particular skills in your previous roles, whilst being mindful of the person specification/recruitment profile. Depending on the role that you have applied for, there may be some specialist questions in addition to the generic questions. This applies to roles in training, nursing, administration, ICT, finance, science and research for example.

Example questions you may be asked:

- Please explain how your skills, knowledge and previous experience will enable you to succeed in this role
- Please give examples of when you feel that you have demonstrated good customer care skills
- Please give an example of when you have acted on feedback to improve your performance or change your behaviour
- Please give examples of when you have had to communicate information both verbally and in writing, in a clear and concise manner
- Please give us examples of how you demonstrate your professionalism
- Please tell us about a time when you have worked as part of a team, and what you did to help the team work well together

Monitoring Information

The information in this section is not used for shortlisting. Public sector organisations are legally required to monitor certain information about applicants to ensure that diversity rules are followed. The staff making the decisions about your application do not see the personal information and monitoring information when they shortlist candidates.

Equality Act 2010 & Disability Confident

The Equality Act 2010 protects disabled people, including those with long term health conditions, learning disabilities and 'hidden' disabilities (e.g. dyslexia). If you declare that you have a disability, reasonable adjustments can be made for the selection process and the interview to make it fair and equitable.

Within the NHS, if you declare a disability, you may wish to be considered under the Disability Confident Scheme. This entitles you to be guaranteed an interview if you meet the minimum criteria (essential criteria) as outlined in the Person Specification. In your application form, you will need to select 'Yes' if you wish to be considered under this scheme. This is not offered in all organisations, although it is commonly offered in most public sector and government organisations. If you are unsure:

- Look for the Disability Confident logo
- Visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-partner-organisations/organisations-that-disability-confident-has-as-partners> for a list of organisations offering this scheme
- Contact your local Job Centre, who will put you in touch with a Disability Advisor for further information on local employers who meet the Disability Confident criteria

Submit

If you are applying for a position in NHS Jobs, you can prepare your application in advance by filling out your profile with all of your personal information, educational background and employment history. As NHS Jobs remembers this information, you will be able to use this, tailoring your application when you find suitable posts. Remember – you will need to make sure that you tailor your supporting information to give you the best chance of success.

In NHS Jobs, you can begin an application and save the form to return to at a later date, or submit your application. Before you submit an application through NHS Jobs, make sure you have checked it carefully. You might want to save a copy so that you can familiarise yourself with your answers if you are called for an interview.

What if you do not have the skill/experience required?

Even if you haven't got the experience or skill/ability required, you could say how similar experiences and skills would help you approach this area. For example, "My experience of learning how to use a spreadsheet from scratch shows I can pick up software packages very quickly, so I'm confident I'd be able to pick up the Microsoft package without any difficulty.

Remember...

It will also impress employers if you show some knowledge of the company, such as what they do, their values (and how you can demonstrate these) and if they have appeared in the news.

Relevant websites

- <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/advice/intro.html>
- <https://www.totaljobs.com/careers-advice/cvs-and-applications>
- <http://www.monster.co.uk/career-advice/>
- <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/careers-advice>
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/skills-and-competencies> - aimed at graduates but the advice is useful for anyone applying for a job

Related documents

There are a lot of documents that you might find helpful in other areas of the [Career Development Toolkit](#), some of which are associated with other aspects of searching and applying for jobs.

- [Top 10 Tips on Completing an Application Form](#)
- [Keywords and Sample Phrases to use in your CV](#) (also applies to your application form)
- [How to Write about Achievements in your CV](#) (also applies to your application form)
- [Sample Interview Questions](#)
- [General Interview Questions and Sample Answers](#)
- [Competency Based Interview Questions and Sample Answers \(Using Situation, Task, Action, Response \(STAR\)\)](#)