Recruitment
Avoiding Shortlisting & Interviewing Bias

Purpose

Avoiding bias in shortlisting and interviewing is crucial for equal, inclusive and fair hiring practices.

What is bias?

Bias is prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair. Bias can be seen in many forms, such as gender, race, age, appearance, or personal preferences.

Common types of bias:

- **Confirmation Bias**: the tendency to favour and seek out information that confirms our existing beliefs while ignoring or dismissing contradictory evidence.
- **Halo/Horns Effect**: a cognitive bias where our initial impression of someone influences our overall judgment of their character, leading us to perceive them more positively (halo) or negatively (horn) than they truly are.
- **Primacy Bias:** the tendency to give greater weight to the first information we encounter, influencing our subsequent judgments and decisions. In recruitment, it might be the first application you screen or individual you interview.
- **Recency Bias**: the tendency to overemphasize the importance of recent events or information, often leading to inaccurate predictions or judgments. In recruitment, it might be the final application you screen or individual you interview.
- **Affinity Bias**: the unconscious tendency to favour people who share similar interests, backgrounds, and experiences with us.

What could happen if a manager was being biased? There are many consequences to being biased including:

- discrimination claims
- reputation risks
- recruiting the wrong individual
- decreased employee morale
- missed opportunities
- staff turnover.

Below is some guidance on how to avoid bias when shortlisting and interviewing.

Manager Responsibilities

Follow the Job Specification

To ensure you are shortlisting fairly, managers should shortlist against the essential and desirable criteria defined in the job specification.

This will ensure all candidates are evaluated equally and consistently.

Diverse Hiring Panels

Managers should aim to work with at least one other individual from their hiring panel. Panels should be as diverse as possible to bring different perspectives and remain objective.

Hiring panels should be utilised to screen applicants to decide who to shortlist for interview or other selection method and also again to interview/assess and select the candidate(s) to appoint for the role.

Each member of the hiring panel should have equal influence and input and score all candidates against pre-defined selection criteria.

Structured Interviews

Managers should follow a structured interview format, asking a consistent set of questions for all candidates and allowing candidates the opportunity to ask their own questions of the hiring panel.

Members of the hiring panel should listen to and score candidates' answers based on set criteria using the council's interview scoring forms.

Interview Questions

When deciding on interview questions, to ensure there is no bias, we should focus on job-related technical competencies and council values.

These questions should be decided in advance of the interview (ideally at least 3 working days prior). Managers are free to make up their own technical questions although the values questions should be selected from a pre-defined list which is available on the Recruitment, Appointment & Induction page on the intranet.

Final interview questions should be shared with candidates by email one working day before their interview.

During the interview, it's best practice for Managers to listen to candidates' answers and then prompt them for further details and clarity if required by utilising follow-up questions intended to tease out further information the candidate may not have disclosed in originally giving their answer.

It is important to ensure no single candidate is given more opportunity than any other candidate though as following up with one or some and not everyone could

unintentionally lead to bias. Managers should try to refrain from steering the candidate towards giving a particular answer or additional piece of information.

Post-Interview Reflection

After interviews, as a panel you should reflect on decisions together, openly discussing any biases that may have influenced outcomes.

You should engage in a healthy debate and acknowledge whether any biases made an impact on the scoring before determining which candidates you have collectively deemed to be appointable.

A common example is having a tendency to 'like' a candidate. In such case, the panel should discuss why the particular individual was more likable than the rest of the candidates and identify if the decision could be due a reason of bias.

By implementing these techniques, we can ensure we offer a fair, equal and inclusive recruitment experience for candidates.