

COVID-19 - Guidance for Managers on interviewing remotely

With remote working arrangements in place across the council due to COVID-19 and social distancing, Skype or video conferencing are replacing face to face recruitment interviews.

Remote interviewing should be the first option for all interviews and face to face interviews should only be considered if it is vital that the interview is conducted in this way, buildings are already open and in operation and it is appropriate. Before arranging any face to face interviews, you should seek agreement from your Director.

This guidance aims to support managers to make effective recruitment and selection decisions during this period, by helping to ensure:

- Remote interviews go as smoothly and professionally as possible
- All parties gain enough from the interview to enable them to make informed decisions.

Interviews should be undertaken using video. Only in exceptional circumstances would an audio only (i.e. phone) selection interview be appropriate.

Remember, a selection interview, whether face to face or virtual, is a two way process, and it is equally important for both the interviewer and interviewee to get the information they need from it to make sound decisions.

The guidance will be kept under review and updated as circumstances change.

1. Set expectations

Going fully virtual is still new to a lot of people and for some this may be their first ever virtual interview, so it is important to make them feel confident and comfortable.

Give candidates advance notice that interviews will be conducted virtually. Give specific guidance about the experience and what's expected from the interview as you would with a face to face interview, including how long it is expected to last, who the interviewers will be, and the structure of the interview.

Share with candidates how to access the videoconferencing technology and whether software needs to be downloaded. Don't just 'send a link'.

Contact the Service desk for further advice.

[Skype user guides](#) are available on 'Our Derbyshire'.

If you email candidates directly to invite them to an interview ensure that your email includes all the information normally included in the Council's standard invitation to interview template – see the example at the end of this guidance. This includes asking candidates to let you know if they have any specific requirements, to enable reasonable adjustments to be made for any candidates with a disability.

2. Be prepared

Treat video interviews with the same seriousness as face to face interviews. Know the job and person profile, the candidate's application and the questions you plan to ask.

Have all of the supporting information to hand so you don't have to navigate away from the interview. If it is difficult for you to view the application on a screen while you interview, make notes beforehand of the key points and areas to cover, to refer to.

Allow more time than normal for each interview and between interviews in case the candidate or the panel members' signal is lost.

3. Check your tech

Double-check the technology you'll be using, and ask the candidate to do the same. Prior to the interview, test the camera and microphone. Choose a quiet, well-lit location. Ensure the lighting enables the interviewee to see you properly.

Ideally you'll want to be somewhere with a blank background so as not to distract from the interview, but if not, consider removing any items which might take away from the professionalism of the interview.

Choose a camera angle that shows at least half your upper body enabling you to demonstrate a full range of body language. Eye contact is just as important as it is in a face to face interview, so make sure you know where the camera is, and make eye contact when asking questions and listening actively.

Close down email and other alerts that could distract you, e.g. set Skype messenger to 'Do not disturb'.

4. Tests

If you would normally include a practical test in the selection process this is still possible. The candidate should be made aware beforehand that there will be a test and given clear instructions on what it entails and how to complete it.

For example, for a business services role where you may want to assess accuracy or numeracy skills, you could provide a task for the candidate to do, and ask them to complete it as part of the selection process, and email it back to you. You could include a discussion about the task and how the candidate has approached it, as part of the interview to help fully assess their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Other options include sharing a document on screen and using it as a basis for a discussion, for example asking the candidate to comment on how information is presented, or discuss and interpret data. If relevant to the role, you could ask the candidate to prepare or research a specific topic or issue and talk through their approach, plan, or ideas in a short presentation at the start of the interview.

Ensure that any test or other assessment technique is accessible to all candidates.

5. On the day

Be on time – 'arrive' 10 minutes early to your virtual space and wait for your candidate.

Think about how you plan to start the interview without the usual opportunity for a 'soft introduction' in the first few minutes, as you greet the candidate in reception, walk them to the interview room etc..Consider how you can establish rapport with the candidate before the interview begins.

Explain the format of the interview in detail to help the candidate feel comfortable and perform through what may be an unfamiliar medium.

Agree what you'll do if the technology fails, or one of you has an unexpected interruption.

If there are continual connection issues this can be quite off putting and stressful for everyone, so if time allows the best option may be to offer to briefly pause the interview and allow the candidate to regroup their thoughts. If connection issues continue it may be necessary to suspend the interview and reschedule for an alternative day.

Emphasise that your selection decision will be based on the interview and that they should ask questions and interact just as they would if they were face to face with you.

It is more important than ever that the candidate is encouraged to ask questions to enable them to get a feel for the role, team and working environment. They will want to assess the culture, values and you as a prospective manager. Be prepared to share information readily – the candidate may need to ask more questions than normal to find out things about the role which they can't see, feel or experience.

6. After the interview

Make your decision in consultation with the other panel members, as you would after a face to face selection process, and ensure you have a record of your decisions and rationale.

If you aren't able to scan the interview notes for the successful candidate and upload them into Recruit, but do have a work mobile, take a photo of the notes to upload. Remember to delete the photos from your phone afterwards, and never use your personal mobile to do this.

If you aren't able to upload the notes into Recruit, retain them until you can. This won't delay the appointment process, but it is essential that the notes are placed on the future employee's personal file as soon as possible.

Guidance on ID checks and the DBS process is covered in section 2d of the [Supply and Demand Guidance](#) for managers on Our Derbyshire.

Further advice:

HR Services Recruitment team - Recruitment@derbyshire.gov.uk

Resourcing Managers

CCP and Economy Transport and Environment

– Tanya.Causebrook@derbyshire.gov.uk

Adult Social Care and Health – Sandra.McCurrach@derbyshire.gov.uk

Children's Services – Rachel.Edinboro@derbyshire.gov.uk

EXAMPLE OF INVITATION TO SKYPE INTERVIEW

Dear [FIRSTNAME],

Following your application for the position of [POSTTITLE] - Ref: [VACANCYNUMBER]. I am pleased to inform you that you have been shortlisted for interview. The interview will take place via Skype on [SLOTBKSTART]. The recruiting manager for this post will contact you with a Skype meeting request. You will need to set up an account on Skype if you do not already have an active account.

When you attend the interview, please have ready the relevant documents identified on [this list](#) so that we can establish your right to work in the UK. The recruiting manager will take copies of these documents during the Skype interview and if you are successful, they will be retained on your personal file. If you are unsuccessful, these documents will be destroyed.

A Trade Union observer may be present during the selection process.

If you require further information or have any particular needs which are covered by the Equality Act 2010, for example relating to a disability, please do not hesitate to contact us on the details below.

Please confirm that you are attending the interview and your email address to be used for the Skype Interview by emailing [CONTACTEMAIL] or phoning [RECRUITERPHONE], quoting the reference [VACANCYNUMBER].

Yours sincerely