



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Good employment practice case study

Recruiting a new staff member for your organisation

Katy Amberley, Headquarters Manager for the [British Society for Haematology](#) (BSH), spoke to us about the recruitment of a staff member for her team at head office.

How did this come about - what brought the issue to light?

The BSH decided that the charity's main sub-committee needed more administrative support to co-ordinate meetings, take and distribute minutes and, potentially, to support new projects.

Who was involved in the recruitment process?

Katy coordinated the recruitment process with the sub-committee's chair and secretary. She also involved NCVO-approved consultants [HR Services Partnership](#), which work with the society on a monthly retainer, and appointed web-based -agency, [Easy Web Recruitment](#), to advertise the post.

What did the recruitment process involve?

- **Drafting the job description and person specification.** Katy assembled the job description and person specification and sought input on the documents from the sub-committee chair and secretary.
- **Updating staff contracts and recruitment documents.** HR Services Partnership assisted with revising key documents such as the application form.
- **Drawing up a recruitment timetable.** *“July was a good time for the new recruit to start as they would get time to settle in before the round of sub-committee meetings in the autumn. So I drew up the timetable from spring onwards, including when we would be short-listing. That was the first step. Then we actually went into the recruitment process.”*
- **Selecting the right advertising method.** A number of options were considered for advertising including print advertising and using recruitment consultants. It was important to balance costs, the volume and quality of candidates and the competing demands on Katy's time in managing the office. Following a suggestion from HR Services Partnership, Katy decided to work with web-based agency, Easy Web Recruitment.
- **Advertising the post.** *“We gave Easy Web our person specification, job description, and the application and equal opportunities forms. They advertised*

the post on various job search websites and handled all the enquiries and application pack requests. They were inundated with enquiries. They were very helpful and simply passed on the completed application forms to us. It was incredibly useful.”

- **Short-listing applications.** Katy received about 90 application forms for short-listing. *“After receiving all of the application forms, I did an initial sift and sent the candidates that we were most likely to short-list on to HR Services Partnership. They fed back and made suggestions. It was reassuring to have a second opinion for fairness. We got the list down to 20; then we got it down to seven candidates – and I sent these to the sub-committee chair and secretary.”*
- **Devising the interview tests.** *“I decided we should have interviews and a test. From my own experience, I’ve found it most useful to be asked to complete an exercise that is relevant to the job. So HR Services Partnership devised an in-tray exercise and helped with our interview questions.”*
- **Undertaking the interviews.** Candidates were invited to attend an interview and test. The panel discussed each candidate after their interview and all candidates were reviewed at the end of the interviews. The panel consisted of Katy, the sub-committee chair and the secretary. *“The interview experience can be revealing. Some candidates find the test a bit of a surprise. The exercise is something that will be encountered in the job so it’s a valid thing to do. It is also very interesting to see how well the candidates have grasped what is involved in the role.”*
- **Notifying successful and unsuccessful candidates.** Candidates were interviewed over two Fridays. The panel ensured that the first candidates were aware that there were interviews the following week and no one was kept waiting too long before the BSH offered the post to their chosen candidate and informed those who had not been successful.
- **Undertaking pre-employment checks.** Katy requested references immediately from the successful candidate and sent out the contract of employment. The candidate provided their proof of their right to work in the UK on their first day in the office. HR Services Partnership supported to ensure that all legalities were covered.
- **Starting the member of staff with the induction process.** *“We’re a small organisation but we had a brief induction just for the first few weeks. It was simple but important that the candidate had something that would help to ease them in.”*
- **Probationary period review.** This was successfully completed after six months of the person being in post.

What has been the big impact of this recruitment process?

Katy has a very effective team member who is still with the organisation after 17 months in post.

What was key to the success of the recruitment?

- **A well-written job description and person specification.** *“I’d like to think that it went well. We put a lot of thought into the job description and person specification.”*
- **Proper paperwork and processes.** *“We reviewed all of our documentation, such as the application form, to ensure that it was up-to-date. We kept to the timetable to give everyone a fair shot. We made sure the contract and offer letter were watertight.”*
- **An induction.** *“Making sure the induction process was completed was important. We followed things through and it did go smoothly.”*

What were the main challenges?

- **Short-listing the large volume of applications.** *“I was astounded by the level of interest, to be honest. We had hundreds of people asking for an application pack. It was a challenge to shortlist 90 applications! I’d shortlist in small batches so that I didn’t get tired and miss things, and I sent HR Services Partnership my long-list to make sure that we were on the right track. I think this was the most challenging part of the process.”*

Any advice for organisations looking to recruit for the first time?

- **Find peer support.** *“Talk to someone with experience and see what advice they have to share.”*
- **Prepare thoroughly.** *“Make sure that you plan the recruitment process. Write everything down in a timetable and make sure that things happen at the right time and that you’re doing what you should. We planned the process fairly meticulously.”*
- **Know the law.** *“Even small things like not asking for a candidate’s date of birth on your application form. You have to be careful that you are not inadvertently discriminating against people. It’s worth speaking to a professional if you can.”*
- **Seek out solutions which are cost-effective for how you work.** *“Having done it once, I would certainly go through a web recruitment agency again, as a small organisation. We recruited an excellent candidate who has settled in well, and it was great value for money.”*

About BHS’s HR and workforce

- **How many staff do you have at your head office?** 3
- **How many trustees sit on your board?** 17