



Guidance Notes for Applicants

Thank you for your interest in working at the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. These guidance notes provide you with information about what to expect from our recruitment process. It explains how decisions are made and provides information about what happens after being offered a role, including how to ask for reasonable adjustments and flexible working.

As a candidate, it's important that you have the time, resources and space to fully participate. We want to support you in showing your skills, values and competencies at every stage of the recruitment process.

Our people are at the heart of the NHS. To ensure we can meet the changing needs of our patients and population, there is always a need for new people to join the NHS across many different professions and roles.

It's vital that our recruitment is completed in line with legal requirements and good practice. This ensures we attract and recruit the best people to care for our patients and that our services run well.

All advertisements for job vacancies at the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust are made available on our Trust website at <https://www.coch.nhs.uk/working-with-us.aspx> or alternatively you can visit NHS Jobs at www.jobs.nhs.uk

When you apply for a job, you'll be redirected to our recruitment site, Trac Jobs, and you will have to sign in or create an account to apply. You'll also need to confirm that you have read and agreed to our candidate privacy note that applies to the data submitted in your application form.

1. Applying for a role

You will be asked to complete an application form to show that you would like to be considered for a role. A great application form will make you stand out against other applicants therefore it's important that you complete the form in full and as accurately as possible. If it would help you to use an alternative method, you should speak to a member of the recruitment team to agree this.

When applying for a role at the Trust, you are required to outline your full employment and/ or training history. You should also explain any gaps between periods of employment and training.

Your application will provide the recruiting manager with information about how your skills and experience match the role.

Read the job description and person specification documents, which will be made available to you. These are important as they include information about the skills, knowledge, values and experience that are needed for the role. These documents will be used throughout the recruitment process to make decisions.

If you need help applying or understanding the documents, or if you have any questions or feedback, you should contact the recruiting manager or a member of the recruitment team.



They will talk to you about the support you might need and will answer your questions about the role or your application.

Your application form must be submitted prior to the advert closing date therefore where possible submit your application as soon as possible and avoid leaving it to the last minute.

2. Guaranteed interview scheme

Within your application, you will be asked if:

- you consider yourself to be disabled under the Disability Confident Scheme
- you are a current member or veteran of the armed forces
- you are a care leaver, have any experience of being in care, or of being within the care system

If you have answered yes to any of these questions and you meet all the essential criteria for a role, you will be selected to attend an interview or assessment.

If your application does not show you meet the essential criteria, you will not be invited to attend an interview or assessment.

If you believe you do meet the essential criteria, you should inform the member of the recruitment team or the recruiting manager who will respond to you as soon as possible. Please note, the scheme guarantees an interview - it does not guarantee that you will be successful at interview or offered employment with the Trust.

3. Collecting information about you

As part of your application, you will be asked to provide information about your race, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, sex, gender, marital status, disability, caring responsibilities and age. These are known as protected characteristics. You do not have to provide this if you do not wish to.

The information you provide is protected by law and will always be used in a way that follows the law's guidelines. The information will be used to understand who applies for roles and who is successful or not. Collecting this information aims to help us understand any problems or unfairness during recruitment. It will also be used to promote equality, reduce discrimination and take positive action to bring about change.

The personal information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be shared with those making decisions to appoint you to a role. If the recruiting manager needs to know information about your health or disability to make reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process, this will be discussed and agreed with you before the information is shared.

Further information can be obtained from our Data Protection Officer – coch.dpo@nhs.net



3. Getting support if you have a disability

As part of your application, you can confirm if you consider yourself to have a disability. If you do, the Lead Shortlister will use your application to understand if you are eligible for the Disability Confident Scheme. You won't be asked for details about your health or disability until after you are offered the role.

You will have the option to request reasonable adjustments to support you in completing your application or during interviews and assessments. For example, additional time may be provided during assessments.

If you request reasonable adjustments or support, the recruiting manager will contact you to discuss your needs confidentially. We'll handle these discussions privately and only share your information with your consent and when essential, such as when seeking advice from occupational health.

You will receive a response as soon as possible, and your request will be supported if reasonable.

4. Making decisions

Once the vacancy has closed the recruiting manager will review all applications. The recruiting manager will understand the role being recruited or have other specialist knowledge that will help them make good decisions. They should be objective and have the skills and knowledge to ensure they can take part in the process in a fair way.

When the job advertisement deadline has passed, personal information about you, including your protected characteristics, will be removed from your application form before being sent to the recruiting manager. They will review every application. They will score each application by reviewing it against criteria that are outlined in the job description and person specification.

You will normally need to meet all the essential criteria to be shortlisted.

The scores will be used to agree who will be invited to the next stage of the process. They aim to complete the shortlisting process within one working day of the advert close date.

5. What to expect during interviews and assessments

If you are shortlisted for a role, you will be asked to attend an interview with the recruiting manager and panel to assess your skills and abilities. You might also be asked to complete a task or discuss agreed topics with a group, and you might meet other team members.

You will be told about any tasks or assessments before the day of the interview. You might be provided with detailed information about these beforehand. Sometimes this will be provided on the day. You'll always be given time to prepare if needed.

Sometimes interviews and assessments are held online. If so, you will be provided with the information you need to attend.



Make sure you have everything you need to take part and let the recruiting manager or member of the recruitment team know if you need support or do not have the correct equipment.

There will normally be time set aside for you to ask any questions you have about the role, team or department. If you would like to discuss opportunities for development this is a good time to ask. You can also discuss flexible working. You can request to work flexibly from your first day.

At COCH our interviews include value-based questions, which helps us understand whether your values and behaviours are aligned to those of the Organisation. You'll be asked to give real-life examples as part of your responses.

During interviews and assessments, every panel member will complete their own scoring using pre-agreed criteria to ensure fairness and consistency.

When all the interviews have been completed, the panel will discuss their scores and answers to agree who will be offered the job. You will hear back from the recruiting manager or a nominated person, normally within one working day, who will inform you of the decision.

You can request feedback by contacting the recruiting manager if you would like to know more about why and how the decisions were made.

When you are offered a role, we want it to be as quick and easy as possible for you to start. Often, if you already work in the NHS, information will be transferred to help with this process.

To begin with, you will be offered the job subject to the satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks.

6. Pre-employment checks

A conditional offer letter will be emailed to you within two working days of the date the manager advises the Recruitment Team that you have been successful. We will then commence your pre-employment checks. These normally take three weeks to complete but can take longer on occasions. You will also be asked to complete Starter Paperwork which will be accessible via your Trac account.

To help speed up checks and provide additional assurance, we use a certified Digital Verification Service (DVS) provider called TrustID to verify your Right to Work and DBS identity. A link to complete these checks will be shared with your offer letter; however, if you experience any issues, you can choose to visit a member of the Recruitment team in person to complete your Right to Work and identity checks.

Pre-employment checks include:

- verification of identity check
- right to work in the UK
- occupational health assessment
- employment history and references
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, if required
- proof of professional registration and qualifications, if required
- Overseas police clearance, if applicable



- fit and proper person requirement, if required

Verification of identity check

You will be asked to attend a face-to-face appointment to complete your identity checks. You will need to provide a range of documents that confirm your name, your current address and evidence of residency. A list of acceptable documents will be shared with you when you receive your offer letter.

Right to work standards

A right to work check determines whether you have the legal right and permission to work in the UK. We will complete right to work checks if you are successful before you can start work at the Trust.

If you are a non-UK national, you can confirm your right to work through the Home Office online checking portal. You will need to share your code with us so that we can check your right to work status digitally.

In some instances, it is not possible to use the Home Office online portal to verify right to work status. Where this is the case, we will complete a manual check.

To complete a manual check, you will be required to provide original documents from List A or B of the acceptable documents. The Home Office has provided guidance and this can be found on their website - [Employers' right to work checklist - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employers-guide-to-right-to-work-checks).

Occupational health assessments

A work health assessment refers to a variety of processes undertaken by us to health screen staff to assess whether you are capable and fit to undertake a particular role. Its primary purpose is to help prevent work-related illnesses, injuries and the spread of disease or infection.

After an offer of employment has been made you will be required to complete a confidential health questionnaire. It is important that you complete and submit the health questionnaire as soon as possible. You will access this form via your Trac account.

During your occupational health check appointment, you should outline and discuss your health, and any disability and reasonable adjustments with occupational health. Doing this will ensure they provide the right advice to your manager to help them support you in your new role.

All health assessments will be carried out fairly, objectively and in accordance with equal opportunities legislation and good occupational health practice.

If you need reasonable adjustments for your new role, your new manager will meet with you to discuss how these will be provided.

You must have medical clearance before starting work. Any offer of employment is conditional pending the completion of a relevant health assessment.

Employment history and references



We will seek the necessary references to validate a period of three consecutive years of continuous employment and or education immediately prior to your application being made. It is important that you provide full details of your referees on your application form, including their full name, job title, email address, landline number and address where applicable.

The number and type of reference obtained may vary, depending on whether you have held employment or have studied for a period of three consecutive years and/ or how many episodes of employment or training you may have had during this time.

Employment and/or education history will be obtained in writing via email. Emailed confirmation from employers/charity bodies or training institutions should be sent from a recognised company email address.

If you have had gaps in employment / training we will seek to obtain a character or personal references from personal acquaintances that are not related to you, and who do not hold any financial arrangements with you. Personal acquaintances may include professors, academic advisors, or someone of standing in the applicant's community. Further guidance about persons of some standing in the community can be found on the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/countersigning-passport-applications/accepted-occupations-for-countersignatories>

If you indicate that you have undertaken volunteer work, references may be sought through the relevant charity body or organisation hosting the activity.

If referee information is missing, we will email you and ask you to provide us with the referee information. It is important that you respond to this request as quickly as possible.

We must obtain satisfactory references, or your offer of employment will be withdrawn.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

If you have been convicted of a criminal offence, sometimes the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 allows you to regard the conviction as "spent" and to answer the question as though the offence had never happened.

If you are applying for a role that is eligible for a DBS Check, you will be asked to complete this check as part of the pre-employment check. Depending on the level of check requested, you may need to disclose spent convictions and cautions. The DBS filtering guidance, [New filtering rules for DBS certificates \(from 28 October 2023 onwards\) - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide) provides information about this. The job description and person specification will state what level of check you will be asked to apply for.

If a Criminal Records Check is required for the role, the cost of the disclosure will be deducted from your salary over the first three months of employment.

We would recommend that all post holders who require a DBS for their role, register with the DBS Update Service. More information can be found on their website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide>

All information provided will be treated in strictest confidence and in line with the Trust Candidate Privacy Notice and relevant data protection legislation.



The Trust complies fully with the code of practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of DBS certificates and DBS certificate information. We also comply with our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and other relevant legislation pertaining to the safe handling, use, storage and retention and disposal of certificate information. Further guidance on the handling of DBS certificate Information can be requested from the Recruitment Team.

The Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust complies fully with the DBS code of practice [code of practice](#).

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent an applicant from working for the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Trust. This will depend upon the relevance to the post and the nature and (if applicable) pattern of the offence(s).

Professional Registration and qualification checks

As part of the application process, we are required to verify registration of all healthcare professionals. When accepting your offer of employment, you consent to this verification check. We'll also verify that you have the necessary skills and qualifications for the job that you are applying for and if applicable to the role, and you will be asked to bring your original qualifications relevant to the role to your face-to-face identity checking appointment.

7. Sponsoring you to work in the UK

If you do not already have the right to work in the UK, you will need to be sponsored to work under the skilled worker visa route set out by the UK immigration system. As part of the skilled worker route, certain roles in the NHS are eligible for the health and care visa, which has a lower application fee and is exempt from the immigration health surcharge.

However, not all roles are eligible for sponsorship, therefore a member of the recruitment team will check:

- the role is on the list of eligible occupations for a skilled worker visa or health and care visa
- your pay meets the minimum salary requirements for sponsorship
- you are eligible to be sponsored
- if there are any other route-specific requirements

They will liaise with you to check the sponsorship requirements are met. If they are, they will complete the sponsorship process to enable you to apply for your visa.

You can check the likelihood of obtaining a visa for the role you are applying for on the GOV.UK website - [Visas and immigration - GOV.UK](#).

8. Flexible working

If you would like to request flexible working and haven't discussed this during the recruitment process, speak to your new manager as soon as possible, as this might be possible from your first day. This will ensure there is time for options to be explored.



9. Receiving a contract

Once the pre-employment checks have been completed, your line manager will contact you to confirm that you are ready to arrange a start date.

Once a start date is agreed, you will receive a contract of employment if you are to be employed on a permanent or fixed term contract.

If you join the staff bank, you will receive 'bank worker agreement'. This document will confirm that you will agree, as and when, with the organisation the hours or shifts you will work.

Always check the contract to ensure the details are correct and speak to a member of the recruitment team or your new manager if you have any questions or something isn't right.

10. Preparing to start your new role

Your new manager will contact you to welcome you to the team. They will arrange for you to meet new colleagues and receive information about your new role.

If you have worked in the NHS before and are transferring to a new organisation, you may be able to transfer your mandatory training and employment records. Speak to a member of the Education and Training team for information about this.

You will need to attend a Trust Welcome Event, which will include important training. Your new manager will also arrange training about your department and role. You must present a photographic identify document, such as your passport, at the Welcome Event and again on your first day in the department so we can complete our administration checks.

To ensure you are ready to start your new role, you will receive essential items, including your new starter paperwork and an identification badge. You will also be given access to the systems you need to start your new role.

11. Resolving concerns

If you have any concerns or are dissatisfied with any part of the recruitment process, you should contact a member of the recruitment team. You might also wish to contact a trade union representative or a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian to get help and advice.

A member of the recruitment team will arrange to discuss your concerns in more depth.