

Public appointments

Guidance notes for application

November 2007



Please read these *Guidance notes for application* before you start to fill in the application form.

Please pay particular attention to the section on conflicts of interest.

If you have any difficulty completing this form, alternatives (eg, large print) can be arranged. Please contact us at the address/ telephone number given in the information pack.

It may be necessary to photocopy the form; if you are completing in manuscript please write clearly in **black** ink.

If you are completing the form electronically please note that where there are multiple choice options (eg, yes/no) the boxes may be checked by double clicking on the box, selecting 'checked' in the window that appears and clicking OK.

Completed forms 1 and 2 should be sent, by the closing date stated, to the address given in the information pack.

Candidates are responsible for the timely and safe arrival of their applications.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Form 1

Section 1: Your personal Details

Section 2: Availability

1. Interviews. Please note the interview dates given in the information pack and be aware that only in exceptional circumstances will the panel consider interviewing on different or additional days.

2. Meetings. The department needs to be certain that you are able to give the proper time commitment and are able to travel to meetings, as specified in the application pack. However, as part of our commitment to improve diversity on the board of our public bodies we are happy to consider any reasonable requests that would enable someone to attend meetings (or in the first instance, an interview) where they might not otherwise be able to do so. This could be anything from facilities in the building where meetings are held, the times that meetings are held or assistance with additional childcare or carer costs.

Please contact us at the address in the information pack to discuss what options may be available. This information will not affect our assessment of your suitability for appointment and will not be disclosed to the sift or interview panels (unless specific arrangements are made in relation to the interview which the panel would need to be aware of).

Section 3: Personal qualities and achievements

3. Addressing the criteria. In this section, for each of the published criteria, please give relevant examples of your personal involvement and impact. We ask this because the Selection Panel will assess your suitability for appointment by comparing the information you give in the application form and your CV against the criteria. These skills and achievements could have been obtained from a range of activities and not simply from a 'traditional' background or career path.

Many people are not used to writing about themselves or describing what they have achieved. The following guidance will be of help when completing the application form:

- Review the selection criteria before completing the form;
- Provide at least one example for each of the criteria;
- The same example (provided it is relevant) can be used to demonstrate how you meet two or more selection criteria;
- Never combine any of the selection criteria or address a criterion by referring the reader to other parts of the application form;
- There may be several aspects to a criterion so ensure you provide evidence that shows you meet all of it;
- Use actual examples that show how you meet the criteria, describe what you personally did and the impact it had. Think in terms of outcomes and achievements;
- Avoid personal attitudes and opinions or saying how you would do something;
- Examples can be drawn from any aspect of your experience be it education, work, leisure, community or voluntary activity etc;
- Do not assume that the reader has any prior knowledge;
- Use simple and easy to understand language, avoid jargon; and
- Make sure your completed application form is legible and that you keep a copy for yourself.

The key to a well written application form is to give the reader specific information about how you meet the criteria for appointment. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience and personal attributes and make sure you take full advantage of the space available to provide practical evidence that best demonstrates how you meet the selection criteria.

The desirable skills or experience are not essential to the role, but would still be an asset to the board or body. No one is expected to have all the skills listed, but we want to know what additional skills you have in order to appoint a balanced board of people with a range of different abilities. We are interested in what you **can** offer.

4. Career and experience – brief CV. Please supply a brief CV with your application made relevant to the post in question. This will enable us to get a better idea of you as an individual and the unique skills you may possess and gives you the opportunity to include any additional information you feel is relevant to your application.

5. Conflicts of Interest. Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to stewardship of

public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest that might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasion be as damaging as the existence of a real one.

It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived. No one should use or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests.

All Board members are therefore required to declare any personal or business interest, which may or may not be perceived to influence their independence. This is to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and can receive a lot of media attention.

Declaring a conflict of interest will not automatically preclude an individual from being considered for appointment but candidates must be prepared for the issue to be explored further at interview.

If you are unsure whether your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this question, in order for it to be discussed with you at an interview if you are short listed.

Failure to declare a conflict would be considered on its merits, but the department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public life and the department may therefore terminate your appointment.

Areas where a conflict could arise

- There are five main issues that could lead to a real or apparent conflict of interests. These are:
 - relevant financial or other interests outside the organisation;
 - relationships with other parties/ organisations which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties;
 - access to information on pending Government Policy could give unfair personal advantage to people with business interests likely to be affected;
 - perception of rewards for past contributions or favours;
 - membership of some societies.
- In considering whether a danger of real or potential conflict exists members should assess whether they, a close family member, a person living in the same household as the board member, or a firm, business or organisation with which the board member is connected are likely to be affected by the decisions or advice made or given by the board. In addition, board members should consider whether they need to disclose relevant interests of other persons or

organisations that members of the public might reasonably think could influence the member's judgement.

Section 4: Other Information

6. Referees. Please give details of two people who may be asked to act as referees for you, including e-mail addresses if possible. One of these referees should be a business or professional contact. Referees will not be contacted unless you are invited for interview.

7. Other Ministerial Appointments. The *Code of Practice* of the Commission for Public Appointments requires candidates to declare any other Ministerial appointments they hold, the Government department that made the appointment and the remuneration received. If you are successful, this information will be published when the appointment is announced.

8. Defra database of potential appointees. Defra holds a database of people who have expressed an interest in a public appointment should something suitable arise, or who have been unsuccessful when applying for one appointment but may be interested in being considered for others. If you are interested in being considered for another appointment then please tick 'yes'. We will send you details of Defra's other public bodies and a questionnaire so you can specify your areas of interest. Should any appointments arise within the areas you have indicated you will be sent a letter informing you of the new recruitment and a copy of the advert. Details will be held for a period of two years.

9. Where did you hear about this appointment? In order for us to monitor the effectiveness of our methods of advertising and recruitment it would be helpful if you could specify how you first heard about this vacancy.

Form 2

This form will be separated on receipt from the main application form and not be seen by the sift and interview panel.

Monitoring Information

Information is collected to enable us monitor all appointment processes to help us ensure they are based on merit.

Disability

Definitions of disabilities as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act:

- substantial means neither minor nor trivial
- long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping
- a normal day-to-day activity must affect one of the 'capacities' listed in the Act which include mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, seeing and memory
- Some conditions, such as a tendency to set fires and hay fever, are specifically excluded.

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also covered by the scope of the Act. There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions.

The DDA 2005 amended the definition of disability. It removed the requirement that a mental illness should be 'clinically well-recognized'. It also ensured that people with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis are deemed to be covered by the DDA effectively from the point of diagnosis, rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Political Activity

Whether you are politically active in any way will not be a factor in the consideration of your application. Information on political activity is requested as required by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and is used for monitoring purposes only. Individual personal information will not be made available to short-listing or interview panels, or to the Commissioner.

If completing the application form in manuscript and there is insufficient space, please continue on a separate sheet. If completing electronically, please just continue typing.