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Guidance notes to help you complete your application for employment

Your application form is a vital part of the recruitment and selection process, and acts as a guide for the selection itself. The following guidance notes relate to all sections of the application form, and the other related forms, and are intended to help you complete your application. The forms that you will be required to complete are:

- The Application Form
- Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form
- Declaration of Criminal Offences
- Schedule 1, Housing Act 1996 Declaration Form

Job Description and Person Specification

Each post advertised has a Job Description and Person Specification, which will list the skills, experience, competencies, qualities and, if appropriate, qualifications required for the job.

Make sure you read both documents carefully **before** completing the form. It is sometimes useful to prepare a draft, so that you can check that you have covered each element before completing the form.

Hundred Houses carries out shortlisting by comparing how applicant's skills, experience, competencies and qualifications compare to the Person Specification. Essential criteria are required for each post. Desirable criteria are advantageous for the post not necessarily crucial.

If you are selected for interview you will be expected to demonstrate the elements shown in the Person Specification, as well as answer a range of questions regarding your experience and scenario related to the post. In some cases you will be required to carry out some tests to further demonstrate your suitability for the post.

The Application Form

Please complete **all** sections clearly in your own handwriting in BLOCK CAPITALS.

The Application Form is the only information we have available when deciding who to invite for interview, so you need to complete it as effectively and clearly as possible.

Please note that we will not accept CV's. Please do not attach them to your application form.

Applicant details

You are asked to give basic details required to process your application. Please provide telephone numbers and email addresses only if you are happy for us to contact you there. We will always be discrete when contacting you at work.

If you are required to drive as part of your duties we will need to see your driving license and any associated documents if you are offered the position.

We need to know whether you are eligible to work in the UK. If you are appointed you will be asked to provide evidence that you are eligible to work in this country as required by the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

You need to declare whether you are related to any Hundred Houses Employee or Board Member. Full details can be found on our website at www.hhs.org.uk. If you are, please write the member of staff / Board Member's name down and your relationship to him / her. Being related will not exclude you from being considered for a position, but you do need to make the declaration in advance. If you are appointed and it is subsequently discovered that you failed to make the declaration, you may be dismissed.

Education, Training & Qualifications

Education and qualifications – tell us about your qualifications from secondary school onwards. In some cases a specific level of educational attainment may be an essential or desirable requirement of the job. In other jobs the qualification itself may not be relevant, but the skills you gained may be, so remember to include these too. You will be asked to provide proof of your qualifications if you are invited for interview.

Training – As with your education, you may have attended valuable courses such as computer courses, first aid or relevant short courses, which you should include.

Membership – for some jobs you will need to have membership of, or be studying for a professional qualification, for example the Chartered Institute of Housing. If this is the case we will say so in the Person Specification.

Relevant Employment History

Provide the name and address of your current / last employer, your job title and the main duties of that post. Keep this section brief and factual.

Then provide a brief synopsis of your previous employment history including any experience or voluntary work you think is relevant to the post.

If you run out of space use a separate sheet. Make sure you include your name and the post you are applying for on it and attach it to your application form.

Experience Skills & Other Supporting Information

This is one of the most important areas of the form and where you need to promote yourself to the Society. Consider the job you are applying for and what it will entail, and why you are interested in it and suitable for the post. Use your past experiences, whether they are in a work or personal environment, during paid work or in a community or voluntary role, and use these to describe how they make you a suitable candidate.

If you need to, continue on a separate sheet and attach it to your application, ensuring your name and the post you have applied for is clearly marked.

References

Give details of two people who are willing to provide a written reference for you. One of them must be your current / last employer. Both your referees should know you in a professional not personal capacity. If you have not worked before or it has been some time since you have worked, a teacher, college tutor or other professional who knows you will do.

If you are offered the position, it will be subject to confirmation from your referees that you are suitable for the position.

Sometimes we will contact your referees before interviews are held. If you do not want us to do this make sure you tick the appropriate box on the form.

Declaration & Consent

Make sure that you read this section of the form, and if you are happy to sign and date the declaration. We will not consider applications where the declaration has not been signed.

Equality & Diversity Monitoring Form

Hundred Houses Society is committed to ensuring and promoting equality and diversity in all areas of its business. For this reason are committed to ensuring

that selection, appointment and advancement are based on the merits of the individual only.

To make sure our policies are being applied consistently, we monitor all applications for employment by race / ethnic origin, disability, gender, age and sexuality. The information you provide will be kept confidential and removed from the application form before the shortlisting takes place. Information is reported to the Board in a statistical format after each recruitment has been completed. No individual will be identified or identifiable in the report and only those involved in the monitoring will have access to this information.

We ask for this information in line with Codes of Practice used by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, employers must:

- Make sure disabled people receive fair treatment when applying for jobs and whilst working for us;
- Make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled applicants to compete to the best of their ability during the recruitment process and to help them in their work with us.

At your interview you may be asked questions about how your disability may affect the performance of a particular job. This helps us to establish what adjustments we may need to make to help you do that job.

Declaration of Criminal Offences

On this form you are asked to provide details of any criminal convictions and cautions that you have, or any court cases that you have pending. We will not discriminate against ex-offenders, and if you give details of previous convictions this will not automatically prevent you from getting the job. However, we will consider how previous convictions could affect the job you are applying for. These will only be taken into account if the offence is relevant to the work you would be doing.

We will use the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure Service to access an applicants' suitability to positions of trust. If you are offered the position, you will not be able to start until the Disclosure has been undertaken by the Criminal Records Bureau and 'clearance' has been given by the appropriate officer.

What is a 'spent' conviction?

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, if someone has been convicted of an offence and is not convicted during a specified period, the conviction becomes 'spent'. A spent conviction need not be mentioned on your application or at interview unless you are applying for a post in one of the following areas: *Solicitor, Chartered or Certified Accountant, working with people under the age of 18 or over the age of 65, people suffering from serious illness or mental disorder*

of any kind, people addicted to alcohol or drugs, people who are blind, deaf or speech impaired and people who are substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or deformity; work relating to leisure or recreational activities for people under the age of 18.

If the post you are applying for does not come under one of the above categories, then you do not need to tell us about any convictions that have become spent. However, you **must** give details of convictions that are not spent.

A conviction becomes spent after a certain length of time which depends on the sentence and your age at the time of the conviction. Sentences of two and half years or more are never spent. It is the sentence set by the court that counts (even if it is a suspended sentence), not the time actually spent in prison.

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and only used in connection with your application. We may withdraw an offer of employment if you do not give details of unspent convictions or spent convictions where appropriate.

Policy Statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders

- As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, Hundred Houses Society complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.
- Hundred Houses Society is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- Our policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, is made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.
- We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
- A Disclosure is only requested after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a Disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within Hundred Houses Society and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

- Unless the nature of the position allows Hundred Houses Society to ask questions about your entire criminal record, we only ask about 'unspent' convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- We ensure that all those in Hundred Houses Society who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- At interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- We make every subject of a CRB Disclosure aware of the existence of the CRB Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.
- We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences.

Policy statement on the secure storage, handling, use, retention and disposals of Disclosures and Disclosure information

General principles

As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, Hundred Houses Society complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information. It also complies fully with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation pertaining to the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosure information and has a written policy on these matters, which is available to those who wish to see it on request.

Storage and access

Disclosure information will be kept securely, in lockable, non-portable, storage containers with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.

Handling

In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, Disclosure information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. We maintain a record of all those to whom Disclosures or Disclosure

information has been revealed and it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.

Usage

Disclosure information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

Retention

Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, we do not keep Disclosure information for any longer than is necessary. This is generally for a period of up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep Disclosure information for longer than six months, we will consult the CRB about this and will give full consideration to the data protection and human rights of the individual before doing so. Throughout this time, the usual conditions regarding the safe storage and strictly controlled access will prevail.

Disposal

Once the retention period has elapsed, we will ensure that any Disclosure information is immediately destroyed by secure means, i.e. by shredding, pulping or burning. While awaiting destruction, Disclosure information will not be kept in any insecure receptacle (e.g. waste bin or confidential waste sack). We will not keep any photocopy or other image of the Disclosure or any copy or representation of the contents of a Disclosure. However, notwithstanding the above, we may keep a record of the date of issue of a Disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of Disclosure requested, the position for which the Disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the Disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken.

Schedule 1, Housing Act 1996 Declaration Form

Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996 is designed to prevent conflicts between the personal interests of employees and that person's duties to the organisation.

The Schedule prevents housing associations from awarding contracts to businesses with which the employee or their relative has a connection. In order to prevent accidental breaches of law you are asked to give details of all businesses which you or your close relatives have an interest.

False statements

Providing false statements or knowingly omitting or concealing any relevant fact about your eligibility for employment will result in your application being withdrawn. If such a discovery is made after you have been appointed, then you

will normally be dismissed. If you are appointed you will be asked to provide information such as proof of qualification.

Complaints Procedure

If you feel your application has been unfairly treated please let us know as soon as possible. We will consider your complaint under our complaints procedure. Further information can be found on our website at www.hhh.org.uk or our leaflet 'How we handle complaints'.

Finally....

Remember to sign and date and send back your application and the accompanying forms by the closing date, and to the correct address. Good luck!