

Recruitment Guidelines

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These guidelines should be read with our [Recruitment Policy](#), which outlines our principles when recruiting employees at MSD.

Planning your recruitment

When planning your recruitment process, there are some decisions that will impact on the process and overall outcome. Recruitment Partners and HR Advisors are available to help support your recruitment process and inform your decision-making but the responsibility rests with managers (based on delegations) to decide on the process that's applied and who is hired.

This guide gives you some good practice to base your decisions on.

The panel

It's important that your panel and applicants have a clear understanding of the selection criteria, what good looks like and that your panel is made up of diverse perspectives.

[The role of Chairperson guide](#) will help you manage your recruitment.

The manager the role reports to will usually be the panel chairperson. The chairperson is responsible for selecting an appropriate panel (with the approval of the approving manager) based on the contribution they can make.

Unconscious bias should be considered, including the affinity or "like me" bias. The "affinity" bias means people typically prefer to hire or promote people who are similar to themselves. To help you manage this risk consider the following when selecting a panel:

- Diverse perspective – does the panel reflect a diverse range of viewpoints and backgrounds consistent with MSD's organisational values, strategies (Te Pae Tawhiti, Te Pae Tata) and principles of the Treaty of Waitangi e.g. Māori representation
- Gender and ethnic diversity
- Availability to fully participate in the selection process
- An understanding of what the role and/or organisation requires
- At an appropriate level above the level of role being recruited for (unless a technical or subject matter expert is required)
- A panel member from outside the immediate work group or area
- Familiarity with the selection process
- Any potential conflicts of interest.

Further advice can be found in [Guidance on selecting a diverse panel](#).

The position description

Before advertising a vacancy, the panel chairperson should have a clear understanding of the purpose of the position and decide on the selection criteria. Recruitment Partners provide support and guidance where needed.

[Selection criteria](#) describes the key attributes that are required to be successful in a position.

These are:

- **Skills** – specific activities required to perform the job
- **Experience** – what someone needs to have done before
- **Qualifications** – formalised academic/professional education or certifications that applicants must have to perform in the role
- **Competencies** – core behaviours that someone has demonstrated or how they go about their work.

Setting up the selection criteria first will help:

- you target your advertising so that people have a clear idea of the requirements for the role
- panels to better understand specific position requirements
- make it easier to assess applications, shortlist and decide who is best suited.

[Writing your selection criteria](#) guide will help you determine your selection criteria.

Advertising

Article I. **When to advertise?**

All vacancies should be advertised where practicable. A vacancy is a fixed term or permanent position that is empty or about to become empty and is waiting to be filled.

Your advertising approach should be to notify your vacancy in an appropriate manner to enable suitably qualified applicants to apply for the role you are advertising. Your options for permanent vacancies are:

- Advertising **internally** only – where you are confident this will enable suitably qualified applicants to apply for the role. This may apply to MSD specific and specialist roles (e.g. Case Manager, Customer Service Representative). Please speak to your Recruitment Partner for advice.
- Advertising **internally** and **externally**

Short term vacancies – Advertising short-term opportunities at the start will avoid any complications if you need to extend the duration. This ensures we're meeting our obligations under the Public Service Act 2020. Your advertising options include:

- advertising internally only
- advertising internally and externally
- an internal expression of interest (EOI) for short-term opportunities.
- When advertising a short-term opportunity both internally and externally, if the successful applicant is:
 - **external** then it will be a fixed term agreement
 - **internal** and a **permanent** employee it will be a secondment
 - **internal** and already on a **fixed term agreement** then they will need to relinquish their current role and fixed term agreement to take up the new role on a new fixed term agreement.
- internal and external advertisement.

Article II. **Regional appointment**

When planning your vacancy, if you are appointing to a region the following applies:

- Hiring Managers should discuss their requirements with their Recruitment Partner so that the role is advertised as a regional vacancy with the specific location of where they will be based initially included in the advertisement
- During the interview, a member of the panel discusses with candidates how regional appointments work, where the role will be initially based, and which sites are included in the regional area and that movement is by mutual agreement. Confirm with the candidate that they understand the arrangement.
- For candidates who are subsequently offered a position, the offer letter will confirm the arrangement and outline where the role will be initially based and confirm any future transfer to another site must be by mutual agreement.

Article III. **Expressions of interest**

This should be used where the role is not permanent and is '**short-term**' such as a secondment.

This process is managed fully by the Hiring Manager. The advertisement can be at a local internal level or wider within MSD.

Not all recruitment process tools are required, and the minimum would be:

- advertising for a minimum of 5 working days; defining the role, period, location and criteria
- application process – this could be an email, a form or an application
- a decision-making process – this may be the hiring manager's recommendation or an interview panel's recommendation to the approving manager
- a process to provide feedback to applicants
- the Hiring Manager holds a digital copy of the documentation on decisions made for 12 months.

Article IV. **Exceptions**

- Acting opportunities (generally up to 4 weeks) eg covering when a person is on leave
- Where a recent advertisement for an identical role didn't produce any suitable applicants. Other options can be explored like recruitment agencies.
- No vacancy exists but employees have expressed an interest to their managers to move from one location to another. Movement would be by mutual agreement and be a direct swap to the same role eg Case Manager: Naenae to Case Manager: Porirua. The Leadership Team for that region should actively maintain a register of interest.

Article V. **Recruitment type table**

The following table is to help you choose which process to follow for each type of vacancy or short-term need.

Please note:

- This is a guide – if you're not sure talk to your Recruitment Partner or AskHR.
- In all situations you should have pre-approval from the appropriate approving manager (refer to [HR delegations](#)).
- Decision and employment documentation must be recorded in MyHR.

Types	Who can apply?	Other requirements	Duration	Is this a vacancy?	Allowances?	How to advertise
Permanent	Anyone can apply	None	Ongoing	Yes Led by Hiring Manager and supported by Recruitment Partner	None	Internal or internal and external
Fixed term	Anyone can apply but if permanent employee appointed it would be a secondment	Must be for a specific event or purpose	For the duration of the specific event or purpose However, if for a period of 12 months or more, consider if it's really a temporary role	Yes Led by Hiring Manager and supported by Recruitment Partner	None	Internal or internal and external
Secondment	Current permanent employees (<i>internal applicants</i>)	Must be a valid reason (specific event or purpose) eg cover parental leave Home position is held	Can be of any duration however if for a period of 12 months or more, consider if it's really a temporary role	Yes Managed by Hiring Manager	Higher Duties Allowance Special Duties Allowance Travel / accommodation (if applicable)	Internal. If not practicable an internal Expression of Interest and can be localised Advertise minimum 5 working days
External secondment (with another organisation)	Current permanent employees (<i>internal applicants</i>)	Must be for a specific event or purpose Home position is held Note: Employee can continue to be paid by MSD and other organisation is invoiced for payment	For the duration of the specific event or purpose	Not MSD vacancy	Other organisation may choose to offer different remuneration or other allowances	Process conducted by another organisation

Acting	Current permanent employees (<i>internal applicants</i>)	Must be for a specific event or purpose Home position is held	For the duration of the specific event or purpose	No – excluded from the Public Service Act as not a vacancy Not subject to review	HDA, Higher Duties Allowance Other costs (<i>if a different location</i>)	Expression of Interest or identification by manager
Relieving	Current permanent employees (<i>internal applicants</i>)	Doing another role at the same level of position (same band) Home position is held	For the duration of the specific event or purpose Should be short-term otherwise consider secondment	No – excluded from the Public Service Act as not a vacancy	Other costs (<i>if a different location</i>)	Expression of Interest or identification by manager
Contractor	Non-permanent employee (<i>external applicants</i>)	Must be for a specific event or purpose. (<i>Not being appointed into a permanent role</i>) Contract approval managed by hirer.	For the duration of the specific event or purpose Should be short-term otherwise consider secondment	No – excluded from the Public Service Act as not being placed into a vacancy	No	Procurement
Casual	Generally non-permanent employees (<i>external applicants</i>)	Available on call for specific tasks/need Should reflect as and when required with no ongoing regular work pattern (<i>otherwise becomes part-time</i>)	Technically employment lasts per engagement	No - excluded from the Public Service Act (<i>assuming no vacancy to advertise but covering peak period, someone's absence or equivalent of short-fixed term</i>)	Hourly rate (including holiday pay) No allowances	Internal or external and internal or referral

[Approval process information \(PDF 153.3KB\)](#)

Article VI. **Where to advertise?**

Your Recruitment Partner can discuss with you how to effectively reach your target audience to allow suitably qualified and diverse people to apply.

External advertising includes:

- Government jobs
- MSD job portal
- Trade Me and Seek

Please note that some advertising options will incur an additional cost.

Article VII. **Additional options – when a vacancy is hard to fill**

Recruitment Partners can help the panel chairperson to identify suitable people by conducting a market mapping exercise. This involves a research campaign across the appropriate labour market(s) using specialised search tools across a range of channels, such as LinkedIn, to identify and engage applicants meeting the vacancy criteria.

Article VIII. **The advert**

Once the selection criteria has been decided, your vacancy can be advertised. If it's a permanent or fixed term vacancy, the chairperson, with the help of a Recruitment Partner will draft an advertisement based on the key attributes the panel are looking for.

The advertisement should highlight:

- the key selection criteria being sought for the position
- additional selection tools which will be used (if any)
- special requirements including national security clearances if required
- qualification requirements
- salary range
- details of a person at MSD who applicants can contact for more information about the role.

Recruitment Partners can help you with appropriate language for your advert to make sure we don't unintentionally use biased language that could exclude people.

[Guidance on how to write a job advert](#) and [Writing your selection criteria](#) will help you to prepare your vacancy advertisement.

Article IX. **Fixed term agreements**

Fixed term agreements can be used when you don't have a permanent vacancy. Employees on fixed-term contracts are not contractors.

The Employment Relations (ER) Act 2000 allows an employer and an employee to agree that the employment will end after a specified date or period; or on the occurrence of a specified event; or at the end of a specified project.

The ER Act contains requirements that must be met for a fixed term reason to be valid:

- The employer must have "**genuine reasons based on reasonable grounds**" for limiting the employment to a fixed period and those reasons and the way in which the employment will end, must be clearly set out in the employment agreement.

What is a genuine reason and what is not?

A genuine reason will explain why the employment is for a limited time and why the role (not the employee) will no longer be required in the business after that period.

Reasons that may be considered genuine:

- the employee covers for another employee who has gone on a period of leave (eg Parental leave).
- the employer requires extra resourcing for a project or 'peak' work period.

You cannot use a fixed-term agreement instead of a probationary period to test whether an employee is right for the job. This wouldn't be a genuine reason for a fixed term.

Please speak to your HR Advisor if you need help with fixed term reasons.

Contractors

If you're considering engaging a contractor there are some key steps you'll need to follow. If the value of the contractor is over \$1000 per day or over \$100,000 over the life of the contract you will need to get approval from a manager with the appropriate financial delegated authority or the Procurement Board. For more information about this process please review the External Resources, Contractors and Consultants Policy on the [Finance doogle page](#).

Additional selection tools

Panels should consider whether additional selection tools could help decide the best fit between an applicant and the role. Psychometric assessments and work sampling can provide valuable insight into the applicant's abilities, personality and team fit.

Information from these tools only provide one part of the picture. Results should not be used in isolation but considered with information collected from other parts of the process to help you make a more informed decision.

There are many different types of psychometric assessment tools. The two main types of psychometric assessments used in recruitment are:

- Cognitive ability tests (eg numerical, verbal and abstract reasoning)
- Personality questionnaires.

Personality questionnaires can be useful to gauge an applicant's fit for a role or team. Personality questionnaires can also be used to assess how an applicant is likely to handle work-related tasks such as managing relationships, working in teams and coping with stress and pressure. Because they measure behavioural tendencies and work style preferences, they shouldn't be used to screen people out. The results of psychometric assessments should never be used on their own to select an applicant for a role. Psychometric assessments are developed for a specific purpose, and their use should be consistent with that purpose.

There are also work sample tests that are used in recruitment. Work sample tests involve a sample of the work that is performed in the role. This can include things like a data entry or written exercise, a presentation, in-tray exercises, role plays and group exercises.

Reputable test providers conduct robust studies on the validity and reliability of their tools. Please speak to your recruitment partner for advice.

Recruitment delegations

The chairperson is responsible for ensuring they have the appropriate approval based on the required delegation. Current delegations can be checked here:

[Human Resources delegations](#). (PDF 369.43KB)

Please give your recruitment partner the name of the approving manager.

The approving manager will approve:

- the recruitment and type eg permanent/fixed term
- panel members
- the recommended applicant and starting salary. NB: specific approval is needed depending on the salary offered, please refer to the HR delegations, relevant guidance (eg the Public Service 2020 Pay Restraint guidance ([Pay restraint in the Public Sector](#)) or consult your recruitment partner/HR advisor.

Looking after applicants

Good communication throughout the recruitment process will go a long way to providing a positive experience for applicants. The chairperson should keep up regular contact with applicants, letting them know how things are progressing.

Templates are available on Doogle under Recruitment to help you at each step of the process.

[Recruitment training](#)

[Recruitment](#)

Shortlisting

Key points

Short-listing is the initial assessment of each application. This initial assessment is based on the selection criteria for the role, the organisational and team fit and how well an applicant has been able to demonstrate a match through their application form, cover letter and CV. Short-listing will be easier if your advertisement is clear about what you want applicants to address.

Panels should agree on the final short-list before moving to the next step in the appointment process i.e. interview. The panel can reach this short-list in whichever way is most suitable for them. For example, each panel member assessing separately and then meeting to discuss and decide together. The panel need to agree on the final short list before proceeding to interview.

For the panel, the key decision at this stage is who should be invited to an interview. This can be done by assessing how well an applicant matches the selection criteria and MSD's strategy and values.

The panel needs to be able to assess whether applicants have the right skills, experience and qualifications to be able to perform the tasks associated with the role.

A short-listing matrix can help demonstrate how the panel conducted an objective assessment against the selection criteria and can also help with giving meaningful feedback to applicants about their application.

Resources

[Shortlisting matrix \(spread sheet\) to record the panel's evaluation](#) (Word 64KB)

[How to give feedback](#)

[Writing your selection criteria](#)

How to...

Deal with any potential conflict of interest

If...	Then...
Any panel member including the chairperson discloses any potential conflict of interest arising from a	To reduce the impact, or perceived impact, on the panel member's ability to be objective, the panel chairperson, or if appropriate the 1-up manager will make a decision on whether the person should remain on the panel.

personal, work or professional relationship with an applicant	Ask for advice from your Recruitment Partner or manager.
An applicant is short-listed	The applicant should be invited to an interview and receive confirmation of the next steps in the process including accessibility requirements and any other supports an applicant may need for an interview. This also includes whānau support.
An applicant is not short-listed	External applicants will be advised through MyHR that their application was unsuccessful. Applicants need to be moved to the appropriate step in MyHR for this to happen. Internal applicants should receive verbal feedback from the panel chair as soon as possible, letting them know why they have not been successful.

The interview

Key points

Competency-based interviews should be completed for all short-listed applicants. The purpose of an interview is to get further information about each applicant relating to the selection criteria. The interview should explore areas such as motivation, competencies, values and fit.

At this stage you should have established that the short-listed applicants have the right technical skills, experience and qualifications to do the job and are now trying to establish a fit for your team, work group, and the organisation. The key judgement here is establishing which of the short-listed applicants demonstrate the closest match to the requirements of the role.

The panel need to manage any unconscious bias. An interview guide will help manage the interview process and ensure that a consistent interview format is used with all applicants.

Interview questions

The interview should follow a competency-based interview format. To keep the interview process consistent and objective, the same competency areas and questions should be explored with all applicants. Your recruitment partner will be able to help you draft appropriate questions to ensure you are able to explore and assess the selection criteria.

The panel has the discretion to ask additional and/or related questions to:

- clarify or further explore an applicant's response to questions
- clarify an aspect of the applicant's CV, including skills, and special and/or certification requirements.

Be mindful that people from different cultural backgrounds may interview differently, and the panel needs to take this into consideration eg eye contact. It's quite common for people with a Pacific background to avoid eye contact. This is not a sign of disrespect or disinterest, but in fact the opposite. When engaging in conversation with Pasifika applicants, looking down or away are very common behaviours. This is particularly common when they are speaking to someone who is in a position of authority.

If the role is a children's worker role, an additional question regarding contact with children is required.

The [interview guide template](#) will help you document the interview responses. Questions should be relevant to the requirements of the position being applied for and be consistent with the provisions of the [Human Rights Act \(1993\)](#) and guidelines provided by [Diversity Works New Zealand](#).

Ministry of Social Development values

The panel should consider the responses of applicants during the interview and reference checking to gauge their alignment with MSD's values. You may wish to have specific questions relating to MSD's values or expected behaviours.

Values underpin how we carry out our roles within MSD – the actions we take, the decisions we make and the relationships we manage.



Manaaki
We care about the
wellbeing of people



Whānau
We are inclusive
and build belonging



Mahi tahi
We work together,
making a difference
for communities



Tika me te pono
We do the
right thing, with
integrity

Resources

[Competency-based interview guide](#) (Word 52.24KB)

[Giving feedback](#)

[Minimising unconscious bias](#)

Background and reference checking

Key points

Background checking consists of referee checks with the applicant's nominated referees, internal MSD check, police vetting, validation of identification and for some roles, children's worker check or a national security clearance. At this stage, you're looking to confirm some key details about the applicant and explore any areas with referees to confirm key skills, experience and any potential areas of uncertainty that have arisen during the selection process.

Reference checks

Reference checking is one of the most important steps in the selection process and must be done for every preferred applicant or contractor before any contractual obligations are confirmed or offer made. It's the hiring manager or chairperson's opportunity to confirm that the applicant can do the job they've applied for as well as confirming some important information considered earlier in the selection process.

Referee checks include questions on whether the applicant has ever, to their knowledge, had a serious misconduct investigation, upheld or currently occurring, or has been dismissed from employment.

Reference checking is based on the consent of the applicant. If the applicant has not agreed to approaching a person, you should not approach them for information. It's important to get the applicant's permission to approach other people for information.

Applicants are asked to provide the names and contact details of two referees, one of which should be a current or recent manager. The panel may elect to reference check just the preferred applicant/s, or the top 2-3 applicants.

A recommended approach to reference checking is:

- Let the applicant know when you'll be contacting referees.
- If possible, make an appointment to call so the referee will be prepared and have the time available to talk to you.
- Contact the referee through the organisation's main phone line to help validate the authenticity of the referee.
- At the beginning please ask them:
 - Would they like their comments to be kept confidential (this may help people feel more comfortable about providing information)?
 - Are they happy for their comments to be shared with the applicant?
- Ask open ended questions.
- If a referee is hesitant to answer or is not forthcoming, this is usually a red flag so keep asking probing questions.
- When a referee provides negative comment about an applicant, ask for specific examples to support the comments being made.

If the role is a Children's Worker, an additional question regarding previous contact with children is required.

The [Reference check template](#) is available to write down or type your notes from the referee check.

Integrity checks

All applicants are asked to declare on their application form:

- Any criminal convictions
- Any convictions that have occurred since being employed by MSD (internal applicants)
- Any pending charges

- Any current complaint and/or disciplinary action upheld against them that is still active
- If they are currently the subject of a complaint and/or disciplinary review.

All potential employees or contractors have background checks completed whether or not they have access to business-critical systems and regardless of their term of employment.

Currently, MSD employees moving to a new role or secondment don't require additional background checks unless they're moving into a Children's Worker role.

The following checks are completed and co-ordinated through the MSD vetting team to help managers make well informed decisions on whether or not applicants meet MSD and Public Service standards of integrity and honesty.

Veda NZ	Check for any aliases
Benefit history	Internal checks using CMS, SWIFTT, TRACE, IMS and SAL
Bankruptcy	NZ Insolvency and Trustee Services
Police vetting	NZ Police Service

Criminal convictions and any disciplinary actions may not necessarily disqualify an applicant unless the panel feels that they are inconsistent with MSD's values and will impact on the applicant's potential to perform in the position. Please refer to the [MSD vetting guidelines](#).

Panels will also need to consider if the role requires a national security clearance eg Top Secret and the applicant's ability to obtain this clearance. This process is co-ordinated by external agencies and may take 2-3 months to complete. This applies to both internal and external applicants.

ID validation

Hiring managers need to verify an applicant's identification by physically sighting the original identity documents before the vetting check can be completed. This is needed for new employees and existing employees moving into Children's Worker roles for the first time. This is to be done by the hiring manager or a panel member at the interview.

The applicant needs to provide two forms of identification.

1. An original primary document (eg passport, full birth certificate, firearms licence)
2. A secondary document (eg a driver's licence, 18+ card, community services card)
3. One form of identity must have a photograph. The identity including the photo must be verified in person by the chairperson or panel member during the interview and recorded on the Police vetting form when submitting the request to confirm the identity check has been completed.

Checking work visas

If you're recruiting someone to work for MSD, make sure they're either a New Zealand citizen or have the right kind of visa to work in New Zealand.

For people who aren't New Zealand citizens, check which visa they hold and whether the visa conditions allow them to do the job they're applying for.

For more information about visa checks please see [Work visa requirements](#)

Resources

[Reference check template](#)

[NZ Police vetting forms](#)

Recommendation and Approval

The recommendation should provide enough information to clearly outline the panel's justification for their decision. A short summary of the decision should be recorded in MyHR under the 'Justification for Selection' field at the Offer Approval stage. If recruitment is not done through MyHR (eg for a secondment/EOI process), then the panel chair needs to keep evidence of the process and decision-making including approval for 12 months.

The hiring manager should have confidence in the robustness and integrity of the process and that:

- the person best suited to the position has been identified
- the selection process and decision-making has been consistent with MSD's obligations under the Public Service Act 2020 and MSD's Code of Conduct.

The hiring manager will make a recommendation to the approving manager of:

- the recommended applicant
- the recommended starting salary.

Note: specific approval is needed depending on the salary offered, please refer to the HR delegations, relevant guidance (eg the Public Service 2020 Pay Restraint guidance ([Pay restraint in the Public Sector](#))) or consult your recruitment partner/HR advisor.

The recommendation can be done through myHR and can be supported by a verbal discussion between the hiring and approving manager.

Any digital copies of documentation collected including short-listing notes and panel interview notes should be kept for 12 months. This will help make sure any relevant information is kept for any potential review process or any requests for information under the Privacy Act. After that the documentation can be disposed of securely.

Review of appointments

MSD staff have 10 working days to seek a review of an appointment other than acting appointments. The appointment remains provisional during this time and until any reviews have been completed.

The review process is intended to provide an effective way of addressing a staff member's concern about any aspect of an appointment. An independent reviewer(s) gathers information from all parties and considers whether the correct procedure was followed and the person best suited for the role appointed. (The process is in accordance with clause 5 of schedule 8 of the Public Service Act 2020.)

Resources

[Appointments review process guideline](#)

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