

## Recruitment During COVID-19 Pandemic

### Guidance for Managers and HR

The following guidance is based on the information contained in the [Emergency Redeployment During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) and the [COVID-19 Emergency Workforce Arrangements](#)

#### 1. Recruitment of Supply Staff to Fixed Term contracts (Key Worker Posts only)

This process applies where staff are being offered a fixed term contract for the same position that they are currently undertaking supply work for. If supply staff are being offered a fixed term contract in a different area the Internal Redeployment procedure below should be followed.

- No requirement to advertise post
- No requirement for individual to complete an application form
- No requirement for internal references to be sought
- Change form should be sent to [HRchanges@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:HRchanges@westlothian.gov.uk) . Managers **must** note on the change form that the reason for the post is COVID-19 emergency cover
- Change form actioned in CHRIS and i-Trent by HR Support/Payroll
- HR Support issue fixed term contract (COVID-19 cover)

#### 2. Internal Redeployment

- No requirement to advertise post
- Where an individual is being redeployed to undertake regulated work employing service must ensure appropriate PVG check is in place. Employee can be redeployed pending the receipt of PVG check however this should only be done where absolutely essential and employing service must ensure appropriate risk assessments are in place
- Change form (including the proposed end date for the temporary redeployment) should **only** be sent to [HRChanges@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:HRChanges@westlothian.gov.uk) if one of the following applies
  - **Increase** in grade
  - **Increase** in hours of work
  - A **new** allowance is payable
- If change forms are received that do not meet these criteria HR Support will contact the manager to advise no change form is required.
- Change actioned in CHRIS and i-Trent by HR Support/Payroll
- HR Support issue a contractual change letter

#### 3. External Recruitment

##### (i) Recruitment to Specific Posts

- Key Worker posts do not require to be authorised by Head of Service or EMT and should be authorised by the relevant Service Manager (authorisation can take the form of an email from the relevant Service Manager with the vacancy authorisation form attached if it is not possible for the vacancy authorisation form to be signed). The process for advertising these will be
  - Recruiting manager sends vacancy authorisation form, advert, job outline and person spec to [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk)

- HR Support add vacancy to Talentlink and make live as soon as possible following receipt
  - Applicants will complete the standard application via Talentlink
  - Managers will access applications forms and notify [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk) of interviews, regrets and appointments in the normal manner
- Non-key worker posts still require to be authorised by Head of Service (as above email confirmation will be acceptable) and EMT. Process for advertising these posts will be
    - Recruiting manager sends vacancy authorisation form, advert, job outline and person spec to [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk)
    - HR Support add these to a list (in the form of a spreadsheet) to go to EMT
    - Spreadsheet emailed to Chief Executive Office in line with existing bulletin schedules along with copies of the vacancy authorisation forms (photograph if not received electronically)
    - Feedback provided to [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk) about whether posts can be advertised and posts then added to Talentlink as appropriate and made live in line with the existing bulletin schedule
    - Applicants will complete the standard application via Talentlink
    - Managers will access applications forms and notify [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk) of interviews, regrets and appointments in the normal manner

## **(ii) General Adverts**

Services may wish to place adverts looking to recruit staff across a number of areas and/or build up a bank of staff they can call on as and when required rather than being limited to specific vacancies.

In these circumstances discussion should be held with the service, relevant Senior HR Adviser and HR Support Team Leader to determine the most appropriate way of placing the advert and managing the responses.

## **(iii) Appointment/Pre-employment Checks**

The COVID-19 Emergency Workforce Planning document makes provision for conditional appointment to posts pending the normal pre-employment checks. This should only be done where it is essential to the delivery of critical services. Where posts involve work with vulnerable groups it is essential that managers put in place a risk assessment and any other relevant safeguards before considering starting an employee without all pre-employment checks being completed.

Managers should continue to notify [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk) of successful candidates. The following is recommended for each of the following pre-employment checks.

### **(a) Pre-employment medical**

These are currently done online and are being processed as normal by occupational health.

HR Support will continue to email the link to the online questionnaire to successful candidates and notify the recruiting manager when the pre-employment medical is returned.

Managers will be able to start an employee prior to receiving confirmation from HR Support that the pre-employment medical has been received.

### **(b) References**

References should still be sought, particularly where the post is governed by SSSC safer recruitment guidelines.

Managers may request telephone references. Where this is done the manager should document the discussion using the reference template which is available on MyToolkit at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/33208/Recruitment-and-Selection-Forms> and return this to [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk)

Managers will be able to start an employee prior to the receipt of 2 references (where the employee is to be undertaking regulated work a minimum of 1 employer reference must be received before an employee starts work). Where 2 references are not received prior to an employee starting work, the recruiting manager must ensure that these are followed up and obtained as soon as possible. HR Support will monitor this and advise managers where references remain outstanding.

### **(c) PVG Check**

Where a post requires a PVG check managers will be able to start an employee in advance of this being received however it is **essential** that a risk assessment is carried out prior to this decision being made. Appendix 1 contains further details on the steps services should take when considering starting an employee prior to a PVG check being returned.

PVG checks for COVID-19 priority areas (Healthcare, childcare, social care, social work and prisons and justice) are being completed electronically and fast tracked. The process for these being completed is as follows:

- HR Support will email the electronic PVG application form to the successful candidate
- Candidate will return the completed application form to [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk) along with scanned/photograph of relevant ID documents
- HR Support will complete the relevant parts of the form and one of the authorised countersignatories will email to [COVID19@disclosurescotland.gov.scot](mailto:COVID19@disclosurescotland.gov.scot)
- Disclosure Scotland will return the completed check (either electronically or via post)
- HR Support will notify the manager of receipt. If there are any attachments HR Support will also advise the relevant Senior HR Adviser.

### **(d) Right to Work checks**

Right to work documentation would normally be checked by the recruiting manager at the interview however this is not possible where interviews are conducted via telephone. As it continues to be a criminal offence to employ an individual who does not have the right to work in the UK, in these circumstances it is **essential** that managers advise the candidate they will be required to provide these **original** documents on the first day of employment. The employee **cannot** commence work until they have provided this evidence. **Where an employee fails to provide this evidence timeously the conditional offer will be withdrawn.** The recruiting manager should then copy and verify these in the normal way and return to [recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@westlothian.gov.uk) within 2 working days. HR

Support will monitor receipt of documents and will provide regular reports to Heads of Service on all non-compliance

**e) SSSC Registration**

There is normally a six-month period after starting work to obtain registration. In accordance with the emergency Coronavirus Bill this has been increased to 12 months once employment has commenced.

**HR Services**  
**31 March 2020**

## PVG Guidance

The safety and wellbeing of vulnerable groups receiving services remains paramount and failure to carry out appropriate checks for new employees could have serious consequences. Employers must therefore continue to request PVG checks for those undertaking regulated work.

### New starts

During the pandemic only, the council will be able to start a new staff member ahead of a PVG check without the risk of committing an offence. Barred individuals who seek to exploit this will be reported to Police Scotland.

As the council will be responsible for mitigating risk to vulnerable groups during the period pending receipt of a PVG check, a risk assessment **must** be carried out to determine the appropriate deployment of an individual. A template risk assessment is attached.

As the responsible officers, it is essential Senior Managers are satisfied with the decisions of recruiting managers and quality of risk assessments.

Offers of employment remain 'conditional' subject to, amongst other things, receipt of a satisfactory PVG check. Offers may therefore require to be withdrawn after a new start has commenced should an unsuitable PVG check be obtained.

A robust interview process probing previous employment and gaps in service, along with receipt of at least one suitable reference prior to appointment, are key mechanisms for minimising risk of appointing an unsuitable candidate.

Where a PVG check confirms a conviction or that an individual is barred from working with a vulnerable group, the recruiting manager **must** immediately consult their Senior Manager (or other member of the Senior management team if necessary), to agree appropriate next steps. Advice from the Senior HR Adviser may also be sought.

### Redeployment

When redeploying an employee with no PVG to carry out regulated work, the fast track PVG checking process should be undertaken.

Employees with a PVG for one group (adults or children) may be redeployed to carry out regulated work with a different group during the pandemic.

The process for obtaining a PVG check is contained in the [Recruitment During COVID-19 Guidance](#)

Further information regarding the protection of vulnerable groups can be found on the council's intranet at: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/33233/Protection-of-Vulnerable-Groups-Children-and-Protected-Adults>

### PVG RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

This form should be completed where awaiting a PVG check during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Post:		Appointee:	
Service:		Recruiting manager:	

1. Service area and vulnerable groups/service involved	
2. Frequency and type of contact with service users, including potential for lone working	
3. Potential risks and control measures that can be put in place to minimise risks	
<b>Approved: Y / N</b>	<b>Approving manager signature:</b>
	<b>Date:</b>
(If not approved, please outline temporary measures to be implemented pending PVG check)	