



**Northumberland**  
County Council

## **CANDIDATE GUIDE**

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## Introduction

We're delighted you're considering a career here at Northumberland County Council!

Our people are key to our success as an organisation, so we have set up our recruitment processes to be inclusive, and hopefully attracting the widest number of candidates as possible. Where any support or adjustments may be needed, we highlight these too.

This Candidate Guide gives useful information about our recruitment processes, plus hints and tips to make your candidate journey with us a pleasant one.

Plus, if there's anything you think we can do better in the future, do let us know at [hrrecruitment@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:hrrecruitment@northumberland.gov.uk)

## Our Vision and Values

**Our Vision:** Northumberland is a land of great opportunities

**Priorities:** creating value for money, enabling growth and tackling inequalities

**Values:**

### People first

We provide services to our people (residents, colleagues, members, partners, visitors and businesses) through lasting, genuine, relationships that make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We listen and understand our people's needs and put them at the heart of our decisions.

### Excellence

We strive for the highest quality delivery of our services. This means being accountable for our actions and delivering on our commitments. We share and celebrate what works, are open and learn from what doesn't and take pride in continually improving.

### Respect

We are committed to building a trusting, caring and supportive environment for all our colleagues and communities. That means we are there for each other, act with empathy, value differences and encourage others to express themselves in order to collectively achieve our common goals. We treat others as they would wish to be treated.

### Resilience

We have robust controls, practices and support in place to protect our residents, our colleagues and our communities and empower them to thrive and live well. We are committed to acting sustainably in order to drive the right impact, over the long term, whilst ensuring best value for money.

## Applying for our roles

All our roles are advertised on our careers website using our online recruitment platform.

### Job description & person specification

If provided, the job description will explain to you the key responsibilities of the role and what skills, experience and/or qualifications you may need. The person specification also shows which criteria are essential, and where possible, you should demonstrate how you match these in your application.

### Disability Confident and Armed Forces Covenant

If you come under one of these categories (and we'll ask in your application form to be sure) then we guarantee that if you meet the essential criteria for the role, you'll be shortlisted to interview/assessment stage.

### Our adverts

Within our advert you'll see a summary of the key tasks and responsibilities you'll have in the role, along with the essential criteria we need you to bring to the role. Where roles can be performed part time, as a job share, hybrid or even via remote working, we will indicate this too. If you should have any additional questions about the role, please get in touch with us and we will do our best to answer them for you.

### Filling out your application

We take all applications to our roles through our applicant tracking system for recruitment. When you click to apply you will be prompted to create an account in our recruitment system (Tribepad) which tracks all your applications with us.

Depending on the type of role you are applying for, you may be able to simply upload your CV to apply, or in some instances, there may be a need to fully complete an application form with some specific questions.

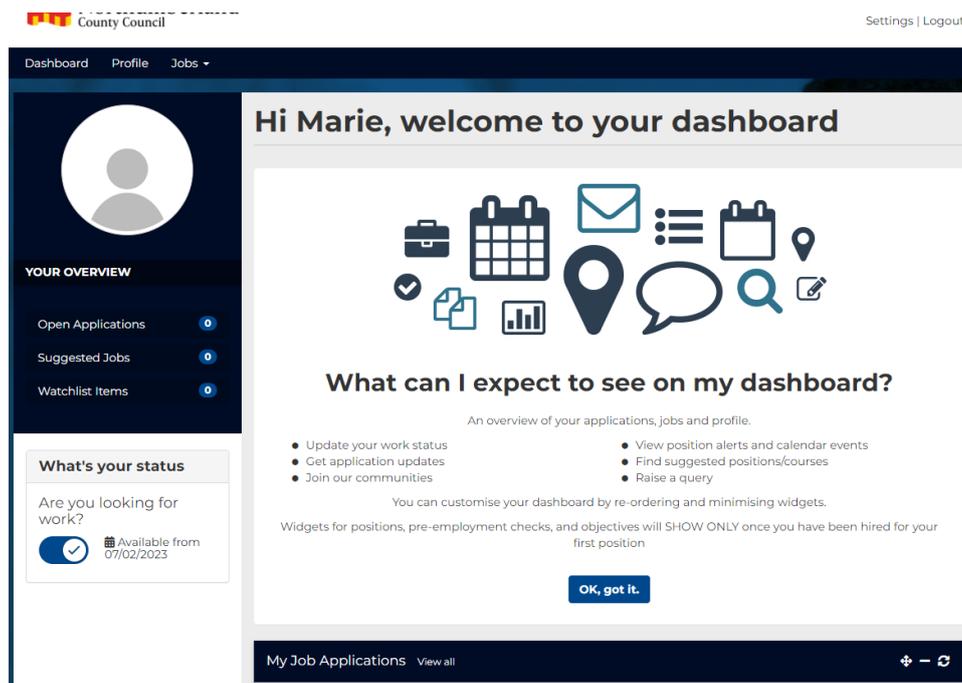
It's great if you are able to say in your application why you're suitable for the role. Take a look at the advert wording and job description and let us know which of those essential criteria you'll bring to the role plus anything extra. It's your chance to tell us why you'll make a great addition to our team here at Northumberland County Council generally, and to that role specifically.

#### Managing your candidate profile in our recruitment system

It's easy to manage your details in our recruitment system. Once you've set up your account you can log in at any time to see the progress of your applications and a record of the email communications we have sent to you.

You can also:

- Update your personal details, for example if you change address
- Update the newest version of your CV
- Change your GDPR preferences
- Set up job alerts so you get an email when roles you're interested in are advertised
- Manage your interview bookings
- View your job offer and fill out any related information we have asked for



## Account preferences

When you first set up an account with us, we'll ask you if you want to 'opt in' to us being able to contact you. You can also update your preferences afterwards from the settings menu at the top right of your Dashboard page:

### Opt-in and communication settings

- Check all
- Check all recommended
- I want to be automatically alerted when vacancies are posted by Northumberland County Council that I might be interested in
- I want to be suggested to Northumberland County Council for other vacancies that I might be suitable for
- I want Northumberland County Council to contact me about other suitable opportunities that may arise
- I want to be kept informed of my application progress by Northumberland County Council, by Text Message

Save

From here, you can update your preferences and the good thing about opting in is that if a role ever comes up that we think you might be interested in, we can then send you a quick email to tell you about it. Plus, it allows us to keep you updated throughout the recruitment process.

## Equality Monitoring questions

All our applications forms have some equality monitoring questions. We ask these questions so we can look at the demographic of candidates we are attracting and recruiting to our roles. This helps us understand whether we are reaching a diverse candidate pool, reflective of the communities we serve. We'd really appreciate if you would answer these questions and your answers will not be seen by the recruiting manager for the vacancy. This information is for monitoring purposes only. All information will be treated as confidential and will not be used when short-listing or deciding on whether an applicant is suitable for a role.

#### How we will keep in touch with you

Once you have a careers account with us, we will primarily contact you via email and we will often prompt you to log into your careers account where you'll see an easy-to-navigate dashboard of all your applications. Please ensure the email you have provided to set your account up is correct so we can easily get in touch with you. Plus, in terms of GDPR legislation, there's a whole section with a link to our privacy policy a bit later on.

#### Technical issues or special adjustments

If you do experience any technical issues whilst trying to complete your application or you need adjustments to be able to apply, please do get in touch with us at [hrrecruitment@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:hrrecruitment@northumberland.gov.uk) and we'll be happy to support you.

## **Shortlisting**

At the shortlisting stage, the recruiting manager will review all applications against the essential criteria for their role. If a high number of applications are received, the recruiting manager may then bring in some of the desirable criteria to be able to come to a suitable shortlist for the next stage. In some instances, they may request further information from you if it's unclear whether you meet the essential criteria so do keep a check on the email you have used to apply, in case they have tried to get in touch.

## **Interviews and assessment**

We conduct many of our interviews face-to-face, but we also use Microsoft Teams for virtual interviews too.

### In-person interviews

We'll let you know in your invite where the interview is being held, any local information you might need, such as where to park, who to ask for on arrival and if any preparation is required in advance of your interview.

### Microsoft teams interviews

You'll need MS Teams on your device to be able to join the meeting. You can download MS Teams from your usual App store or via Microsoft on your laptop or PC. You won't need to pay for the app, just use the free version and you'll be able to join as a 'guest' on your interview day. The link to join the interview will be provided to you in an email.

If you should experience any technical difficulties on the day of the interview, you will have contact details for who to reach out to.

### Accessibility & Reasonable Adjustments

If you do have any special requirements or need any adjustments to our recruitment process, please do let us know by emailing [hrrecruitment@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:hrrecruitment@northumberland.gov.uk)

## Interviews hints and tips

When you attend an interview or assessment with us, we want to give you the best opportunity to show us your skills and experience, so we've put together a few pointers to help you prepare.

### Plan ahead

- **Where is the interview being held** – if it's in person, check the route, plan your journey, where will you park. If online, have you got your joining link, are you using a laptop or a phone – is it fully charged?
- **Task, presentation or assessment** – were you asked to prepare a presentation for your interview? Have you been sent an assessment or task to complete? Make sure you check the invite and email to see if there were any other elements to complete or prepare.

- **Things to take with you / have to hand** – were you asked to take documentation? Do you like to ask questions at the interview and perhaps need to take your own notebook? Also, having a drink of water to hand can always be good especially as you'll probably be talking a lot!
- **Review the advert, job description & company website** – it's always good to remind yourself of the key things the role needs from you and also what the values of the organisation are. This can help you see how you'll fit into the organisation and which of your skills are going to add the most value for the employer.
- **Practise, practise, practise** – it's always good to try and predict some of the questions you may get asked and prepare some answers. Try popping these down as bullet point prompts and practise answering some standard interview questions. Also, if you need to have specific technical knowledge, make sure you are up-to-date with your knowledge. A great model for answering interview questions is the STAR model as shown here:

### STAR Model

The STAR Model gives you a blueprint for covering everything you would need to know when answering interview questions, or competency questions more generally, even in applications forms. It also ensures you draw on examples from real life experience, or where that's not possible, follow the steps through STAR and think what you would do in that situation to demonstrate you know what would be needed.

S – SITUATION: Outline what the issue was that needed resolving

T – TASK: What specifically did you do

A – ACTION: How did you complete your task

R – RESULT: Were you successful, what was the outcome and what did you learn

## Equal Opportunities

We recognise the importance of promoting equality of opportunity across all services as well as in the employment of our staff. We aim to promote equality

of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, and we welcome applications from a diverse range of candidates. Our Equality Policy supports our commitment to promoting inclusion.

## **Documentation** – Right to work, proof of address, proof of qualification

Any documents you provide must be the original.

### Right to Work in the UK

If you are offered the post, we must take copies of evidence that you are able to legally work within the UK; the following list details the acceptable documents/combinations of documents which we must see and copy. Please contact us if you are in doubt of which documents can be provided.

### Proof of Address

We'll ask you to provide proof of address and, whilst not an exhaustive list, the following original documents can be accepted as proof of address:

- Recent utility bill\*
- Recent mortgage statement\*\*
- Recent bank/building society statement\*
- Current full UK Driving Licence (Paper document)
- Current UK / EU Photocard Driving Licence
- Current house or motor insurance certificate
- Current council tax bill\*\*

\* dated in the last 3 months

\*\* dated in the last 12 months

### Proof of Qualification

If applicable, and where this is a necessary requirement to be able to perform the role you have applied for, we will ask you to provide proof of relevant qualification(s).

## **References**

Our policy here at NCC is to obtain references covering the last 3 years of your employment (or school/college/university for students) and a minimum of 2 references will be required. But don't worry, we'll ask you to provide this

information during the recruitment process when we need it, and we will not request a reference until you have accepted your verbal offer.

If we are experiencing difficulties in obtaining a response from a referee, we may ask for your assistance or for an alternative contact.

We do ask that you advise your referees where possible to expect our reference request.

## **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act**

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act was introduced to make sure that you are not discriminated against when applying for jobs if you have been convicted of a criminal offence and you have not re-offended for a period of time.

Exceptions Orders exist to protect vulnerable groups such as children, young people, and the elderly, sick or disabled. In such cases, we are legally entitled to ask you for details of all convictions, even if they are "spent" or "unspent" under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. All details of convictions will be disclosed by the Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly Criminal Records Bureau) for the preferred candidate.

All applicants who are offered employment to a post, subject to a criminal record check from the Disclosure and Barring Service before the appointment is confirmed, will have to provide details of cautions, reprimands, or final warnings, as well as convictions.

## **Safer Recruitment**

Northumberland County Council provides services to some of the most vulnerable residents in the county. We are required to ensure that the confidentiality and safety of our service users is protected, and we therefore undertake the most stringent vetting of our staff. This includes, where appropriate, Criminal Record Checks and thorough referencing, scrutiny of previous employment history, and checks against our client and employee records.

A trace against these does not mean that applicants are unsuitable for employment. It does, however, allow us to explore and address any potential conflicts of interest and also to assess suitability for employment.

Submitting your application form indicates your consent for such checks to be undertaken.

## GDPR

Data Protection Legislation places responsibilities on us to process personal data that we hold in a fair and proper way.

We collect personal information from you when you register with us to make any application. Information we collect includes name, email address and other contact details. We will use this information to communicate with you generally and to assess your application.

The personal data supplied in your job application will be used for recruitment and selection purposes. If appointed to the job, any subsequent personal information provided throughout the course of your employment, including sensitive personal data (e.g. medical health, criminal convictions, references etc.) will be held and processed for employment purposes by the Council, and any third-party organisations that provide services on our behalf. Any organisations that process your personal data on behalf of the County Council have the same legal obligation to comply with data protection legislation.

Personal information relating to your application will be kept in secure conditions. If you are unsuccessful, your personal data will normally be destroyed after 1 year. If you are successful, the data will be retained both for the duration of your employment and for a period after in line with our retention and disposal schedule.

Further details on how we process your personal data is available in our Privacy Notice.

We will consider that, by submitting your application form, you are giving your consent to the processing of your personal data in the ways described above.

## Politically Restricted Roles

A small number of roles we recruit to are classed as politically restricted and so this means the successful candidate cannot be an elected member of local authorities, or an MP/MEP, as stated in 'The Local Government and Housing Act 1989'. Where a role is politically restricted, we will state this in the advert/JD to make you aware.

## Relationship to members / employees canvassing

To ensure fairness in our recruitment process, we ask in our application form whether you are related to a Member, or Officer, of Northumberland County Council.

We will not be able to appoint you if you canvass any Members/Officers of the County, or of any committee of the Council, directly or indirectly – this means asking for help and influence to get a job using their position in the council.

## Staff Bank

Alongside general recruitment, we also advertise vacancies for our Staff Bank. Staff Bank functions as an in-house recruitment agency to the Council, offering short term and temporary vacancies to members of our Bank Pool.

It is a great way to join Northumberland County Council, try your hand at something new, or work flexibly around other commitments!

Staff Bank vacancies will be visible in the careers hub for you to view and apply to. The advert may list all the key responsibilities of the role and what skills, experience and/or qualifications you may need, or be more generalised depending on the role.

If successful after shortlisting and interview, your details will be held on our Bank Pool. Here you opt in to be approached by our Temporary Staffing Team for any new and suitable vacancies. Our Temporary Staffing Team work collaboratively with our Bank Pool candidates to match you to any vacancies based on your availability, location and field of interest.

We provide staff to all areas to the Council, so there's something for everyone!

To find out more about joining the Bank Pool, please contact our Temporary Staffing Team at [temporarystaffing@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:temporarystaffing@northumberland.gov.uk)