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# Preparing a successful NHS job application form

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**Looking to start your career, recently graduated, ready for a career change or wanting to progress? No matter what role or stage of your career, the job application process is key.**

The following document will provide you with some tips on how to create a successful application.

### **Searching for vacancies**

Job vacancies within NHS Wales are advertised on the NHS Jobs: <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/><sup>1</sup> and Trac websites: <https://apps.trac.jobs/>. Vacancies are also advertised on local health board/trust websites – details of these can be found [here](#).

Both the NHS Jobs and Trac websites have a search function allowing you to refine your search to roles which fit what you are looking for. Some examples of the search option include:

- keywords – title of the types of roles you are looking for
- location – roles within a specific location or radius
- pay grade/salary – roles based on your desired income.

### **Finding a listing**

Each vacancy is accompanied by a job advert, job description and person specification. Prior to making an application it is important to carefully read this information, make a note of the closing date, look at what the role involves and to also do some self-reflection, taking time to consider:

- do you meet the requirements – essential and desirable criteria
- what can you bring to the role – your skills, experience and values
- why do you want the role – thinking beyond the title/pay, what really interests you in the role.

Each vacancy is often accompanied by a named contact who you can get in touch with if you have any questions or want to find out more information about the role. Making contact can often be seen to be good practice as it can give you the chance to get a better insight into what the role involves and help for you to get a feel of whether you would be a good fit.

### **The application process**

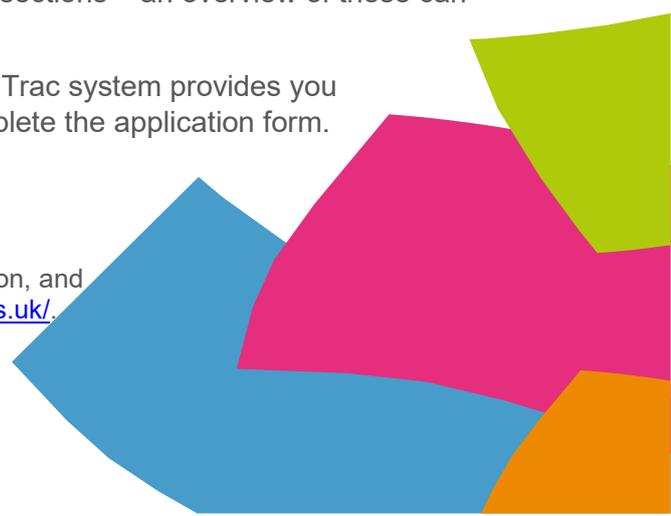
All NHS job applications are completed through Trac, an online portal responsible for managing all aspects of the recruitment process – from the application form to pre-employment checks. To start a job application on Trac you will need to set-up an account.

The NHS job application is made up of a number of key sections – an overview of these can be found below.

With the exception of any pre-application questions, the Trac system provides you with the flexibility to choose what order you wish to complete the application form.

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<sup>1</sup> A new version of the NHS Jobs website will be launching soon, and this is available through the following link: <https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/>.





In addition the system also provides you with the ability to save and return to your application form as you require.

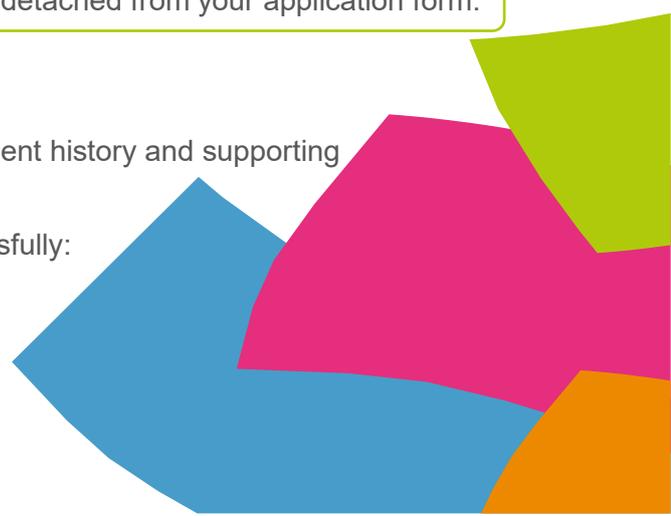
### Overview of the sections featured within the NHS job application



### Writing a successful application

Two vital parts of your application form are the employment history and supporting evidence sections.

Here is some guidance on how to prepare these successfully:





## Employment history

For each role you have undertaken within the last three years, you will be required to write an overview of your duties and responsibilities – up to a maximum of 500 words.

Before writing the overview refer to the job description and person specification and think about how your experience relates to the role and also what the employer is looking for.

Also think about any achievements you had and skills you used in your previous employment and look to include these within the overview as these will help to demonstrate your suitability for the role.

Remember this section is for you to provide a brief overview, it is not for you to list all of your past duties and responsibilities so pick out those which you feel are most relevant and use these within your response.

## Supporting evidence – the personal statement

The personal statement is often seen as the most important part of the job application – you've got 1500 words (maximum) to sell yourself and show why you are the best candidate for the role.

As with the employment history, when writing your personal statement you need to be fully prepared, referring back to the job description and person specification, as well as carrying out research into the organisation and their values<sup>2</sup> to make sure that you fit what the employer is looking for.

A useful tool to use when looking to structure your personal statement is through using the sandwich method, which is broken down into three segments:

**1. top slice**  
your introduction

**2. the filling**  
how you meet the criteria

**3. bottom slice**  
your closing statement

### 1. The top slice

This is your introduction – it is your chance to capture the attention of the employer. Using the essential and desirable criteria as a reference, think about your key skills, most relevant qualifications and experience and briefly introduce yourself. For example:

“Experienced in the assessment, delivery and evaluation of patient care using agreed pathways, I am a graduate mental health nurse with excellent

<sup>2</sup> NHS Wales values: <https://heiw.nhs.wales/careers/about-us/>

communication and people skills. Priding myself on my ability to work alone and as part of multi-disciplinary teams, I am passionate about mental health and delivering high-quality care.”

## 2. The filling

The ‘filling’ is all about showcasing what you have to offer and importantly, how you meet the essential and desirable criteria for the role.

The essential and desirable criteria listed within a person specification is often broken down into a table, placing the criteria into key sections which are often referred to as attributes.

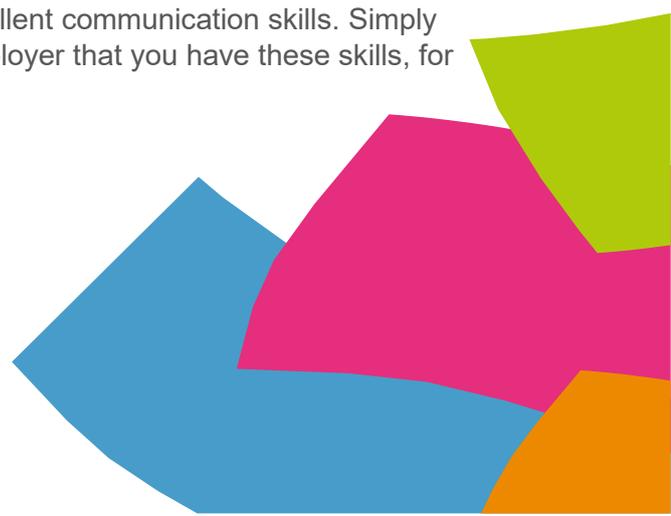
Using an example of a speech and language therapist, here is an example of some of the criteria listed within a vacancy<sup>3</sup>:

Attributes	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognised qualification degree/equivalent in speech &amp; language therapy</li> <li>HPCP registered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of health legislation/policy</li> </ul>
Experience and achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience of supporting service change</li> </ul>
Aptitude and abilities (strengths, skills and qualities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent interpersonal skills</li> <li>Knowledge of assessment tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to speak Welsh</li> </ul>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathetic</li> <li>Self-motivating and able to motivate others</li> </ul>	
Other relevant information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to travel</li> </ul>	

Using the order of the person specification as a guide helps to provide a natural flow for your personal statement. This is done through chronological order by following the order of each of the attributes and the relevant criteria within to build your statement. For example, covering qualifications and knowledge first by addressing you have the relevant qualification, followed by the required registration. Using this method helps to make sure that you cover all of the criteria and also makes it easier for the reader to follow.

One of the most important things to remember when writing your personal statement is that you need to show the employer that you are able to effectively carry out the role – it’s more than just stating that you can do something. For example, as part of the essential criteria an employer may be looking for the candidate to have excellent communication skills. Simply stating that you meet the criteria does not show the employer that you have these skills, for example:

<sup>3</sup> Criteria for roles may differ across organisations and so the qualifications/experience required may be different for each vacancy.





“I have excellent written and verbal communication skills.”

Instead you need to provide evidence and demonstrate how you are able to put your skills into practice, for example:

“Through my role as a as a marketing assistant, I have developed excellent communication skills. From dealing with email enquiries and writing reports, to representing my team at local events and engaging with a wide range of people including young children and business owners, I pride myself on being an effective communicator.”

### 3. The bottom slice

The ‘bottom slice’ of your personal statement is the conclusion and where you will need to positively summarise what you can bring to the role. It is also a space to tell the employer why you want the role/to work for the organisation – think beyond the money/title! As an example, using the role of a dentist:

“I am a highly motivated and reliable individual able to confidently manage my work and deliver excellent patient care. Having been inspired by the work within community dental services during my clinical placements and through my lifelong ambition to become a dentist, I would love the opportunity to be considered for the role within your practice”.

### Final tips

Here are some final tips to help you to prepare a successful job application:

1. check the closing date
2. don't rush your application – give yourself enough time to show why you are the best candidate for the role
3. remember to read the job advert, job description and person specification before starting your application
4. self-reflect on what you can bring to the role
5. use the person specification as a checklist to make sure you demonstrate the criteria within your responses
6. read all the instructions and questions carefully
7. use the same tone of voice throughout
8. be clear and succinct with your responses
9. check your word count – applications such as Word, Notepad or online tools can help to monitor your word count when there is a maximum number of words
10. proofread your application to check for any spelling or grammar errors
11. where possible get someone to read over your application for you
12. check through all sections to make sure that you have provided all of the required information, all the information is correct and that you are happy with your responses
13. confirm that your referees that they would be happy to provide a reference
14. once you have submitted your application, regularly check your Trac account and emails as notifications regarding interviews and assessments will be added here
15. remember it's your application form so showcase yourself and be the best you can be!