Agenda for Change Job Descriptions

Every member of staff should have a relevant and banded up-to-date Job Description (JD). For all staff groups except Medical and Dental, this is part of national Agenda for Change Job Evaluation terms and conditions. An ideal time for managers and staff to review the role being undertaken is as part of the annual appraisal process.

If it is agreed there have been significant changes required of the role (eg. new skills or additional responsibilities), the JD can be amended with management and staff working collaboratively and agreeing the final version, which will accurately reflect the role. The Trust’s AfC guidance (including how to write a good JD) is available via the HR Staff Hub (intranet):

<https://staffhub.liverpoolft.nhs.uk/working-with-us/job-descriptions.htm>

Amended JDs should be submitted to the Agenda for Change team, with a Person Specification (PS) and an organisational chart demonstrating where the role sits within the structure of the department, showing reporting lines ie who the role reports to and who (if appropriate) reports to the role.

The PS details the knowledge, experience, skills and attributes required for the role. Where specific qualifications are requested, sometimes it is advisable to add “or equivalent level of qualification / knowledge” to i) avoid potential breaches of equality legislation and ii) to optimise the candidates that you may want to shortlist. Similarly, specific years of experience should not be asked for. Instead, highlights of achievements and training should be encouraged.

Roles which require professional registration (eg. HCPC-registered Biomedical Scientist) must have this explicitly requested for the post-holder or successful applicant to comply with statutory regulations.

If no agreement can be reached between the manager and the postholder(s) on any changes to the JD, the Trust’s grievance policy should be referred to.

Once a JD is submitted to the Agenda for Change team, they will arrange for the Job Evaluation Group to review the paperwork and if necessary, will arrange for a panel to determine the banding of the role. Consisting of two trained AfC practitioners from both management and staffside, this group use the national profiles, the Job Evaluation handbook and their training to analyse the JD, PS and organisational chart to try and match the role to a National Job Profile. The manager of the department and the current post-holder(s) (or the most relevant stakeholder who will work with the role if the position is new or vacant) also attend the panel (typically via video link), so that clarifications and/or supporting contextual information can be provided.

The national profiles, which the panels refer to for guidance, are nationally available and have been drafted to bring national consistency across all professions and all 16 factors of every job. There is an extensive range of profiles available for all NHS sectors (nursing, pharmacy, estates, finance, HR, physiotherapy, healthcare science etc.) and in most cases a successful match can be made. The scores and evidence recorded by the Panel are subsequently checked for consistency and clarity by the Job Evaluation Group and the manager is then informed of the decision. A review may be requested of the outcome. In this instance, a new panel is convened, the majority of whom will be different from the original group.

It should be noted that an amended JD does not necessarily result in a role being matched to a different band. There may indeed be significant and acknowledged changes, but these alone may not change the banding of the role. It is understandable that staff may be disappointed in this instance, however, it is hoped that the rigour within which panels operate offers reassurance that the process is transparent, unbiased and held to the strictest standards of governance.

The Trust uses generic job descriptions where appropriate to support both a consistent approach across teams and functions and also to reduce the volume of individual requests for roles. It may well be the case that roles at the same band in multiple departments are matched to the same National Job Profile.

The generic roles are pitched at the appropriate level of responsibility for the banding and the specific detail of the function or area using the JD can be included in both the advertisement and as a local task list. Applicants can then tailer their answers to any interview questions appropriately.

When shortlisting, managers should always shortlist the candidates who meet all of the essential criteria in the PS to ensure there is no challenge to selection. Interview questions should consist of questions seeking to assure the interview panel of competencies, values and behaviours.