

# on the job

This is the fourth in a series of briefings to assist managers of drug treatment services in developing effective management policies and procedures.

## 4

### Recruitment and retention

#### RECRUITMENT

There is currently a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced staff in drug treatment services. This is a barrier to increasing treatment capacity and improving the quality of drug treatment services.

#### Equal opportunities

There are no specific rules on how to recruit staff but employers should be aware of anti-discrimination laws that will affect the ways in which they recruit staff.

*Employers should also be aware that:*

- positive discrimination to change the composition of an unbalanced workforce is not allowed but employers can take positive action to address the issue (e.g. offering training to any under-represented currently employed groups within their service)
- a person's sex may be a Genuine Occupational Qualification (GOQ) for a job, in which case discrimination in recruitment would be lawful. It is recommended that employers seek further advice before deciding on this option.

#### Pre-employment checks

Criminal record checks and other vetting procedures are essential for staff recruited to work with drug misusers. Having a criminal conviction should not automatically exclude someone from employment. However, employers have a duty to check an applicant's criminal record and other relevant information (e.g. information held by the local police) in order to protect clients and patients. Enhanced checks are required when working with vulnerable clients, including young people and drug and alcohol misusers.

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enables organisations to make more thorough recruitment checks. New staff should only be confirmed in post with the completion of these checks. Services must register with the CRB and comply with their code of practice.

References should also be requested and they should be used as a source of verification of assertions made by a candidate about the tasks they have performed and responsibilities held.

#### Employing former and current drug and alcohol misusers

Current and former drug and alcohol misusers should not be considered or overlooked for employment because of their substance misuse alone. Applications should be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the type of work the individual will be undertaking (whether administrative or client-based), the extent and type of drug or alcohol misuse, and whether the misuse is current. The principle of ensuring that staff are competent to perform the job for which they are being employed should be the main driver behind any recruitment.

Prescribed medicines may impair an individual's performance at work and may preclude them from doing some tasks. However, the use of medication for drug misuse should not be considered drug misuse in itself although some drug services may require that their staff are abstinent from all drugs and alcohol. There are also additional considerations if a former or current drug user applies for a job with a driving requirement. There is more information at [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk)

#### Asylum and Immigration Act

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 makes it an offence to employ an individual who does not have permission to live or work in the United Kingdom. Services should request evidence in the form of an original document, which states that the individual has permission to work and live in the United Kingdom.

#### Job description and person specification

Before a job is advertised it is important that a job description and a person specification are prepared. A job description describes the job's main tasks while the person specification describes the skills, knowledge and

characteristics needed for an individual to perform a specific job. Drug and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS) are an essential tool when writing job descriptions and person specifications for drug service employees.

### Attracting applicants

The process of attracting applicants for a job needs to be undertaken carefully to ensure that the process is cost effective and results in a good response from individuals of appropriate ability. The method of recruitment and job advertised should be adapted to the type of job that is being advertised and aim to reach as wide a group as possible. Employers may also consider advertising in media targeting under-represented groups (e.g. The Voice).

Interested candidates should be asked to complete an application form, which can be designed to provide the necessary and relevant information about the applicant, their skills and experience. An application form should be provided in a variety of formats (e.g. large print). All personal information and data requested for monitoring purposes should be collected on a separate sheet(s) and detached before the selection process.

### Selection process

It is necessary to select candidates for interview who are deemed to be appropriate for the job advertised. This involves matching the requirements set out in the job description and person specification against the candidate's application form. This selection should be undertaken by at least two individuals. All short-listed candidates must at least meet all the essential requirements of the person specification. Specific reasons for non-selection associated with the person specification must be recorded for each candidate.

There are two purposes of an interview: to select the best candidate for the job and to give the candidate information about the job and service. The interview panel should be diverse and competent to recruit and select. A set of standard questions will help with comparison, time-keeping and ensuring that all candidates are treated equally. Constructive, relevant and non-discriminatory feedback, agreed in advance by the panel, should be offered to unsuccessful candidates. As well as interviews the candidates could be asked to produce and make a presentation or undertake a test relevant to the role.

An offer of employment should be sent to the successful candidate. The content of the letter can form the main terms and conditions of employment or part of these.

### STAFF RETENTION

It is important that the right staff are recruited and then retained by drug services both to keep their skills and experience within the organisation and to reduce the costs of replacing staff.

*Staff retention may be improved by:*

- an induction process to help new employees and current employees settle into their new job and the organisation
- training and development strategies, which include a training needs analysis against Drug and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS) of the staff team as a whole and for each individual
- improving the work-life balance of employees by offering flexible working, especially for employees with children
- having regular and effective appraisal and supervision sessions
- providing appropriate remuneration (e.g. competitive pay, holidays and internal loyalty schemes)
- having effective communication between employers and staff (e.g. trade unions, staff meetings)
- developing effective policies so that employees know that they will receive fair treatment for any problems they experience while at work.

Some of these issues are addressed as part of broader NHS initiatives, which all drug services will need to take into account.

### USING MONITORING DATA

Recruitment and retention offer numerous opportunities for an organisation to monitor its practice and ensure that it is treating everyone fairly. This data should be routinely analysed and the results used to review and improve the processes being used.

→ For further information on this topic contact the QuADs and policy support line, which offers general policy development advice and a free policy review service at [brendan@drugscope.org.uk](mailto:brendan@drugscope.org.uk) or call 020 7928 8701.



**National Treatment Agency  
for Substance Misuse**

### NEXT ISSUE

**Disciplinary issues**