**Guidance on writing job descriptions and person specifications**

The purpose of the job description is to outline the main responsibilities and duties of a role. It helps set clear expectations with your employees at the outset of their employment about what is expected of them.

With regards to recruitment it will help applicants determine whether the is job of interest to them and whether they have the required skills set. From the employer’s perspective it will assist with shortlisting for interview by matching the applicants received with the job description. It will also help with formulating interview questions.

The job description should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it remains current and in line with the actual role being performed. It can be helpful to review the job description as part of performance management processes (e.g. at the appraisal meeting).

**Summary of a Job Description**

The job description should:

* State the job title
* State who the role reports to and who else are the key contacts/relationships
* State the location of the job
* Describe the main purpose of the job
* List between 8 – 20 short sentences that cover the main duties and responsibilities
* List any financial management or staff management responsibilities. Where the post has financial management, it is helpful to include the amount of the budget and the nature of the responsibilities.
* State the key purpose of the post, this is a brief overall statement of why the job exists within the organisation and what the job is expected to accomplish.
* Lists the skills, abilities and qualities required

**Main Duties and Responsibilities**

This should identify the outputs of the job against which success in the job could be measured. A useful approach when defining the main duties is to list all the tasks the role is required to undertake. This may initially be a very long list, but the tasks can then be grouped into broad areas of activity, and re-worded as main duties and responsibilities.

It is important to be specific and clearly explain what the post holder will be doing. For example, if one of the duties is to ‘provide advice’, be clear about the nature of the advice the post holder will be expected to provide and the complexity of the advice. It is also helpful to be clear about whether the post holder has discretion to exercise initiative, make decisions or influence events. It is also helpful to clarify when decisions would be referred upwards.

Use ‘action’ verbs to describe tasks or responsibilities such as:

* Plan
* Devise
* Recommend
* Develop
* Co-ordinate
* Examine
* Create
* Analyse
* Control
* Research
* Test
* Evaluate

**Person Specification**

The person specification is used to describe the experience, knowledge, skills and qualities that are needed to enable a person to undertake the role successfully. It should only include things that are necessary to do the job. These are divided into essential criteria (which are required from the point of recruitment) or desirable criteria (which can be developed or could be advantageous).

Knowledge, Qualifications and Experience

* Qualifications of education level
* Membership of a professional body
* Previous experience of working in a particular environment
* Previous experience of managing budgets
* Previous experience of line management
* Knowledge of the Church of England or workings of a Cathedral

In order to avoid any potential for age discrimination, it is helpful to state the need to demonstrate they can carry out specific tasks, rather than ask for a number of year’s experience.

**Skills and Abilities**

This section refers to how the post holder uses and applies his/her knowledge and experience. Examples could include:

* Ability to plan and prioritise work
* Effective time management
* Ability to use email and Microsoft Office and/or other specific packages
* Written/Verbal skills
* Organisational skills
* Team-working
* Ability to work on own initiative
* Presentation skills

**Work-related Personal Qualities**

This section refers to the values and standards the post holder will bring to the role. Examples could include motivation, integrity, creativity or confidentiality. It could also include requirements such as ‘Need to attend evening meetings’.

Words such as ‘Energetic’ and ‘Gravitas’ should be avoided in person specifications and in job advertisements as these can be seen as having an age-bias. Expressions such as ‘Fit and Able’ must also be avoided as they can have the potential for disability discrimination unless these can be objectively justified. Statements such as ‘sense of humour’ should also be avoided as these are very subjective statements that are impossible to judge objectively.