



Better Hiring
Institute

The Better Hiring Blueprint for the Future of Hiring

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BETTER HIRING INSTITUTE

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Foreword

Introduction

Hiring in the UK

Over the years, the hiring process has become old fashioned and fragmented. In our modern post-Covid world and future of work, we need modern, flexible and digital hiring that is Faster, Fairer and Safer for all.

The Better Hiring Blueprint for the Future of Hiring

The Better Hiring Blueprint for the Future of Hiring is the UK's first guide on how all of the stages within the hiring process need modernising.

The Better Hiring Institute is a social enterprise created between government and industry to drive change in the post-Covid labour market, emphasising helping workers and organisations flourish after lockdown.

The Better Hiring Institute has an advisory board featuring DBS, Cifas, NHS, DCMS, FSB, Reed Screening, and Universities. It also has industry subcommittees consisting of well-known employers that between them cover 80% of the UK's workforce.

The Better Hiring Blueprint for the Future of Hiring is a living document owned and updated by The Better Hiring Institute's consortium of experts across multiple sectors, employers and government. It is designed to show what change is required within hiring to drive the levelling up agenda and help organisations take advantage of new thinking. It has four pillars, Future hiring, Pre-hiring, Hiring, and Onboarding. Each pillar is split into one-page sections of the component parts of the hiring process. Therefore, it can be seen as an overall manifesto or as a specific topic within the hiring process as stand-alone.

Faster, Fairer, and Safer Hiring

The Better Hiring Institute mission is to make hiring Faster, Fairer and Safer. The Better Hiring Institute believes the hiring process needs modernisation and digitalisation to make it fit for purpose within the post-Covid labour market.

To help govern the work of the Better Hiring Institute, there are three expert panels aligned to the Better Hiring Institute mission of making hiring Faster, Fairer and Safer. They are committed to ensuring that all of the modernisation proposed by the Better Hiring Institute meets the requirements of a Faster, Fairer and Safer labour market and are comprised of some of the leading experts in their area across industry and public sector.

The Better Hiring Institute Toolkits

The Better Hiring Institute also produces Better Hiring Toolkits for industry sectors in association with regulators and trade groups that standardise hiring and onboarding requirements for each industry, enabling the move towards greater digitalisation.

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Faster, Fairer & Safer

The Better Hiring Institute mission is to make hiring Faster, Fairer and Safer. The Better Hiring Institute believes the hiring process needs modernisation and digitalisation to make it fit for purpose within the post-covid labour market.

	Faster	Fairer	Safer
Future Hiring	In future the BHI will make Future Hiring faster through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A better join-up between employers, young people, education institutions and re-skillers 	In future the BHI will make Future Hiring fairer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A better understanding of future employer skills requirements ✓ better support for young people entering a post-lockdown labour market ✓ removal of graduate exit fees ✓ the job application process better reflecting the diversity of the UK 	In future the BHI will make Future Hiring safer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Greater employer recognition of mental health challenges caused by Covid and potential isolation of the new virtual world of work
Pre-Hiring	In future the BHI will make Pre-Hiring faster through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Development of online job applications/online job searching 	In future the BHI will make Pre-Hiring fairer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More inclusive job adverts ✓ improvement of targeted marketing ✓ inclusion of salaries on job adverts ✓ an end to recruitment ghosting 	In future the BHI will make Pre-Hiring safer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supporting regulation of the online recruitment sector to eradicate fake job adverts and employment scams
Hiring	In future the BHI will make Hiring faster through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adoption of new technology 	In future the BHI will make Hiring fairer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Influencing diverse and inclusive recruitment practices ✓ helping to avoid AI and RecTech bias ✓ encouraging fairer methods of sifting and selection 	In future the BHI will make Hiring safer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improving protections for workers in the gig economy ✓ encouraging the importance of contracts and fair pay
Onboarding	In future the BHI will make Onboarding faster through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhanced digitisation of the process and adoption of recruitment technology 	In future the BHI will make Onboarding fairer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ a framework for social media checking ✓ consistent decision making by employers on criminal records ✓ ensuring the new digital right to work regime is inclusive for all 	In future the BHI will make Onboarding safer through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Digital credentials ✓ digital careers replacing CVs ✓ standardising requirements at sector level ✓ improving referencing

Future Hiring

Future hiring is the process of preparing early talent, work-seekers or re-skillers for the hiring process. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the labour market more than ever. The pandemic has created a greater need to upskill and reskill the existing workforce and work-seekers to keep up with the job market. The early talent labour market is competitive, giving rise to new expectations of skillsets and abilities set by employers. However, this is not being communicated clearly nor taught in universities causing graduates to feel insecure in their abilities to secure a job opportunity.

The Better Hiring Institute campaigns for a Faster, Fairer and Safer process for hiring whereby, all work seekers are confident in going through the hiring process with the necessary resources.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

- Leading minds in the Future Hiring subcommittee are developing policy & practice in this area. BHI have a future hiring Sub-committee of experts within post-schools and higher education, creating best practice and guidance. BHI supports Graduates Fog's campaign in "challenging exit fees" in order to create a fairer future hiring process, and, for fairer hiring fees amongst Graduate schemes.
- BHI is seeking feedback and inputs from students and school leavers about the challenges of getting a job after COVID.

What does the UK need?

- The UK is currently undergoing a staff shortage and is expected to continue and faces challenges globally on the war on talent. The UK needs to invest in programmes that better prepare young professionals into roles for their aspiring industry.
- The UK needs a post-university hiring process that is fairer for work seekers. A better linkage between the skills required by employers and the skills being taught in the education system.

Future Hiring

Employer

Many companies and organisations will invest and develop a strong recruitment strategy to attract the best talent. Building a strong and planned employer branding strategy can help companies to stand out from their competition.

What is the current stance?

Campus recruiting

Colleges and Universities are full of young aspiring professionals and dynamic talents who demonstrate immense enthusiasm for their work. Prospective employers will partner up with leading universities and colleges and be part of their placement cells. Employers use campus recruiting to recruit talented students and recent graduates.

The best ways to attract these young talents are:

- Get featured in campus newspapers
- Conduct workshops and seminars in different colleges to showcase the company and the career opportunities the organisation has
- Sponsor college festivals and other cultural events
- Invite students for an industry tour to learn about the company structure and functioning and allow them to interact with a few of the eminent stakeholders of the company
- Offer internship programs where interested students can intern with your company
- Have a different recruitment team for these freshers who are young professionals and understand the budding minds.

Employee Benefits

Employee benefits are non-cash provisions within the reward package, although they can have a financial cost for employers, for example, paid holidays, pensions, or company cars. Employee benefits offer a way to attract and keep people, contribute towards improving wellbeing and encourage required behaviours, achievements, values, and skills.

Organised competitions

Companies now use digital media to attract talent by organising online talent programmes for students and professionals to participate and display their skills. One way they do this is by creating online competitions for students where they engage with the organisation's work. Such competitions allow students/candidates to know the company and recognise the brand. They enable aspiring professionals to experience responsibility before even becoming qualified professionals.

Social media recruiting

Employers will ensure HR teams are actively promoting the company to attract the best talent. They will search for the candidates and encourage them to apply to their company actively.

Employee referrals

Setting up an employee referral program is a great way to hire promising candidates and make your current employees happy. Use your employees as brand ambassadors for the company. Ask them to refer their qualified friends and family and earn rewards. Motivate them by offering appealing employee referral rewards.

What does the UK need?

The UK is currently undergoing a staff shortage which is expected to continue and challenges are faced globally on the war on talent.

The UK needs to invest in programmes that better prepare young professionals into roles for their aspiring industry.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

Leading minds in the Future Hiring subcommittee are developing policy and practice in this area.

BHI have a future hiring Sub-committee of experts within post-schools and higher education, creating best practice and guidance. BHI supports Graduates' Fog's campaign in "challenging exit fees" in order to create a fairer future hiring process, and, for fairer hiring fees among Graduate schemes.

Future Hiring

Work Seeker

What is the current stance?

What graduate in-study work-seekers are currently doing?

Volunteering

One of the simplest ways for grad in-study work-seekers to improve their employability is volunteering for relevant industry experience without facing competition from other applicants. Graduates can apply for a range of voluntary positions with charities or not-for profit organisations. Opportunities are typically advertised on volunteering websites or at employers fairs organised by the university career services.

Placement year

During University, graduates may opt to do a placement year to gain relevant industry experience. Placement years can sometimes lead to full-time job opportunities if the employer is impressed.

Internships/micro placement schemes

Mini placement schemes and internships allow students to dedicate three to five weeks of work during the summertime. These internships and schemes aim to gain real-life experience in their relevant industry by taking on exciting projects which also help nurture their crucial employability skills and grow their professional network.

Mentor schemes

Mentor schemes allow students to learn and be coached on the ins and outs of working professionals within their relevant industry. Students will be paired with a working professional who can help them prepare for the job market and give them an insight into the industry.

What is the reality for graduates?

The pandemic has severely impacted young people graduating into the toughest job markets in decades. With employment rates rising, companies freezing their recruitment and the global economy set to face the deepest recession to date.

Research by UK-based graduate jobs website Milkround shows just 18% of graduates are securing jobs this year compared to the typical 60%, while US-based jobs website ZipRecruiter says the number of available jobs popular with university graduates has plummeted since its mid-February peak: it fell 77% by mid-May and is still down 61% on its pre-Covid-19 levels.

There is a significant reduction in all roles across the board. While there is a slight preference for cheaper graduates vs experienced workers, these roles tend to be short term or part-time. With the shift in the workforce, data suggests there is a 10% reduction in salaries across all roles.

Re-skillers

The pandemic has impacted jobs and sectors more than ever. There is a greater need now for existing workforce and job seekers to reskill and upskill in order to keep up with the job market.

What does the UK need?

The UK is currently undergoing a staff shortage which is expected to continue and challenges are faced globally on the war on talent.

The UK needs to invest in programmes that better prepare young professionals into roles for their aspiring industry.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

BHI is seeking feedback and input from students and school leavers about the challenges of getting a job after COVID.

Pre-Hiring

Pre-hiring is the first initial stage of the recruitment process. Within this stage organisations will identify a need for a vacancy. The hiring manager will need to conduct a job analysis and create a candidate profile for the role. They will obtain approval from HR to recruit for this vacancy. Once approval has been granted, the team can proceed in drafting a job description and advertising the vacancy.

Hiring a unsuitable candidate can be very expensive for an employer, the pre-hiring stage helps them to clearly define and identify qualified candidates in the hiring process.

However, there are fundamental cracks within the pre-hiring process that need addressing and changing.

The Better Hiring Institute Stance

- To explore the current target marketing methods and identify areas where technology creates discrimination and ways of tackling this issue.
- For job adverts that remove bias such as gender bias, and include information such as salaries and other information that help a work-seeker make a choice.
- For stronger regulations within online recruitment to ensure fairness and safe method of recruiting

What does the UK need?

- The UK needs targeted marketing approaches that treat job-seekers fairly and does not discriminate against them.
- Currently, in the UK, there is no standardised way in which job descriptions are written. Employers do not have a checklist they need to adhere to cover the critical components in writing a job description. There is a need for standardisation when writing job descriptions.
- The UK needs a fairer system of advertising jobs that does not discriminate against work-seekers, or lead to other negative experiences such as fraud.

Pre-Hiring

Employer

Identify a vacancy, evaluate need, attain approval, submit a requisition.

What is the current stance?

Identify the vacancy

In most cases, vacancies become available in a business when existing employees leave, their role is unfilled. These vacancies are usually for existing roles and are therefore easily identifiable. When companies expand or undergo restructuring, it may create a need for new roles, but maybe less clear to what those roles are.

Conducting a job analysis

When the vacancy becomes available in an organisation, it is essential to identify the duties and skills required for the role. This is known as job analysis. A job analysis is carried out to determine whether a vacancy needs to be filled or whether the team's tasks and duties can be redistributed. This aids the later process of drafting job descriptions and candidate profiles.

Candidate profile

The candidate profile determines the skills and qualifications that are required for the role. This will be identified in the job analysis. These skills and qualifications can be listed as either essential or desirable. Once this is determined, it can be used for a series of measurables against candidates applying for the vacancy.

Attain approval

Senior management will review the vacancy need and make amends, accept or reject the recruitment plan.

Targeted marketing

Once a role has attained it's approval, recruitment teams will devise a recruitment marketing plan to attract the best talent. A few ways they will do this is by:

- Building a strong employer brand that attracts top talent
- Improving candidate experience right from the start
- Increasing the visibility of employer website
- Establishing stronger relationships with candidates through social recruiting
- Having an employee referral program
- Hosting recruitment events

Organisations use a variety of technologies to help their targeted marketing. These include marketing analytics, conversion optimisation, email marketing, search engine marketing and marketing automation. There is a risk of technology amplifying current bias, particularly concerning jobs and gender.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs targeted marketing approaches that treat job-seekers fairly and does not discriminate against them.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

To explore the current target marketing methods and identify areas where technology creates discrimination and ways of tackling this issue.

Pre-Hiring

Employer

Job descriptions

What is the current stance?

An excellent job specification is key to attracting and evaluating the best candidates for your organisation.

Firstly, before writing a job description, you must analyse the role on offer, mainly if it's a new role. A job description should be rewritten each time the role is advertised to reflect any changes in your business requirements. Use this as an opportunity to review the role and its responsibilities. Organisations should be open about expectations, specific goals, and length of role.

What to include in a job description?

You should include most, if not all, of the following points in the structure of your job specification:

- Job title
- Department and to whom the employee would report
- Location
- Type of employment, e.g. full-time, part-time, shift pattern
- Summary of the primary duties and objectives of the job as well as a detailed description of the role (ideally between five and ten key responsibilities)
- Likely changes or developments in the role and scope for progression or promotion
- Essential skills or qualifications required to perform the position, e.g. accountancy qualifications
- 'Soft' skills, preferred experience, or personality traits in a desirable candidate
- Salary and benefits. Think about what your company has to offer - you need to sell the job to the best candidates as much as they need to sell themselves to you.

Company overview

A company overview allows an organisation to sell itself and be more attractive than any others who may be recruiting for similar positions. This should include size and scale of the organisation and any unique selling points of working for the business; plus, an idea of the company culture. The company should strive to make the ideal candidate realise how much they want to work for you.

Language and Tone

The job description's tone can indicate the formality or informality of your organisation. Also, consider where the advert will be posted and how this might affect the wording. Ensure you use inclusive language in your job descriptions to avoid gender or any other kind of bias. Removing gender bias within your job description will likely attract a much broader inclusive and diverse talent pool. Examples include: using gender-neutral job titles, using "you" or "your" instead of "he" or "she", avoiding using masculine or feminine words, and avoid listing too many requirements. This creates fairness and does not deter certain groups from applying.

What does the UK need?

Currently, in the UK, there is no standardised way in which job descriptions are written. Employers do not have a checklist they need to adhere to cover the critical components in writing a job description.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

To explore whether improvements in job descriptions better help work-seeker in choosing the right job for them and aid employers in hiring suitable candidates.

Pre-Hiring

Employer

Advertising

What is the current stance?

Employers may advertise their job vacancy on multiple platforms to attract the right candidates for their vacancies. Some include:

- Job boards
- Social media
- Instore advertising
- Referrals
- Career websites
- Job fairs
- Company websites
- Head-hunters and recruiters
- Gig-economy platforms
- Apps

Discrimination in job adverts

Employers must not state or imply in a job advert that they will discriminate against anyone. This includes saying that you are not able to cater for workers with a disability. Only use phrases like 'recent graduate' or 'highly experienced' when these are actual requirements of the job. Otherwise you could discriminate against younger or older people who might not have had the opportunity to get qualifications. Where you advertise might cause indirect discrimination - for example, advertising only in men's magazines.

Biases in advertising

Employers should not create any biases when creating a job advert. Doing this can deter certain types of candidates from applying for the role and can cause reputational damage to the company. For example, Facebook admits a level of bias in that people are "shown ads they may be interested in". In an experiment, almost all Facebook users shown adverts for mechanics were men, while ads for nursery nurses were seen almost exclusively by women. The algorithm is designed to ensure as many people as possible click on the ads - but Global Witness says it is perpetuating and even amplifying biases already built into recruitment.

Salaries

Many job adverts do not contain salary information. However, this information is useful when worker-seekers make a potential employment decision. Job agencies under the job recruitment standards must state the job salary; many still do not provide this information.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a fairer system for the information contained within job adverts. There is a need for further guidance on how and where job adverts are presented.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI advocates for job adverts that remove bias such as gender bias, and include information such as salaries and other information that help a work-seeker make a choice.

Pre-Hiring

Work Seeker

Advertising: The number of job advertisements and applications continues to rise in the UK, making it more difficult for companies to attract suitable candidates to their vacancies.

What is the current stance?

There is a multitude of ways in which jobs are advertised. Some include:

- Job boards/social media
- Instore advertising
- Referrals
- Career/company websites
- Job fairs
- Head-hunters and recruiters
- Gig-economy platforms/Apps

External and internal advertisement

A job can be advertised internally or externally. Internal recruitment allows an organisation to promote or move an existing employee within the organisation and these are advertised through company intranets, noticeboards or even word of mouth. External recruitment is when the company employs an individual outside the company. The role is advertised on various platforms to attract the best talent. This includes job boards, national press, social media, job centres, recruitment agencies, and online advertisement. There is no legal obligation to advertise jobs internally or externally but employers must pay attention to any collective agreements to see if they specify whether roles need to be promoted internally first before resorting to external methods.

Fair advantaging

Worker seekers should know that according to the law, reference to 'protected characteristics' (such as a person's sex or race) should not be made in a job advert. Examples that could be discriminating unfairly against protected characteristics include:

- terms like 'recent graduate' or 'highly experienced' – these can discriminate against age (you must be able to prove you have a good reason for any job requirement in your advert)
- terms like 'barmaid' or 'handyman' – these can discriminate against someone's sex
- language requirements – 'German sales rep' could discriminate against race, so 'German-speaking sales rep' would be more appropriate
- clothing requirements, for example, wearing a hairnet in a kitchen, could discriminate against someone who, for religious reasons, covers their head in other ways

Fake job adverts

Scams and fake job adverts have been a blight on the online recruitment industry for over a decade. Their prevalence continues to increase in the UK with the evolution of technologies and an absence of specific regulation. A scam job is a job advertised by illegitimate individuals or organisations acting as employers or agencies, usually with the intent of defrauding their targets or obtaining personal data for criminal use. A fake job, however, is not always advertised with criminal intent, but is a non-existent job advertised to entice work-seekers to apply, for the purpose of recruiters building a pool of candidates, for example. Despite its seemingly innocent justification, this is not legitimate in the UK and is an example of bad practice. Both scams and fake jobs, despite their differences, have a vast and profound impact on work-seekers, which can include the loss of money, loss of personal data and loss of trust in the online recruitment process. Candidates should not pay to make job applications or pay for a job interview. Genuine organisations will not require any remuneration for submitting a job application, interviews or make the candidate pay for uniform and equipment.

Underrepresented groups

Organisational recruitment practices that are counteracting discrimination do not necessarily enhance diversity and recruitment practices that can be seen as discriminatory. Many candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with criminal records feel as if there is no effective practice for the recruitment of underrepresented groups in the labour market.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a fairer system of advertising jobs that does not discriminate against work-seekers, or lead to other negative experience such as fraud.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

Online recruitment is poorly regulated according to Matthew Taylor, Former UK Labour Market Enforcement Director. Online recruitment needs stronger regulations to ensure fairness and safe method of recruiting.

Hiring

The Hiring stage is the second stage of the recruitment process. Within this stage, companies will create an application form for the candidate to fill out. This may be a traditional informational based form, a CV and cover letter or an application form that covers competency-based questions. The format is solely dependent on each organisation.

Once all the applications are received, the team will sift through them and identify candidates, who match the criteria set out in the pre-hiring process. Candidates may be asked to undergo a series of psychometric tests for further sifting. This then creates a shortlist for interviewing candidates. They may be asked to conduct a series of interviews such as telephone, video, group and one to one interview. If they are successful within this stage, the employer will make an offer of employment to the candidate.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

- Standards for a fair job applications, such as how people apply for jobs, the information they would need to provide and how decisions are made
- Exploring how job application processes could be more inclusive and fair in the future.
- BHI is concerned the use of technology in shortlisting could increase bias in the current process. BHI is working to make this part of hiring fairer, and work needs to be done to reduce the amount of discrimination at this point in the process.
- For alternatives to CV's as well as exploring how the current process can discriminate against broad sections of the labour market.
- Technology has a vital role in making hiring faster, but it is important to ensure this does not further risk discrimination or bias towards work-seekers. The BHI supports using technology to make hiring faster, but only where it makes hiring fairer.
- The BHI are concerned about certain video interviews and the rise in ghosting. The BHI are committed to ensuring that the recruitment technology tools are enabling Faster, Fairer and Safer recruitment.
- Every work-seeker has the right to a formal job offer and contract. The job offer and contract should be available in plain English and through mediums i.e. digital and paper based.

What does the UK need?

- There is a lack of consistency in which the application process is conducted amongst organisations. The UK needs a standardised process dependent on the role (where possible). The application process should be based on the merits of the position rather than the company deciding randomly.
- The UK needs a fairer hiring process that reduces the potential for discrimination in the sifting process, including how technology could reinforce current bias.
- A suitable alternative to CV's that removes a potential barrier for certain work-seekers to gain employment. The BHI seeks to improve the current process to remove discrimination.
- A Faster, Fairer and Safer process for hiring. The inclusion of technology can enable all these factors if managed and implemented effectively.
- To ensure that every work-seeker receives a job offer and a contract including agency workers and non-permanent workers. The job offer should be in plain English and delivered through different mediums.

Hiring

Employer

Applying for work

What is the current stance?

Most companies will create an application form that will usually include sections on personal information, education, work experience and employment history, as well as competency-based questions and a personal statement. Application forms are generally completed and submitted online. The majority of employers prefer online applications, although paper versions may be accepted in some cases.

However, the application itself may differ from company to company.

Other formats include:

- Online application with competency based questions
- CV + Cover letter
- Email a CV to the recruiter

Or a basic to advanced application form - varies from company to company.

Once application forms are submitted, the employer will use the following methods to filter for the best candidates.

- Pre-screening questions – pre-screening is a process of evaluating the quality of a candidate before interviewing them. This is to ensure that they meet the basic requirements for the role and ensure that you don't waste time putting unqualified candidates through an extensive in-person interview.
- Artificial intelligence – Applicant tracking systems is human resources software that acts as a database for job applicants. Companies of all sizes can use an ATS to organise, search, and communicate with large groups of applicants.
- Due to the time limits in the various Discrimination Acts, minimum retention periods for records relating to advertising of vacancies, job applications, CVs, cover letters and interview notes should be at least 6 months. A year maybe more advisable as the time limits for bringing claims can be extended.

Digital poverty

As more people gain access to computers and the internet, online job applications have become increasingly common. Employers should be aware of digital poverty as not everyone has consistent access to a computer or the internet. This is particularly true of individuals applying for entry-level or minimum wage jobs. Due to inequalities in technology access, some employers may decide to offer paper applications as an option; however, this is rare.

What does the UK need?

There is a lack of consistency in which the application process is conducted amongst organisations. The UK needs a standardised process dependent on the role. The application process should be based on the merits of the position rather than the company deciding randomly.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI advocates for standards for fair job applications, such as how people apply for jobs and the information they would need to provide and how decisions are made.

Hiring

Work Seeker

Applying for work

What is the current stance?

Application forms are available to candidates who wish to apply for the position. Or alternatively, a curriculum vitae (CV) will be requested.

Application forms consist of pre-prepared questions set by the organisation. This allows an organisation to compare potential candidates easily. It also ensures the organisations get all the information they require from the candidate.

Curriculum vitae (CVs) are prepared by the candidate and summarise a person's education, qualifications and previous.

The application itself varies given the different ways in making the job application.

- Competency bases questions
- CV + Cover letter
- Email a CV to the recruiter

Or a basic to advance application form - varies from company to company.

Digital poverty issues

The pandemic accelerated the technological advancements allowing many people to shift their work and day to day tasks. This highlighted the challenges of digital poverty more than ever. According to The University of Cambridge, in partnership with the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, 22% of the UK's population lack basic digital skills. The likelihood of having access to the internet from home increases along with income. Only 51% of households earning between £6-10k had home internet access compared to those with a higher income. Research led by The University of Cambridge in partnership with New Horizons shows digital exclusion creates additional problems for people who are already experiencing poverty: putting together a CV, applying for jobs, managing online applications and even navigating through jobsites and application forms.

Competency-based Application Forms VS Basic Application Forms

Companies are adopting new ways of attracting and accessing the best talent pool, one way they are doing this is by creating a competency-based application. Competency-based frameworks can increase clarity around performance expectations and establish a clear link between individuals and organisational performance. This allows recruiters to assess transferable skills and identify required behaviours regardless of career background. However, for many work seekers, this process is strenuous and challenging. Competency-based applications focus on experience and can't keep up with rapidly changing environments and deter inexperience candidates from applying.

What does the UK need?

There is a lack of consistency in the way the application process is conducted amongst organisations. The UK needs a standardised process dependent on the role. The application process should be based on the merits of the role rather than the company deciding randomly.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI are committed to exploring how job application processes could be more inclusive and fair in the future.

Hiring

Employer

Shortlisting

What is the current stance?

Collect application forms

Application forms and CVs both contain personal information on a candidate. They can be used to compare the candidates' skills and qualities against those listed in the person specification. This will make it easier to shortlist candidates based on those whose skills best match those that are required to do the job.

Create a shortlist

It would be too costly and time consuming for employers to interview every candidate that applied for a position so a shortlist is made to reduce the number of candidates who will be interviewed.

The application forms or CVs are compared to the person specification and job description. This is used to draw up a shortlist of the most suitable candidates. These candidates will be invited to interview.

The use of AI in the sifting process

Employers may use AI technology to prevent human biases occurring in the recruitment process, however this is not always the case. For example, Amazon was using a CV matching tool that was discovered to favour male candidates. This does not mean all AI recruiting tools are inherently faulty, it simply means faults can exist. AI technology might discriminate against candidates due to biased data. This happens when data fed to algorithms reflects prejudices that already exist. For example, Amazon used past applicant data to inform their CV matching algorithm. As Amazon had hired more men than women in the past, the AI was trained to reflect this.

Another problem that occurs is that data collected might not represent reality, meaning the AI algorithm is working with limited information. For example, an AI algorithm might look for desirable employee attributes using attributes already modelled by star employees at certain companies. However, if companies do not have great diversity then the model employees sampled will only reflect a small number in the population. This limits the opportunity for different but equally suitable candidates to be recognised.

Similarly, the way in AI is trained can create technology that is biased. For instance, if an AI technology rates people's voices and appearance and uses this information to create candidate scores, it will be because people trained the AI to look for these attributes and score them. Therefore, it is important to ask the companies you are considering working with about the way their algorithms work and what inputs are used to make decisions.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a fairer hiring process that reduces the potential for discrimination in the sifting process, including how technology could reinforce current bias.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI is concerned the use of technology in shortlisting could increase bias in the current process. The BHI is working to make this part of hiring fairer, and work needs to be done to reduce the amount of discrimination at this point in the process.

Hiring

Work Seeker

Shortlisting

What is the current stance?

Shortlisting

Shortlisting is the process of identifying the candidates that meet the criteria laid out in the job listing. They're the candidates that the company wants to move forward within the recruitment process, most likely by having an initial interview or otherwise moving on to the next stage of the recruitment funnel.

Applicants will be shortlisted under the company's criteria for that role. This is usually carried out by an AI system that extracts applicants that meet the requirements and eliminates those who do not.

Blind applicant screening

Many companies many implement a blind applicant screening stage in the process to avoid discrimination. Employers use this process to eliminate any subconscious bias towards applicants, resulting in all applicants being treated fairly and on merit.

The Blind process removes all demographic data from the application form and CV. This reinforces the focus on only the relevant criteria-reducing hiring bias and preventing it from the recruitment process.

Using CV's to determine suitability of candidates

Many companies will use a CV as the sole determinant of whether a candidate moves forward or not in the hiring process. In the age of technology and advanced recruitment, many argue that CV's are outdated and should not be used as a sole factor to determine suitability. A CV is a self-reported description of historical events. Rather than providing information that a recruiter needs to hire the candidate (candidate actual work or a description of what they could do in the prospective role), they are mere self-reported narrative descriptions of the candidates' past work. This can lead to unfairness to highly educated but do not have any working experience. As CV's are essentially job histories, they do not tell the employer anything about the candidate's character and how they would act in the role.

Most companies absolutely require an updated CV to apply for a position or become an employee referral. But most employed individuals do not have an updated CV readily available. So, requiring one to be considered for a job will eliminate many top potential candidates who can't find the time in their busy schedule to update their CV. Furthermore, some individuals feel that updating their CV is an act of disloyalty, so they won't take that action until they have made the final determination to leave (meaning candidates' won't apply for the job until they have updated their CV). And even those who have decided to leave may be reluctant to provide a CV as it may put their current job unnecessarily at risk if their boss were to find out.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a suitable alternative to CV's that removes a potential barrier for certain work-seekers to gain employment. The BHI seeks to improve the current CV process to remove discrimination.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI is advocating for alternatives for CV's as well as exploring how the current process can discriminate against broad sections of the labour market.

Hiring

Employer

Selection process

What is the current stance?

Hold interviews/testing

An interview allows the organisation to ask potential candidates a series of questions.

Interviews can be:

- **one-to-one** – one person interviews the candidate
- **Panel** – more than one person interviews a candidate
- **Telephone** – the interview is not conducted in person but over the phone

Psychometric tests

Conducting a series of psychometric tests can provide extra information on a candidate's suitability through practical assessments to employers. There are many methods that can be used to test a candidate's ability.

Psychometric testing allows an organisation to see how a candidate copes under pressure. It aims to find out about a candidate's true personality and abilities and not just what they say about themselves.

During the interview and testing stage candidates may be asked to go to an assessment centre to be tested and interviewed for a job. This could take place over a day or more.

The candidates can be asked to take part in a range of activities throughout the day including group or individual interviews, ability or aptitude testing or problem-solving exercises.

Video interviews vs in-person interview

Traditionally before the pandemic, prospective employers would conduct face to face interviews. Regardless of the many advantages of these, they are now becoming outdated, as video conferencing seems to be a new norm in recruitment. Employers prefer to conduct video conferencing as it is less time and cost consuming. Video interviews are cost-effective compared to in-person interviews, and it allows better and easier scheduling on both parts. Employers may choose to conduct pre-recorded interviews where the individual can relax as they were not answering someone's questions on the spot; some candidates and recruiters might still prefer in-person interviews over video conferencing. Candidates might be unable to acquit themselves well on video, even if they are familiar with the technology. This method may place a technological barrier between the interview and the candidate. Many candidates argue there is a lack of fairness in this process as pre-recorded interviews are assessed through AI software, looking for keywords. It does not assess the suitability of the candidate.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a Faster, Fairer and Safer process for hiring. The inclusion of technology can enable all these factors if managed and implemented effectively.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

Technology has a vital role in making hiring faster, but it is important to ensure this does not further risk discrimination or bias towards work-seekers. The BHI supports using technology to make hiring faster, but only where it makes hiring fairer.

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Conducting a series of psychometric tests can provide extra information on a candidate's suitability through practical assessments to employers and there are many methods that can be used. Psychometric testing allows an organisation to see how a candidate copes under pressure. It aims to find out about a candidate's true personality and abilities and not just what they say about themselves. During the interview and testing stage candidates may be asked to go to an assessment centre to be tested and interviewed for a job. This could take place over a day or more. The candidates can be asked to take part in a range of activities throughout the day including group or individual interviews, ability or aptitude testing or problem-solving exercises.

Asynchronous video interviews

Many companies are adopting asynchronous interviews to filter down job applications to get a smaller pool they can meet in person. Some platforms record applicants answering pre-determined questions, usually with a time limit for each answer. In some instances, employers may watch these interviews by the hiring manager. However, most of the time, the platform will assess the candidate based on what they said or even their facial expressions. This form of interviewing is not favourable among young jobseekers as they feel confused, dehumanised and exhausted by automated recruitment systems. One student commented that he tries to make "eye contact" with the camera but finds it hard to watch himself. He worries if he glances down or up, he will look like he is reading his notes. He describes the process as "robotic." In most cases, students cannot review their videos and are not told if a human or a machine would judge them. Most of the time, jobseekers never receive any feedback after a rejection. This severely affects the self-esteem of the job seeker.

Ghosting

Many students have expressed their concerns around communication from companies during the recruitment process. Companies with automated recruitment processes do not provide any correspondence to the worker-seeker to whether they have passed or failed a stage. Worker-seekers are chasing recruiters for a response, giving rise to stress and anxiety.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a Faster, Fairer and Safer way to hire. The inclusion of technology can enable all these factors if managed and implemented effectively.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI are concerned about certain video interviews and the rise in ghosting. The BHI are committed to ensuring that the recruitment technology tools are enabling Faster, Fairer and Safer recruitment.

Hiring

Employer

Offer

What is the current stance?

A job offer is an agreement from the employer to the candidate, intending to hire them. Job offers may be formal or informal, they are presented orally, and in writing. Candidates can either accept or reject a job offer or may choose to negotiate additional terms.

Once the selection process has been completed the successful candidate will be informed. Internal candidates may be told in person, but it is more usual for candidates to be informed by telephone, email, or letter.

The job offer letter will set out the main terms and conditions of the job and include:

- their name
- the job title
- the date employment starts (and ends if it's a temporary role)
- the length of the probation period (if applicable)
- any conditions the offer is subject to
- any action required by the candidate (such as forwarding details of their right to work)

Employers may ask candidates to return a signed copy of the offer letter to establish the terms in which the offer was made for any future disputes.

An offer letter is not a contract of employment, therefore either party still have the opportunity to back out of the agreement. Candidates must receive a written statement of the main terms and conditions of employment.

Employment agencies hiring temporary workers would send out the job offer letter as the agency is the employer. Those who hire workers within the gig economy do not receive a job offer or contract.

Candidates who accept the job offer will be progressed onto the next stage which is where they will undergo background screening checks and will be asked to provide employment documents such as right to work. The HR department will send out the employment contract to the candidate which they will need to sign and return. At this point it becomes a contractual agreement.

What does the UK need?

Employers in the UK need to ensure that every work-seeker receives a job offer and a contract including agency workers and non-permanent workers. The job offer should be in plain English and delivered through different mediums.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI supports the need for all workers to be provided with a written job offer and contract

Hiring

Work Seeker

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Candidates must receive a written statement of the main terms and conditions of employment. Work seekers have the right to negotiate the terms and conditions of an employment contract, not all work-seekers know they can do this. Often work-seekers are advised to negotiate within reason, they may do this by researching the market value of the prospective role. Work seekers can negotiate terms such as salary, office location, working hours and additional benefits they may receive. The employer will review the negotiating terms of the work-seeker, and may choose to accept or reject them. They may provide the work-seeker with counter offer to their terms and conditions or re-negotiate until both parties agree on a set of terms.

The Covid-19 pandemic has bought a new working approach to life. The labour market has a surge in demand from work-seekers for roles that offer remote working. Many work-seekers look for roles that offer a remote working approach when job searching and now is a negotiating factor for companies during the offer stage. The pandemic highlighted the flexibility it provides to both organisations and the work-seeker and is an approach here to stay.

Candidates who accept the job offer will be progressed onto the next stage. This is where they will undergo background screening checks and will be asked to provide employment documents such as right to work. The HR department will send out the employment contract to the candidate which they will need to sign and return at which point becomes a contractual agreement.

What does the UK need?

Every work-seeker has a right to receives a job offer and a contract including agency workers and non-permanent workers. The job offer should be in plain English and delivered through different mediums.

Anyone working through an agency who doesn't receive one, should report this to the employment agency standards inspectorate and government (EAS).



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

Every work-seeker has the right to a formal job offer and contract. The job offer and contract should be able in plain English and through mediums i.e. digital and paper based.

Onboarding

The final stage of the recruitment process is Onboarding. Once, the candidate accepts the job offer and has signed the contract of employment, the onboarding process takes place. Within, this stage the employer will conduct background checks such as, Right to work, referencing, educational credentials, social media check, criminal record and credit checks.

Background checks are carried out after the candidate accepts the job offer as this saves the employer time and resources.

The Better Hiring Institute Stance

- Industries require more time to implement the important right to work changes and the transaction cost needs to be proportionate. All jobs seekers need to be treated fairly, whether they have a digital identity or not. All companies need to apply either face to face or IDVT options consistently, so it does not cause an unfair advantage.
- Ensuring employers don't discriminate against jobs applicants without a digital identity. There are straightforward routes for the work-seeker to get their right to work checked, and employers understand those jobs seekers mustn't be discriminated against.
- Supports the use of social media checks in hiring but only with improved guidance and frameworks for an organisation to ensure that appropriate use and suitable decisions are being made in the same as the use of criminal records data is in use by employers when making hiring decisions.
- For work-seekers being treated fairly where social media checks were carried out and have the right to appeal and complain independently if they felt like the decision was unfair.
- Credit checks can form a fundamental part of the hiring process. In particular industries, there is a clear framework for credit checks. Employers need to be more sympathetic towards the work-seeker personal financial situation due to the pandemic.
- Better referencing. This campaign is about standardisation and a deeper understanding of the utilisation of references and a strong focus on fairness.
- To work with several partners to explore digital solutions to prove educational and professional credentials.

What does the UK need?

- A fully digital process for checking the right to work for all job applicants that doesn't discriminate or pose a cost barrier to business and is applied consistently across industry.
- A fair system to be hired fairly and quickly, whether or not a person has a digital identity.
- Increased consistency at the sector level on what different background checks are needed.
- A clear stance when applying social media checks in hiring and a framework for making decisions based on the results. Also, clear policies on how companies deal with remediation and appeals.
- A more clear, standardised approach to hiring with a clear understanding for work seekers on the information they are providing - particularly on adverse information during the hiring process.
- A fair approach to assessing job offer decisions based on credit check information particularly when considering the level of financial strain that individuals will have due to the pandemic.
- A process to digitally confirm the credentials and qualifications of work seekers. Not only would this be secure but simpler for work-seekers and enables a faster hiring process.
- To ensure that criminal record checks aren't used as a barrier to employment, as some previous convictions will prove to be barrier. The UK also needs consistency across criminal record checking agencies for employers and an increase of digital.

Onboarding

Employer

Digital right to work

What is the current stance?

Due to COVID-19 the Home Office launched an online Digital Right to Work Employer checking service. The Home Office Right to Work checking service gives employers access to up to date, real-time information about migrants' rights to work, making it easier for candidates to prove their right to work in the UK. Until now, employers would have to request paper documents alongside using this service. Now, employers can use the online service to demonstrate they have conducted the necessary right to work on migrants and avoid a identify if they are found to be employing illegal workers.

An announcement was made in December 2021 to have a permanent digital route for Right to Work checks. Further guidance in January 2022 described how employers could conduct these checks through certified providers.

This is due to come in place in October 2022. At this point, employers will have to cease the temporary adjusted measures or either revert to face to face right to work checks or move to the new Identity document validation technology (IDVT) route.

British or Irish citizens without dated passports will not be hired digitally and will have to use a manual route to have their documents validated by employers. It is crucial that this does not create a two-tier system, where British or Irish citizens without an in-date passport are chosen secondary behind work-seekers with a digital identity. It is estimated that as many as 1 in 5 job seekers will either not have docs to support digital hiring routes or will not have documents to evidence right to work at all. In the forthcoming right to work regime allowances need to be made by employers for this population of work seekers

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a fully digital process for checking the right to work of all job applicants that doesn't discriminate, does not pose a cost barrier to business, and is applied consistently across industry.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

Industries require more time to implement the important changes. The transactions cost need to be proportionate. All jobs seekers need to be treated fairly, whether they have a digital identity or not. All companies need to apply either face to face or IDVT options consistently, so it does not cause an unfair advantage.

Onboarding

Work Seeker

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The levelling up agenda is very important to ensure that work-seekers from more backgrounds can engage with digital hiring. Work seekers who are not natives of digital hiring may need support so they can be hired quickly and digitally. There will be two groups of citizens, one group will have the documents to enable digital identity, although some of those citizens may choose not to. The second group is those citizens without the documents to create a digital identity who, therefore, will not be hired digitally.

The Better Hiring Institute is concerned that those without a digital identity, and therefore unable to engage with employers for digital right to work checks, will become second class citizens when looking for work and this may cause unfairness across the labour market. It is important for the work seeker to understand whether or not they are eligible for one of the right to work routes as this could create a barrier to getting work. By law, employers must not discriminate against job seekers for the purpose of right to work.

What does the UK need?

The UK need a fair system for all to be hired fairly and quickly, whether or not they have a digital identity.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI are committed to ensuring employers don't discriminate against jobs applicants without a digital identity. There are straightforward routes for the work-seeker to get their right to work checked, and employers understand those mustn't be discriminated against.

Onboarding

Employer

Background checks

What is the current stance?

Many organisations may also conduct other background checks on potential employees depending on the sector. It is vital organisations have clear policies on what background checks will be done throughout the process.

The sorts of background checks that may also be conducted on employees are:

- Proof of address check
- Criminal record check
- Overseas police check (if applicable)
- Passport and visa verification
- Social media background checks
- Employment medical checks and health screening
- Bankruptcy and insolvency screening
- Credit checks
- Right to work checks
- Financial probity checks
- Directorship checks
- Adverse media checks
- AML Checks (Anti Money Laundering) and PEP Checks (Politically Exposed Persons)

What does the UK need?

The UK needs increased consistency at the sector level on what different background checks are needed



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI is committed to improving consistency at the sector level and developing several toolkits to help organisations and work-seekers across major industries know what is required.

Onboarding

Work Seeker

Background checks

What is the current stance?

Depending on the industry, there are many other background checks employers may perform on the work-seeker. Organisations should be transparent on what background checks are required so work seekers can if they wish, ask about these beforehand.

Some background checks include but may not apply to all are:

- Proof of address check
- Criminal record check
- Overseas police check (if applicable)
- Passport and visa verification
- Social media background checks
- Employment medical checks and health screening
- Bankruptcy and insolvency screening
- Credit checks
- Right to work checks
- Financial probity checks
- Directorship checks
- Adverse media checks
- AML Checks (Anti Money Laundering) and PEP Checks (Politically Exposed Persons)

Work-seekers are advised to have their up-to-date documents and details to hand when applying for work and are within their rights to ask what kind of background checks will be done on them.

Should you wish you to, you can issue a subject access request to the organisation view your vetting.

For general advice visit: [Work - Citizens Advice](#)

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Onboarding

Employer

Social media checks

What is the current stance?

Increasingly employers are using social media profiles to check the suitability of employees. There is more information in job applicants' background online than offline, i.e., references. However, using social media to check the suitability of employees is challenging as there are no frameworks to guide employers in this.

Employers may review publicly available sources social media checks to evaluate and flag any adverse content posted by or associated with a candidate focussing on several factors. This includes racism, sexism, hate speech, drug use, general criminality, and any other risk categories that an organisation may deem as indicating unsuitability for the position applied for or incompatibility with the culture and values of the organisation.

Employers are using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and various others to assess candidates suitability.

The UK Social Media Statistics for 2021. Social media usage in the UK has stayed relatively consistent over the last 12 months. There are now 45 million social media users, or 66% of the UK population using the platforms.

Here is a breakdown of users on social media platforms:

- LinkedIn – 26 million users
- Facebook 51.34 million users
- Twitter – 19.05 millions users
- Instagram – 28.4 million

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a clear stance when applying social media checks in hiring and a framework for making decisions based on the results. Also, clear policies on how companies deal with remediation and appeals.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI supports the use of social media checks in hiring but only with improved guidance and frameworks for an organisation to ensure that appropriate use and suitable decisions are being made in the same as the use of criminal records data is in use by employers when making hiring decisions.

Onboarding

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Work seekers should prepare themselves for an increasing focus from potential employers on their online behaviour. There are ways that work-seekers can prepare for this eventuality by behaving appropriately when online. Also, organising their social media profiles so that they would be positively scrutinised in the future.

If a work-seeker feels like they have been treated unfairly by the employer when reviewing social media, there is no process for making a complaint at the moment. The work-seeker cannot appeal the job rejection. In many cases, potential employers will not provide a tailored reason or any reason for rejecting the candidate's application.

What does the UK need?

. The UK needs a clear stance on when to apply social media checks in hiring and a framework for making decisions based on the results. Also, clear policies on how companies deal with remediation and appeals.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI advocates for work-seekers being treated fairly where social media checks are carried out and have the right to appeal and complain independently if they felt like the decision was unfair.

Onboarding

Employer

Credit Checks

What is the current stance?

A employment credit check is when a potential employer checks the applicants credit history to see how they have handled consumer debt. Employers may carry out credit checks for certain roles, for example, in industries such as Law and Finance companies are legally required to perform a credit check on potential employees. However, other companies may also ask for permission to conduct a credit check on the candidate before offering employment- especially in roles that require dealing with money.

In the UK, companies may choose to use one of the three major credit reporting bureaus - Equifax, Experian and TransUnion or they may use a specialty screening company to conduct credit checks.

A credit check provides the employer with the following information:

- Identifying information (includes information such as name, address, date of birth and National Insurance number).
- Credit account information (information includes, credit card, mortgages, student loans or vehicle loans)
- Bankruptcies
- Collection accounts (includes past-due accounts that have been turned over to a collection agency. These can include your credit accounts as well as accounts with doctors, hospitals, banks, retail stores, or mobile phone providers)

Employers use this information to get a insight into a potential hire, including signs of financial distress that might indicate risk of theft or fraud.

It is crucial when conducting credit checks on potential employees; the company has a clear policy on what is acceptable and what constitutes a request for more information or, in rare cases, an offer rejection. Given the financial strains of the pandemic and the future financial challenges caused by the national debt, employers should consider that employees may have higher levels of personal debt than previously seen.

This should be taken into account when setting internal company policy.

What does the UK need?

A fair approach to assessing job offered decisions based on credit check information particularly when considering the level of financial strain that individuals will have due to the pandemic.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

Credit checks can form a fundamental part of the hiring process. In particular industries, there is a clear framework. Employers need to be more sympathetic towards the financial situation of the work-seeker due to the pandemic.

Onboarding

Work Seeker

Credit Checks

What is the current stance?

Employers may carry out credit checks for specific roles. Companies are legally required to perform a credit check on potential employees in industries such as Law and Finance. However, other companies may also ask for permission to conduct a credit check on the candidate before offering employment - especially in roles that require dealing with money.

In the UK, companies may choose to use one of the three major credit reporting bureaus - Equifax, Experian and TransUnion or may use a speciality screening company to conduct credit checks.

Can credit checks stop work-seekers from getting a job?

Many employers do not require check checks, those that do will require the worker-seekers permission before carrying them out.

Potential employers will perform a credit check if the work-seeker is applying for a role that involves handing large sums of money/or a large amount of responsibility. This include areas such as:

- Law
- Finance
- Senior Management
- The Police and Army.

Having a poor credit check result can deter employers from hiring a candidate. If a potential employer feels that the candidate's current financial situation could impact their ability to perform well in the role, or their credit history reveals evidence of bad financial planning, they may decide not to employ them.

Preparing yourself for a credit check by a potential employer

Since employers are mainly checking to see any patterns or habits of mismanaging money when they conduct a credit check, the best way to prepare is to know what your credit report says before applying for any job.

You can also check your own credit report for free. There are three credit agencies which hold credit reports on you, Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. It's best to check all three reports once a year, because they all have an impact. For more information visit their website.

What does the UK need?

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Onboarding

Employer

Referencing

What is the current stance?

A reference is usually written by a past employer. Reference checks should verify any pertinent information shared by the candidate about previous employment, job performance, experience, responsibilities, workplace conduct, etc.

It will often include information on whether the referee thinks the candidate is suitable for the position applied for.

References allow the organisation to confirm that the information supplied in the application form or CV is correct.

References remain an important part of hiring within the UK; there is a wide range of standards regarding how many and what types of references are being sought. This can range from the previous employer to 7 years in industries such as healthcare or financial services; even within those industries, there are often variations in the amount of referencing that needs to be obtained.

Gap verification

In some industries, gaps in employment dates highlight that scrutinised by employers as much as the references themselves. A gap in references can be evidenced through other forms of documentation such as benefits or evidence of travel.

Relevance of referencing

Many references now come back with dates only, but often this can be as important as it evidences that the work-seeker was working where they claim they were. Some references still come back with negative adverse information that is useful to the employer. In some sectors, referencing is arguably more important than others, such as safeguarding sectors, i.e., education and healthcare. A small number of organisations have turned away from referencing as it is perceived as low value. However, no real substitute has occurred.

In 2018, Business Minister Andrea Leadsom, did propose to make it compulsory for all employers to provide references, but this proposal was never made into reality.

Reference technology

Some organisations outsource referencing to third party employment screening providers or even technology platforms that automate part of the referencing process, such as sending and chasing.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs an increased consistency of how employers use and provide references. A better understanding by employers of what can be put on a reference and how to deal with potentially adverse information received.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI is campaigning for better referencing. This campaign is about standardisation and a deeper understanding of the utilisation of references and a strong focus on fairness.

Onboarding

Work Seeker

Referencing

What is the current stance?

Any offer of employment should be conditional on satisfactory clearance of pre-employment checks such as references from the candidate's previous employer(s). References should contain the length of past employment, job title, brief details of responsibilities, overall performance, timekeeping, and reason for leaving. However, recruitment decisions should never be based solely on references as they provide a limited perspective of an individual's suitability for a role.

It is common practice to provide referees details, or at least contact information from your last two employers. The contact details should be formal work addresses, not personal addresses.

Work seekers should think about future reference requests when leaving the organisation to ensure they exit the business correctly and have details of the appropriate referee. Some sectors require a far greater level of referencing than others; this depends on the work being undertaken. Work seekers must be open and transparent about the work history on the CV and the referee's details to make sure the dates align as closely as possible.

Any periods of non-employment should be positively itemised on the work history to show what the individual was doing whilst out of work and what skills were gained.

Adverse information

If the work-seeker thinks they've been given an unfair or misleading reference, they may be able to claim damages in a court. The previous employer must be able to back up the reference such as by applying examples of warning letters.

Worker-seekers must be able to show:

- It's misleading or inaccurate
- They 'suffered a loss' for example a job offer was withdrawn.

Workers can get legal advice, including from [Citizens Advice](#).

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a more clear, standardised approach to referencing with a clear understanding for work-seekers on the information they are providing and particularly on adverse information during the hiring process.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI is campaigning for better referencing. This campaign is about standardisation and a deeper understanding of the utilisation of references and a strong focus on fairness.

Onboarding

Employer

Education credentialling

What is the current stance?

If a qualification is essential for the role, employers will carry out qualification checks on the candidate. Many will ask to see the candidates' certificates, check with the awarding bodies or use their checking services.

There is an increased number of job seekers declaring qualifications that they do not have, in hopes employers do not carry out qualifications checks. However, more employers now have a desire to carry out these checks to ensure candidates are who they say they are with the increased rate of qualification fraud. It is a criminal offence to falsify qualifications in the job hiring process and many employers are checking the validity of qualifications and skills. However, it is a very fragmented landscape with no one way of being able to check all professional training and educational qualifications.

The **Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessments (CCEA)** has details of qualifications it accredits.

UK ENIC is a UK national agency for international qualifications and skills and can help compare overseas qualifications with UK equivalents.

Employers should only ask for evidence of qualifications and training specifically relevant to the role. Many education qualification and training checks are basic and rely on paper-based documents. However, there is a move to try and digitise as much as possible.

Many degrees can be validated through Higher Education Degree Database (Hedd). Hedd is a trusted higher education verification service in the UK. They have verified more than half a million degrees for employers and universities. They are confident that your organisation is protected from degree fraud and candidates are who they say they are.

For many of their qualifications, they rely on the work-seeker themselves providing a certificate that is not wholly reliable.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs a process to digitally confirm the credentials and qualifications of work seekers. Not only would this be secure but simpler for work-seekers and enables a faster hiring process.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI is working with several partners to explore digital solutions to prove credentials.

Onboarding

Work Seeker

Education credentialling

What is the current stance?

Education credentialling checks verify a candidate's academic history, degree type, honours received, industry qualifications and professional membership claims directly with regulatory bodies or organisations.

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Many employers will ask for evidence of previous qualifications and credentials. It is important that work-seekers only declare factual qualifications and results on their CV and prove those achievements through certificates or other methods. When applying for jobs, work-seekers must ensure they keep their original certifications to hand for evidence.

Some professional bodies and certain sectors will confirm awards, and certain universities will confirm degrees. However, it is always worth work-seekers holding their evidence and achievements when applying for work.

What to do if I lose my qualification?

If you lose your certifications, you can request a duplicate through the awarding bodies or training institutes to help to confirm qualifications requested by the employer.

Fraudulent certifications

Fake degrees are a growing problem as job candidates seek to set themselves apart in a competitive labour market. Eighty-five fake UK university websites have been shut down over the past five years as part of a government crackdown on degree fraud, according to Hedd, a trusted higher education verification service in the UK.

Hedd, has observed a rise in qualification fraud in recent years, particularly for diplomas and degree certificates: "More people working online combined with a competitive jobs market, economic downturn and a general feeling of insecurity are making people vulnerable, and fraudsters are taking advantage."

It is illegal to present fake degree certificates and transcripts as genuine documents. If a work seeker does present fake certifications then under the Fraud Act 2006, the work seeker can face a prison sentence of up to ten years.

What does the UK need?

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Onboarding

Employer

Criminal checks

What is the current stance?

Potential employers are allowed to ask candidates to do a criminal record check before they employ them. However, under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) an **employer must have a lawful basis for carrying out** this check and processing data relating to criminal convictions.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

DBS is a UK government agency who provide criminal records checks to assist employers in identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, for example, work involving contact with children or other vulnerable groups. They also maintain barred lists of those individuals unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults. There are four types of criminal record check for employment purposes, **basic**, **standard** and **enhanced** with barred list.

Disclosure Scotland (DS)

For work undertaken in Scotland you can apply to Disclosure Scotland for a disclosure certificate. Disclosure Scotland is a service that provides potential employers and voluntary sector organisations with criminal history information on individuals applying for posts. Individuals may also apply for a basic disclosure. Disclosure certificates give details of an individual's criminal convictions, or state that they have none. Enhanced disclosures, where appropriate, will also contain information held by police forces and other Government bodies.

The Protecting Vulnerable Group scheme (PVG)

The PVG membership scheme is managed and delivered by Disclosure Scotland and ensures people whose behaviour makes them unsuitable to work with children and protected adults cannot do 'regulated work' with these vulnerable groups. When someone applies to join the PVG Scheme Disclosure Scotland carries out criminal record checks and shares the results with individuals and organisations. The application process involves gathering criminal record and other relevant information. This can be shared with the employer who is providing regulated work, unless the person applies to have a conviction removed from their PVG Scheme record.

Access NI (ANI)

An ANI check covers an individual's criminal history information for people working within Northern Ireland. This check is primarily to help organisations make a safer recruitment decision when employing staff. Some organisations are required by law to consider the suitability of applicants for certain positions or to ensure that they are not barred from working with vulnerable groups.

An ANI check is a criminal history record check which provides different levels of information. They will let an employer know if you have been convicted of a criminal offence or are barred from working with children or other vulnerable groups. In some cases, a check may also include disclosure of other non-conviction information, sometimes called soft intelligence, if the police consider it is relevant for the purposes of the position being applied for.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs to ensure that criminal record checks aren't used as a barrier to employment, however, some previous convictions will prove to be barrier. The UK also needs consistency across criminal record agencies for employers and an increase of digital.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI supports the digitalisation of criminal record checks to aid faster hiring. The BHI supports the fair use of people's criminal records and ensures that their past doesn't unfairly stop them from finding work in the future.

Onboarding

Work Seeker

Criminal checks

What is the current stance?

Potential employers are allowed to ask candidates to do a criminal record check before they employ them. However, under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) an **employer must have a lawful basis for carrying out** a criminal record check and processing data relating to criminal convictions.

There are over 11 million people with a criminal record and approximately 735, people with unspent convictions according to Unlock.

A criminal record check is the most commonly performed background check, there are different levels of checks and related services available to employers in the UK. You will probably have a criminal record if you have ever accepted an official police caution, pleaded guilty or been found guilty in a criminal court.

Employers, insurers, and others might ask you for details of your criminal record, and if the information you disclose is not accurate, this could cause you problems at a later stage. All work-seekers including those with criminal records must be open, honest, and upfront when applying for work. Past criminal records mustn't be a barrier to finding future work but can stop work-seekers from finding a role in certain sectors.

Declaring a criminal conviction

If you have a criminal record you may be worried about how it might affect your job prospects and the implications for working in the future. Having a criminal record doesn't prevent you from getting a job. However, some organisations are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) in the UK and in those cases, you'll need to disclose all convictions whether they are spent or not.

What does the law say regarding disclosure of criminal records?

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) permits the majority of convictions and all final warnings, reprimands and cautions to be classed as 'spent' after a specific time frame, which is referred to as the 'rehabilitation period'. When applying for jobs, if you have a spent conviction, under the ROA, you've the legal right to not declare it. Most roles are covered by the ROA, although there are some organisations and professional bodies that are exempt from ROA legislation, meaning the employer can request information regarding any spent or unspent convictions and / or cautions that you may have.

What happens if you have a criminal record and you apply for a job?

The employer might request a basic disclosure check on you, which is a search that can be carried out by any employer or voluntary organisation as part of the hiring process. A basic disclosure check will only disclose any unspent convictions that you may have. Spent convictions will not show on a basic check and it is in this instance where you don't need to declare any conviction that are spent.

Criminal records are not a barrier in gaining employment apart from a small number of serious criminal records in regulated sectors. Work-seekers should not let a criminal record prevent them from getting work. For advice on these matters, visit [Unlock](#) for England or [Release Scotland](#) for Scotland.

What does the UK need?

The UK needs to ensure that criminal record checks aren't used as a barrier to employment, however, some previous convictions will prove to be so.



The Better Hiring Institute Stance

The BHI supports the agenda for people to find work with criminal records where appropriate and supports the need for a more proactive role in decision making.