

FACTSHEET

HOW TO ENSURE ONLINE RECRUITMENT IS ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

Since the start of COVID-19, online recruitment has meant that job opportunities have become more exclusive due to unequal access to devices and data. This factsheet outlines how businesses can make their online recruitment accessible and inclusive.

Introduction

Virtual recruitment isn't a new phenomenon, with online job advertisements and application forms widely used for many years. However, since the emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020, many companies have moved their entire recruitment processes online. Although some are adopting a more hybrid approach as we emerge from the pandemic, many aspects of virtual hiring look set to stay for the foreseeable future.

67%↑

**number of employers using video interviews
in the twelve months to January 2021**

60%

**of employers plan to keep video interviews
post-COVID**

There are lots of real benefits of virtual recruitment for employers, including helping them to see more candidates, more quickly and more cheaply. But some online hiring practices can deter jobseekers from completing the application process. The purpose of this factsheet is to highlight examples of good practice, showing businesses how they can

make sure that their approaches to virtual recruitment aren't inadvertently creating barriers for people to find decent work.

What we mean by virtual recruitment

Virtual recruitment is the term used to describe hiring processes that take place remotely, without meeting the candidate face-to-face. Long-established virtual recruitment practices include:

- Online job advertisements
- Online application forms

Virtual recruitment practices that have become more widespread since COVID include:

- **Pre-recorded interviews, when** the candidate is asked to connect remotely to a platform and record their answers to set questions
- **Live video interviews, where** a panel of interviewers asks the candidate questions in real time via an online platform like Skype or Zoom
- **Online assessments, where** the candidate's skills are tested remotely. Examples include aptitude tests, job simulations, game-based assessments, and group exercises.



Who is impacted by virtual recruitment?

Finding and securing a new job can be challenging. It isn't something that most of us do very often. On average, UK workers change jobs every five years,ⁱ and there can be a lot of changes to recruitment practices in that time.

2 million people

in the UK don't have adequate access to a device and/or connectivity at homeⁱⁱ

For first time jobseekers, or for those who don't have recent experience of looking for work (whether they are newly unemployed or have been away from the labour market for a long time), the process can be daunting. And the fact that so much recruitment is now conducted online adds an additional layer of complexity for many people looking for work. Similarly, businesses may also experience issues in recruiting diverse talent if recruitment activity becomes exclusively virtual.

58%

of businesses find it harder to connect with early career candidates since the start of the pandemicⁱⁱⁱ

What are the issues?

- Poor connectivity and limited access to devices
- Limited access to a quiet and peaceful space in which to interview
- Reliance on a mobile phone to complete the recruitment process (making some assessments more difficult to complete)
- Lack of familiarity with the digital platform used by the recruiter
- Inexperience of virtual interviews (the candidate not knowing what is expected of them, nor what they should expect)

91%

of students have experienced issues with online interviews^{iv}

TOP TIPS FOR AN INCLUSIVE ONLINE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

When executed thoughtfully, virtual recruitment can be a positive experience for a candidate.

Recruiting and working in a more virtual way can also open doors to exciting young talent from across the UK. When recruiting virtually, we recommend that businesses take the following approach:

1. Operate a flexible approach

While some elements of the interviewing and recruitment process will be fixed, you can also empower your candidates to set certain parameters and offer flexibility to suit their needs. This is especially important for young candidates who might be in the process of studying. Do not sacrifice flexibility for a lack of clarity on the role and ensure that candidates and your hiring teams are aware of arrangements up front.

- Be flexible about the time and date of the interview or assessment
- If you offer a hybrid approach, with candidates being given the option to choose a virtual or an in-person interview, ensure that your recruiting managers are trained to avoid unconscious bias so that differences in the medium do not impact the hiring decision

2. Offer support and be proactive

Young candidates are usually less experienced when it comes to interviewing. However, the new world of online recruitment means that lots of people are now in the same boat when it comes to experience and practice. Offering support around the process is not cheating, it simply improves transparency, and the quality of information provided at interviews. Ensure that all candidates are offered the same level of support.

- Provide some basic interview tips (e.g., use a plain background, practice with the technology in advance, etc.) and set out exactly what they will be asked to do on the day

- Provide contact details of someone they can speak to at your organisation if they have any questions or concerns
- Proactively contact the candidate in advance of their interview to check whether they have any questions or concerns

3. Be accommodating

Mass homeworking during the pandemic has made digital disruptions in the workplace the norm. From dodgy connections to household interruptions, all the way to caring responsibilities and someone unexpectedly arriving at the door, almost all of us have experienced the challenges of remote working alongside the benefits. However, in an interview situation these kind of distractions have the potential to throw people off. With this in mind, be accommodating and empathetic to these kind of issues.

- Encourage the candidate to disclose whether they are likely to have any issues with their device, connectivity, or distractions and demonstrate understanding of those disclosures. Offer assistance, understanding and flexibility where possible
- If conducting a live interview, give the candidate a few minutes to get used to the technology and settle before getting started. Set out in advance what will happen in the event of a technical or connectivity problem.

Further help

BITC's expert Inclusion Advisers can provide a range of support in this area, including the delivery of an Inclusive Recruitment workshop, sharing best practice from our members across each stage of the recruitment process.

ENJOYED THIS CONTENT?

You might also like to:

- [find out more about Employment & Skills](#)
- [learn more about our advisory services](#)
- [join us for one of our upcoming events](#)



Talk to one of our expert team today to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further and drive lasting global change.

REFERENCES

ⁱ LV.com

ⁱⁱ Digital Access for All, 2021

ⁱⁱⁱ Handshake UK (2021), Guarding against 'Netpotism' – building fairer and more inclusive recruitment processes in a post-COVID UK, Available here: <https://www.joinhandshake.co.uk/netpotism>

^{iv} Ibid.