

Carlisle City Council

Guidance Notes for Candidates - Virtual Interview Process

Candidates should thoroughly read this guidance in advance of their interview date to ensure any issues or concerns can be addressed and resolved prior to the interview.

Introduction

Carlisle City Council is making use of virtual meeting software (currently Microsoft Teams) as a safe option for conducting interviews during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The purpose of this guidance is to give those invited to interview an overview of what to expect during the virtual process.

This document includes recommendations to help candidates feel more prepared, troubleshoot technical issues and ensure they are able to perform to their best ability during the interview.

Microsoft Teams Meetings

After confirming they wish to attend an interview all candidates will be issued with an email setting out the Microsoft Teams meeting details for the interview.

Candidates are able to choose their preferred Microsoft Teams method below.

1. Using a phone or tablet - The Microsoft Teams App is available as a free download for both Apple and Android devices.
2. Using a laptop or PC - The email will include a link which can be opened in the candidate's internet browser. For those using a computer or laptop a webcam is required.

Advance Preparation and Practising

Each candidate is advised to trial the Microsoft Teams options in advance of their interview to avoid technical problems on the day.

As virtual interviews will be new territory for many candidates, we recommend taking some time to practise with a friend or family member to become comfortable with the format. This will be particularly important for candidates who are unfamiliar with Microsoft Teams.

We would encourage candidates to make use of the support resources available on the Microsoft Teams help centre <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/teams>

Things to Consider

Candidates should:

- Dress appropriately and as they would usually for a face-to-face interview. We suggest avoiding a white shirt or top to prevent issues with image contrast.
- Select a quiet place in their home which is well lit and, where possible, has a neutral background.
- Consider the best way to get into 'interview mode' ahead of the virtual meeting.
- Place their device in a position where the camera is at eye level or slightly above (e.g. placing a laptop on a box) and further away than normal to avoid the image being overly close-up.
- Consider using a headset or headphones to block out unwanted background noise and ensure replies are delivered back to the interviewers as clearly as possible.

On the Day Troubleshooting

It may take several minutes to gain access to the virtual interview so candidates should be logged on in advance. Microsoft Teams will hold candidates in a virtual 'lobby' so it is important to be available and ready for when the interviewers start the meeting.

Candidates should:

- Ensure they have access to a strong, reliable internet connection.
- If using a laptop or PC - ensure both the webcam and microphone settings are enabled. Candidates may find the use of headphones with an integrated microphone useful.
- Have access to a telephone nearby. If there are issues with sound on a device candidates can dial in and effectively use the telephone as a microphone and speaker instead.
- If unable to access the meeting after troubleshooting, then candidates should contact the HR Department on **07976 915749** as soon as possible.

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The Virtual Interview

There will be a discussion around the interview format when the virtual meeting commences.

- If there have been initial technical difficulties stay calm and update the interviewers.
- Candidates who are new to virtual interviews should make the panel aware of this.
- Your camera is your interviewer in a virtual setting. When talking to the interviewers it is important for candidates to focus on their camera. This is the best way of making eye contact with the interview panel.
- Non-verbal cues are more difficult to pick up in a virtual setting so the interviewers may need to interrupt verbally at times to keep the interview on track.
- When listening to the interview panel it is good etiquette for candidates to mute their own microphone to manage sound within the virtual space.
- Occasionally there can be a lag between sound and vision which may become more significant. Candidates should promptly make their interviewers aware of any communication problems.
- If sound is lost completely candidates are able to utilise the written chat function to communicate with the interview panel.
- In some instances it may be necessary to log out and join the meeting again using the initial steps (e.g. due to loss of connection).

Equal Opportunities

Carlisle City Council is an equal opportunities employer and bases all its employment practice on the need to be fair and non-discriminatory to prospective and current employees.

If candidates have a condition whereby they require an alternative interview method (e.g. hearing problems) then they should make the HR Department aware of this as soon as possible by emailing hradvisoryservice@carlisle.gov.uk

August 2020