

COPFS Application Pack

Procurator Fiscal Depute Aberdeen

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Introduction

This pack is to guide you through the COPFS recruitment process. It is vital that you read this carefully as hints and tips are contained.

If you have any further questions or require the application pack in an alternative format, please contact:

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Telephone – 07435932287

About COPFS

This is an exciting opportunity to join the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), Scotland’s only prosecution service. We receive reports about crimes from the police and other reporting agencies and then decide what action to take, including whether to prosecute someone. We also look into deaths that need further explanation and investigate allegations of criminal conduct against police officers.

COPFS plays a pivotal part in the justice system, working with others to make Scotland safe from crime, disorder and danger. The public interest is at the heart of all we do as independent prosecutors. We take into account the diverse needs of victims, witnesses, communities and the rights of those accused of crime. We support the Strategy for Justice in Scotland and, in particular, its priorities of:

* Reducing crime, particularly violent and serious organised crime
* Tackling hate crime and sectarianism
* Supporting victims and witnesses
* Increasing public confidence and reducing fear of crime

For further information about COPFS please visit our website - <http://www.copfs.gov.uk/about-us/about-us>  
[Click here for information regarding COPFS Recruitment Privacy Notice](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/privacy-notice)

Vacancy Information

**Procurator Fiscal Depute**

**Salary**

Starting full time salary will be £52,355 rising to £65,276 in annual increments subject to satisfactory performance and future COPFS awards.

**Location**

Aberdeen and Inverness.  
  
Office attendance will be required 5 days per week and there will be limited scope for remote working.

This post will regular travel will be required to the Tain, Elgin and Fort William offices. There may be an occasional requirement to travel to other offices within the sheriffdom, depending on business needs.

**Job Description**

As a Procurator Fiscal Depute you will play a key role in the criminal justice system. You will take decisions on criminal proceedings, court proceedings and work closely with the police and other criminal justice partners to improve the efficient delivery of justice for local communities.

This is a unique role where you will be acting in the public interest as one of the Lord Advocate’s local representatives, requiring common sense, good judgement and decision making, flexibility, legal and advocacy skills, and a sound knowledge of the criminal law system in Scotland. Whilst you may be asked to undertake a variety of duties within COPFS, the main essence of the role is to mark cases, prepare and present cases effectively in court and deal sensitively and appropriately with victims and witnesses.

You must be passionate about always serving the public interest; confident in making complex decisions, based on independent assessment of all the available evidence; and enthusiastic about public service and meeting the needs of victims and witnesses.

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds including people of different ages with the skills and experience to perform this role.

This post would include the following responsibilities:

**Non-Court Legal Duties**

* Marking of criminal reports
* Court preparation
* Drafting charges and legal documents
* Dealing with appeals
* Caseload management
* Consultation with witnesses
* Preparation of reports to Crown Counsel
* Liaising with criminal justice partner agencies such as Police Scotland, Social Work Departments, Scottish Court Tribunal Service

**Court Related Duties**

* Preparation for and conduct of criminal courts
* Dealing with issues relating to victims, witnesses, other relevant parties and obtaining of evidence

**Please note this is not an exhaustive list and other duties may be required as appropriate to the role.**

**Essential Criteria**

The selected competencies on pages 11-15 also form the key essential criteria for this post.

Candidates must be a solicitor or advocate qualified to practise in Scotland and hold a practising certificate which is free from conditions which are inconsistent with performing the role and free from any conditions imposed by the Scottish Solicitors Discipline Tribunal or the Court by the end of December 2022.

**Desirable Criteria**

Full clean UK driving licence.

**Closing & Assessment Dates**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Recruitment Activity | Anticipated Dates |
| Closing Date | 11th December 2022 |
| Sift Date | w/c 12th December 2022 |
| Interviews | TBC |

Please note that these dates may be subject to change and candidates should note availability up until mid January

Application and Selection

**Completing your Application**

COPFS follow the Civil Service approach to competency based recruitment. This means the panel will be looking for specific examples of how you have met the competencies that you will be assessed against.

The [COPFS Competency Framework](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/about-copfs/careers/how-your-application-is-assessed/a-candidate-s-guide-to-competency-based-selection/) details the level of competence required for each Grade, a description for each competency and what behaviours are expected at each level. You should refer to the Framework to gain an understanding of role, however for the purposes of this exercise we have detailed the key competencies within this pack.

Candidates must remember that the Competency Framework is not exhaustive and provides an indication of the general level of working. Your evidence should also take account of your skills, the job role and its accountabilities.

The recruitment panel expect you to ensure that the examples given in your application form are concise and meet with the recommended word count of 250 words per competency. Answers in excess of 300 words will not be assessed beyond this count which will likely affect your score.

The examples you provide will ideally be from a recent work-related context but might equally well be derived from other activities away from the workplace (e.g. voluntary work, outside interests) provided they are relevant to the job role. The Selection Panel will consider the suitability of the example used (i.e. relevance and complexity) in assessing your application and/or performance at interview.

**Part B**, **section 4** of the application form is where you must provide specific and job relevant evidence of competency related behaviours in each of the key competencies detailed on pages 12-15.

In order to do this, we recommend you adhere to the ‘STAR’ (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method to present your answers:

**S – Situation**

This part of your answer is to describe the scenario you are going to use. A brief overview is all that is necessary.

**T – Task**

Again, a brief sentence or two is all that is needed. The task will be your objective or goal, it may also be relevant to note any consequences to you not achieving it.

**A – Actions.**

This is the most important part of your example in terms of assessment. You should explain what you did within your described situation and task.

It is important to note what YOU did, so actions should start with **“I”** and contain a specific action word (e.g. organised, presented, researched, etc). You should also note how you carried out actions (e.g. face to face, over the phone, etc).

When preparing your answers at home, actions should read like bullet points.

**R – Result**

Like the situation and task, this should be kept brief and describe the outcome of your situation. You may also consider some reflection points (e.g. would you do anything differently, has there been an evaluation).

Following the STAR method helps present your example in a chronological order which focuses on what you have done.

# Understanding the sift procedure

Where there are specific essential criteria or a post attracts more applicants than can reasonably be handled at interview, applications may be “sifted” and a shortlist produced. This formal action will be conducted by a Sift Panel who will usually (but not always) be the same as the Selection Panel. The information you provide in part 4 of the application will form the basis for the sift.

## Further Assessment of Suitability

The board in advance of the interviews will require further evidence to assess candidates for specific posts.  This may be used as a method to further sift candidates or as part of their overall assessment.

The further assessment will include a test of candidate’s judgement, decision making, legal and advocacy skills. This will take place at the Scottish Prosecution College and likely to be held 16th July 2019 – 1st August 2019. Further details will be communicated to candidates following the initial application sift.

# The Interview

When at interview, the Selection Panel will try to put you at ease. The Chairperson will explain what is going to happen and who will ask the questions. You can also ask questions, seek clarification or add extra information at any time and will be given a specific opportunity to do so at the end.

The selection panel will comprise at least two members. If you find that your line manager (or someone with whom you are familiar) is interviewing you do not be surprised if they treat you formally, they must treat all candidates equitably and must not give you an unfair advantage through over-familiarity.

For any particular post, everyone’s interview will be similar in that all candidates will be asked the same core questions. Any follow-up questions will depend on the answers you give and won’t necessarily be the same as those for other candidates.

Interview Questions

Competency Based Selection is based on the underlying principle that past behaviours are the best predictor of future behavior. If a candidate can demonstrate how they have faced challenges and achieved success with similar issues in the past, they will be able to apply these to the challenges of the new job in the future.

All questions for candidates will be designed to test suitability based on the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate in relation to the requirements of the role and the competencies associated with the vacancy. The candidates should then provide specific examples to demonstrate how they have met the competencies required.

You will be asked competency based questions and you will be expected to talk about how you actually tackled a real problem. The questions will relate to competencies and essential criteria stated in the advert, therefore the key is to prepare examples from your career that highlight the various skills that you would be required to show in your new job. You should also be prepared to answer questions about any desirable criteria which is stated within the advert.

In answering these questions, you should respond by giving a real specific example, ideally using the STAR method. Candidates are reminder to use ‘I’ not ‘WE’ so that the Selection Panel obtains a full understanding of what you did within a specific example.

Candidates should be prepared to talk about their example in a lot of detail. The Selection Panel will ask you probing questions to ensure they fully understand the situation you are describing. The Panel will also be interested in the outcome of the situation and whether there was anything you learned from the experience.

**There are things you can do to help yourself prepare for the competency interview:**

Read and understand the “STAR” method, this will help you to answer the question correctly, and maximise your score.

Prepare examples for each of the competencies. The perfect competency answer may be one element of a bigger picture - if you use too big an example you will just skim over the surface of the actions rather than providing the detailed answers they need to hear. It may be helpful to have an example of the following sorts of situations to hand:

* A situation where you resolved conflict with a colleague
* A time you worked to a pressured deadline
* The performance or project you are most proud of
* A time when something went wrong and what you did to resolve it
* An example of working as a team to achieve a common goal
* An example of motivating others, if relevant
* Examples of showing specific skills relevant for the job you're going for

Rehearse your answers in front of a friend or family member.

We would advise that you don’t use jargon unless you are absolutely sure all the members of the selection panel will understand.

By preparing in this way you will feel more comfortable with being able to perform at your best at interview. Focus and hone in on your own contribution and ensure that you show yourself in a good light, whilst of course being honest.

Candidate Notes  
Candidates are advised that they may bring personal notes to their interview, however these should be used as reference material only.

**The Scoring System**

The same 3 point scale is used to score applications at the sift stage and candidates at the interview stage.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Evidence** |
| 3 | The candidate provided evidence that **demonstrated highly effective behaviour** against the requirements of the role and level of competence required. |
| 2 | The candidate provided evidence that **demonstrated effective behaviour** against the requirements of the role and level of competence required. |
| 1 | The candidate provided evidence that **partially demonstrated effective behaviour** against the requirements of the role and level of competence required, but there are a few minor gaps that can be investigated at interview or developed on the job. |
| 0 | The candidate **failed** **to demonstrate** that they meet the level of competence required. |

Board members set the sift pass mark for each individual campaign however candidates will usually be required to obtain a score of at least ‘2’ at each stage, although a score of ‘1’ for a single essential competency should not rule a candidate out if scores are high for all other competencies.

Applicants who score zero in any of the competences or essential skills/experience/qualifications will not be selected for appointment.

**Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

COPFS is committed to valuing diversity and equality of opportunity and participates in the Disability Confident scheme as awarded by Job Centre Plus.

Under this scheme, all candidates who consider them to be disabled in terms of the Equality Act 2010, and who meet the essential minimum criteria for the post, will be guaranteed an interview.

For the purposes of the scheme, the minimum criterion to quality for interview requires adequate demonstration of all competences tested and to meet the essential criteria.

This will be applicable at all stages of recruitment, i.e. if you do not pass the standard required at sift or technical assessment (if applicable), you will not proceed to interview.

**Selection Information**

The selection panel will recommend the candidate(s) for appointment in order of merit.

You may ask for feedback on your performance however this may not be available. However candidate rating forms will be available.

Please note that we will not meet any expenses you may incur in association with this recruitment exercise (tests or interview), nor if you have to relocate to take up appointment (this is also applicable to any current COPFS staff who may make an application for an externally advertised post).

**Appeal**

All candidates are entitled to the right of appeal against any selection decision (i.e. at sift or interview).

Appeals against selection decisions can be made on the following grounds:

* + There has been a procedural irregularity that can be seen to have materially disadvantaged the individual candidate; and/or
  + There has been an infringement of COPFS’ equal opportunities policy causing actual disadvantage

Appeals out with these grounds will not be considered. The appeal must be submitted in writing, justifying the grounds, to the HR Resource Team within five working days of receiving the results or feedback (if available). Where an appeal is upheld, COPFS will take steps to remove disadvantage or compensate for actual loss.

## Equality & Diversity

COPFS is proud to maintain an inclusive workplace and we encourage applicants from all backgrounds. Our policy is to provide equal opportunities for employment, career development and promotion to all where eligible, on the basis of ability, qualifications and suitability for the work. Selection will be based on fair and open competition and regardless of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or ethnic origin.

We are a Stonewall Diversity Champion employer and hold the Disability Confident employer status from JobCentre Plus.

Current staff network groups include: Proud in COPFS; Equality Ambassadors and the Staff Disability Advisory Group.

**Competencies**

**COPFS Competency Framework**

The COPFS Competency Framework applies to all staff. The Competency Framework has been developed to recognise the general range of skills and behaviours expected across all job roles within COPFS. It is based on the same competency framework used by nearly all other Civil Service organisations. The COPFS Competency Framework is central in understanding how best to use the considerable resources available in Civil Service Learning. This includes access to National Occupational Standards (NOS), recognised nationally in industry and Government as indicators of how professionals should be performing. COPFS Learning & Development can provide advice about management development in particular to a level 7 of the Chartered Management Institute standard.

The Competency Framework enables COPFS to recruit and select staff by considering evidence on how an individual achieved an objective or completed a task. It further allows selection based on specific past occurrences which can be indicators of future behaviours or performance.

The Competency Framework should give all candidates an equal opportunity to describe their behaviours when working towards an objective or performing a task.

**Competency Levels**

Competency levels determine the level that someone would be expected to demonstrate indicative behaviours in their day to day work and interaction with others, these differ by grade. The levels go from level one up to level six. It would be assumed that someone performing at level six would be aware of and routinely performing at levels one to five.  
  
For the purposes of this exercise, you are asked to provide examples and evidence against the following key competencies.

# 

# Delivering at Pace

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it’s about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way. At senior levels, it is about building a performance culture to deliver outcomes with a firm focus on prioritisation and addressing performance issues resolutely, fairly and promptly. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times. | |
|  | ***Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…*** | ***Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…*** |
| Level | * Get the best out of people by giving enthusiastic and encouraging messages about priorities, objectives and expectations * Clarify business priorities, roles and responsibilities and secure individual and team ownership •Adopt clear processes and standards for managing performance at all levels * Act as a role model in supporting and energising teams to build confidence in their ability to deliver outcomes * Maintain effective performance in difficult and challenging circumstances, encouraging others to do the same * Review, challenge and adjust performance levels to ensure quality outcomes are delivered on time, rewarding success | * Lose focus, giving a confusing sense of what is important * Take the credit for delivery of outcomes without acknowledging the contribution of their teams * Fail to set standards for timeliness and quality of monitoring in their own area of responsibility * Overly focus on task delivery at expense of motivating and building capability to perform * Fail to take a constructive approach to adversity, resorting quickly to blaming others for shortcomings * Allow performance to drop without challenging quickly and responsively -continually focus on the negatives |

# Leading and Communicating

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It’s about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens. At senior levels, it is about establishing a strong direction and a persuasive future vision; managing and engaging with people with honesty and integrity, and upholding the reputation of the Department and the Civil Service. | |
|  | ***Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…*** | ***Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…*** |
| Level 4 | * Be visible to staff and stakeholders and regularly undertake activities to engage and build trust with people involved in area of work * Clarify strategies and plans, giving clear sense of direction and purpose for self and team * Stand by, promote or defend own and team’s actions and decisions where needed * Confidently engage with stakeholders and colleagues at all levels to generate commitment to goals * Lead by example, role modelling ethics, integrity, impartiality and the elimination of bias by building diverse teams and promoting a working environment that supports the Civil Service values and code * Be open and inviting of the views of others and respond despite pressure to ignore, revert or concede | * Only speak to staff and stakeholders in a face-to-face environment when pressured to do so * Leave team unclear about vision and goals of their immediate business area * Leave team members to cope alone in difficult situations –provide little support for their teams * Miss opportunities to transform the team, wait for others to take the lead * Act in ways that are at odds with their expressed beliefs * Set out a course of action and apply it without listening to others or adapting where relevant |

# Making Effective Decisions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Effectiveness in this area is about being objective; using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well reasoned justifiable decisions. At senior levels, leaders will be creating evidence based strategies, evaluating options, impacts, risks and solutions. They will aim to maximise return while minimising risk and balancing social, political, financial, economic and environmental considerations to provide sustainable outcomes. | |
|  | ***Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…*** | ***Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…*** |
| Level 4 | * Push decision making to the right level within their teams, not allow unnecessary bureaucracy and structure to suppress innovation and delivery * Weigh up data from various sources, recognising when to bring in experts/researchers to add to available information * Analyse and evaluate pros and cons and identify risks in order to make decisions that take account of the wider context, including diversity and sustainability * Draw together and present reasonable conclusions from a wide range of incomplete and complex evidence and data –able to act or decide even when details are not clear * Identify the main issues in complex problems, clarify understanding or stakeholder expectations, to seek best option * Make difficult decisions by pragmatically weighing the complexities involved against the need to act | * Involve only those in their peer group or direct reporting line in decision making * Underestimate the work required to consider all the evidence needed and do not involve experts sufficiently early * Take decisions without regard for the context, organisation risk, alignment with wider agendas or impacts (economic, social and environmental) * Get confused by complexity and ambiguity and consider only simple or straightforward evidence * Rely too heavily on gut instinct and provide unclear, incoherent or illogical analysis of core issues * Make expedient decisions that offer less resistance or risk to themselves rather than decisions that are best for the business |

# Managing a Quality Service

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People, who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches to support service delivery. At senior levels, it is about creating an environment to deliver operational excellence and creating the most appropriate and cost effective delivery models for public services | |
|  | ***Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…*** | ***Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…*** |
| Level 4 | * Exemplify positive customer service behaviours and promote a culture focused on ensuring customer needs are met * Establish how the business area compares to customer service expectations and industry best practice and identify necessary improvements in plans * Make clear, pragmatic and manageable plans for service delivery using programme and project management disciplines * Create regular opportunities for staff and customers to help improve service quality and demonstrate a visible involvement * Ensure the service offer thoroughly considers customers’ needs and a broad range of available methods to meet this, including new technology where relevant * Ensure adherence to legal and regulatory requirements in service delivery and build diversity and equality considerations into plans | * Take little action when customer needs are not being met * Ignore externaltrends that impact on the business area * Allow programmes or service delivery to lose momentum and focus and have no contingencies in place * Make changes to service delivery with minimal involvement from others * Maintain a limited or out-dated view of how to respond to customers’ needs * Disregard non–compliance with policies, rules and legal requirements and allow unfair or discriminatory practices |

Additional Information

**General Pre Employment Requirements**

Should you be successful in your application you will be recommended for appointment subject to our standard pre recruitment checks. These include:

* **Identity** – you will be asked to provide evidence of your identity if invited to interview and potentially at another time during the recruitment process.
* **Nationality and Immigration Status** – you will be asked to provide proof of your eligibility to work and remain in the UK. Successful candidates will also be required to satisfy the Civil Service Nationality requirements.
* **Employment/ Academic History Verification** – if you are successful, we will conduct a verification of your 3 year history
* **Criminal History** – COPFS has exemptions from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974). This check will be undertaken through an Enhanced Disclosure check (of which, COPFS will meet the expense)
* **Health** – prior to appointment, you will also undergo a pre-employment health assessment through our Occupational Health provider.

When full checks are satisfactorily completed, a formal offer of employment will be made.

**Terms of Appointment**

Salary is paid monthly by credit transfer to your nominated bank account.

Subject to length of contract, successful candidates will be subject to the [depute accreditation](http://glwweb02.crown.copfs.gsi.gov.uk:8090/portal/page/portal/EmployeeInformation/StaffHandbook/PerformanceManagementandAppraisal/PerformanceAppraisalGuidance/DeputeCompetenceAssessment) process and be expected to complete a 9 month probation period.

Successful applicants will be expected to work a five day week of 37 hours excluding lunch breaks. You will have an annual leave allowance of 25 days per year (rising to 30 days after 4 years’ service) and will also benefit from an additional 11.5 public and privilege holidays per year.

Your working week runs from Monday to Sunday as you may be required to work on a Saturday or a Sunday in order to cover Court or other duties as part of a rota system during your working week. On occasions where you are required to work at the weekend, your normal working hours from Monday to Friday will be adjusted in the same week to take account of the hours to be worked at the weekend. You will be given reasonable notice of any occasion upon which you will be required to undertake weekend work. You will not be entitled to any overtime payment in respect of such weekend work.

However where there is a requirement, you may be given the opportunity to work overtime. You will be entitled to overtime payment when you have completed 37 hours of work (including any weekend working as detailed above).

Candidates appointed to posts within the national marking hubs will require to be available to start at 7am on Mondays and to attend work on a rota basis at 7am Tuesday to Friday.

Part time allowances will be calculated as a pro rata amount and confirmed within the contract of employment.

On joining COPFS, employees will be automatically enrolled in the Civil Service pension arrangements. You can find further information on Civil Service Pensions via the [Cabinet Office](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/pensions/) ([www.civilservice.gov.uk/pensions](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/pensions)).

Civil Service Code

As a Civil Servant, you will be expected to carry out your role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service and its core values. The Civil Service Code defines the core values that you, as a Civil Servant, are expected to work within and uphold. These core values are:

* Honesty
* Impartiality
* Integrity
* Objectivity

The Code forms part of the terms and conditions of every Civil Servant. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/values>.

Civil Service Commission

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service’s recruitment processes are underpinned by the principle of selection for appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in the Civil Service Commission Recruitment Principles which can be found at <http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/>

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Principles and you wish to make a complaint, you should contact the HR Resource Team by e-mailing [Recruitment@copfs.gov.uk](mailto:Recruitment@copfs.gov.uk) in the first instance.  If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the Service you can contact the Office of the [Civil Service Commission](http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/contact-us/) directly.

The Code forms part of the terms and conditions of every Civil Servant. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/values>.