

Guidance for Applicants



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Use this guide to help you complete your application clearly, honestly and confidently.

The application process

- Your application helps us understand your skills, experience, qualifications and suitability for the role.
- Before applying, read the job advert, job description, person specification and any supporting documents.
- Use your application to show how you meet the essential criteria for the job.

We can give you the application form in different formats. If you need an accessible version, please contact the recruiting manager using the details in the job advert.

Completing your application form

- **Prepare your information** – have your work history, qualifications and referee details ready.
- **Tailor your application** – explain why you want the job and how your skills match the person specification.
- **Use clear examples** – show what you did, how you did it and what difference it made.
- **Check your dates** – list your employment in order, starting with your most recent job, and explain any gaps.
- **Submit on time** – complete a separate application for each role and submit before the closing date.

Your work history

- Include paid, voluntary, casual, part-time and full-time work, starting with your most recent role.
- Explain any employment gaps and include transferable skills from work, education, volunteering, caring responsibilities, community activity or hobbies.
- Give enough detail so the recruiting manager understands your role and responsibilities.

Your references

- Ask your referees before listing them and make sure their details are correct.
- One referee should normally be your current or most recent employer, ideally your line manager.
- External applicants need a second referee. This can be a previous employer, someone from your current workplace, or a responsible person who knows you well.
- If this is your first job, you can provide two-character references. These should not be from a family member or partner.
- We will only contact your referees if you are offered the job.

How applications are shortlisted

The recruiting panel checks applications against the job description and person specification. Tell us clearly how your skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications meet the **essential criteria** for the role you are applying for. Use examples where you can. If your application does not show this, you may not be shortlisted.

1. **Connect for Success competencies** – we will assess your application against the council's Competency Framework. The relevant level will be shown in the JDPS in this section. Choose two competency areas and explain how you have demonstrated them. Further guidance to help you do this is in Appendix 1.
2. **Qualifications** – explain how your qualifications are relevant to the job you are applying for.
3. **Experience** – give examples showing what you did, your role and what you achieved.
4. **Knowledge and skills** – show how you have used the knowledge and skills listed in the person specification.
5. **Professional competencies** – complete this only if the role asks for professional requirements.
6. **Additional requirements** – explain how you meet any other essential requirements for the job.

As a Disability Confident Employer, we guarantee an interview to applicants who tell us they have a disability and meet the essential criteria. If you are shortlisted, we will email you with interview information, including how to book a time, prepare for your interview, claim expenses and prove your right to work in the UK.

- Guidance on expenses
- Information about proving your right to work in the UK
- Tips for preparing for your interview
- How to book an interview time

If you're not shortlisted, you'll receive an email letting you know you were unsuccessful. You can check your application status anytime in your HROnline, recruitment account.

Top tips:

- Keep your answers clear and relevant
- Use specific examples (not general statements)
- Focus on what *you* did
- Match your answers to the person specification
- Check your application for spelling, grammar and accuracy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and your application

- Argyll and Bute Council is a **Digital First** organisation. AI tools can support applicants during recruitment and at work, if they are used honestly and properly.

- Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Copilot and Kickresume, can help create or edit text.
- AI can help you improve your application or prepare for interview, but it should not replace your own examples, views or experience.
- Your application should still be personal, honest and based on your own skills, views and experience.
- Honest information in your application helps us understand:
 - That you understand the job role
 - How your skills and experience match the job you're applying for
 - What motivates you and what helps you do your best at work
 - What you have achieved in the past and how you achieved it

Search engines Vs generative AI

- Some application questions ask you to research and think about your answer before you write it.
- Search engines help you find information. AI can turn information into a full answer. Make sure you understand and personalise anything you use.
- Do not submit AI answers that suggest you have skills or knowledge you do not have. This may become clear at interview or assessment.

Using AI to complete your job application	
Use AI responsibly and ethically to support your thinking, not to replace your own.	
Be honest. Be professional. Be you.	
Acceptable uses of AI	Unacceptable uses of AI
You can use AI tools during the application process to: • Organise your ideas – make your thoughts clearer and improve the structure of your answers. • Research the Council and the job – learn more about Argyll and Bute Council and the role you are applying for. • Find information – learn about local government and your profession or volunteering area. • Check the flow – spell check, tidy the layout and sense check what you have written.	You should not use AI tools to: • Write your answers for you or copy full AI-generated statements into your application. • Exaggerate or make up skills or experiences that you do not really have. • Create examples or scenarios that never happened in real life. • Paste in generic, impersonal answers that do not reflect you. • Share sensitive or confidential information, such as employer details, figures or personal data.

Important: AI-generated answers might not be specific enough or relevant to the job. They may not match the key criteria in the job description and person specification. Using AI in the wrong way could reduce your chances of being selected for the next stage of the recruitment process.

Preparing your job application

- When applying, AI should help improve your own words and show how you fit the role.
- Do not use AI instead of your own judgement or to give misleading information.
- Use AI to support your own preparation. Do not use it to misrepresent your abilities.

If you need to use AI tools for accessibility reasons, please tell the recruiting manager in advance so they can support you.

Before you submit

Use this final checklist before sending your application:

- ☐ I have read the job advert, job description and person specification.
- ☐ I have answered each question clearly and used relevant examples.
- ☐ I have checked that my work history, dates and qualifications are accurate.
- ☐ I have added correct referee details and asked my referees if they are happy to be contacted.
- ☐ I have checked spelling, grammar and plain English.
- ☐ I have saved or emailed myself a copy of my application.
- ☐ I have submitted my application before the closing date.

Appendix 1: Competency Framework

Introduction

The Competency Framework sets out the behaviours and ways of working expected across Argyll and Bute Council. It helps applicants understand what we value alongside the skills, qualifications and experience needed for each role.

It is built around our **Connect for Success** principles and links to the **Way We Work Together**, which describes good work in practice: being listened to, respected, supported through change and trusted to do our best.

The framework does not replace the Job Description and Person Specification. It adds shared expectations about how people work together and deliver outcomes for our communities.

For applicants, it explains behaviours that may be considered during shortlisting and selection, including teamwork, focus, learning, use of data and technology, and adapting to change.

The framework has three levels:

Level 1 applies to all employees,

Level 2 describes the additional behaviours expected from managers

Level 3 describes what is expected from senior leaders.

The relevant competency level for the role will be shown in the Job Description and Person Specification. The levels are progressive, with the same core behaviours expected on a wider scale in more senior roles.

How the framework is used in recruitment

Applications may be assessed against the relevant competencies, alongside the essential and desirable criteria.

- **Shortlisting** – to assess applications fairly and consistently against the role criteria and relevant competencies.
- **Interviews and selection** – to help assess examples of behaviour, experience and approach.
- **Understanding the role** – to help applicants understand the behaviours and ways of working that are important for the post.
- **Development after appointment** – to support learning, development and team working once someone joins the council.

Level 1: All employees

One council, one place working together as one team	Purpose and mission focus understanding what we are here to deliver and staying focused on our shared goals	Empowerment supporting people to do their best	Data and evidence driven using data to make informed decisions	A learning council a council that learns and grows	Agile being flexible and ready for change	Maximise useful technology using technology well
We work across teams, services and locations to deliver the best outcomes for Argyll and Bute.	We understand what is expected of us in our role and we focus on how	We support each other to learn, grow and do well in our roles.	We use data, evidence and insight to make better decisions	We regularly reflect, adapt and improve how we work.	We respond quickly and effectively when needs change.	We use the right technology to improve how we work and deliver

	we behave and work each day on delivering our shared goals.		and improve outcomes.			excellent services.
In practice: • Uses shared tools (such as M365) to keep communication open. • Involves colleagues early to avoid doing the same work twice. • Helps to solve problems together.	In practice: • Links day-to-day tasks and role responsibilities to council goals. • Celebrates achievements that improve our communities. • Prioritises work in line with agreed expectations and service priorities. • Uses available tools and ways of working to deliver efficiently and effectively.	In practice: • Seeks feedback and acts on it. • Takes part in training that supports their role and goals. • Shares what they learn with colleagues. • Takes responsibility for their learning, development and contribution.	In practice: • Uses available tools to understand service data. • Records information accurately. • Shares information to improve processes. • Collects, uses and shares information appropriately to improve their work.	In practice: • Tries new approaches when things are not working. • Suggests what could be improved. • Takes part in individual and shared learning activities. • Takes the initiative to learn and try new ways of working.	In practice: • Responds quickly to changes in people's needs. • Tries new ways to solve problems. • Works flexibly across tasks or locations. • Changes priorities and approach when needed.	In practice: • Effectively uses technology and systems relevant to the role. • Learns new systems when they are introduced. • Suggests how technology could improve people's experience of our services. • Uses the technology available to improve their work.

Level 2: Managers

One council, one place working together as one team	Purpose and mission focus helping teams understand what they are here to deliver and stay focused on shared goals	Empowerment supporting people do their best	Data and evidence driven using data to make informed decisions	A learning council a council that learns and grows	Agile being flexible and ready for change	Maximise useful technology using technology well
We work across teams, services and locations to	We help our teams understand what is	We support each other to learn, grow	We use data, evidence and	We regularly reflect, adapt and	We respond quickly and	We use the right technology to

deliver the best outcomes for Argyll and Bute.	expected of them and how their work, behaviour and priorities contribute to delivering shared goals.	and do well in our roles.	insight to make better decisions and improve outcomes.	improve how we work.	effectively when needs change.	improve how we work and deliver excellent services.
In practice: • Sets expectations for working well together. • Encourages staff to use shared systems and processes. • Connects teams across services, creates opportunities to work together, removes barriers and coordinates activity to deliver a smoother service for people who use it.	In practice: • Helps the team understand what they are expected to deliver and how this supports council priorities. • Connects behaviours, priorities and day-to-day work to shared goals. • Recognises and shares achievements that show positive outcomes.	In practice: • Provides coaching and regular feedback. • Gives people trust and independence where appropriate. • Creates development opportunities that support the team's learning and encourage people to take responsibility.	In practice: • Reviews data with the team to identify improvements. • Makes sure data quality standards are met. • Uses dashboards or reports to guide decisions. • Collects, uses and shares information appropriately to improve work.	In practice: • Runs team learning sessions. • Encourages experimentation and new ways of working • Uses feedback and learning from experience, successes and challenges to improve how the team works.	In practice: • Supports quick decision-making. • Allocates resources flexibly. • Helps teams change direction when priorities shift.	In practice: • Identifies digital training needs. • Introduces digital processes where relevant. • Encourages and enables teams to work together using useful digital tools and technology.