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Senior Permitting Officer

Candidate Information Pack

Please consider the environment and only print this document if you really need to.

<http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency>



Job title: Senior Permitting Officer
Job location: Warrington
Date: February 2019
Reference: 9295

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1. Our organisation

Our organisation

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment. Acting to reduce the impacts of a changing climate on people and wildlife is at the heart of everything we do. We reduce the risks to people, properties and businesses from flooding and coastal erosion. We protect and improve the quality of water, making sure there is enough for people, businesses, agriculture and the environment. Our work helps to ensure people can enjoy the water environment through angling and navigation. We look after land quality, promote sustainable land management and help protect and enhance wildlife habitats. And we work closely with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. We can't do this alone. We work with government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and communities to make our environment a better place for people and wildlife.

Of course, none of this will be possible without the professionalism and dedication of our staff. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity in all we do, and to valuing the diversity of our workforce, customers and communities.

We're committed to helping our people to find new ways of working and to maintain our focus on creating a better place for people and wildlife. For more information on the Environment Agency and what we do, please visit:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/aboutus

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Flickr](#) | [YouTube](#)



2. Salary and benefits

Join us in this role and you will enjoy the following benefits:

Grade Rate: £34,879 - £42,955 (pro-rata - if part time)

Location: Richard Fairclough House, Latchford, Warrington, WA4 1HT

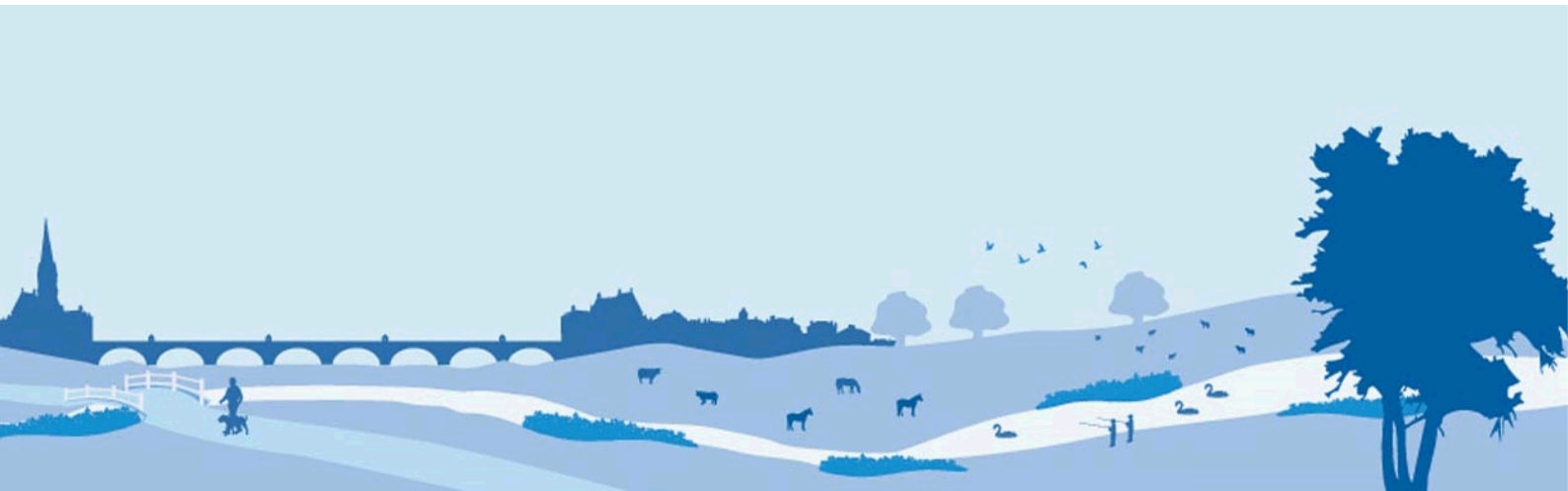
Hours of work: 37 hours FTE, permanent

Leave entitlement: Your leave allowance in this role will be 27 days plus bank holidays (pro-rata - if part time or an assignment).

We offer up to two days paid environmental outcome days each year. These give you the opportunity to take part in community activities with a clear environmental outcome for people and wildlife.

Pension: We will enrol you into the Environment Agency Pension Fund (EAPF) on commencing employment, if your employment contract is for 3 months or more. The EAPF is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It is a career average scheme, which means you will build up benefits based on your pay each scheme year rather than your final salary.

We will base your pension contributions on your actual pay and you will receive tax and national insurance relief on your contributions. The pension contribution rates currently range between 5.5% and 12.5%. Whilst you are in the scheme we will also pay an employer contribution into your pension. We currently pay 18.5%, so this is a very generous scheme.



2. Salary and benefits continued

Work/life balance:

We support flexible working hours and practices to help you strike a good balance between your work life and your personal life. We will also encourage you to keep developing your skills and professional knowledge throughout your career.

Diversity:

We are committed to diversity and inclusion. We aspire to be the best employer in the country for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and want all our staff to feel valued and respected and to see this as a great place to work. From our EDI executive champions to our EDI employee networks, everyone has a part to play to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in our organisation. Diversity: it's in our nature.

Tenancy deposit loan:

Our Tenancy deposit loan scheme assists permanent employees and individuals employed directly by the Environment Agency on a Fixed Term Contract of more than 3 months, to cover the costs of a deposit for a privately rented home, which can sometimes act as a barrier to moving.

The scheme gives access to an interest free loan to pay for some, or all of, a deposit and can be paid back over a period of up to 12 months (or by the end of your fixed term contract, if you are employed for less than 12 months), directly from your monthly salary.



3. The role

Role

An opportunity has arisen for an enthusiastic Senior Permitting Officer to join our National Permitting Service's Water Resources teams based in Warrington. There has never been a more exciting time to work in Water Resources. There are many facets to our day to day work that are delivering now, to improve the environment for wildlife and people. Our licences currently are;

- Removing impoundments that obstruct fish migration opening up 100KMs of spawning habitat.
- Supporting the country's renewable energy targets by licencing Hydro- Electric Power, Ground source heat pumps and Surface water heat pumps.
- Helping create 410 hectares wetland habitats in 2018/19 to meet our corporate strategy through abstracting and impounding water, delivering independently or working with environmental partners.
- Rebalancing historically water stressed catchments, where over abstraction/licencing have caused environmental deterioration to more sustainable abstraction levels.
- Intermittent issuing of drought permits when needed protecting the environment whilst still ensuring public water supply.
- Contributing to our flood risk management targets of protecting 300,000 properties by 2021.

Through our abstraction reform programme we are also:

- Delivering the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction (RSA) programme where rivers that have run dry for over a hundred years now have freshwater flowing again.
- Working with licence holders to revoke unused and underused licences.



3. The role (continued)

- Bringing 5000 previously exempt licences into regulation to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
- Digitising our permitting stock to enable applicants to access their abstraction details easily. This will also improve communication with our customers.

In April 2020 Water Resources will also move into EPR (Environmental Permitting Regulations) alongside other regimes.

In your role you'll be assessing and determining a range of complex Water Resources applications located across England, in line with Environment Agency processes and regulatory obligations. With the desire to provide mentoring and coaching support to others, you will ensure that the team deliver high quality decisions on Water Resources applications to tight deadlines. To achieve this, you'll have excellent interpersonal skills to develop and maintain excellent working relationships with internal and external customers. You must be prepared to have difficult conversations with your customers and be able to clearly explain your decisions supporting the team in challenging conversations too.

In exchange for your hard work, you'll have the opportunity to further develop your skills, expertise and career in this fast-paced environment. We would like to hear from candidates who feel they have the right attributes to be successful in a permitting environment.

Knowledge/Qualifications

- a degree (or equivalent) in a science or humanities subject
- specialist technical knowledge in any of the following: Hydrology, Groundwater, HEP, WR Compliance/regulation, Water Resources planning, Drought permitting, Integrated Environment Planning.



3. The role (continued)

Skills/Abilities/Experience

- Experience in environmental management and environmental risk assessment
- Willingness to work collaboratively with internal and external partners to build technical resilience, share best practise and knowledge and improve efficiency
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Strong influencing skills
- Ability to make sound and timely decisions

Desirable requirements for the role

- Experience of environmental permitting/licencing such as providing pre-application advice, assessing applications, regulating against licences, reviewing licences, making licence applications
- An understanding of the Water Resources Act
- Chartered membership of a relevant institute or (for Environment Agency staff only) Practising Environmental Regulator.

Top capabilities

As part of the application and interview process, we'll be looking for you to tell us how you:

- Take decisions and solve problems
- Coach others
- Deliver results through others
- Focuses on efficiency, innovation and quality

Please refer to the Capability Dictionary appended to this candidate pack, for further information.



3. The role (continued)

What else do you need to know?

- These roles will be office based, although infrequent travel will be required to attend meetings, training or site visits.
- We welcome applications for those requiring part time and flexible career opportunities.
- Please see National Permitting Service recruitment link to get a feel for NPS and our teams <https://design102.wistia.com/medias/r9nquoaf56>

To help bring the role to life, here are some views from current Senior Permitting Officers:

Water Resources Senior Permitting Officer – Hannah Hawkins



I've been working in water resources for 14 years where I started as a grade 3 permitting officer, with the last 10 years as a Senior Permitting Officer. I really enjoy this role and the variety of work I am able to get involved in.

Day to day I provide technical support to the permitting officers in my team which can range from chatting through a consultation response they have received from Natural England to reviewing their work to ensure it is of a good standard or providing training where needed to ensure technical resilience. Helping others in my team and watching their skills and confidence grow is one the main things I most enjoy about my job.

I also get involved in projects working to develop procedures, feeding into the SPO group and have recently been the lead for a drought permit. I like being able to prioritise and manage my own workload to ensure that I continue to develop my own knowledge (there is always something new to learn!) while supporting the team to ensure they meet the deadlines required of them.

Since starting a family 4 years ago, I have been able to return to work on a part time basis and have been supported by my team leader in doing this. The EA is a great organisation for those who already have or are thinking of starting a family due to the flexible working and parental leave offered.



Water Resources Senior Permitting Officer – Emma Barlow



I've enjoyed working in the National Permitting Service for ten years, five of which have been as a Water Resources SPO. The Environment Agency is a great place to work and I feel lucky to have found myself in a field I am passionate about straight from university, getting to know colleagues from across the Environment Agency who have such incredible knowledge and determination to do a good job for the environment. I thought by now I would feel like I knew most things about water resources permitting, but every day I learn more about water, the environment and legislation so the role is never dull! Challenges include analysing complex information, problem solving and dealing with difficult customers.

I have responsibility for delivering training to my team as a whole and supporting each permitting officer individually as they work through the Technical Development Framework from brand new starter to experienced officer. I take great pride in helping permitting officers to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in dealing with a wide range of water resources issues. When they come across technical issues or difficulties with the process, I help them to resolve those issues and make decisions about how to issue a licence to the customer whilst protecting the environment.

My role includes being a liaison lead for two water companies, meeting them regularly to understand what applications they plan to submit soon and building up a relationship that will help us to deal with them smoothly. I lead on the New Authorisations project which is bringing 4,500 previously exempt activities into licensing. This involves learning about new legislation and abstractions for purposes we've never previously been involved in, helping to design processes and guidance that will enable us to deal effectively with the volume and complexity of the applications. A dry spell in the summer of 2018 changed the focus of my role for a period as I moved intensively on drought permit applications to alleviate public water supply shortage.

In NPS we are always trying to become more efficient and deliver better results for our customers and the SPOs have a big role to play in this. This is an exciting time for water resources with lots of improvements coming in to enable us regulate abstractions in a more modern and effective way. Being an SPO puts you at the forefront of helping to adapt to legislative and policy changes to continue to deliver high quality permits to customers.



Water Resources Senior Permitting Officer – Graham Melhuish



Flexibility is a key attribute for an SPO as it is rare to have a day end where you can say you did everything you had planned to do that day.

As the team determine applications, balancing the needs of the environment and the needs of people naturally throws up questions and queries for resolution on a daily – sometimes hourly - basis. As an SPO you get involved in most of these; sometimes you are providing the answer; often you are coaching the Permitting Officer towards an answer or supporting the decisions they've made; frequently you are learning something new yourself, to be stored away and used another day.

Being able to quickly understand or appraise an issue – particularly it's wider consequences or implications – and enable its resolution is a core SPO skill. This is gained from experience – knowing and applying the various legislation and guidance to issue licences for many types of application. And maintained by continuing to determine the more complex applications and being involved with the work each Permitting Officer is undertaking, both by coaching and listening to their views in return.

This is the best move I have made to date as no day is the same and it's not all administrative work. The main skills you need in this role are working with others and knowing where to look for what you need and keeping organised as the role is varied. The EA is a great place to work, as you can work flexibly at times when you need to and the main focus of the EA is always your health, safety and wellbeing which supports you in getting on with your work and being the best you can.



Water Resources Senior Permitting Officer – Pete Timms



I have been working for the EA for ten years, all of which have been within the Water Resource Permitting role in the National Permitting Service. I began as a Grade 3 Permitting Officer, eventually become a Grade 4, and finally moving into the Senior Permitting Officer role. As I have progressed, so has my role, becoming increasingly more challenging, much like the Water Resources regime itself. Originally determining a great number of Water Resources applications in my earlier role, my role is now focussed on training and ongoing coaching of new and existing staff. The role allows you to write and develop certain aspects of this training, and it's rewarding to see it or even deliver it yourself to officers from all over the country.

On a more local scale, it's really rewarding to see officers develop into the role and progress. Sometimes this progression can be within NPS, other times it can be onto other departments within the EA. This is another great thing about working within the National Permitting Service, it requires you to learn about the wider business, giving you an insight into what other roles the Agency has to offer.

The role of Senior Permitting Officer is varied, responsive, and challenging. There will be times where you have to complete a number of different tasks for a number of people in a single week, so it's essential to be a well-organised person who can prioritise a number of work streams. This is something I really relish about the role; you may be delivering training one day, reviewing an operational instruction the next, helping a Permitting Officer with a complex application the day after, writing a new process in response to an issue that has arisen after that, and then maybe, you'll get to work on your own application at some point thereafter.

Development wise, the Water Resource regime is facing numerous upcoming challenges which will require licensing expertise to move them efficiently forward. Drought has been a significant challenge for the whole regime and one that is always possible going forward. New Authorisations work (licensing of previous exempt activities) is set to accelerate over the coming year. And the abstraction reform and Water Resources into EPR are all ongoing large scale work streams. In addition to these development opportunities, getting involved in Incident Response is always something that is encouraged and will give you the opportunity to do something entirely different to Water Resources licensing.



4. Training and development

At the Environment Agency, it is fundamental to our success that our staff have the appropriate knowledge and understanding in order to effectively deliver our work. We will therefore invest significantly in providing you with excellent training opportunities.

Our training and development programme has been designed to ensure that you develop and maintain a good understanding of Water Resources legislation/regulations and further develop your personal effectiveness skills. You will develop your technical knowledge by receiving training in areas of permitting specialisms, relating to different activities within Water Resources. As you gain more knowledge and experience, you may get the opportunity to assist other teams to support your professional development, or if required by the business need.

What will the training be like?

The training will be a combination of:

On the job training, computer based learning and formal classroom sessions

In-house training sessions, for small groups delivered by technical leads to address newly-emerging priority work areas

Coaching and mentoring from other staff, to assist you in determining applications for activities or sectors which are more complex than previously experienced; and

Structured site visits with compliance officers to observe permitted activities 'in the field'.

This training process provides you with an overview - a platform for you to build your knowledge upon using live Abstraction licence applications.



4. Training and development (continued)

Training Journey

Initial Training

In the first few weeks you will receive a condensed training package, providing an overview of the following:

- Our Permitting process
- Legislative knowledge
- Environmental risk management
- Records management and data protection
- Incident response
- Health, safety and wellbeing

Continuous Professional Development

Your learning certainly doesn't stop upon completion of the initial training – you are only just getting started! You will learn a huge amount by continuing to work on Abstraction licences applications as no two are ever the same.

There is no prescriptive program for what a Senior Permitting Officer is taught after they complete the introductory training. Your learning will be somewhat influenced by the work that we are requested to deliver by our customers. We need to make sure that we are best able to deliver a service that exceeds the needs of our customers and that our staff have the required technical skills to help us achieve our potential and maximise our productivity.

We strongly encourage our officers to be proactive in developing themselves. You may come into the role with a broad overview of several knowledge areas, but there will be plenty of opportunities for you to specialise (according to your interest or your ever-developing work experience). Even if you are a specialist already, there is always opportunity for you to diversify as we deal with such a huge range of technical areas.



4. Training and development (continued)

What will Continuous Professional Development be like?

This training will help you develop your knowledge on a variety of technical areas, which you will apply to your permit determinations. Your development will be structured through the following tools:

- A Technical Development Framework (TDF), which enables you to track and plan your development journey. TDFs take the high level technical capabilities for your job and describe the specific technical activities, tasks and indicators relevant to your role at each competency level. Progression through the TDF represents your developing skills and knowledge.
- Achieving 'Practising Environmental Regulator (PER)' status, for officers who meet a prescribed level of capability within the TDF. This title is endorsed by industry certification bodies.
- Alternatively, you can apply for Chartered Status if you meet the criteria for your relevant Professional Body. You will benefit from the EA paying for your annual subscription to your one chosen Chartered Professional Body.

This is a demanding but rewarding training and development programme, in which there is always more opportunity to learn. To succeed you will need to be self-motivated and take active ownership of your personal learning and development.

What will I achieve?

As a Senior Permitting Officer you will issue and maintain complex and sometimes contentious permits, to protect the environment and support economic growth. You will also work with internal and external customers to assist in providing pre-application advice, whilst enhancing the Environment Agency's reputation.



4. Training and development (continued)

As well as working on applications, SPOs typically adopt a technical area of specialism in which they lead and develop others within NPS. In addition to this, they get involved in work to shape and improve their team, their regime and NPS' approach to permitting and regulation as a whole.

Opportunities for career progression

Career progression opportunities are good for Senior Permitting Officers. In the past they have developed their technical knowledge sufficiently to progress to Regime technical specialists. Alternatively, you may be interested in a role outside of NPS, in an area team (focussing on regulation) or in a national team, setting the standards for NPS and area alike. There is also the option to move into a management role.



5. Is this the right career for you?

The Senior Permitting Officer role is varied and demanding, but it is very rewarding too. As with all jobs, some people are better suited to the role than others.

To help you decide if this is the right career for you, we've put together a few examples of situations that you might find yourself in as a Senior Permitting Officer. You won't encounter these types of situations every single day, of course. An honest description of the role and tasks will help you to decide if it is something you'll enjoy doing. If you are not sure whether the job is really for you, ask yourself – and be honest – about how you would react to these situations having received the relevant training and development.

You will be coaching one of the teams Permitting Officers in the following scenarios;

- The PO does not have sufficient information to progress a permit application despite already requesting further information from the applicant. You know that the applicant has been waiting a long time and needs the permit to secure a contract. You need to decide whether you advise the PO to request the information again or alternatively return the application and ask them to reapply when they have the correct information, knowing that this may mean that they lose out on the contract.
- You have to help the PO make a decision on an Abstraction licence application when you have conflicting information and / or there is no clear policy.
- A pressure group is unhappy with your decision to grant an Abstraction licence and has said that they will be pursuing a Judicial Review. You need to help the PO prepare or maybe even be prepared to defend your decision at a hearing.
- You have been asked to attend a site visit for a pre-application request. You need to gather all the relevant information and ensure you are in the best position to do this.

One of the great things about being a Senior Permitting Officer is that you will be able to see how you've made a difference. The decisions that you'll make will have an outcome on the environment and on business. Here's what else you can expect to get involved in as a Senior Permitting Officer:



5. Is this the right career for you?

- The opportunity to work on a huge range of permit applications - varying in industry type, size and complexity – no two sites are ever the same!
- A continual and varied development programme to help you continually grow your knowledge.
- Working with technical teams to make environmental improvements on site i.e.;
- Reducing licenced water quantities so in environmentally sensitive places there is more water for the environment, creating more opportunities for Fish passage and creating wetland habitat.



6. Further information

The Environment Agency values a diverse workforce and welcomes applications from all sections of the community who wish to join a workforce which embraces difference and welcomes everyone.

We aim to create and maintain a diverse workforce (including our Board and Executives) that better reflects the UK's economically active population. Therefore, we particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), disabled, female and LGBT+ candidates who are under-represented across our workforce.

We will consider flexible working patterns for all our vacancies, including job share, so please include clearly any information regarding your preferred working arrangements on your application.

These roles will primarily be office based, although infrequent travel will be required to attend meetings and / or training.

For further information, please contact:

Rob McHale, Permitting Team Leader

020302 50964 – robert.mchale@environment-agency.gov.uk

Eligibility to apply and continuity of employment

Employment agency workers and contractors are considered to be external candidates and should therefore only apply for positions that are being advertised externally. They are also not eligible to claim continuity of employment should they be successful in securing a position with the Environment Agency.

If you have been a member of a Regional Flood and Coastal Committee in the last 12 months we will not be able to continue with your application based on agreed appointment rules related to employing ex-RFCC members. We would welcome an application from you once the 12 month period have passed.



6. Further information continued

Eligibility to apply and continuity of employment cont'd.

For applicants who currently work in local government or other bodies listed in the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government etc.) (Modification) Order 1999, you may be eligible for continuous service for the purpose of calculating any future redundancy payment. In addition, if you can demonstrate that you have worked at the Environment Agency immediately before joining the Civil Service and are now being re-employed by the Environment Agency within a period of three years of leaving, you may also count your Civil Service employment for the purpose of calculating your service related entitlements as outlined above. If you are unsure of your status then you should contact your own HR Team.

Pre-employment Checks

We apply the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) check when recruiting staff to our posts. This includes a basic criminal records check.

For the great majority of roles in the Environment Agency this will be sufficient and only certain roles will require a higher level of clearance. Should this be necessary, you will be advised of this during the recruitment process.

Positions based at our London office or roles that require frequent travel to London require CTC level security clearance. This will be confirmed to you during the recruitment process.

Want to find out more?

To find out more about what it's like to work at the Environment Agency, please visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/about/recruitment>





7. How to apply

We use an online recruitment system. To make the application process simple and straightforward, and so that you know how it works and what we need from you, we've put together a few hints and tips. Make sure you have all the information you need about the vacancy. For some jobs, you'll be asked to download a candidate pack, like this one, where you'll find specific application instructions.

The first thing you need to do is sign up to our recruitment system. You will need a valid e-mail address to log in and apply for opportunities, as all communication from us will be via e-mail. You can do this via the vacancy you are interested in by selecting '**Apply**' at the bottom of the advert.

Once you've clicked this link you'll then be asked:

- Do you have the right to live and work in the UK?
- Do you have the required qualifications or equivalent experience, which were stated in the job advert?
- Are you currently an employee of this organisation?

Simply answer yes or no and you can carry on with your application. You'll then see the '**Register**' page. Simply complete the details and select '**Submit Registration**' and register to the system. You only need to sign up to the system once; you'll just be able to login next time.

When it comes to the actual application, you need to fill out each section, please be aware that the system will automatically time out if you are inactive for more than 60 minutes. This will result in any unsaved information being lost so make sure you save what you are doing regularly. Once you've finished, your details and information will be saved on the system for any future applications – of course, you can edit your details at any point.



7. How to apply continued

When you apply to the Environment Agency for a job we will ask you to provide your personal data on our application form. We need this information so that we can establish your identity and your right to work in the UK.

You can read our Data Protection Statement on the application process page of our recruitment system. It is also available for reference on each page of the actual application.

Competence Questions/Statement

We're keen to know what makes you right for the job you're applying for and why we should ask you in for an interview. The competence questions/statements are your chance to convince us!

You should demonstrate how your skills, qualities and experience meet the requirements of the job (as described in the job advert and candidate pack). And instead of simply telling us, show us: use real life examples of where you've used a certain skill or how you've practically applied your experience.

There's a 250 word limit per competence including spaces. It's a really important part of the selection process so make sure you keep your statement relevant and concise. Think about what we need to know about you and what you'd bring to the role and our organisation.

Application questions

For some roles, we'll ask you some specific questions, like if you have a preferred work location. If you're disabled and you'd like to be part of our Guaranteed Interview Scheme, you can add this information in here.



7. How to apply continued

Equality and Diversity

We're committed to reflecting the communities we serve and we'd like you to tell us about yourself and your background.

Submitting your application

Once you've filled out and completed everything, you'll be prompted to submit your application. Simply click the button and you're done.

Please be aware that once you've submitted your application, with the exception of the 'Personal Details' section you will not be able to edit your application further. If you decide to withdraw your application, you will not be able to submit another application for the same vacancy.

If, at any stage, you have questions or problems, please contact the recruitment team on 0845 241 5350 or email ea_recruitment@sscl.gse.gov.uk

Setting up 'job alerts'

If you have been unsuccessful with your application you can set up email alerts for future vacancies. You will automatically receive an email when a job that matches your criteria becomes available. To do this simply click on '**create a new job alert**', enter your job criteria and save.