

Backend Engineer - Digital Publishing

Thank you for your interest in joining Digital Publishing as a Backend Engineer.

We want to give you the best opportunities we can to demonstrate your suitability. We hope that being open and transparent about our hiring process will help with that, but let us know if there's anything else we can do to support you.

If you have any other questions about the Backend Engineer role or hiring process, please email ons.resourcing@ons.gov.uk.

The hiring process

It takes approximately four to six weeks from the application closing date to us making a job offer – but we'll try to make it faster if we can.

We focus on skills, experience, behaviours and potential – we won't ask any trick questions, and we don't expect you to know anything to a textbook level of detail.

1. CV and covering letter

The first stage of the application process is a CV and covering letter. At this stage we want to find out more about you, your background, what interests and motivates you, and why you feel you'll be a good fit at ONS.

As a rough guide, your CV should be around two to three A4 pages, and your covering letter around one A4 page – but there's no strict limits.

We'll let you know if you've been successful within a few days of the closing date.

2. Telephone interview

If you're successful at the application stage we'll invite you to a 30-minute telephone interview. This will be a technical interview to explore your skills and capability in a bit more detail.

We'll ask you for an example of some difficult technical work you've done recently. This could be a challenging coding problem or a complex system requirement. We'll ask some follow up questions to understand your technical capability.

We'll typically conduct our telephone interviews over a week, so you might have to wait a few days to hear if you've been successful.

3. Invitation to interview

If you're successful at the telephone interview stage we'll invite you to an on-site interview at ONS in Newport.

You shouldn't need to prepare for this – we're not testing your ability to remember things, but it's worth reviewing your CV and covering letter, and thinking about some examples of the work you've been doing recently.

4. Your interview

Your interview will be on-site at ONS in Newport. It'll take around two to three hours, and will be a technical and behavioural interview, followed by meeting some other members of the team. The interview is based on the [Civil Service Success Profiles](#).

We know three hours is a long time, so we'll make sure we give you plenty of opportunities to take a break. We'll also make sure there's pens, paper and post-its available, and we'll give you time to think or make notes before you answer.

There's no dress code for your interview - you can wear anything you feel comfortable with.

- We'll spend around twenty minutes talking about your previous experience. Since this is a senior role, we'll focus on mentoring and how you support junior engineers.

We'll also ask you some scenario-based questions to understand how you respond in difficult situations, and how you approach problem solving.

- We'll then spend around fifteen minutes reviewing some code in either Go or Java, as though you're reviewing a pull request on GitHub.

You'll get a few minutes to review the code, then we'll discuss the changes we might make to improve the performance, stability or readability of the code.

- Next we'll ask you to help us prioritise some tasks

We're not too worried about the actual priority order you choose, but we do care about the kind of questions you ask, the things you consider, and why you prioritise the tasks in the way you do.

- We'll design a new service together.

We'll give you a scenario (for example, "publish geographic data") and spend around thirty minutes discussing the most important features. We'll talk about how we might implement some of those features, and look at what trade-offs and technology choices we could make.

- You'll spend time with some of the team.

You'll spend between 30 and 60 minutes with two members of the Digital Publishing team. This is your chance to find out more about the work we do, what it's like to work here, and how you might fit into the organisation. It's also a chance for other members of the team to get to know you a bit.

5. Getting a job offer

We'll get the interview results out within a few days, and regardless of the outcome, we'll make sure you get feedback on your application and interview.

If you've been successful, our recruitment team will work with you to get any paperwork and security checks completed.

We'll then agree a start date, and send you useful information to help you get ready for your new role in Digital Publishing.