Interview Skills

Helping you prepare for the day and after your interview

Introduction

This booklet aims to:

* Give you a greater understanding of what to expect when you attend interviews
* Help you feel more confident and prepared ahead of your interview and on the day
* Provide you with some guidance to get the most out of your interview
* Help with questions you may be asked and help with thinking about questions to ask
* Give you advice about next steps after your interview

Before your interview

Congratulations on getting an interview!

You can be confident that your application has met the criteria for the job being advertised and the organisation is interested in finding out more about you and what you can bring to the role

* Initially, double check that you have ‘accepted’ the interview – as well as letting the potential employer know if you have any specific requirements, such as an accessible room.
* Before attending your interview, research the organisation and ensure that you’re up to date with their services, values and aims. Look on their website and social media channels for easily accessible information.
* You might want to call the contact to have an informal chat or even an informal visit first; many people will value your communication with them and will be happy to answer any initial questions you may have about the job.
* Find out able the selection process – will you have to do a presentation? If so, who to and on what subject? Will there be any other kind of exercises or is it just an interview?
* Find out if you need to bring any identification documents with you
* Plan your journey to get rid of any worries caused by rushing on the day, and check parking or public transport where necessary. Aim to get there about 10 to 15 minutes early if possible.
* Plan what you want to wear so you feel comfortable, but also professional. If you feel confident about your appearance you will feel more confident on the day.
* Take a copy of the job description, person specification and your application, so you can check through what you have already told them, and what you may need to add.

The day of your interview

A selection process is a two way thing – it is up to you and the employer to both get enough information about each other to see if they will offer you the post – and if you want to accept it.

* Don’t worry if you are feeling a bit nervous, the interviewer is probably nervous as well. Practice a bit of mindfulness or breathing exercises so you feel as relaxed as possible.
* Try to smile, be polite and friendly, and make eye contact.
* Walk confidently into the room, but don’t sit down until invited to do so.
* If you don’t hear a question properly, or understand what is bring asked of you, feel free to ask for clarification.
* Make sure you don’t interrupt the person asking the question.
* If there are serval people in the room, look at the person who asked you a question, but try to glance at others to check that they are following you.
* Always try to explain and evidence your answers to questions, linking back to previous experiences.
* Be aware of the language you’re using, keeping it professional

Topics and questions

There are lot of different things you may be asked about:

**Technical questions about the job –** this is often evidenced by your qualifications, but many employers also ask about key areas to check your understanding, or even recent changes to see if you keep abreast of the subject.

**Presentations are often used to assess communication skills –** if this is the case you will probably have been given the subject in advance – make a few slides and practice the presentation several times. Bring the presentation with you on a memory sick or email it to the employer in advance. It can be useful to bring a printout and any handout slides too.

**In tray exercises –** these have been shown to be very effective at providing evidence for effective decision making. It might be a typing test: a written budget question, or even a medicines management quiz. Sometimes there are scenario-based questions, “what would you do if…..?” Ask if you will have any selection tests when you accept the invitation so that you’re prepared on the day.

**Involving others –** many healthcare organisations involve people who use their services, carers or someone with ‘lived experience’ in the selection process. This is important as it brings a unique perspective into the skills needed for the role. Be aware this might happen and think of any questions you might have for them.

**NHS values-based questions –** values-based recruitment is an approach which attracts and recruits students, trainees and employees on the basis that their individual values and behaviours align with the values of the NHS Constitution. You may be asked interview questions about examples when you have demonstrated these values, or they can be part of scenario-based questions.

**Competency-based questions –** these focus on actual experiences you have had and are useful as they can bring up really good evidence about your skills and knowledge. Think of a real incident, what you did and what happened. We all learn from everything we do, don’t be afraid to say that you would do it differently next time.

Think about your questions for the employer. Useful questions may include:

* Is there anything that you need for the job that I have not been able to evidence?
* When and how will I hear about the outcome?
* Will I be able to get feedback and if so how do I access this?
* What development opportunities and training are available?

**At the end of the interview, thank the interviewers and shake their hand.**

After the interview

After the interview take some time to reflect. You might want to think about:

* What went well and what could have gone better.
* Were there any questions you could have answered differently.
* Were there any questions you forgot to ask – if so you can still contact the employer and ask.

If you haven’t heard back from the employer within two weeks, give them a call to find out why. Administration errors can occur and some organisations can be slow in their recruitment processes – don’t panic and assume you have not been successful.

If this interview isn’t successful, remember the points from your reflection and use them as ways to fine-tune your next interview.