

Help and support for candidates

Information Point 2

Preparing for Interviews

Congratulations, you've been offered an interview! Now is your chance to show us what skills, experience and knowledge you have and demonstrate to us that you are the best candidate for the job. These notes are designed to help you prepare for the interview and make the most of the opportunity.

What to expect

You should normally expect to be interviewed by a panel of two, or three people and this will ordinarily include the line manager for the role. During the interview the panel will be looking to see how well you meet the job criteria, and whether you can provide evidence of this. The job criteria are outlined in the role profile. Some of these will be essential and others desirable.

What does “essential” mean?

This means that the skill, experience or knowledge is needed immediately to do the job. It is vital.

What does “desirable” mean?

This means that it is useful but not absolutely essential straight away to do the job. It can sometimes be learnt while doing the job or developed through training.

What is evidence?

This is proof of your skills, qualifications, experience and knowledge.

Selection for the job may include several forms of assessment, such as a test or presentation, but one of the main methods used is an interview and the interviewers will be looking to see if you meet the job criteria is by asking you questions about them. They will ask you for evidence and examples of things that you have done in the past that demonstrate you have what is needed to do the job. You may be asked about both the essential and desirable criteria, and there may be more than one question about each requirement. You will need demonstrate fully your experience, skills and knowledge and prove your abilities.

Interview preparation

Before your interview it is a good idea to think about examples and situations you have been in that help demonstrate you meet the requirements of the job. Think about what you have done in the past. Often candidates talk about 'we', or what their team and colleagues

have done, however the interviewers want to know **your** skills. If you have achieved something as part of a team, be prepared to explain exactly what your role was.

Identify specific and real examples that demonstrate your skills and experience. The interviewers do not want to know what you have done in general terms, or what you would do in a situation. They want to know what you have **actually done**. Only if you haven't done something before, then instead give a view about what you would do in that situation. In addition to the examples you gave on your application form prepare one or two more examples for each of the job criteria. These don't have to be limited to work situations. They could also relate to your home life, voluntary work and a leisure interest. You may have transferable skills developed from another environment, such as budget monitoring from a project at home, which could be used as an example.

Time limited at interviews so give as much relevant information as needed to prove that you meet the requirements, but be concise. Also, give evidence that relates directly to the experience, skills and knowledge required, rather than providing lots of background information to put your example into context. Practice answering out loud before the interview, and if possible in front of a friend, so they can give you feedback; it gets you used to answering questions. It may feel embarrassing but it helps!

Our values and behaviours

Please make yourself familiar with our values and behaviours framework which can be found on the internet. These will help you understand what our expectations of our staff are and help you to develop your answers.

Useful information

- Do some research about the Council, the team and the role to help you be more prepared
- Ensure that you know in advance where you are going for the interview so there is nothing unexpected on the day. Plan your journey and how you will get there
- If you have a disability and require any particular arrangements or adjustments, please make sure you contact us in advance
- Make sure you are dressed smartly and appropriately
- Be on time for the interview and turn off your mobile phone
- Take a copy of the application form with you, you may be asked to expand on something you wrote in it
- Make sure you take any documentation or evidence that you have been asked to provide at interview
- The way you conduct yourself in the interview is just as important as what you say. Be positive and enthusiastic about the role you are being interviewed, you need to show the interviewers that you want this job.
- Maintain good eye contact with the interview panel, and listen to what you are told
- Make sure you understand the questions you are being asked, and ask for clarification if you are unsure
- Do not criticise your current manager/team or moan about a situation, it does not reflect positively on you. If you were frustrated about the way something happened, talk about how you managed your frustration and what you learnt from the experience.
- The interview panel will be taking notes. Don't be put off by this, it is so that they can remember what you have said.
- Don't worry if you are nervous, this is natural. If you become nervous in the interview focus on taking deep breaths and have a drink of water.

- Remember an interview is a two-way process. The interviewers want to find out about you, but you also need to find out about the Council and the role and see if it fits with your expectations. Be prepared to ask them some questions (normally at the end) if there is something you want to know about the role or the team.
- Ask for feedback at the end of the process

Remember that thorough preparation will give you the confidence to do your best at an interview.