

Preparing for an interview...

Perhaps you haven't applied for a job in a long-time, or you want to update yourself on how best to prepare for an interview? The key word is **preparation**. This short document sets out a series of hints, tips and advice to help you. Many of the tips below, relate to *face-to-face* interviews but, there are also several specific points about *on-line* interviews. We would suggest you read the whole document, as the hints, tips and advice are often equally valid, regardless of the interview format.

- **Location** - check out in advance where the interview will be held, work out how to get there and arrive with plenty of time to spare. Remember that hospitals, universities and NHS buildings can be large and busy places: you need to know exactly where you need to be for your interview. If necessary, do a dry run to make sure you know where you are going (better still, arrange an informal visit –you'll be spending a lot of your time there, if successful!)

For on-line interviews, you need to prepare your location equally well. We would suggest doing this the day before, so you aren't rushing around on the day. Make sure it isn't too dark and stay away from overhead lights. If you can, settle down near a window - as natural light is best. An artificial glare could make it difficult for the interviewer(s) to see you.

- **Technology** – in a face-to-face interview, it is important that you turn your phone to silent. Obviously, for on-line interviews you need to make extra preparatory checks. You need to feel comfortable using whichever platform your prospective employer prefers (Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, MS Teams etc.) - so you need to find out, and find a way of practising. Once you're comfortable with the platform you'll be using, it's a good idea to test your internet connection, the audio and your sound capabilities to make sure everything works properly. Before the interview, ask the employer to confirm;
 - ✓ Which platform will be used?
 - ✓ Is it an audio interview or both audio and video?
 - ✓ Is there someone on the other end of the video, or are the questions pre-recorded?
 - ✓ What do I do, or who do I call – should you or I start having technical difficulties?
- **Decision makers** - do ensure that you speak to the recruiting manager to find out more about the job, the working environment, the challenges and aspirations of the team you'll be joining if successful. This conversation can you give you a good idea of what you might be getting into and, what likely areas of questioning might arise at interview.
- **Influencers** – who are the interview panel – find out what you can about them, so you know about their background and interests. This will help you strike up that all-important rapport.
- **Social media** - double check your social media and online footprint – are you happy with what you see when you type your name into Google? What about the organisation you're applying to – what are they talking about online? This will help you demonstrate you have an awareness of their current issues.
- **Questions** - NHS interviews tend to involve quite common interview questions and a few that relate to the job description and also, the person specification. They may ask about things on your CV too. The key, is to practice, practice and practice more. Consider asking a friend or colleague to ask you some interview questions or, record yourself answering them and listen back. The more you practice, the smoother and more comprehensive your answers will be.

- **What to take** - things you might find helpful to take with you are - a drink of water, a copy of your application or CV, information about the job, change for machines (e.g. parking) and a pen and paper. Clean out your bag, so tissues/old sweet wrappers don't accidentally fall out!
- **Look the part** - ensure you look business-like, whether the interview is in person or on-line. Interviews are generally formal meetings, so dress appropriately to convey that you mean business (equally important whether face-to-face or on-line). Freshly pressed, smart clothing is essential. Check for small things like clean shoes, loose hems and clean fingernails – these are the things interview panels will notice. A bit of pampering, perhaps a haircut or fresh shave will boost your self-confidence. That said, do not overdo jewellery, perfume or aftershave!
- **Time to get in the right head-space** - ensure you are not working, right up to the interview. Make time, space and energy to focus on the interview. Ideally, take the morning, afternoon or whole day off (especially important for 'internal' interviews – treat the process like applying to a different, new organisation).
- **Remember – you are on solid ground** – the interview panel is on your side. You have been invited to the interview because they liked your CV or application form and they want to know more about you. You are also the expert when it comes to you, your career, your values and your strengths and weaknesses. Spend some time reflecting on your career, so you're armed with good information and stories to help illustrate points you want to make.
- **Take time to listen** - listen carefully to the questions they ask. Answer them as clearly as you can. Don't rush. Think about your answers. If there is something in the question you don't understand, ask for clarification
- **NHS values** - be prepared to demonstrate your understanding of [NHS values](#) or the values of the organisation you're applying to. Be ready to describe how you would these values in your everyday work?
- **Questions** - think in advance about any questions you might have for the pane. Take the opportunity to ask them at the end.
- **Distractions** – if the interview is on-line, make sure pets and children are looked after and therefore, unlikely to burst in part way through! If you can, have someone around to manage distractions so you can focus properly on the interview. Make sure other applications like email are closed, so nothing unexpected pops up on your shared screen.
- **What you don't say** - brush up on what body language conveys. Be aware of what you are communicating through your posture and stance - for example, sitting with your arms and legs crossed sends a message that you are closed-off or feel defensive. Good eye contact is important too, whether the interview is on-line or face-to-face.
- **Sleep** – lastly....make sure you get a good nights sleep the night before your interview. Nothing will put you off of your game, like a bad nights sleep!