

## **Interview Guidance Candidates**

### **The Panel**

Normally, you will be interviewed by two or three people.

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

If you have a disability and require any reasonable adjustments, let us know in plenty of time to help us organise this.

### **Tests/Presentations**

Some interviews will include a work-based test or sometimes a short presentation. Details will be outlined in your invitation to interview email.

### **Interview Questions**

The questions you will be asked will be linked to the Job Description and Person Specification for the role, and the Council's values (<https://www.southampton.gov.uk/jobs/why-work-for-us/our-values/>). Read through these before you attend the interview to familiarise yourself with the criteria, key responsibilities and expectations of the role. Think about the type of questions you will be asked and possible answers you could give that would evidence the skill/behaviour.

We recommend using the STAR method for answering questions:

- **Situation**  
Start by describing the situation or scenario you were in. Set the stage by explaining the circumstances, the challenges you faced, or the goal you needed to achieve.
- **Task**  
Next, explain the task or objective you were assigned within that situation. Clearly outline what you were responsible for accomplishing or what role you played in the scenario.
- **Action**  
Describe the actions you took to tackle the situation or accomplish the task. This is the most detailed part of your response. Clearly explain the steps you took, the strategies you employed. Focus on your individual contribution (use 'I' and not 'we')
- **Result**  
Finally, share the outcome or result of your actions. Explain the positive impact of your efforts. Discuss how your actions resolved the situation, achieved the task, or contributed to the team and the organisation.

### **Relax**

Interviewers will understand if you are nervous, as most people being interviewed usually are. They will take this into account and will want the interview to go well for you. Their aim is to get the best out of you.

Listen carefully to the questions being asked, if you do not understand then do not be afraid to ask them to repeat/re-phrase the question.

Take your time with answering questions, take a sip of water before answering. They interviewers won't mind if you need to take a moment to reflect before answering.

- **Preparation:** One of the most effective ways to reduce anxiety/nerves is through thorough preparation. Practice your responses to common interview questions and review your experiences. The more prepared you are, the more confident you will feel going into the interview.
- **Deep Breathing:** Breathing exercises can help calm your nervous system and reduce anxiety. Take slow, deep breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. This technique can be done discreetly before and during the interview to help you relax and stay focused.
- **Positive Self-Talk:** Replace negative thoughts and self-doubt with positive affirmations. Remind yourself of your experience, strengths, and past accomplishments. "I am prepared," "I am qualified," or "I am confident." This can help shift your mindset and boost your confidence.

### **Before the interview**

- Be sure you know the time, date and location of the interview and the name of the person to report to.
- Check out how you will get to the location, and when you need to set off to be there in plenty of time. Do a practice run if necessary. Check for traffic delays and parking arrangements.
- If you have been sent any practice test papers, make sure you have completed them and understand what will be expected of you on the day.
- Organise what you'll be wearing on the day and get it ready in advance.
- Ensure you have your Right to Work ID documents, Qualification/Registration documents and DBS ID documents (if applicable) etc. ready as you'll need to bring them with you for verification.
- Familiarise yourself with the Job Description and Person Specification for the role, along with the Council's Values.
- Research the Council, especially at the area the role will be within. Have a look through our website and the services we provide.
- Write down any questions you may want to ask the panel at the end of the interview.

## At the interview

- Good manners and social confidence are important.
- Make yourself comfortable.
- Make sure you have some scenarios at your fingertips, having prepared specific examples in advance for all the key accountabilities which are relevant to the job. Don't rely on being able to think of something on the spot.
- If you are unsure about any aspect of the job, take the opportunity given to you at the end of the interview to ask the interviewers questions, for example questions about training or career development opportunities, who you will be working with etc.

## After the Interview

At the conclusion of your interview you will be told roughly when to expect to be told the outcome.

You will be contacted either by the interviewers or the Recruitment Team with the outcome from your interview. If you are successful at interview, you will receive an offer email, subject to pre-employment checks, from the Recruitment Team. The email will detail all pre-employment checks required e.g. medical clearance, satisfactory references, disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks etc.

## Feedback

If you would like feedback on your interview performance, you may request this by contacting the Recruitment Team who will pass the request onto the interviewers for you.

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