

Overhauling Recruitment

Selection Toolkit – Interviewing Best Practice

About this toolkit



The Overhauling Recruitment programme is seeking to change the way that the NHS attracts, selects and onboards people into the service.

Attracting talent into our organisations and facilitating seamless mobility is done on a day-to-day basis by all our organisations, and embedding a strategic approach to this is a fundamental tenet.

This pack is designed to support HR Directors, Deputy HR Directors, Heads of Resourcing and their teams in NHS providers and systems to focus on best practice in the selection stage of the recruitment process.

- Sets out considerations and options for selection
- Considers panel composition and service user involvement
- Outlines an alternative approach for interviews.

A further toolkit is available on our FutureNHS site looking at Alternative Approaches to Selection.



This is one of a number of tools as part of the Overhauling Recruitment series. Model documents, case studies and other helpful resources can be found on [FutureNHS](#).



Sections	Slide(s)
Selection process considerations	<u>4</u>
Selection options	<u>5</u>
Panel composition	<u>6</u>
Service User/Patient/Carer involvement in selection	<u>8</u>
Interviewing best practice	<u>9</u>
Alternative interview approaches	<u>11</u>
Interview questions	<u>13</u>
Tips for interviewers	<u>14</u>
Selection: Interviewing Best Practice	<u>16</u>

Selection process considerations

There are a range of factors to consider when choosing a selection method, including the role itself, available resources and the method's validity. Some selection elements occur during shortlisting - however the majority take place during the interview stage.

Some methods are more reliable than others in predicting performance on the job but may require more resources to administer.

Whichever method is used, the candidate experience and length of recruitment process is important.

Candidates should be aware, in advance, of what to expect from the selection process, including:

- How long it will take
- What technology, if any, will be used
- The type of assessment being undertaken.

There should also be checks on whether there is any need for adjustments during this process.

Examples of common selection methods



Interviews



Group interviews



Situational judgement tests



Personality Testing



Selection Centres



The most effective selection approach is a mix of interview and other assessments

Selection options

Interviewing, the most used selection approach, has evolved over the years and employers are using a variety of methods to make the process quicker easier and more accessible, all of which improve the candidate and manager experience.

Examples of interviews can include Face to Face, Virtual (Teams/Zoom), Telephone, Speed interviews and Recorded interviews.

1 Decide on the selection approach/blend of approaches

Six stages

There are a variety of approaches to interviewing, the most effective is that of a structured interview using a variety of the following:

Type	Description
Situational	Situational interviews are scenario-based, and candidates are asked to imagine a set of circumstances and then indicate how they would respond in that situation. Two core aspects of the situational interviews are the development of dilemmas that employees are likely to encounter in the role, and the development of scoring guides in advance for trained assessors to evaluate responses to each situation.
Competency based	Competency-based interview is a process of recruitment based on the ability of candidates to provide information about their professional experience which can be used as evidence that the candidate has a given competency. Candidates are asked to relate past experiences that are relevant to the role (past-oriented), this may draw upon previous employment experience or relatable/transferable experience from other areas (candidate 'lived experience').
Value based	Values-based interview (VBI) is a type of structured interview which is particularly focused on understanding a candidate's values and how they align with the organisation's values. A VBI may appear similar to other types of interviews in that the format will involve asking candidates to provide examples of behaviour they have previously demonstrated or to explain how they would respond to a particular situation. However, it is the probing questions, designed as part of a VBI, that are used to provide insight into a candidate's values or what they consider to be important. This may be just one part of a wider structured interview to assess aptitude and skills.
Strength based	Strength-based recruitment (SBR) is an approach to hiring focused on natural talents and motivators, honing-in on the intrinsic motivation that drives those behaviours. The approach matches an individual's strengths to a given role, ensuring that job applicants are not just capable, but will be engaged and motivated.

The panel is crucial in ensuring that candidates feel comfortable, welcomed and able to demonstrate their ability to function in the role, work as part of the team and to ensure commitment to the NHS values and vision.

2 Decide on the panel composition and how it will operate

Panel make up

- **Only include those who have recently had training in the specific ways in which bias can impact recruitment decision making.** Such training alone will not bring about a step-change but may assist in understanding and implementing the process.
- **Include someone with an understanding of disability and reasonable adjustments** – or have immediate access to such a person.
- **Include at least one person from outside the recruiting department who feels confident in challenging the other panel members.** That might be because of their seniority or it might be because there is some form of accountability beyond the panel.
- **Consider including people in hiring decisions who have not been involved in shortlisting candidates.**
- **Consider the use of service user/patient/carer/advocates** as part of the panel as this often gives a different and important perspective.

Panel diversity

- Panel diversity is not the “silver bullet” it is sometimes presented as, especially if the diverse members of a panel are junior or are unable to hold the chair and other members to account.
- Research on whether the panel itself should be required to be diverse is mixed. Having selection panels with a mix of men and women seems to sometimes help women’s prospects and at other times to harm them. Some studies show that the more women there are on a panel, the more likely women are to be selected for a role while some studies find the opposite. The same may apply to the impact of BME panel members.
- The lack of clear evidence on panel diversity is not surprising given that the decisions of people from underrepresented groups are not inevitably more likely to uphold the principles of equality than anyone else’s.



Different types of panels

When using a selection centre approach you may consider using groups of different panels. This would be to determine how they would interact with these groups in the role on a regular basis.

Examples:

- **Key stakeholder panels**
- **Internal** – staff groups
- **External** – local community leaders, commissioners
- **Service users** – patient representative groups, young people, carers, advocate groups

Service User/Patient/Carer involvement in selection

Representation from service users/patients/carers and advocates gives a different perspective of the candidate's abilities and interactions.

3 Consider wider participation in selection

Why?

The involvement and empowerment of service users is a fundamental principle of the NHS Constitution, and their participation in the recruitment of staff is an important component.

When?

Senior or strategic positions
Clinical Areas (direct patient contact)

Who?

Representative(s) of the group
Carers of the community group
Advocates working on behalf of the wider community

How?

As part of the main interview panel
OR
Separate panel that feeds back to the appointing panel.

Considerations



- Be mindful of 'groupthink' – are the representatives truly representative of the wider community?
- Be aware of the power imbalance that can occur if involved in the appointing panel and ensure that this is removed/reduced.
- Ensure representatives are trained in recruitment and selection but allow them to approach the questioning in 'non-corporate' ways – it may encourage you to think differently about your approach.
- Remuneration should form part of the organisation's overall patient involvement strategy.
- Case studies available on [FutureNHS](#)

Preparation is key to success.

4 Interview preparation

Pre interview

1. Ensure the panel have been identified, and are available, as well as venue.

2. Make sure you know the requirements of the role.

Be familiar with the job responsibilities, interactions with other teams, required skills and knowledge and other relevance details

3. Select the most appropriate interview approach.

Group, individual panel, virtual/in-person. Is a presentation/test required?
Will the questions be shared prior?

4. Create a list of standard questions for all candidates and agreed scoring methodology with the panel.

Prepare a set of essential questions that you can use to get a basic idea of a candidate's suitability for the role. Consider whether you are using situational, competency, values or strength-based questions or a combination of these. Refer to a question bank if possible.

Interview

1. Review candidate's application.

2. Put the candidate at ease.

It is an interview, not an interrogation so aim for a structured conversation.

3. Be prepared to answer candidate's questions.

4. Confirm next steps.

Post interview

1. Review notes and score.

2. Discuss with panel members.

3. Confirm successful candidates.

4. Agree communication actions and timescales for successful and unsuccessful candidates.

5. Consider other avenues for unsuccessful candidates.

6. Move to next stage of the recruitment process.



Tips for running an interview panel

- Provide candidates and interviewers with a handout beforehand, with the interview invitation, detailing expectations.
- Develop an interview protocol sheet that explains to everyone what's expected from candidates in an interview. Distribute it to candidates and interviewers for review.
- Ask the same list of questions to every person who is interviewed – that are directly relevant to the job the candidate is applying for and that are part of an agreed scoring metric linked to an agreed success profile.
- Ask performance-based questions, or behavioural interview questions, which are a strong predictor of how successful a candidate will be at the job.
- Provide guidance on what should be captured in the interview notes. Taking notes linked closely to the success profile and scoring matrix during the interview can reduce biases. Panels who wait without proper notes till the end of the interview to score, risk remembering strong examples but forgetting other evidence from the interview.

Alternative interview approaches 1 of 2

5 Consider sharing interview questions prior to the formal interview

Interviewers already consider alternative approaches to provide reasonable adjustments for candidates to ensure they are not disadvantaged, in line with the Equality Act 2010. Presentation topics are also generally shared to ensure that candidates can fully prepare to demonstrate their full range of skills in communication, use of technology and grasp of any technical knowledge. This can also be considered for the interview questions themselves.

Whilst some individuals may thrive at interview, the process itself and the uncertainty it may bring, can increase anxiety and impact performance on the day. The aim of selection is to determine the best candidate so consider options that can increase a candidate's ability to function.

There are a few considerations around sharing questions pre interview:

		Advantages	Disadvantages
What	All questions	Gives candidates time to fully develop responses	Can become rehearsed and candidates may not engage with the interview panel
	Some questions	Can split between questions that require independent research and more practical questions that candidates can consider their own experiences	Candidate may 'blank' when faced with an unknown question after preparing answers for other questions
When	An hour before	Gives candidates an opportunity to collect their thoughts	May not give enough time to fully prepare a full answer
	The day before or more	Can fully prepare and allow the candidate to fully develop and express their personal knowledge and experience	May lead to overthinking and additional stress Candidates may research the 'correct' answer and not have personal in-depth knowledge



Tips for sharing interview questions

- Determine whether you are testing a candidate's ability to perform verbally under pressure.
- Consider what questions may be shared:
 - 'Cold' questions that you want to determine what independent research the candidate has done – e.g. what do they know about your organisation
 - 'Warm' questions that may require the candidate to delve into their own experiences and apply to the question so have been shared in advance – e.g. 'how have you led change at a department level?'
- Create a dialogue as follow up to the prepared answers – use the opportunity to scratch beneath the surface.
- Review to determine whether this approach has improved the effectiveness of appointments and retention.

Interview questions

6 Consider developing or using an interview question bank

Why use a question bank

- Developing effective interview questions can, and should, take time. It requires understanding of the values, skills, experience and knowledge of a role to be able to craft an effective question.
- Once the bank of questions is developed it can save managers time long term and bring efficiency to the process.
- Allows consistency between different recruiting managers hiring to the same roles (e.g. Band 5 nurses).
- Enables objectivity and standardised questions to assist interviewers to be less swayed by bias.
- Enables panels to identify key areas to explore and to choose appropriate questions.
- Ensures that the interview stays focused on key competencies and qualities.
- Regular review of questions can ensure they are in line with the organisation's vision and values.
- Provides ability to hold model answers with questions to ensure what is being measured is understood.



Interview question bank benefits

- **Consistency**
- **Model answer available**
- **Range of questions available**
- **Time management.**

Tips for interviewers 1 of 2



- ✓ **Be clear on your purpose and stay on target.** Know your purpose and remember that throughout the interview. Maintain your focus no matter what responses you may be getting.
- ✓ **Instead of conducting an interview, have a conversation.**
- ✓ **Be a good listener.** Listening is an active process, not a passive one. A person being genuinely listened to can both see and hear the results. When you respond verbally, give something more than one-word responses that allow the other person nothing to build on.
- ✓ **Engage the person.** If you really want to hear what another person has to offer, treat them with maximum empathy and respect. Remember that they may be nervous.
- ✓ **Approach things from a different angle.** Try to avoid the same tired questions – consider the best practice question bank.

- ✓ **Ask open-ended questions.** How, why, and what questions reveal how the interviewee thinks and feels about things. And don't be afraid to ask them to go deeper than their initial response. In other words, follow up in ways that ask for more from the candidate.
- ✓ **Consider body language/eye contact.** Remember this is a conversation and you want to get the best out of the candidate.
- ✓ **Get involved emotionally.** An interesting fact of interpersonal communication is that influence occurs more readily when the other person "shows the way" by opening up emotionally.
- ✓ **Try your best, because you're being interviewed too.** Just as an interview isn't a monologue, it's not a one-way street. Traffic can, and must, flow in both directions. Regardless of whether you're asking most of the questions, your candidate is judging whether they want to join your organisation, reveal their truest self, or come back for a return engagement. Don't lose sight of that fact.



Interviewers as ambassadors for the organisation

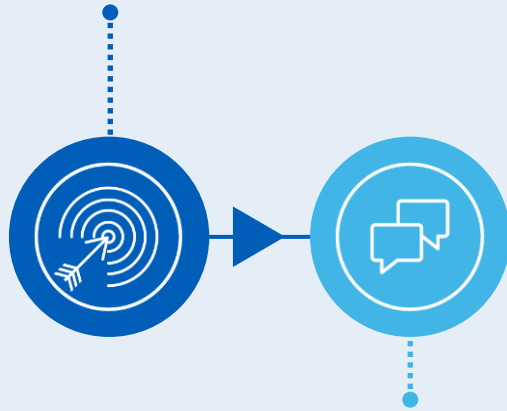
A study by Carless and Imber (2007) demonstrated that, as well as influencing candidates' levels of anxiety (with implications for interview performance), the personal characteristics of job interviewers – such as friendliness, job knowledge, general competence and humour – had significant impacts on how attracted candidates were to the organisation and their job choice intentions.

This is explained in part by signalling theory, which states that, due to a lack of more robust information, people make judgements about an organisation based on the behaviour of those they meet. As a potential hire decides whether an organisation is a good fit for them, it is important that they have an accurate sense of what working there would feel like.

Selection: Interviewing Best Practice

Be clear on the purpose

Know your purpose and remember that throughout the interview. Maintain your focus no matter what responses you may be getting.



Have a conversation

Instead of conducting an interview, have a conversation.

Listen

Listening is an active process, not a passive one. A person being genuinely listened to can both see and hear the results. When you respond verbally, give something more than one-word responses that allow the other person nothing to build on.

Engage

Treat them with maximum empathy and respect. Remember that they may be nervous.

Use a different approach

Try to avoid the same tired questions – consider the best practice question bank.

Questioning

How, why, and what questions reveal how the interviewee thinks and feels about things. And don't be afraid to ask them to go deeper than their initial response.

Body language

Remember this is a conversation and you want to get the best out of the candidate.

Get involved

Influence occurs more readily when the other person "shows the way" by opening up emotionally.

Remember this is a two way process - you are being interviewed too!



Thank you for taking the time to view this pack.

This is one of a number of tools as part of the overhauling recruitment series. Model documents, case studies and other helpful resources can be found on [FutureNHS](#).