

# Interviewing: how to get it right

## Preparation

Before the interview you should review the details of the post and the candidates' applications. The panel can then prepare a set of questions.

- *The question plan should be consistent and fair giving each individual an equal opportunity to perform successfully at interview. Start with something simple and general to help them feel at ease.*
- *No question should be asked if it cannot be asked of all candidates, although further clarification of a point can be gathered as appropriate.*
- *You may wish to assess any theoretical knowledge as well as their competence to perform the role.*
- *Questions that are open, probing, reflective or hypothetical give both the interviewee and interviewer the chance to gather and check information.*
- *The interview should take place in a quiet room, free from interruptions.*

On a practical note, have a clock in the room for the eyes of the interviewer to ensure equal distribution of time.

## Conducting the interview

Use the following checklist during the interview:

- *do not keep the candidate waiting without explanation*
- *start with a friendly introduction of the panel*
- *outline the interview – first we'll talk about...then... and state how long the interview will last and who will ask the questions. It is good practice for each panel member to ask the same set number of questions to each candidate*
- *explain that you will be taking notes during the interview*
- *start with simple questions that the candidate will be able to answer easily*
- *ask if the candidate has any questions*
- *ask if they are still a firm candidate.*

As the interview draws to a close, indicate what the next steps will be (eg you can expect to hear from us in \_\_\_\_\_ days). Thank the candidate for coming. Each candidate should feel they have a fair chance to express themselves and put across their case.

Allow time between each interview to write up notes, discuss with your fellow interviewers and prepare for the next interview. You will also need a break as interviewing is a very tiring business. Four interviews in one day would be recommended, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. If you are tired you will be less able to listen to the candidates and give a fair assessment of their talents.

## After the interview

Make a note of your initial impressions of the candidate as soon as the interview ends. It is wise to keep a copy of the reasons for offering (or not) a job in case of future claims of discrimination, or simply to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

## Interviewing skills

Interviews differ from everyday conversation as they always have a specific purpose – ie to gain enough information to decide whether to employ someone in a short space of time. You will be working with that person on a regular basis so you want to get it right. To do this you will need to exercise control over the interview to ensure that it does not go on too long.

Remember to ask open questions (eg 'what duties does your present job involve?') and not closed questions, in order to stimulate discussion from an early stage.

Ask for evidence that the candidate has the skills and experience they claim they have. Examples could include:

- *you say you have undertaken new patient checks – can you give me an example of how you would do this?*
- *tell me more about...*
- *how would you conduct an audit to record the quality of care for patients with diabetes?*

Be careful to avoid leading questions and avoid multiple questions as these can easily confuse a nervous candidate as they may not be sure which part to answer first. Your ability to listen and observe will help you to get a clearer image of the person. Remember the Pareto rule '80–20'. In this case you will talk for 20%, and listen for 80% of the time.