

Behaviour Based Interview Question Guide

Interviews allow you to:

- Match a person to the job
- Exchange information with the candidate
- Ensure each candidate is given a fair opportunity
- Give a candidate a good impression of the Council

Remember the interview is a two way process. It is a structured conversation, allowing a candidate to decide whether they would like work in the role as well as allowing you as a manager to extract specific information from them about behaviours and experience relevant to the role.

The time restriction dictates a need to focus in the interview on the 6-8 key behaviours you have identified from the Performance Development Framework, any specific technical knowledge or experience required, any gaps in the application, any assessments and the information you need to make a decision.

You should use the template interview booklet saved on the intranet which provides you with a structure to your interview

Preparation

- Plan the content of the interview in advance, agreeing questions with other members of the panel and inserting these into the template interview booklet.
- Consider the environment and housekeeping such as reception, privacy and seating arrangements.
- Allow breaks between candidates for review and writing up notes.
- Be realistic about how many interviews you can conduct in one day – ensure you are as alert for the last candidate as you were for the first.
- Make arrangements between each interview to ensure you collect any relevant documentation from each candidate, i.e. Qualification certificates, proof of eligibility to work in the UK.

Conducting the Interview

- Introduction – using the prompts contained in the template interview booklet, set the agenda for the candidate so that they are aware of what is going to happen and in what order.
- Be structured – control the direction of the interview to meet your original objective. Ask questions that are focused around the key behaviours and will enable you to assess the candidate against your person specification. You may also want to ask questions to assess specific technical knowledge and experience.
- Consider non-verbal signs such as body language, eye contact etc.
- Each candidate needs to be given an opportunity to ask questions of the panel and time for this should be allowed.

- The interview booklet template should be used to record notes of the candidates' responses and should be sent to the Recruitment Team – Room 346/b Kensington Town Hall. The Recruitment Team will ensure these are scanned and placed in the online vacancy file.
- Any notes should be factual and objective. Candidates are entitled to request to see any notes made during their interview under the Data Protection Act 1998. If a candidate asks to view their notes, you should encourage them to come in to view these and receive full feedback at the same time with one of the panel members. Interview notes are often written in an individual's shorthand and can be difficult to read. In such circumstances meeting with the candidate to go through the notes is best practice and ensures there is no misinterpretation of information.
- At the end of the interview, the candidate should be informed of what will happen next and when they will be informed of the outcome. Candidates must be advised of the conditions upon which any offer would be made.

What Questions to Ask?

The Performance development framework provides the basis for your interview questions.

Whilst questions asked can vary between candidates to suit their particular circumstances and work experience, the key behaviours that you are testing should be the same for each candidate.

Do not be afraid to probe further into any questions that were not answered adequately to enable you to fully assess the candidate against your essential requirements.

Below are examples of questions which will allow you to probe whether a candidate is likely to exhibit key behaviours in the role you are recruiting to. You should choose no more than 6-8 key behaviours to assess at the interview from the 4 PDF clusters given below.

- Reasoning
- Engagement
- Achievement
- Leadership

Please remember that the questions are examples only. You may like to develop other behavioural based questions you would like to ask to assess your chosen key behaviour.

Reasoning

Organisational and Political Awareness

- Can you explain what steps you have taken to understand how your current role contributes to the boarder team aims?
- Can you explain how you ensure that you understand service structure and organisational priorities?
- Can you describe how the work of other teams and business groups/departments have an impact on your responsibilities and achievement?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to consider a number of high profile issues to reach a balanced view on a set of proposals?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you had to assess whether a course of action would be viable within your organisation's culture?
- Can you tell me about a strategy that you have developed and managed through to delivery?
- Can you tell me about the last time you faced a complex problem that could impact on other stakeholders?
- Tell me about a time when you have been effective at anticipating the positions/or reactions of others and used this knowledge within the Council?
- Can you provide an example when you have considered organisational/business group mood, key players and stakeholders when implementing change?
- Can you describe a time when you have fostered support for initiatives behind the scenes, using 'windows of opportunity' effectively?

Solution Focus

- Can you give me an example of a time when you remained committed to a course of action in difficult circumstances and reached your goal?
- Can you describe a time when you persevered with a task when faced with problems or difficulties?
- Can you tell me about an occasion when you successfully tackled a complex issue? (probe) - How did you know what needed to be done to achieve your objective?
- Can you tell me about a time when you were unable to meet a deadline you were set?
- Can you tell me about a time in which you involved your team in successfully solving a problem?

- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to analyse and make sense of a considerable amount of information, e.g. financial documents, written reports etc?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have been faced with a complex issue and explain how you ensured you understood it?
- Can you describe a time when you have had to analyse information to produce recommendations/draw conclusions?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have helped your team come up with new service ideas?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have found a solution to a basic problem in your own area of responsibility?
- Can you describe a time when you have collated data from multiple sources and stakeholders, creating a long-term strategy?
- Can you give an example of a time when you implemented a transformational, far reaching initiative that improved your organisations performance?

Planning and Prioritising

- Can you give me an example of an occasion when you have had to prepare plans for a project?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have developed a working plan from a long term objective?
- Can you describe a project you were involved in that was completed to time and the desired specification?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to complete several tasks at once, or handled a high volume of work?
- Can you describe a time when something has not gone to plan? (probe) – How did you reprioritise, what action did you take?
- Can you tell me about a time when you had to put a plan into place to manage organisational change (probe) – who did you involve?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have involved others when preparing plans for a project? (probe) – How did you ensure they were engaged or involved?

Engagement

Communication

- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to adapt your communication style whilst working with others?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to use various communication techniques and tools to get your message across?
- Can you describe a time when you have had to maintain emotional control during a tense/difficult situation?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have involved your team in decision making, strategising and change?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have persuaded someone to your point of view?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have presented to a large group and key stakeholders?
- Can you give me an example of a time when someone you have been speaking to has not understood what you were trying to tell them? (probe) – How did you adapt your communication style?

Working in Partnership

- Can you tell me about a time when you have had to build a working relationship quickly?
- Can you give me an example of an occasion when it was necessary to build and develop relationships internally/externally?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have built an effective working relationship with someone in your team?
- Can you describe a time when it was important to develop a relationship with someone from another business group?
- Can you describe a time when it was important to develop a relationship with someone from an external body?
- Can you tell me about a difficult work relationship you have had to manage?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to engage others in decision making?
- Can you describe a time when there has been conflict between yourself and another department or partner organisation? (probe) – How did you find common ground?
- Can you describe a project you have worked on which has required you to consult widely capturing the views from a diverse range of stakeholders?

- Can you tell me about a time when you have found a cross-sector or cross-borough opportunity to develop and strengthen partnerships/alliances?

Change Focus

- Can you describe a time when you have supported members of your team through an organisational change?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have volunteered to be involved in a project that focused on changing work practises?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have improved on working practices across your team and beyond?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to adapt to significant change at work?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to sell a change in working practices to others?
- Can you describe a time when you have taken a leading role in supporting a team through change initiatives?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have implemented an organisational change initiative, role modelling new practices and ways of working? (probe) – How did you ensure support structures and coping mechanisms were in place to help staff through uncertainty?
- Can you tell me about a time when you involved your team in shaping solutions to manage organisational change?

Inclusiveness

- Can you give me an example of a time when you considered someone else's viewpoint before you made a decision or took a course of action?
- Can you tell me about a time when your viewpoint was at odds with someone else's in your team? (probe) – How did you react? How did you proceed?
- Describe a time when you had to adapt your approach to reflect the different needs of customers or colleagues?
- Tell me about a time when you have encouraged contribution from others?
- Can you describe a time when you sought feedback from a wide range of stakeholders?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have taken a lead role in inclusiveness?
- Can you describe a time when you have taken action to confront ignorance, or intolerance within the workplace?

Achievement

Professionalism

- Can you give me an example of a time when it has been essential that your work was accurate?
- Can you describe a time when you have had to work under pressure? (probe) How did you ensure you remained calm?
- Can you describe a time when you have remained calm when faced with extreme pressure?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have set yourself a challenging target or goal?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have ensured your organisation/Council's processes, finances and frameworks were adhered to by yourself and others?
- Can you describe a time when you have been faced with challenging circumstances? (probe) – How did you look for positive outcomes?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have taken steps to develop a culture in your organisation/Council where professionalism flourishes and a sense of organisational purpose is retained?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have been an ambassador for your organisation/Council?

Drive to achieve

- Can you give me an example of a time when you have failed to complete a task to a standard that you personally set?
- Describe an occasion when you achieved success in an idea/venture that you developed?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have set yourself challenging targets?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have added value to your organisation by reviewing existing practices/policies?
- Can you give me a recent example where you have taken a risk when making a decision?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you worked on an assignment that required a high level of precision?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have had to put in extra effort to make things work?
- Can you tell me when you have set long term transformational goals for your department/team/organisation/Council?

- Can you give me an example of a time when you have not met a set deadline?
- Can you tell me about a time when your team has been faced with a setback or disappointment? (probe) – How did you manage this?

Customer Focus

- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to deal with a difficult customer?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have resolved a customer complaint?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have made an error/mistake? (probe) – How did you ensure this was not repeated?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have gone the 'extra mile' for a customer?
- Can you tell me about a system or process you have put in place that has been customer centred?
- Can you describe a time when you have had to deal with criticism or negative feedback? (probe) – What did you do?

Leadership

Leading and Coaching

- Can you provide me with an example of a time when you have provided development for a member of your team?
- What development or learning opportunities have you created?
- Can you give me some examples of the techniques you use to manage/develop your team?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have delegates a task for development purposes?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you sought feedback from your team/peers?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have coached a member of your team?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have had to motivate a senior manager to raise the bar and face tough issues?
- Can you tell me how you have built your own leadership profile externally, through speaking engagements, networking and sharing best practice?

Managing Business Performance

- Can you describe an occasion when you have agreed performance targets and developed actions with team members? (probe) – How did you do this?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to manage your team's resources and time flexibly?
- Can you describe a contract you have managed where risks and dependencies have had to be tightly managed or monitored?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have had to address performance issues with a member of your team? (probe) – How did you address the underlying cause rather than systems?
- Can you tell me when you have ensured financial reporting and financial control obligations are met in your team?
- Can you describe a strategy you have put in place to address key performance challenges over the medium to long-term?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have changed the organisational structure to ensure alignment with business strategy?
- Can you describe how you have set clear performance expectations with service areas and partner organisations?

Recognising Achievement

- Can you tell me how you have recognised the contribution your team has made, in particular any extra effort or hard work?
- Can you describe a time when you have sought feedback from colleagues, customers and/or partners to ensure feedback to staff and subsequent recognition was balanced?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have accelerated the development of a high performing member of staff, increasing responsibilities and opportunities for new work?
- Can you describe an occasion when you have publicly credited the team or an individual, putting them on the 'radar' of more senior staff?
- Can you give me an example of a simple reward idea you have implemented?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have shaped an individual's role to help them learn and grow?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you have encouraged a high performing member of staff to mix with senior stakeholders and key players?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have encouraged development and growth internally, across business groups and beyond the Council?

Additional technical interview questions

In the interview you should also review the candidate's employment history to probe career gaps and to spot those candidates who have a number of jobs in unexplained sequence.

You will also have specific technical skills you wish to ask candidates. The interview booklet template provides space for these.

Any questions ask must be related to the requirements and circumstances of the job and should not include inappropriate questions with regard to a candidate's domestic or personal circumstances, or cultural background. Unacceptable questions include those relating to marital status, plans for having children, childcare arrangements or spouse's occupation. Candidates should not be asked if their social customs or religious practices may affect their ability to undertake the duties of the post, nor should the different social interests of people from different racial groups be permitted to influence the selection process. It is also inappropriate to ask questions concerning candidates' religious beliefs, racial origins or background.

Effective questioning techniques

There are several questioning techniques you can use within an interview. These are:

The Open Question

This is one of the most useful styles of questioning and should be used a first opening question when try to gain evidence of a key behaviour or technical skill. It usually starts with:

- Describe...
- Tell...
- Explain...

The Follow-up or Probe Question

This form of question is used when you want to explore something in more depth, or do not have enough information and you would like to pick up on a remark.

- "Please tell me more about ..."
- "That sounds interesting; can you expand that for me?"

The Closed Question

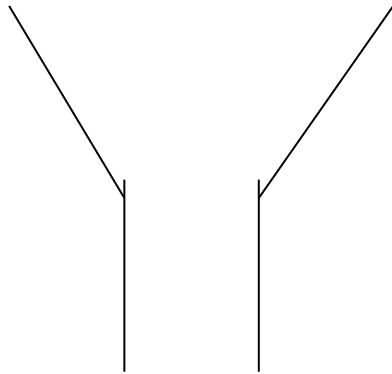
This requires a short, specific answer, e.g.

- "Where you successful?"
- "Did you complete the project on time?"

This is a good approach to use in order to check facts or understanding or to gather specific information. It is also useful to put a brake on an over-talkative individual. Be careful not to use too many or you will sound as if you are interrogating the candidate!

The Funnel Technique

The open, probing and closed questioning techniques can be used in conjunction to form a funnel approach to a subject.



OPEN questions to gather broad information

PROBING questions to get more specific

CLOSED questions to confirm facts

The Comparison Question

People find this easier to answer than direct questions about their likes and dislikes. It is a very useful question for exploring attitudes and feelings

- “How did your time in Company X compare with your time in Company Y?”

The Reflecting Question

This type of question is used to summarise and check both interpretation and understanding, e.g.

- “So as I understand it, you have been Is that right?”

The Final Question

Such a question can lead to important additional information, e.g.

- “Is there anything that we have not covered this afternoon that you would like to talk about?”