**Recruitment Interviews**

Interviews are an important stage in any recruitment process. Having identified a shortlist of suitable candidates, the interview gives an employer a valuable opportunity to ask specific questions to candidates in order to assess their suitability for the job.

It also represents a particular area in the recruitment process where employers must be vigilant to avoid discrimination. In the course of discussion, subjective judgments could be made, consciously or unconsciously, that are based on certain personal characteristics.

Employers should avoid asking discriminatory questions or taking account of information that is not relevant to the job but could potentially have a discriminatory effect if it were applied in the recruitment process.

Key points:

* Employers must not discriminate at interview or in the arrangements relating to interviews.
* Planning a consistent approach to interviewing and selection can help employers focus on relevant job-related information and reduce discrimination or bias.
* All staff involved in interviewing and selection should receive equality training and training on interview and selection techniques.
* Selection criteria and scoring methods should be based on objective criteria which tests skills that are relevant and necessary for the job
* Selection criteria should be identified in advance
* Clear records of the interview and selection processes should be kept as evidence to help reduce the risk of a discrimination claim (6 months is standard, after which point, they should be destroyed)
* Reasonable adjustment must be for those who require it in order to attend; ask when you send the interview invite whether any adjustments are required.

**Interview Questions**

When writing the interview questions, think about what information you wish to obtain from the candidates about their skills, knowledge and experience relating to the person specification.

It is important to ensure that all the candidates are given the same opportunity so each candidate must be asked the same questions (apart from additional probing questions in response to an answer given to a question – perhaps seeking some clarification). There may also be specific questions that you have for individual candidates as a result of the information they have provided as part of their application. The questions should only relate to the person’s ability to do the job – details of their home life, age, marital status etc. are irrelevant and should not be asked as they will certainly be deemed to be discriminatory under the Equality Act. Always leave sufficient time at the end of the interview to answer any questions that the candidate may have.

It is helpful to confirm the terms and conditions of employment (hours of work, pay, pension etc.) before the end of the interview. This will assist the candidate to decide whether or not they may wish to accept the position should it later be offered to them. Finish the interview by telling the candidate when you hope to make a decision and by when they can expect to have heard an answer from you.

Competency-based interviews (also called structured or behavioural interviews) are systematic, with each question targeting a specific skill or competency. Candidates are asked questions relating to their behaviour in specific circumstances, which they then need to back up with concrete examples. The interviewers will then dig further into the examples by asking for specific explanations about the candidate's behaviour or skills.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of common skills and competencies:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Skills and competencies for competency-based interviews** | | |
| * Adaptability * Compliance * Communication * Conflict management * Creativity and Innovation * Decisiveness | * Delegation * External awareness * Flexibility * Independence * Influencing * Integrity | * Leadership * Leveraging diversity * Organisational awareness * Resilience and tenacity * Risk taking * Sensitivity to others * Team work |

Although most questions tend to ask for examples of situations where a candidate has demonstrated specific skills, they can appear in different formats. Examples include:

* How do you ensure that you maintain good working relationships with your senior colleagues?
* Give us an example of a situation where you had to deal with a conflict with an internal or external client.
* How do you influence people in situations where there are conflicting agendas?
* Tell us about a situation where you made a decision and then changed your mind.

In many cases, the interviewers will start with general questions, which they will then follow up with more specific example-based questions. So, for example:

* How do you manage upwards?
* Give us an example of a situation where you had a fundamental disagreement with one of your superiors.

Types of Interview Questions:

Behavioural questions

* Applicants are asked to describe past events or experiences.
* The premise of this type of question is that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.
* This type of question is usually phrased as: “Tell us about a time when ...”
* Responses sought include detailed descriptions of:
  + The situation or task
  + What the applicant actually did - the actions taken
  + The outcome

Situational questions

* Applicants are asked what they would do in a hypothetical, job-related situation. The premise of this type of question is that stated intentions predict future behaviour.
* This type of question is usually phrased as: “What would you do if ...?”
* Responses sought:
  + Detailed descriptions of what the candidate would do
  + Evidence of the kinds of behaviours the candidate would demonstrate in the presented situation

Knowledge questions

* Applicants are asked to demonstrate knowledge or a skill required to successfully perform the duties of the job.
* Useful in situations where the position for which you are hiring requires the verbalization of technical information or work procedures.
* Responses sought:
  + Detailed descriptions of the applicant’s knowledge of information that is important to overall performance on the job

**Providing Feedback**

It is good practice to provide unsuccessful candidates with feedback, particularly if this has been specifically requested. Giving constructive feedback may help unsuccessful candidates focus on any aspects that they could improve on for future success.

Having evidence of clear, objective reasons for the decision not to appoint is not only useful in providing feedback: it can be particularly useful where candidates allege discrimination in the recruitment process, challenge the reasons for rejection, and in defending a claim of discrimination.

**Making the Job Offer**

Before making an offer of employment, an employer should be clear about its intentions in relation to forming a contract of employment with a suitable candidate and binding itself to the terms.

The employer should give careful consideration to:

* the particular job being offered
* the terms and conditions of the employment
* any further information needed about the individual before employment can be confirmed (for example, proof of the right to work in the UK or evidence of qualifications)
* any conditions that an employer wants to apply when employment begins (for example, a probation period or a requirement to achieve a specific licence or qualification)
* how the candidate should confirm acceptance of the offer.

**Verbal Offers**

Most of the time a verbal offer will be made; however note that when a verbal offer is made to a candidate and is accepted, a valid contract of employment can be formed, even where the parties have not made any formal written agreement.

Follow up with a written offer to clarify the terms and conditions; this will help to avoid any doubt or misunderstanding between the parties about the particular terms and conditions of employment.

It is common for offers of employment to be made subject to certain conditions being met. Common examples of conditions that are placed on offers of employment include the employer receiving confirmation of:

* satisfactory references
* proof of the legal right to work in the UK or any necessary immigration approval
* satisfactory health information, for example in a medical questionnaire or report
* proof of qualifications
* satisfactory information from disclosure checks.

When a conditional offer is being made, whether verbal or written, make sure the conditional nature of the offer is clearly communicated to the candidate, particularly if the employer intends to rely on the condition to revoke the offer if the condition is not satisfied. The employer should also clarify that if these conditions are not satisfied then the employer will be entitled to withdraw the offer.