

## Values and Competency Based Interviews (2015)

NHS Lanarkshire selects the right candidate(s) for post(s) through a Values and Competency-based interview (VCBI).

### Introduction

The main objective of VCBI is to identify the right candidate for the post by gathering evidence from responses to a set of questions. The interview questions ask you for examples from real-life situations chosen by you about how you reacted and behaved in past situations. Past reactions and behaviours are known to be the best predictor of future reactions and behaviours and this allows the assessment of how well your knowledge, skills, experience and aptitudes match the post. The actual questions asked depend on the post.

### What is a competency?

If you are selected for interview, you will find the questions are competency-based. The word competency is widely used in all areas of business to refer to the behaviours, skills and knowledge a person needs to be successful in a post. For every post there is a set of competencies drawn from one or two frameworks as outlined in '*Overview of the Values and Competencies Frameworks*'. Questions are asked to reflect these competencies. Different questions are used for different levels and types of posts. The questions used are selected to best reflect the post and its level: they are not designed to trick you in any way!

### How does this link to values?

Our values drive our behaviours and through answering the competency-based questions you can provide an indication of these values and how they influence your behaviour. The interviewer will be looking for your values in your answers.

### What does a competency-based question look like?

Competency based questions ask you: 'Can you give an example of...'; or 'Tell about a time when...'; or 'Describe a situation in which...'; from your work or life so far. Here are some examples of competency-based questions:

- Can you give an example of a time when you have had to work to tight deadlines?
- Tell us about a time when you encountered a challenge at work and how you overcame it.
- Describe a situation in which your ability to communicate was vital.

### How do I prepare for a VCBI?

Start by reviewing the Job Description and Person Specification and the competencies outlined in '*Overview of the Values and Competencies Frameworks*'. Then think about situations you have successfully faced where you can demonstrate the result you achieved. Alternatively you can think about your skills and the best example you could provide on how you have used this skill. Your personal achievements can be as relevant as your work experience. For example "In my role as a team leader I

successfully developed 4 of my staff to achieve promoted posts” sounds better than “I’ve managed people for 10 years”.

An easy way to prepare an answer is to use the so-called **STAR** (Situation, Task, Action and Result) approach. Here is a worked example:

- **Situation:** I identified a procedure which was not being adhered to by staff
- **Task:** I organised a team meeting with a specialist in the procedure in attendance
- **Action:** I discussed with staff the reasons why they were not adhering to it, then the specialist explained the importance of it, while overcoming their concerns
- **Result:** The procedure is now being followed and patient care has improved.

A point of note in this example is the use of the word ‘I’. Whilst what you did may have been done as part of a team, it is important you are able to highlight your personal contribution. The box at the end of this document gives you some further points to think about.

### **What happens during the VCBI?**

There are usually around 3 interviewers and they take turns to ask you questions. You need to listen carefully to the question so you can answer accurately. If you are unsure of the question, ask for clarification.

Once you have answered a question, interviewers may ask for some more detail-this is called ‘probing’. Probing is aimed at getting as much evidence from you as possible so can only benefit you.

The interviewers take notes throughout the interview so don’t be put off by this. Notes are necessary to record your evidence gathered from your answers.

You will be given an opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

An interview normally takes 30-45 minutes.

### **What happens following the VCBI?**

It is important to learn from the experience of VCBI and regardless of whether you are offered the post or not you should ask for feedback. You can also ask yourself:

- What answers was I happy with and why?
- Which questions gave me the most difficulty and why?
- How could I have better prepared for interview?

During your feedback listen to what the interviewer has to say, clarifying with them to understand the point they are making. Do not go into defensive statements, e.g. “that was because ...”, as the interviewer can only describe what they identified at the interview. You do not have to agree but you should understand the feedback.

Ask if there are any specific things you can do on other occasions and remember to thank the person for their feedback.

<b>An overview of the main things you need to think about when preparing for VCBI.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know as much as you can about the post and be clear about how you match the requirements in terms of your qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience.</li> <li>• Review your employment history and identify your key achievements in relation to the competencies required for the post.</li> <li>• If the post is a promotion opportunity be familiar with the different level of responsibilities expected.</li> <li>• Prepare answers which provide evidence of your level of experience and achievement using the STAR approach (see below).</li> <li>• Be ready for probing questions to each of your answers.</li> </ul>	
<b>The STAR Approach</b>	
<p><b><i>Situation</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the background?</li> <li>• How did you find yourself in the situation?</li> <li>• Who or what else was involved?</li> <li>• To what extent were patients / service-users / customers involved?</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Task</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What needed to be done?</li> <li>• What was the objective?</li> <li>• What did others want out of the situation?</li> <li>• What particular skills (personal / technical) were needed?</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Action</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What options were considered?</li> <li>• What action did you take?</li> <li>• Why was it taken?</li> <li>• What contingencies were put in place?</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Result</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the outcome?</li> <li>• How close was the result to that planned / expected?</li> <li>• How was success measured?</li> </ul>