



Interview Guide

Executive | Adult Services

You've been selected for interview for a senior managerial role in adult social care. So, how do you make sure you impress your potential future employer on the day? How do you ensure your answers are relevant to all members of the interview panel? What questions should you ask and what practical things do you need to consider? We realise there's a lot to think about ahead of an interview, especially where a role is senior and involves service transformation. That's why we've created this interview guide. It should help you frame your responses clearly and act as a checklist on how to best highlight your specific skills, knowledge and experience.

Research and preparation

Our Sanctuary Executive consultants have all been working in social care recruitment for quite some years and have built up trusted relationships with hiring managers. This means they will know the exact type of person required to step into a role. Thankfully, in selecting you as just the right manager, you're already part way there to securing the position. There are a few more things you could and should do though to help you land the role. Most, if not all the answers you give, will need to be framed based on the knowledge you have about the service you are stepping into.

Google and the employer's website will become your new best friend. Does the employer have a business plan they are following for the directorate? What information is available on their Health and Wellbeing or Adult Safeguarding Board? Are there any minutes you can access? Is the CQC relevant to the role, if so, are there any reports you could read?

As a tip, to narrow your Google search, frame your search query with quotation marks.

Being able to demonstrate knowledge of the broader national issues related to the role you are applying is also useful. It shows you share an interest in the future of adult social care.

Our magazine, Social Work News is a good source of nationwide information, so [please take a look](#).

Examples of your work

Review the job description and person specification and detail all the key competencies, people skills and service knowledge required. Be ready with three or four appropriate examples of how you meet the requirements. Being so senior, this is harder than you might think.

The best advice we can give is to bring back every example of your own experience to how it is directly relevant to the role you are applying for. Be prepared to discuss strategies you use to deal with conflicting demands (both internal and external) and your experience of working with other partners. Crucially, be ready with some examples of how you inspire and motivate others.

Being interview ready, wherever you are

Most local authority employers that entrust us to find professionals appreciate that their next senior adult social care hire may not be local – and even if they are, it might not be possible to meet in person. That’s why, in addition to an initial telephone screening interview, you might be offered a video conference-based interview.

These interviews are treated in much the same way as if you are physically in the same room as the employer. There are some practical things that you’ll need to consider...



Make sure you understand how the tech works

You may be familiar with Zoom but not Skype or vice versa. Either way, you’ll need to be able to access the software and have made sure it works on your chosen device and that your microphone and webcam are synced.



Make sure your interview space is distraction-free

Make sure you’re in a room that’s quiet and free from distractions, inside and outside. There’s nothing worse than having a great interview answer interrupted by the beep of a delivery van.



Be on time, but not too early

This may feel as if you’re breaking interview-etiquette, but it’s best to be on time rather than ten minutes early. An employer may be using the same virtual ‘meeting room’ for another interview.



Be aware of your body language

Being on film can make even the most confident person feel shy. As a tip, practice looking into your webcam as you speak. It might help to put a sticky label just above the webcam to remind you of this.



Address everyone in the ‘room’

You could be interviewed by two or more people in different locations themselves. Make sure you are familiar with who they are and take the time to individually acknowledge them in your answers.



Remember to relax and be yourself

As far as interviews go, there’s a lot to be said for being able to make a coffee in your own home and talk about your professional self in your own space.

Interview questions

As a senior manager, you will be asked a series of interview questions. Some might focus on whether you understand the service challenges the employer is facing and if you can work collaboratively at a senior level to deliver change. Others centre on core competencies such as leadership and how you support others to safeguard vulnerable adults.

EXPERIENCE-BASED BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Please describe your previous experience.

With this question, it is tempting to talk about all the senior roles you've had and the fantastic achievements you've made along the way. This is important but you need to think carefully how you position your answer. What the interview panellists are really asking you is 'why is your experience useful to this role'? Try and summarise your career within two or three sentences and then provide three or four examples of where your knowledge and experience are transferable into the role on offer.

AMBITIONS

Could you tell us about your achievements?

The employer is looking for relevant achievements only. You'll need to have done your research and have carefully reviewed the person specification; to identify what achievements will be most relevant to talk about. Discuss how you've previously pinpointed similar areas of under-performance and what you did to resolve them. You'll need to be ready with specific KPIs and results. You could also bring a long any reports

to leave with the employer or if you are on a Skype interview follow-up with an email.

What's your vision for the role?

You'll need to explain your understanding of the local authority's vision. But you must go further than this. In a complex adult social care environment, it's difficult to establish direct links between cause and effect. The temptation is to talk about what you have delivered and the changes you have made in a previous post. Whilst this is important, you must explain how you were able to identify the factors that were causing specific service issues and what you did to reverse this. Carefully explain how a similar methodology could be mirrored there. Remember, to be clear on the changes you expect to make and how this will impact on performance and potentially save money.

What are your expectations of us as your new employer?

Talk about the expectations you have already been informed about by your Sanctuary Executive consultant. For example, mention your understanding of the managerial structure, the information and teams you would need direct access to. Also reference how you would be proactive in quickly establishing a good rapport with the relevant teams, services and partner agencies.

Competency-based questions

For competency-based answers, you'll want to follow the STAR formula, situation, task, action and result. You can do this by drawing on a real-life example for each answer.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Can you describe a time when you used your leadership skills to resolve a difficult staffing situation?

The STAR formula requires you to structure your answer in a 'story' format. Start with the description of the situation, who you needed to involve from within the team and from other departments, add more detail on the specific steps you took, and finally describe the positive results of your actions.

Particularly strong answers focus on how, in line with the Care Act, you've worked proactively to prevent care from escalating or how you've led on an integrated approach with partner agencies to deliver highly targeted services.

How do you help motivate others?

During the interview, employers are interested in assessing how well other leaders and social work staff would respond to you, and how you would interact them and respect their input. Your response offers interviewers a snapshot of your leadership and interpersonal skills. You'll want to think about the strategies you use to motivate your team. Again, using the STAR format, draw on a real-life example. It's helpful to explain how you might approach staff who perform well, whilst motivating others who struggle with change.

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND INNOVATION

Tell us about a situation when you felt that a conventional approach was not suitable. How did you manage this approach?

A good example to use here could be your approach to drawing on resources outside of your department. Can you think of an example where you encouraged teams to work in a different way; perhaps with partner agencies to secure positive outcomes for vulnerable adults? Outcomes that might have been very different if it wasn't for clear multi-agency communications.

Or perhaps you have particularly strong influencing skills with an ability to proactively lead and deliver cultural change to improve service quality?

Describe a problem that you recently needed to solve. Were there any alternatives you could have considered?

As a senior manager, you'll solve problems every day. What the interviewer is looking for is an awareness that you thoroughly consider other options before pursuing your chosen course of action. Explain what your options were and then detail why you chose a specific course of action and what the results were. If you can demonstrate how you worked with others on a workable



solution, even better. After all, adult social care involves closely working with other managers who often have competing demands.

COMMUNICATION

Describe a situation where you have dealt with a conflict of interest with another manager.

Using the STAR format, start by describing the difficult situation and how it arose. What were the pinch-points and how did you manage to find a positive way forward? The panellists will be keen to learn of your people skills as much as your service transformation and social work knowledge.

Competency questions can of course take many different formats but if you have an example to give for each of the areas below, you'll be as prepared as you can be:

- Where you've led on a piece of work and how you guide and enthuse others
- How you've helped your staff to cope and adapt to change in the workplace
- When you made a mistake or things didn't go to plan
- How you introduced a non-conventional method and the challenges you faced
- When you delegated responsibility
- How you drove a team through change



80%

OF WHAT WE COMMUNICATE
IS NON-VERBAL

Preparing for your interview is important, but it's not just about what you say during your interview.

Being interview ready, wherever you are

Most local authority employers that entrust us to find professionals appreciate that their next senior adult social care hire may not be local. That's why, in addition to an initial telephone screening interview, you might be offered a Skype-based interview with the hiring panel. These interviews are treated in the same way as if you are physically in the room as the employer. Therefore, you'll need to take the same amount of care with regards to your preparedness.

Think about your surroundings; are you in a quiet location free from interruptions? Is your internet connection good? Are you wearing what you would normally wear in a face-to-face situation?

Remember, relax and be yourself. Position the camera so that it's easy to make eye-contact with members of the interview panel and remain positive.

GOOD LUCK!