

## **Interview questions**

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The council encourages managers to use competency or skill-based questions in interviews. These are questions that prompt you to reveal how you performed in various situations in the past, and what knowledge, skills and abilities you used.

These types of interview questions ask you about when you have used particular skills. For example;

- a. Can you tell me about a time when you ...
- b. Can you give me an example of ...

A good interview answer is:

1. Succinct, it does not waffle
2. Focused, it answers the question being asked without being too descriptive
3. Tells the interviewer what your actions were and the skills you used
4. Finished with the outcome to your example and your learning points

## **The CAR approach**

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The CAR approach provides a framework for your answer to help you make the most of your skills and experience. This method was originally designed to help candidates structure an interview answer, however, it can also be used when presenting examples in a supporting statement.

The questions below are a guide to help you structure your answer, using CAR. You do not need to answer all of them; choose the most relevant ones for your example.

### **Context**

This is a brief description of the situation and the task you were faced with.

- What was the problem or issue you were presented with?
- What was your aim or objective; what did you want to achieve?
- How did you know something needed changing?
- What was your role in making this happen?
- Who else was involved and what was your relation to them? (Were they customers, clients, team members, stakeholders etc.)

Try and summarise the context in 2-3 sentences. It is easy to become over descriptive so practise summarising the context succinctly using only relevant information.

### **Actions**

This is where you explain what you did and how you did it.

- What were your options?
- How did you decide which option was best?
- Who did you have to work with or engage to make it happen?
- What measures of success did you have; how were you going to know you had done a good job?
- What actions did you take and what skills did you use at each stage?
- Did you use experience, judgement or knowledge of a policy or process?

- Were there challenges or things that could have prevented you succeeding?
- What did you do to address them?

It is very easy to talk about what the group did: We did this and we did that. The interviewer is interested in what you did and what skills you used; practise talking about your examples using 'I' instead of 'we'.

### **Result**

Finish your answer with the outcome of the exercise or experience. This provides a rounded way of finishing off your answer.

- What was the outcome?
- Did you achieve what you had set out to achieve?
- What did you learn from the experience or what would you do differently next time?
- Did you receive feedback on your performance, how did this help you develop?

Answering interview questions is not easy, regardless of how many interviews you have had. The best thing you can do to help yourself is to prepare and practise.

- Take time to think about the role and what the recruiter is looking for
- Think about the questions you might be asked and what examples you could use
- Practise answering out loud and, if possible, practise with a friend who can give you feedback on your answer and the way you answer

**Think about how you would answer the question, and practise, practise, practise!**