

## Interviewing an Autistic Candidate

Autistic people can make very productive employees. They can bring a range of highly specialised skills to the workplace and thrive in the right environment. However, traditional job interviews often fail to meet the needs of autistic candidates and are not always the best way of assessing a person's skills.

A better approach is to offer the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate their skills rather than relying on their verbal description of them within an interview. However, if you do have to undertake the job interview process, here is some advice about how to make interviews more accessible for autistic candidates.

### ***Prior to interview***

- Give the candidate clear instructions on how to confirm their attendance.
- If the interview is in person, enclose directions to the place of interview, with easily visible information about date and time of interview.
- Provide information about what to expect from the interview, including:
  - How many people will be in the interview?
  - How long the interview will last?
  - When the successful candidate will be informed?
- If possible, provide the list of interview questions to help the candidate prepare.
- Allow the candidate to bring pre-written material such as a CV to reference in the interview, and advise them of this beforehand.

- If possible, allow the candidate to bring an advocate to help them express themselves in the interview.

### ***During the Interview***

- Remember that autistic people have communication and cognitive processing differences so may respond to your questions differently.
- Remember that autistic people use body language differently – be careful not to misinterpret their facial expressions, gestures or tone of voice.
- Remember that many autistic people use eye contact differently, do not make incorrect assumptions about this.
- Avoid social chit chat at the beginning and end of interview.
- At the start of the interview, explain the process, number of questions and your expectations of the candidate.
- Avoid questions that are too general, use specific questions.
- Ask questions that directly relate to the job.
- Avoid hypothetical questions such as ‘what would you do if...’, instead base questions on the individuals experiences ‘describe how you...’
- Do not use figurative language, idiom or metaphor.
- Allow the candidate extra time to process your questions before answering.
- Give single questions, avoid linked or 2 stage questions being asked together.
- Provide the questions in written format to help keep the individual on track.
- Be prepared to prompt the interviewee to provide more information.

- Indicate timings for responses, e.g. we expect you to spend around 3 minutes answering this question.
- Be prepared to politely advise the interviewee that they have spoken enough.
- Avoid sarcasm and figurative language.

### ***Following the Interview***

#### *At the end of the interview:*

- Avoid excessive social chit chat.
- Explain the timescale in which the successful candidate will be notified.
- Explain the process for unsuccessful candidates.
- Explain the process for applying for vacancies in the future.

#### *Notifying a successful candidate*

- Be clear about the conditions on which the employment offer relies.
- Set and communicate a start date.
- Provide an enhanced orientation programme (see Advice For Managers advice sheet).

#### *Notifying an Unsuccessful candidate*

- Be clear and precise in telling the individual that they have not been successful.
- Give clear feedback, which includes how they could do things differently.

- Make sure to feed back the positives and encourage the person to continue applying for work.