**GAs Case Study by Dr Archie Roy**

**PCT: Vacancy for Assistant Psychologist**

**Department: Psychology in Health Care**

Salary: Band 4 £19, 832 - £24,318

We are looking for an enthusiastic assistant psychologist to join our large psychology team. We provide services in acute hospital settings and in primary care.

This post is primarily a research post with two large projects: the Advanced Communication Skills Project within Cancer Care and the Eating Disorders Service. The post holder will also support the multidisciplinary Eating Disorders Team by undertaking protocol based psychological assessments of clients applying psychological self-report measures, rating scales, observations and semi-structured interviews with clients and others involved in the clients’ care. Previous experience of working with this client group would be desirable.

To be considered for a Band 4 level, you will have excellent communication skills and good knowledge of IT skills including databases and SPSS. You will assist in clinically related administration, collection of statistics, research projects, and other project work as directed.

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| **Person Specification** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
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| **Training and**  **Qualifications** | * Honours degree in Psychology (at 2:1 or 1st Class) * Entitlement to graduate membership of the BPS | * Further postgraduate training in relevant areas of professional psychology, research and/or mental health |
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| **Experience** | * Previous work (paid or voluntary) with a patient group/people with mental health problems * Experience using databases and in data analysis especially SPSS | * Experience of work in eating disorders field |
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| **Knowledge and Skills** | * High level communication skills (written and verbal) * Team working skills to collaborate in clinical and research teams * Resilience and adaptability * Ability to adhere to ethical and professional standards * Investigative skills | * High standard of report writing |
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| **Personal / Other** | * An ability to maintain intense concentration for client assessment * Ability to interact effectively with staff from all disciplines, people with mental health problems and their families, and with cancer patients * Ability to work independently, reliably and consistently with work agreed and manged at regular intervals | * A desire to explore a career in professional psychology * Car driver * Commitment to and interest in working with people with mental health problems and their families and with cancer patients |

**Responding to competency/attributes based interview questions**

Look over your past experiences and look for evidence of these skills and qualities. A useful way to structure your thinking is to use the STAR acronym: **Situation Task Action Result**

* Describe a particular Situation/Scenario
* What was the Task or Target? Explain what you had to do (include information such as any issues encountered and how you solved them)
* What was the Action **you** took? Use positive action verbs, such as I organised; I negotiated; I developed; I presented; I persuaded; I encouraged. Try to use “I” far more than “we”, including when talking about your role in a team
* What was the Result? Give a positive outcome

Try to write down every “STAR Story” you can think of for each requirement as concisely as you can. Prioritise them according to how relevant and persuasive they are.

Don’t worry about where your evidence is from. Experiences from paid or unpaid work; degree course activities; spare time activities and family commitments are all valued by employers. The point of transferrable skills is that they are transferrable! When you’re talking about your experience, if you follow the STAR format, you should make it easy for the interviewer to understand:

* The context of your experience
* What you have done
* What you have achieved

Think about when you’re having a normal, relaxed conversation - don’t you naturally cover all the STAR elements?

The interview is simply a conversation, but with a purpose. Try to treat it as a “normal” conversation and be yourself, as you tell of your experiences so far. The interviewer will then have a clear idea of your past behaviour and your effectiveness, and will have confidence that you can repeat those behaviours in their role.

Here’s an example of the rough proportion of time you might want to give to each element of the STAR structure in an answer. Please be aware though, that you would give much more information than this in a real verbal explanation overall!

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| **Situation** (~15%) | I am an active member of the University International Society and last year I was elected Chair of a committee to organise and oversee the annual charity ball. |
| **Task** (~10%) | My target was to deliver an enjoyable event and raise a minimum of £2,500 for charity. |
| **Action** (~60%) | I was the leader of the committee of about eight people, each with different ideas and agendas. I encouraged good communication between members of the group and this helped create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere, which was essential.  I led the team and made each person realise they had an important role to play. I identified the main duties and delegated responsibility to those most interested and skilled in particular areas and followed their progress closely.  There were some conflicts within the group (in a real interview you would expand on this) but I encouraged the team to listen to each other and take into account other people’s ideas and advice. Any disagreements were sorted out. I did this by allowing each person to have their say, while encouraging them to identify areas of potential compromise, within a definite time frame. |
| **Result** (~15%) | We overcame these issues, and raised over £3,000 for charity as well as providing a fantastic evening of entertainment with guests from more than 20 different countries. |

You’ll end up with a bank of “STAR Stories” relevant to the requirements of the job. This is your evidence.

Irrespective of the questions involved in the interview, it’s important to try to work as much of this as possible into the conversation, so that by the end of the interview you’ve given concrete evidence of all skills and qualities.

**Exercise**

Listen to your partner giving their answer to a question about one of the Person Specification attributes within *Knowledge and Skills* *or Personal / Other*. Fill in the table below and give them some feedback.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Tick (🗸)** | **What was good?** |
| **Did they answer the question?** |  |
| **Did they expand their answer by giving specific reasons / evidence?** |  | **What could be better?** |

Listen to your partner giving their answer to a question about one of the Person Specification attributes within *Knowledge and Skills* *or Personal / Other*. Fill in the table below and give them some feedback.

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| --- | --- | --- |
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