

Keep calm and carry on: redefining an inclusive interview process for Dietitians



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Introduction

The recent graduate workforce completed clinical placements during the global pandemic with a condensed training program, and in some cases reduced direct patient contact. Anecdotal evidence has suggested a potential increase in anxiety and stress levels on entering the hospital environment, with more students disclosing diverse neurological and mental health conditions.

NHS GGC emphasises the importance of providing a safe and inclusive environment for neurodivergent staff. As employers, we have a legal responsibility to make reasonable adjustments for individuals where required (Equality Act, 2010).

There is no requirement to divulge any disability or personal health issues when undertaking pre- registration training or shortlisted for interview. Providing opportunities to introduce the hospital environment, reduce anxiety and support showcasing of skills could reduce any potential indirect discrimination or disadvantage to any potential employees.

In NHSGC Adult Acute Dietetics (AADS), Practice Development (PD) are responsible for the recruitment of Band 5 graduates. Despite continuing to provide a significant number of hours of pre-registration training the number of previous students applying for graduate posts was low.


Aim

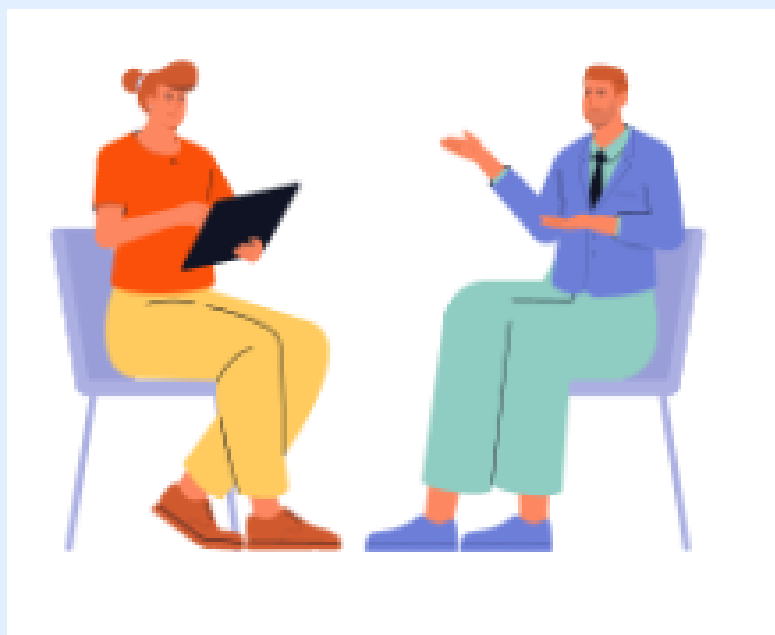
To support the recruitment of new graduates post pandemic, increase the number of applications for posts, quality of interviews and foster an inclusive and neurodiverse work place.

Method

- 1 Applications for posts were made via the Job train platform, shortlisted and invited to interview as per normal practice.
- 2 Prior to interview all candidates were invited to attend a 30 minute online meet and greet session provided by PD - including an introduction to the interviewers, brief overview of the job role and locations, interview format and an opportunity for questions.
- 3 Shortlisted candidates were given access to questions up to 30 minutes prior to the interview, in person or online.
- 4 Using plan, do, study, act cycles the process was repeated three times over 14 months (2023-4).
- 5 Anonymous feedback from candidates was gained using Microsoft forms immediately following the interview.

Results

- Over three cycles
- Average number of applications = 33 (range 13-35)
 - Average number of candidates shortlisted= 18 (range 11-31)
 - A Face to face 'meet and greet session had a poor uptake as run within working times and excluded overseas candidates. Online 'after work' sessions were implemented.
 - Access to interview questions prior to interview was increased from 20 to 30 minutes.
 - Average overall rating of interview experience by candidates = 5.4/6 (range 5.11-5.6; 1= poor, 6=excellent) 
 - Access to questions prior to interview, 'meet and greet' sessions and information about the interview format rated as most useful.



'The meet and greet was really helpful to put a face to a name and also make the interview experience less daunting. Receiving the interview questions beforehand helped me feel less nervous and I could give better, well rounded answers that I may not have been able to give when put on the spot.'

Interviewee, cycle 1

'The interview process was structured well. Having the questions available prior to the interview was extremely beneficial and reduced the nerves'

Interviewee, cycle 2



'The interview panel were friendly, kind and respectful. They answered any questions I had and made me feel at ease through out the interview. The interview questions were reasonable, fair and covered all important aspects related to a band 5 role. It was overall a great experience.'

Interviewee, cycle 3

Discussion and Conclusion

This change has received an overwhelmingly positive response. Candidates stated a reduction in nerves supporting improved performance. The number of candidates shortlisted for interview has tripled, including an increase of 25% of previous students. This format of interview has been proposed as best practice for the whole service and elements have been adopted across acute and community teams.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the candidates who have attended interviews.