

Applications & Interviews



A Guide for Social Work Students

D2N2 Teaching Partnership

Social Work Academy for Excellence

Getting ready for employment...

This set of guidance has been put together by the Teaching Partnership, to help you navigate your way into employment. Inside the guide, you'll find information on:

- ▶ Preparing for, and completing online applications
- ▶ Knowing how best to evidence your skills and experience
- ▶ Getting your application supporting statement right
- ▶ When to start applying for jobs
- ▶ Where to find examples of social work interview questions
- ▶ How you can prepare for your interviews
- ▶ What questions you could ask the interview panel

Online Recruitment - Preparation

- ▶ Most employers will use an online recruitment process, where you'll be able to set up your own account, and submit applications
- ▶ In most cases, you'll be able to "save" your application form, and log back in to complete it at a later point if you need to.
- ▶ You'll need your **National Insurance Number**, or other proof of your right to work in the UK
- ▶ Have your **work and qualification details** handy! Having a summary of your work/employer history, and qualifications, with dates, will mean you can easily complete the work history and qualifications sections.
- ▶ You'll also need your **Referee details**, so that employers can take up references (remember to think carefully about whether it's ok for employers to contact your current employer or whether you'd only want them contacted if you were offered a job - there's usually a box for you to tick for this)
- ▶ Plan your **supporting statement** on a separate Word document, so that you can review it, before you add it into your main online application form
- ▶ Think about the **timing** of your application before you submit it - some employers have a very fast turnaround on applications, so if you're not quite ready for an interview yet (e.g. if you've only just started your final placement), only submit your application when you feel confident enough to accept an interview invitation. That final bit of practice experience can make a big difference to how you feel, and it will give you more case examples to draw upon when you're being interviewed.

Successful Applications...Part 1

► Qualifications

Make sure your Social Work qualification is clearly identified in the Qualifications section, and that you state your anticipated finish date e.g. June 2022 (even though you've not got the qualification yet - you must include it in your application).

► Work history

REMEMBER - your social work placements are a crucial part of your work history (albeit not paid work!) and we need to know about them! So the Work History section of the form, is the best place to tell us about these.

Remember to highlight the details of your placement experience that are relevant to the job you're applying for - it will help us see that you've already gained some useful skills and knowledge

► Student Jobs & Voluntary Experience

Customer service roles, voluntary work, relevant personal experience - don't underestimate the importance of this type of experience. You can learn an awful lot about managing people and tricky situations when you're working behind a bar, or in a shop! Think about people skills, team working, time management, communication etc.

Successful Applications....Part 2

➤ Supporting Statements/Evidencing your knowledge and skills....

All application forms will ask you to provide some sort of **supporting statement** - which is essentially **your opportunity to “shine”**. - your chance to evidence that you have the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to move into a social work role. Some employers will give you specific topics to address in your statement - others will just allow you the space to say whatever you feel is relevant - so be sure to **read the instructions carefully!**

There are a number of things that it's worth considering as you put your supporting statement/evidence of practice & skills together.

- Get familiar with the **Post-qualifying Standards for your area of social care (the KSS)** - this may help steer the content of your statement, as you'll want to be sure that you've incorporated evidence that you have the appropriate level of skills and knowledge
- **Read the Person Specification** for the job you're applying for (it will list the skills, experience and attributes that the employer is looking for) - so you'll want to be sure that you address these/evidence them within your application.
- Make sure that you respond to **ALL** of the requirements that the employer is looking for - **they will shortlist against these** - so they're important!
- If you've been given the space to write your own **supporting statement** (as opposed to specific questions/topics to respond to), then it's worth thinking about how you want to **structure** this - perhaps with some broad **headings** that reflect the **Person Specification** - to show that you've read it, and to ensure that you cover all the elements of that specification in your statement (it will also make shortlisting easier at the employer's end, as they will be able to see, clearly, that you've covered each bit of the specification)
- **Get it checked!!** Ask your **Practice Educator** or Tutor to check through your statement before you add it into your online application - get their feedback/advice

Interviews - Preparation - Part 1

▶ Practical stuff

- where is your interview/how will you get there/parking/timings
- if it's virtual - think about a suitable virtual background/quiet location etc.
- if you're at home/in halls - let others know that you'll be having an online interview, so that they don't interrupt you
- dress-code - even if it's virtual, dress professionally/look smart!
- what documents do you need/have you got them/can you get them
- do you need to prepare a presentation or a case study
- remember to confirm whether you'll be attending or not

▶ Interview Questions - what will I be asked?

- competency-based - tell us about a time/give us an example of...
- factual/legislation - what are the main points to remember when....
- equalities issues - how would you respond to/what is your understanding of
- personal - why do you want this job/what do you bring to the team
- sample questions - look on the internet:
 - YouTube is a good source of ideas
 - Indeed has some sample questions and answers
 - The Guardian has sample questions and advice about answers
 - Community Care - some good advice for SW students

Interviews - Preparation - Part 2

There are a few things that you can do, ahead of your interview, to help boost your confidence, and your performance.....

- ▶ **Practice Examples** - you'll most likely need to refer to some case examples when answering interview questions, so it's well worth preparing for this:
 - create a list of all the cases you have worked on, with a brief summary for each (Initials, key issues, processes/interventions, outcomes)
 - once you have your list, look for themes/common issues (e.g. DV, neglect, mental health), and group them by theme
 - decide which cases you'd feel most confident talking about and do a spot of reflection on those (what went well, what was tricky, how did you deal with it, was the family's/individual's "voice" taken account of, what was the outcome etc.)
 - rehearse these cases, so that you can confidently talk about them in your interview without having to scramble about in your memory trying to find a suitable case
 - think about the competency-type questions you might be asked e.g. a time when you had to deal with an abusive individual; a conflicting professional opinion, a distraught parent/carer.....which cases would you draw on/what will they tell us about you and your practice?
- ▶ **Statutory processes** - employers may want to see how well you understand these
 - what needs to be done/who would be involved/what deadlines are there
 - why might you refrain from statutory intervention/what else could you do
 - what might the impact be on the service user/carers how would you manage this

Successful Interviews

All employers recognise that graduates will be nervous at interview - we all get nervous at interviews! So we'll try our best to put you at ease - but here are some useful things to remember when you go into that interview room:

- ▶ It's a 2-way conversation - you want to find out about us, and we want to find out about you! Remember - your questions are just as important, because you want to pick the right job, and the right employer for your circumstances.
- ▶ Listen carefully to the questions, and make sure that your answers stay on track - try not to go into too much detail - think about what's relevant/important for the panel to know
- ▶ You can ask for the question to be repeated - it's ok! We do sometimes have longer questions in 2 parts - so we understand that you might need us to repeat the second part, or the whole question
- ▶ Take a breath before answering, if you need to - it's not a race to the finish, and sometimes it's good to just collect your thoughts/get a good case example in your head before you start talking
- ▶ Maintain eye contact with those on the panel, and keep your body-language engaged and positive
- ▶ Have your own questions on a piece of paper with you - you can refer to these once the main interview questions are finished (see next sheet for question ideas)
- ▶ Remember to mention your attributes and values - what "soft" skills you'll bring to the role (approachable, good listener, empathetic, level headed, sense of humour, supportive to colleagues/good team member etc.)

Interviewing Us!

It's usual at the end of an interview for the panel to ask you whether you have any questions yourself. So, it's worth thinking about your own questions beforehand, and jotting down a few notes, so that you can take them into your interview. Below are just a few ideas to help you get started:

- Can you tell me a bit more about the team I'll be working in? Will there be any other NQSW's in that team?
- Where are these roles located/what choices do I have? (some roles may be cross-county)
- What is included in the ASYE programme, and what support will I be given as an NQSW?
- How is the allocation of cases managed for someone who's newly qualified?
- How is practice being managed virtually, and what activities are still being conducted face-to-face? (whilst we're experiencing Covid - this may be useful to know)
- When will you be making a decision on successful recruits? How will you be notifying us?
- How soon could I start work?
- What options would I have for progression once I've completed the ASYE programme - what choices would I have?
- What types of CPD would I be offered? Is there any access to post-graduate study?

We hope that you've found this short guide useful - but please do let us know if there's anything else that would have been beneficial.

You can contact us [here](#)