Interview success for promotion to band 7

These senior-level positions generally call for leadership and advanced clinical skills. Find out how to prepare for your interview and answer questions on the day.

Moving up to a band 7 role can be a substantial jump and you may be asked types of questions at interview that you have not encountered before.

Read our advice to make sure you know what to expect.

What types of jobs are band 7 roles?

Band 7 nursing roles in the NHS are senior-level positions. Typically, these roles will involve significant managerial responsibilities and advanced clinical skills. Some roles may require the ability to make detailed patient assessments, as well as diagnosing and prescribing.

Roles at this level include ward manager, senior nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist and hospital bed manager.

What do employers look for in a band 7 nurse?

Although this will vary depending on the role, RCN careers coach Julie Watkins says there are some key things that panels are looking for.

‘The biggest difference with a band 7, compared to band 6, is usually the level of responsibility,’ says Ms Watkins. ‘So the interview panel will be looking for stronger examples of leadership and management skills.’

Deputy associate director of nursing at East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust Louie Horne says: ‘Panels will be looking for problem-solving abilities and how you have implemented solutions, as well as strategic thinking.’

What interview preparation should I do?

Ms Watkins recommends looking at the job description, in particular the list of skills they are looking for, and then spending some time preparing good examples from your own experience that show how you have demonstrated the attributes listed.

Time yourself answering the question, suggests Ms Horne. ‘English is not my first language and I can tend to over-explain things, which is quite common among international nurses,’ she says. ‘When I’m mentoring international nurses I advise them to practise with a colleague or at home, aiming to say something succinctly – ideally in a few minutes. If you go on for ten minutes you will bore people.’

‘Give strong examples of how you have led change rather than just implemented it as part of a team’

Louie Horne, deputy associate director of nursing, East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

The STAR method – which stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result – can help frame your example in a full but succinct way.

While it is important to prepare, Ms Horne says it can be off-putting if a candidate is trying too hard to say what they think you want to hear. ‘I’m looking for authenticity; you can tell if someone is being authentic when you listen to them,’ she says.

‘When I first started going for senior roles myself, someone said to me “Remember to use the buzzwords”. I ended up trying to insert what
I thought were the buzzwords into what I was saying and it didn’t really work. It’s better to be yourself.

**What type of questions can I expect?**

At a band 7 interview, you can expect to be asked a mix of questions about leadership, management of teams, budgets and clinical skills. You will also be expected to demonstrate your knowledge of the Nursing and Midwifery Council code and NHS values, and show how you uphold these in your day-to-day work.

You may be asked scenario-based questions that assess your ability to prioritise effectively – for example between three different patients with complex needs in different circumstances.

In terms of people management, you’re likely to be asked about how you would resolve conflict and/or under-performance issues in your team. ‘You would need to demonstrate a knowledge of formal disciplinary procedures and show that you are going to work with the member of staff to help them improve,’ says Ms Horne.

Expect some questions that explore your understanding of governance, clinical effectiveness, NHS and organisation targets, and how you keep your skills and knowledge up to date.

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**Common band 7 interview questions**

- **‘If you are successful, what would you want to achieve in the role?’**

  ‘I usually ask something along these lines,’ says deputy associate director of nursing at East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust Louie Horne. ‘I’m looking for some evidence of strategic thinking and an understanding of what can be achieved in the first couple of months – and also what you would be aiming for after six to 12 months.’

  Aim to show a blend of learning from the team and what’s happened before, together with your ideas and vision to move the team forward, says Ms Horne.

  ‘A good starting point when you’re new to a management role is to review any performance data you have,’ she says. ‘For example, you could say “I will review the quality improvement projects and any records on complaints, sickness and turnaround times for the ward, and have one-to-ones with the team to establish what the key challenges are.” Then go on to outline how you will contribute to the overall development of the team and unit. Remember to explain how your ideas will enhance patient care.’

- **‘What is your leadership style?’**

  ‘It’s important to think about this in advance,’ says RCN careers coach Julie Watkins.

  ‘You will need to describe your leadership style, based on your values, and give some concrete examples of how you have operated in the way you describe.’

  However, she advises not being too rigid.

- **‘How have you managed change?’**

  Prepare an example of a time when you have implemented change, preferably when you have led this in a team. You can use the STAR technique – Situation, Task, Action, Result – to frame it, and use the word “I” in your answers.

  ‘Make sure that you understand and articulate why the change was being made,’ says Ms Horne. ‘Everything that we change is to improve patient care.’

- **‘Can you tell us about a time when you have managed poor performance in your team?’**

  Have an example ready for this question that shows how you are able to balance staff welfare with operational needs, says Ms Watkins. ‘The interview panel will want to know that you have stepped in and addressed an issue directly with the person,’ she says.

  ‘This starts with asking them if they are okay, recognising if a behaviour has been out of character, and offering support if needed – but always bringing it back to the impact on the team and patient care. Show that you have been clear about the improvement you want to see and how you will monitor it, for example with a performance plan if appropriate.’

- **‘Employers often look for adaptability, so you may say you have a preferred leadership style, but also give examples of where you’ve been flexible to accommodate a particular individual or circumstance.’**

  ‘It’s likely the panel will be looking for evidence of strategic thinking at this level. For example, a knowledge of the trust’s long-term goals’

  Julie Watkins, careers coach, RCN
What is distinctive about a band 7 interview?
The panel will want to hear examples of how you have led teams, managed people and delegated tasks to take on more responsibility.

‘I’m expecting the “I” in answers at this level, rather than the “We”,’ says Ms Horne. ‘Give strong examples of how you have led change rather than just implemented it as part of a team.’

Ms Watkins says: ‘It’s likely that the panel will be looking for evidence of strategic thinking at this level. For example, a knowledge of the trust’s long-term goals.

‘If you think you would like to apply for band 7 roles in the future, it’s a good idea to look out for opportunities to take on some more responsibility,’ she adds. ‘For example, can you take charge of a shift, act up, deputise for a ward manager or run an improvement project? All of this experience will help to give you strong examples to talk about at a band 7 interview.’

Do I need a master’s degree if I want to apply for a band 7 role?
Some specialist band 7 nursing roles may require a master’s degree, so check the skills section of the job advertisement to see what is listed there. If you haven’t got a master’s but feel you have most of the skills on the list and could do the job well, Ms Horne advises discussion with the hiring manager.

‘You could point to other courses that you have done, and if you are planning to do a master’s, or you are part-way through, then let them know. I tend to be flexible about this,’ she says.

Should I speak to the hiring manager first?
‘It’s always a plus if candidates have come to see me before the interview,’ says Ms Horne. ‘It’s fine to ask what the expectations are for the role, and also approach someone who is currently doing the role to find out more.

‘You might ask something like: “What are the three biggest challenges you’re facing now?” and ask about the culture of the team. Knowing the basics about the unit you’re applying to is important.’

Should I ask questions at the end of the interview?
‘I think one or two questions at the end is about right,’ says Ms Horne.

‘I really appreciate questions about professional development and culture.’

Examples include:

» What is the organisation’s culture?
» How is professional development supported?
» How will the induction process work?

‘Personally, I find it off-putting if a candidate asks about the salary at the end of an interview,’ says Ms Horne.

‘I think it’s probably better to do that outside of the interview, via HR, perhaps before the interview or if and when you are offered the job.’

Should I ask for feedback if I don’t get the job?
It is always disappointing to miss out on a role you wanted, but asking for feedback and listening to it can really help build your interview technique for next time.

Ms Watkins suggests that asking for specific information – such as your scores on different categories, or which two categories you scored lowest on – can give you something more concrete to work on.