HM Prison & Probation Service

Hints and Tips for writing behaviours

As part of your application, you will be asked to answer behaviour questions. These are the actions and activities that you have taken in previous roles, that display effective performance. When sifting applications, we're looking for real-life examples that show us you've got the behaviours required for the role. Please find below some hints and tips to help guide you on what to include and how to structure your answers.

Structure

We recommend using the STAR method when writing your example. This stands for:

- **Situation** – what was the situation you found yourself in. Keep this short and to the point
- **Task** – build your answer by explaining the task you had to complete and why you had to complete it. Keep this short and to the point - you only need to provide an overview of the task.
- **Action** – what did you do to resolve the issue or situation? You need to state what **you** did. Try to add in actions that **you** specifically took to complete your task and why **you** took this approach, rather than stating what others did.
- **Result** – briefly explain the results of the actions you took, what impact they had on the situation and how you knew whether they worked.

How to create your answer

Civil Service behaviours are consistent across the civil service and under each behaviour there are details of what the grade or band needs to do to demonstrate that behaviour. Therefore, below you will find guidance on the steps you can take to write your behaviours.

1. The job advert will indicate which grade the role you are applying is. If you head to page iv (the contents page) on the CS Success Profiles this will indicate where you will find the relevant behaviour for the grade you are applying for. This will help you when you think about what you have previously done and how these tasks and actions relate to the behaviour question you are answering.
2. These situations do not necessarily need to come from a work-related situation, therefore also think about ways in which you have demonstrated a behaviour outside of work, for example through volunteering. If you cannot think of an example, you can always ask friends or colleagues for their opinion on what you have done.
3. Once you have an example, map it out into the STAR structure outlined above, focusing your attention on the actions that you took to resolve the situation. It might be helpful to
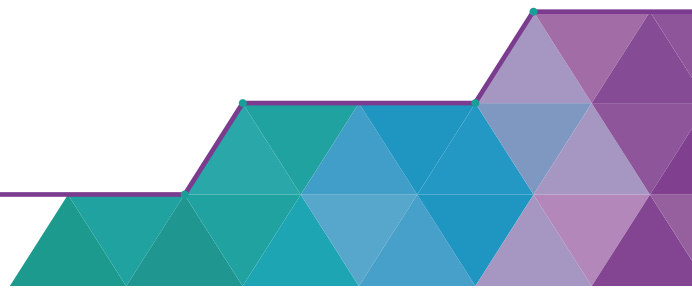
make bullet points of each action that you took and why, to help you ensure that each action is included in your answer.

4. Write a first draft once you have an example in mind and have thought through which actions **you** specifically took and why.

5. Read this through to make sure that you have explained clearly what you did, it would be worth checking your spelling at this point.

6. Compare your answers to the detail provided within each behaviour explanation on [CS Success Profiles](#), you will find relevant behaviour you are applying for by referring to the content pages on iv.

7. You may also find it helpful for someone else to read it over to make sure that it makes sense and you have clearly demonstrated what you did, and why, to resolve the situation **and** what the outcome was.

8. Keep within your word limit as you won't be able to submit anything over this. The goal is to write short but detailed responses.

9. Make sure you have read back over what you've written and that you aren't using acronyms or jargon. Your examples should be easy to understand and the story you are telling should flow due to applying the STAR method.