



Passport to your future

# First Interview



'I don't think this first part of the interview process could have been improved'

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At first we were a large group of people who didn't know each other, we all had to wait at Reception until we were collected. Some of us talked to each other but there was a little of the 'doctor's waiting room' atmosphere. However, once we were collected, the interview was unlike any other I have been to - we were met by friendly staff - given an ice-breaker task to get talking to each other and the staff and we all became relaxed and at ease with each other right away, trying to find the answers to the 'bingo' questions on our sheets - who had children, who came on the train, etc.

There was a lot of laughter and milling about but we all got into the swing of it. We were then split into two groups and given tasks that encouraged us to speak to the other members of our group. Everyone seemed to be at ease with each other. At one point we were paired off and had to talk to each other and then present to the group one at a time.

The high point came when we had to work as a team and build a tower using plastic bendy straws and sellotape - we all had input and listened to each other and eventually a past design student came up with a simple and effective method and we were away, a couple constructing the tower itself while the rest of us

worked on the individual pieces that were being built into it.

It all became very competitive - the other team were working on the floor - the other side of their table, hiding their structure - right - we had to do the same - we couldn't see what they were doing, we didn't want them copying our idea! There was a great deal of laughter - we did notice during all these activities that members of our team would be taken away, brought back and another taken but we were so busy and having so much fun, I for one did not have time to worry about when my own turn would come.

By the time I finally had my interview, with 2 people, which happened to be the last one of the afternoon, I was too full of the fun we had been having, to be nervous! In total contrast, at other interviews I would have a set time for the interview and turn up at that time and be interviewed immediately, nerves did not have time to dissipate and I felt the tension with usually 3 people interviewing spread around the room and bobbing my head between each of them to answer the questions. However friendly they were, it was a strain and I usually found myself forgetting things I had planned to say. With those interviews, that was my only chance to 'sell' myself and I would usually feel

afterwards that I could have done a better job.

For the National Trust interviews not only were we put at ease with the activities but it was not just one 10 minute interview, you're done, bye! We were able to relax, participate in the tasks and be quietly assessed during them as well as having a separate interview. We had much longer, both for us to know what to expect in the job and for the staff to give us every opportunity to promote ourselves. The National Trust staff ensured we were all able to give of our best and this process was to help them select those who would go for a second round of interviews, for which I have been lucky enough to be selected. I feel this has been a much more thorough and fairer process than you are usually allowed when being interviewed, whatever the outcome is to be.

I don't think this first part of the interview process could have been improved, apart from the fact that the space where we had to meet, adjacent to where visitors were having to show passes or buy tickets, was rather small for all of us and there were only a couple of seats so possibly an alternative waiting area would have been better.