

# Helping you to plan your future

Information, advice and guidance for those dealing with redundancy and unemployment



# Can we help you?

The higher futures network has dedicated advisors in the two University's and six of the further education colleges in the Sheffield city region. This brochure explains how to access our services to help you plan your future.

[Searching the hidden job market](#)

[Looking for work in the South Yorkshire area](#)

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## Dealing with redundancy and unemployment

Being made redundant or being at risk of redundancy is usually a very difficult and challenging position to be in. It may seem like there are very few positives, especially if you have been out of work for some time or you have worked for one company for many years and you have never been in this situation before.

The important thing to remember is that all is not lost and you can turn your situation in to a positive. Regard it as an opportunity rather than a threat, especially if you were unhappy in your job, and/or you have some redundancy pay that gives you some flexibility in what you do next. This is a perfect opportunity for change and although change is sometimes very daunting it can also be very exciting and can present new opportunities that you may never have considered before.

## Think outside the box

Is finance the critical factor? Is this an opportunity to work fewer hours or not at all? Could you spend more time on that hobby...or learning something new just for enjoyment?

Whatever your situation, it is important to remember that you are

not alone and there is lots of useful information and support that you can access.

## As a starting point try to visit:

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpandadvice/redundancy>

This is the national Careers Advice website and has a lot of practical information about dealing with redundancy and what to do next. Alternatively, contact the National Advice Line on 0800 100 900.

Try to remember it is the job which has been made redundant not you!

Change can be very unsettling...but it can be for the better.

## Local support to help you plan your future

If you are currently unemployed or at risk of redundancy and you have either qualifications above GCSE/O Level or you have worked in a technical, managerial or supervisory position you can access free independent, impartial one to one support from Higher Futures.

Higher Futures is a partnership of colleges and universities across South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. Advisers are based at various locations. Contact your nearest advisor using the details below. Alternatively email [info@higherfutures.org](mailto:info@higherfutures.org) or visit [www.higherfutures.org/redundancy](http://www.higherfutures.org/redundancy).

Higher Futures can help you with: Enhancing your CV, job search techniques and resources, exploring other careers, study options and with information about taster and short courses.

## Higher Futures contact network

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The following pages offer practical help in taking the next steps in planning your future.

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## Thinking about higher education - why you should!

Higher education isn't just for 18 year olds: 60% of undergraduates (students in higher education) are over 21. It is never too late to consider this option. It can help to boost your employability and demonstrate that you have certain skills valued by employers. It can also help you to make a complete career change or increase your prospects in your current job.

Many jobs require a higher education qualification, for example nursing, teaching and social work, and recent forecasts by the Institute of Employment Research show that by 2017 over half the jobs expected to become vacant will be likely to demand graduates.

You may have left education early for all sorts of reasons and now want to pursue that dream of getting a degree or other qualification after all. It could be the opportunity to pursue that special interest in history, art or politics...whatever!

It can **broaden your horizons** and those of your family, especially if you are the first to take this step. Many mature students talk of increased confidence...a new belief in their ability to succeed when they never thought they could "It wasn't always easy...but I am so proud of my achievement!"

## What are the options?

You will need to consider options which fit in with your life in terms of work, family, caring, financial and any other commitments.

The good news is that there are more options than ever which can accommodate these:

- Courses are available at both universities and further education colleges
- Courses can be full or part time and may be available on a flexible or distance learning basis. About 40% of students study like this

Some courses can be work-based. It may even be worth checking with your employer whether any funding might be available.

Visit the [www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk) website:

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/index.htm)

### What do I need to get on a course?

Higher education welcomes students of all ages. Course admission requirements are often flexible, and for mature students formal entrance requirements may not apply. For many courses a range of qualifications will be considered, such as BTEC National Diploma/Certificate, NVQ3, A levels, Access courses. For some courses GCSE Maths/English will be required.

Entrance requirements depend on what you want to study and where, so you will need to find out more directly from the institution. A lot of information is available online. You may also wish to discuss with the admissions staff. Any Open Days can also be a good way of learning more...and give you the opportunity to get a feel of the place if your course will be based there.

The Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has useful information about admissions policies and courses. Visit [www.ucas.ac.uk/students](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students) or [www.ucas.com/students/wheretostart/maturestudents](http://www.ucas.com/students/wheretostart/maturestudents)

### How much will it cost?

This is complex and will depend on your course. Don't be put off by this - you may be better off than you think once you look into it.

- The main cost for most courses will be tuition fees, which vary and help may be available with these.
- If you need to continue earning while you study, part-time and flexible courses can be combined with work.
- Check whether your employer would be prepared to support you.
- Full time students have access to a range of support.

Some courses may attract bursaries. This is true of many health related courses, for example, nursing, occupational therapy and social work.

For more information about student finance visit

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm)

or [www.ucas.ac.uk/students/studentfinance](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/studentfinance)

And for more information about NHS Bursaries visit

[www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/839.aspx](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/839.aspx)

Make your dreams a reality. Visit

[www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/publications/M/MatureStudent-MakeYourDreams](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/publications/M/MatureStudent-MakeYourDreams)

for comprehensive information about being a mature student.



### The creative job search

Finding suitable jobs to apply for in hard economic times can be challenging. Make sure you are using all possible avenues to maximise your chances of finding that dream opportunity.

#### Advertised vacancies

This is the obvious place to start if you are looking for work. Get into the habit of checking the local and national newspapers, and jobs websites for suitable vacancies. You will find plenty of useful websites in the section on 'looking for work in the South Yorkshire area' (page 11) in this guide. Where possible, sign up to be alerted to any suitable new opportunities as soon as they are listed.

#### Recruitment agencies

Depending on the area of work you are looking for, you may find that there is a specialist agency to help. Specialist consultants should have a good grasp of current issues and industry requirements, and a wide range of contacts. Skilled agents match candidates with opportunities in new roles or with employers you might not find yourself. There are reputable recruitment agencies out there, but make sure you stay in control of the process, be clear about what happens to your details, and do not join any agency that requires you to pay a fee. Also, do remember that agencies' main clients are employers, not candidates, so do not expect them to do all of the research and work on your behalf.

#### Networking

Effective networking is all about maximising your circle of contacts. Make sure everyone you know is aware that you are looking for work, the sorts of opportunity you are seeking and the skills you have to offer. A good starting point for networking is making sure you have an up to date CV and a positive outlook. Use your existing networks, former colleagues or employers might know you well and

hear about opportunities you could be suitable for. Networking needn't be scary – start with friends, families and neighbours, but maximise your chances by building new networks too. You could join an evening class or volunteer somewhere to gain relevant experience and skills.

#### Professional, Trade and Industry Associations

If you are from an industry that has a related trade or professional association, get in touch with them to see if they can offer you any assistance. Some may have specialised careers advice available to their members. Alternatively, you could approach the relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC) for your sector to see if they have ideas about how to extend your networks and aid your job search. SSCs vary in size, but some, not all, will provide initial information advice and guidance on careers related issues. Find your SSC at [www.sscalliance.org/SSCs/LinkstoSSCs.aspx](http://www.sscalliance.org/SSCs/LinkstoSSCs.aspx)

#### Making speculative applications

Take time to identify any local organisations that could potentially be recruiting either now or in the future for people with your skills. Use the Yellow Pages, trade association directories and the press to identify possible companies. For a speculative approach to be effective it is really important that you have done your research, send your CV with a persuasive and well-informed covering letter. Make your approach as targeted and personal as possible. For example, phone up and get the name of someone to write to, and use your covering letter to explain why you are particularly interested in that organisation. This approach can work in sectors which don't typically advertise vacancies, for example media and publishing. Users of this strategy need to be able to take rejection, but where it does work, the rewards are high.

#### Get your foot in the door through work shadowing or volunteering

Another way to catch opportunities before they go public is by making sure organisations know about you and your skills. A spin off tactic to the speculative application is to send a CV and covering letter to places you'd ideally like to work for or with in the future, and ask whether you can spend a day with them work shadowing, or a longer spell volunteering for a particular project. This will not only build your skills and demonstrate your interest in their sector; but also extend your networks. If you make a good impression, you may find they let you know in advance of future openings, and your insight into their organisation is likely to make your job applications more informed, focused and therefore effective.

## How talented are you?

Potential employers are interested in what skills you have to offer their organisations. Many people underestimate just how many skills they have, so if you are thinking of applying for opportunities, time spent identifying your key skills - and thinking of examples of how you can demonstrate them, is time well spent. Knowing your skills will not only make you more confident, but will help you market yourself more effectively both on paper (CVs and Application Forms) and in job interviews. So how do you start recognising your own talents?

### What skills do employers want?

One way to start is to think about what skills employers are interested in. You can often tell this from the language used in job advertisements – look out for phrases such as ‘team player’ or ‘good communicator’. Here are some of the skills that are commonly required:

- Team work
- Leadership
- Oral Communication
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Computer Skills
- Customer Care
- Commercial Awareness
- Time Management
- Creative thinking
- Written Communication
- Numeracy
- Project Management
- Negotiation
- Enthusiasm for learning
- Plus plenty more....

### What skills do I have? A DIY skills audit.

Different occupations and organisations will require different things, so don't expect to be able to prove you have every skill on the list above! A good way to start your DIY skills audit is by making a grid that brings together your experiences and the skills employers want. Then think of examples you could use for each section.

Skills can come from anywhere – hobbies, home life, study work – now is not the time to be modest about your achievements! Make a list all the things in life you've been involved in, think particularly about activities you've really enjoyed doing or where you feel you've achieved something. Put these examples as headings across the top of a grid. When you are thinking about your work, you might want to have different columns for different aspects of your role. Now, along the side of your table make a list of all the skills employers say they want. Next, where the two heading cross, write a brief paragraph which illustrates how you've used the relevant skill in that particular context. Your grid will be personal to you, but might look like this:

Your activities here → List skills here ↓	Most recent job	Voluntary work	Part time study	Home life responsibilities	Part-time work	Activity or interest 1	Activity or interest 2
Team working							
Communication							
Customer service							
Lots more!!!!							

In each box in the grid, where you can, give an example of how you demonstrated the particular skill in the particular role. If you have some gaps don't worry – we can't all do everything! But this exercise should make you more aware of where your strengths are. If you are worried about some gaps in your skills profile, then you might think about getting some training or voluntary experience to help fill them for next time.

Once you've completed your skills audit, you should start to feel a lot more confident about what you have to offer. If you want help with this, you might like to try the windmills interactive website at:

[www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/section\\_1/subject\\_ion\\_2/page1.html](http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/section_1/subject_ion_2/page1.html)

Remember you ARE talented - get used to talking positively about all the things you can do!

## Looking good on paper - your CV

### What is a CV?

Literally CV stands for 'Curriculum Vitae' and that means 'record of life'. In practice a CV is a marketing document that outlines an individual's relevant work history, experience and qualifications. A CV is one of the best ways to sell yourself on paper, but there is no such thing as a perfect CV. There are many different ways to present yourself; the important thing is to choose a style that works for you.

### When to use a CV

You might need a CV for a range of purposes. Even if you aren't sure if you will need a CV it can still be helpful to spend time writing one. The process of structuring your CV will encourage you to reflect on the skills and experiences you have to offer in language that employers can relate to. It will also mean that when a suitable opportunity does come up, you can be much quicker in responding ahead of a deadline. Writing a CV will take longer than you think, but the time spent getting it right is a good investment in your future!

### Different styles of CV

There are lots of different ways of writing your CV. The most common styles you will encounter are likely to be a chronological CV – which basically structures all your experiences in date order, or skills based, which focuses on what you offer rather than when you did it. In practice, you need to work out a style that is effective for you. Just be aware that this is quite a personal judgement so you might want to experiment with different styles. It is usual for a CV to be no more than 2 pages long, it should be accompanied by a covering letter, avoid 'fussy' font styles and make sure it is tailored to the job on offer.

### Some possible headings

The sequence of headings will vary according to the CV style you adopt, and the stage you are at in your career. For example a recent school or college leaver would normally put their educational details first; however someone with work experience would probably start by emphasising their recent career history. Make sure you keep sections together, i.e. avoid having any page breaks mid paragraph, juggle your headings if necessary to improve the layout.

**Personal details:** name, postal and email addresses and telephone numbers. It is not necessary to include date of birth, marital status, nationality, gender or a photograph. Most CVs start with a name in bold font at the top of the document. Do not begin with the words 'Curriculum Vitae' as that would be a very old-fashioned approach.

**Personal Profile:** (optional) a three line snapshot of your skills and experiences that summarises what you offer and

what you are seeking. This is the hardest part of your CV to write, but if you do it well, it will encourage the reader to read on!

**Education and Training:** include academic qualifications and professional training – use reverse chronological order, i.e. put most recent qualifications first.

**Key Skills:** think about those skills that are particularly important for the opportunity you are applying to. Sometimes technical skills will be most important (e.g. knowledge of a particular IT package) in other cases more general transferable skills (e.g. communication skills) will be more important. Whatever skills you list, should be evidenced with examples.

**Career History:** include job titles, employer and dates of employment. For each post, think about the roles in terms of responsibilities, achievements and skills gained. Again, use reverse chronological order, i.e. put your most recent experience first within any one section.

**Current post:** this doesn't always require a separate heading, but it can be useful if you wish to emphasise your current situation for some reason.

**Work experience:** this heading might be more appropriate for those with limited career history

**Relevant experience:** use this heading to bring together experience from different areas, paid and unpaid where you are keen to emphasise skills gained in non work related settings. This might be important if you are considering a career change when e.g. volunteering or work shadowing activities are more relevant to your target job than you prior salaried employment

**Activities and interests:** any hobbies or leisure activities that might make you stand out from other applicants

**Voluntary work:** again this might highlight another aspect of your skills that is not necessarily obvious from your employment history

**Plus any heading that works for you:** your CV should reflect you – if you have a key achievement, or a career motivation/ objective that you want to communicate, include those headings too

**References:** always conclude your CV with 'references available on request' and make sure you have approached your referees and that they are happy to do this for you.

### Writing your own CV

Everyone finds writing their CV challenging! The important thing is to start somewhere:

1. Think about what your target employer might be looking for – they are interested in what you offer, not what you want
2. Identify what you have to offer that is relevant to the opportunity you are seeking



3. Choose a suitable structure for you CV (skills based, chronological)
4. Draft a CV and seek feedback – use the 'rate your CV check list below'
5. Re-write your CV taking account of any constructive criticisms
6. Make sure you write a targeted covering letter to accompany your CV

#### Rate your own CV:

It is useful to look at your CV with a critical eye – after all this is what a potential employer will do. Ask yourself these questions to rate your own CV – or even better, get a friend to do it for you – does your CV make the grade?

- Does your CV have an immediate, positive visual impact as a professional document?
- Does the CV have a logical structure and easy to navigate headings?
- Is the language clear and free from spelling and grammatical errors?
- Is it clearly laid out and easy to read?
- Is it in reverse chronological order where appropriate? (Most recent information first)
- Is it relevant to the particular job and company you are approaching?
- Does it emphasise what you offer the employer with examples to demonstrate your key points?
- Does it highlight relevant skill, experience and qualifications?
- Does it provide evidence of your skills?
- Does it stress your achievements?

- Is it easy to extract basic factual information such as contact details?
- Is it a good example of written communication skills?
- Does the CV provide an insight into your personality?
- Is the CV unique to you, or could it belong to anyone with a similar work history? (it should be unique)
- Is the CV an appropriate length?
- Is your CV accurate and up to date?
- Are you happy that the CV accurately reflects you?

If you can say 'yes' to all of the above, then well done – now make sure you produce a strong covering letter to ensure your CV gets read!

#### Further sources help:

There are lots of sources of CV advice on the internet, but do be cautious about following any pro-forma too closely. A CV is a personal document, and should be unique to you. If you are eligible, try to get face to face feedback on your CV from the local careers service. Alternatively you could try the following websites:

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/writingcv>

[www.getconnectedsheffield.com/jobs-careers/interview-cv-tips](http://www.getconnectedsheffield.com/jobs-careers/interview-cv-tips)

[www.shf.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/cvs.html](http://www.shf.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/cvs.html)

#### Remember:

Your CV is work in progress! Make sure it is adapted for different opportunities and keep it up to date!

## Application forms - making the best of them

### When to use them

Many job adverts will ask you to fill in an application form. Employers often prefer these to CVs because they allow them to compare candidates more easily and fairly as details are provided in the same format by everyone. You may need to contact the employer to get a copy of the application form, but some employers will expect you to download one from their website, or even to complete your application online. NEVER be tempted to just send your CV instead, it is very likely that it will end up in the bin!

### Ten top tips for completing application forms

1. Check the closing date for the application, if you send it in too late, it won't be considered.
2. Always read any instructions for filling in the application form and make sure you follow them! For example, they might ask you to use CAPITALS, or complete the form in black ink only (this makes photocopying easier). Some will ask you to list details in chronological order (date order) some in reverse chronological order (most recent education and or employment first).
3. Before you begin to complete the application form do your research! Make sure you have read and reread the job advert, the job and person specification for the post. You might also take time looking at the company's website to help you to understand what the employer is looking for.
4. Analyse each question – what is it designed to reveal about you, which parts of the job and person specification does it relate to? Then take time to identify which skills and experiences you have which are most relevant to the post to which you are applying.
5. Answer all the questions as positively as you can, and make sure you fill in all the boxes. A blank space on an application form might be a missed opportunity to sell yourself. If a question is really not relevant put 'not applicable' or 'n/a' so it is clear you haven't missed it out by accident
6. If there are obvious gaps in your employment history, say what you were doing in that time in a positive way e.g. bringing up children/ caring responsibilities, working as a volunteer, pursuing a leisure interest.
7. Include skills and experiences developed outside work where appropriate.
8. Spell the name of the company correctly - and check the spelling and grammar throughout the document – don't rely on 'spell-check' it might catch you out!
9. Always do a rough version of your application form first, and ideally get a friend, colleague or careers

adviser to read it through for you and give you feedback before you sent it off.

10. Always keep a copy of your application; you will need it to refer back to if you are called for interview.

### Possible Questions and how to approach them

It is important that you ensure you have read and understood each question on any application form correctly. Try to resist the temptation to cut and paste answers from one application form into another. You may inadvertently mention the wrong employer, or trot out your most commonly used examples of a particular skill. Questions might sound similar but be looking for evidence of different qualities or experience. For example a question such as 'tell me about your experiences of working as part of a team' will expect a quite different response than one phrased as 'give me an example of when you have had to lead a team to meet a shared objective'. At first glance they are both asking about team work, but one has an emphasis on cooperation alongside others, the other is looking at leadership skills.

**Personal details:** application forms will usually start by asking you for various personal details such as contact information. It is very important you complete all sections accurately.

**Education and Training:** follow any instructions on the application form, but it is likely you will be asked to use reverse chronological order i.e. put your most recent qualifications first, when detailing your experiences. Depending on the headings used in the application form you may wish to include academic and professional qualifications under this heading. It is also acceptable to include relevant on the job training even if it does not lead to a particular qualification.

**Membership of professional bodies:** some professions will have associated organisations or professional bodies to represent them. If this applies to you then you will probably be aware of those relevant to you. If you are a member state this, along with the type of membership you hold. If you don't currently belong to any association, but there is one relevant to your field consider joining. If you can't think of any just put 'not applicable'.

**Career History or Work Experience:** follow any instructions about how much detail to include. However, if you have an opportunity to outline your responsibilities and achievements make sure you do so! Just listing a job title is a missed opportunity to sell what you can offer. If your job did not have an actual job title, it is acceptable to create one, as long as it accurately reflects your role in the organisation.

**Reason for leaving:** sometimes employers will ask you



why you left each job you have held. Always try to complete this as positively as possible; this is not the time to express grievances about past employers! Suitable responses might be: 'end of fixed term contract/ maternity leave'; 'career progression'; 'redundancy' or 'to take up educational opportunity'.

**Current post:** this isn't always given a separate heading, but where it is, make sure you emphasise your responsibilities, skills and achievements in the most relevant way you can. If you are not currently working, you can still complete this section outlining how you are spending your time. Be positive!

**The 'tricky' questions:** sometimes application forms will ask you to give examples of how you have demonstrated a particular skill. These questions are often 'competency based' which basically means they ask the applicant to provide detailed answers based on personal experience to demonstrate a particular skill required for a job. The employer is looking for a clear and succinct response. For questions of this type you should try to briefly outline the situation or context in which you demonstrated the skill being asked about; explain what you did in terms of the skills and processes that you used in some detail then finally describe a positive outcome or personal learning point linking it to the post to which you are applying. Be as specific as possible, quantify results if you can.

**Personal Statement:** this is the most important part of the application form. It is an opportunity for you to demonstrate how your skills, experiences and interest provide evidence of not only your ability to do the post on offer, but your enthusiasm for doing so. Your personal statement should relate directly to the specifications of the job or course you are applying for. It is important that you address all the points in the job specification in the order in which they appear. It might help if you imagine this being used as a checklist by the person short-listing.

**Outside interests and activities:** employers don't always ask you about outside activities, but when they do it is not only for clues about your personality (are you involved in team activities, or are most of your interests more solitary) but also because this might provide additional illustrations of skills and qualities needed for the job. The trick here is not just to list any interests or hobbies, but to identify how they relate to the job on offer through the development of transferable skills. For example, if you are training for a half-marathon that suggests you are very goal orientated with an ability to plan ahead.

**References:** if an application form asks for referees, make sure you choose people who are appropriate. Ideally they should be able to comment positively on your work related skills and qualities, and you must ask their permission before giving their contact details.

#### Further sources help:

There are lots of sources of advice about completing application forms on the internet. Visit <http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/appforms/> for general guidelines.

#### Remember:

Completing an application form well can be time consuming and challenging. But think of the time spent as a good investment in your career. If you don't look good enough on paper you won't get to shine at interview!

## Covering letters - a template to guide you

If you are contacting employers, then whether you are sending a CV or an Application Form, you will need to include a covering letter as well. This covering letter acts as the advertising campaign for your product (you) and should draw the reader's attention to the good match between what you have to offer and what they need. This is partly done through the evidence you have provided in your CV but the letter brings all the key elements together and explains why you are interested in the job and the organisation

Use this guide to identify the key points you want to cover in each section; you may wish to vary the order of the three 'Why?' paragraphs - then use that as the basis for each separate paragraph in your letter (allow about one side of A4).

**Introduction:** Why are you writing? Is it in response to an advertised vacancy (in which case give details) or as a speculative enquiry? With speculative enquiries be clear about the type of work or opportunity you are asking for - the 'I'll do anything' approach is usually too vague to be successful.

**Why you?** Referring to the evidence in your CV, state clearly how you match what the employer is asking for or, with a speculative application, what you would expect them to be looking for.

**Why this job/opportunity?** Describe what motivates you and attracts you about this job - show that you have a realistic understanding of the work and can draw parallels with experiences you have already - even if they might be in different settings (such as volunteering as well as any employment history)

**Why them?** Say why this organisation appeals to you. Draw on any research you have done; perhaps from their website, recruitment brochure, contact at careers events

or any work experience. Describe the research you have done to show your commitment and enthusiasm, but don't waffle or make it up!

**Conclusion:** Round off in a positive way. If appropriate indicate when you are/are not available for interview. If this is a speculative application sent through the post, you should include a stamped, self-addressed envelope (SAE) for their reply.

For more information and advice about covering letters see:

[http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/writetcv/covering\\_letters.htm](http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/writetcv/covering_letters.htm)

[www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Applications\\_CVs\\_and\\_interviews/CVs\\_and\\_covering\\_letters/Covering\\_letters/p!ejFdaLL](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Applications_CVs_and_interviews/CVs_and_covering_letters/Covering_letters/p!ejFdaLL)

#### Top tips for interviews

First of all, take confidence from the fact that you have been invited for interview. It means the prospective employers are interested in your application and want the opportunity to find out more about you.

Here are some brief tips, but use the resources listed below for further help.

#### Preparing for interview - the key to success

Know where you are going and how long it takes to get there!

Wear something you feel comfortable in. Make sure it is smart and appropriate.

Re-visit your application form to remind yourself of what you said. It will help prepare you for any specific questions about your application and work history.

Research the employer as much as you can...a simple search on the website or in a local library or careers resource centre. You can impress with your knowledge.





Find out what you can about the style of interview. This can help avoid any unpleasant surprises on the day! There are many different types and format. You can find out more by using the resources listed below. Here are just a few examples:

**Face-to-face:** could be with maybe one or two interviewers

**Panel interviews:** these involve several people with one person co-ordinating the questions

**Group interviews:** several candidates may be together at the same time and asked questions in turn or enter a group discussion

**Competency - based:** structured to reflect the particular competencies/skills/qualities detailed in the job advert or specification

**Technical:** if you have applied for a job which requires technical knowledge, you will probably be asked to display your technical knowledge of a certain process or skill

If you are doing a presentation, check that any resources you need are available.

#### At the interview

- Take some deep breaths before you go in. It may help to relax you.
- Remember to turn off your mobile!
- Be aware of body language - keep good eye contact, think about posture, and try to smile from time to time if appropriate!
- Make sure you can convincingly demonstrate why you

want the job. Seems obvious, but if you prepare a good answer to this, it helps get the interview off to a good start.

- Listen carefully to the question and take your time to pause and think before answering - try not to be put off by tricky questions. If you don't understand anything, ask the interviewer to explain.
- Be positive and enthusiastic. Do not criticise former colleagues or employers.
- Do not argue with the interviewer.
- Keep your answers focussed on what you can do for the employer, rather than on what they can do for you.
- If given the opportunity to ask a question you could use it to check out anything more about the organisation or role that has not been covered.
- Check out what happens next, and what the opportunities for feedback might be.

#### More information

National on-line Careers Advice Resource  
<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/intshort/>

or telephone 08080 100 333

Prospects (a web resource for graduates and postgraduates  
<http://prospects.ac.uk>

## Looking for work in the South Yorkshire area

### Online vacancy sources

Directgov  
<http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk>  
 vacancy site with a location search

Graduates Yorkshire  
[www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk)  
 portal for regional employment

Prospects  
[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

Sheffield City Council  
[www.sheffield.gov.uk/whats-new/job-vacancies](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/whats-new/job-vacancies)

Sheffield International Venues  
[www.sivltd.com/jobs/index.php](http://www.sivltd.com/jobs/index.php)  
 run 13 venues in Sheffield including Arena, City Hall, Ponds Forge, Don Valley Stadium

Sheffield Children First  
[www.sheffield.children-first.co.uk](http://www.sheffield.children-first.co.uk)  
 useful for work with children, including nursery nurse, after school clubs, nannies, etc

Recruitment & Employment Confederation  
[www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com)  
 searchable database of recruitment agencies by location and industry type

My Sheffield Jobs  
[www.mysheffieldjobs.co.uk](http://www.mysheffieldjobs.co.uk)  
 job search site for Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley with vacancies across various job sectors

Local authority vacancies  
[www.lgjobs.com](http://www.lgjobs.com)  
 national site

Fish4jobs  
[www.fish4.co.uk/iad/jobs](http://www.fish4.co.uk/iad/jobs)  
 vacancy site with a location search

Monster  
[www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk)  
 vacancy site with a location search

Total jobs  
[www.totaljobs.com](http://www.totaljobs.com)  
 vacancy site with a location search

### Local newspapers

Sheffield Star on Thursday (Wed for business information)

Yorkshire Post on Thursday (bias to North/West Yorkshire)

Derbyshire Times on Friday (Chesterfield, NE Derbyshire, Peak District)

Barnsley Chronicle on Friday  
[www.barnsley-chronicle.co.uk](http://www.barnsley-chronicle.co.uk)

Rotherham Advertiser on Friday  
[www.rotherhamadvertiser.com](http://www.rotherhamadvertiser.com)

Yorkshire Jobs Today on Saturday  
[www.yorkshirejobstoday.co.uk](http://www.yorkshirejobstoday.co.uk)  
 repeats vacancies from daily papers, including Sheffield Star, Yorkshire Post, Derbyshire Times  
 Fish 4 Jobs Yorkshire on Saturday  
[www.fish4.co.uk/jobs/location/Yorkshire.html](http://www.fish4.co.uk/jobs/location/Yorkshire.html)  
 repeats vacancies from daily papers with bias to North/West Yorkshire, but has Sheffield jobs section

### Online company information

Sheffield Science & Technology Parks  
[www.shefftechparks.com](http://www.shefftechparks.com)  
 information on resident companies

Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
[www.scci.org.uk](http://www.scci.org.uk)  
 recruitment section

Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce  
[www.brchamber.co.uk](http://www.brchamber.co.uk)  
 directory of member firms

Doncaster Chamber of Commerce  
[www.doncaster-chamber.co.uk](http://www.doncaster-chamber.co.uk)  
 directory of member firms

### Other sources of company information

South Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce Directory - joint publication of the four Chambers of Commerce in the county, providing basic information on hundreds of local companies, indexed by product/service.

Dun & Bradstreet Business Register - provides only basic information but aims to be comprehensive; covers businesses of all sizes from PLCs to self-employed individuals.

Key British Enterprises - directory of the 50,000 leading businesses in the UK. Volume 4 lists companies by town/county. Vols 1-3 provide further information on individual companies.

# For individual advice contact a Higher Futures Adviser

## Other useful information sources

The internet is a potentially fantastic resource for careers related information advice and guidance. Whether you are dealing with redundancy; considering a career change; looking for job vacancies or seeking help with job applications and interview techniques the web is an obvious place to start. However, sometimes the sheer volume of information 'out there' can be overwhelming. To get you started, here are some ideas for websites that might help you if you are reviewing your career options for the future.

### Taking Stock of where you are now

Windmills interactive:

[www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/](http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/)

Windmills Interactive is designed to help you to; take a fresh look at your life; picture the kind of life you want and then show you how you can achieve it.

Career Wheel:

<http://media.monster.com/uk/en/careerwheel/careerwheel.pdf>

Taken from the [www.monster.co.uk/](http://www.monster.co.uk/) website, this career wheel encourages you to think about your current career situation objectively, to identify what might be important to you in the future

Dream bigger Dreams

[www.shef.ac.uk/dream/dreams.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/dream/dreams.html)

A website for people considering a career change, which brings together a range of potentially useful web-based resources

### Researching what different jobs are like

Find out more about over 420 graduate occupations on the Prospects website at:

[www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Explore\\_types\\_of\\_jobs/plmX](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Explore_types_of_jobs/plmX)

For an even wider range of areas of work, try the Jobs4U career database at:

<http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/>

In addition there are job profiles for over 700 occupations on the [direct.gov.uk](http://direct.gov.uk) website at:

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/jobprofiles>

### If you are a graduate

Your starting point for resource materials on graduate careers, including job vacancies and how to access them see:

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

### General Redundancy, Job search and self-employment help

Find your way back to work:

<http://backtowork.direct.gov.uk/index.html>

Dealing with redundancy:

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpandadvice/redundancy>

CV writing tips:

<https://www.cvbuilder-advice-resources.co.uk>

Redundancy – next steps:

[www.learnirect.co.uk/improve-your-job-prospects/redundancy](http://www.learnirect.co.uk/improve-your-job-prospects/redundancy)

Self-employment:

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

### Interested in Voluntary work?

Could volunteering help you as well as helping others by developing new skills, experiences and networks, increasing / restoring your confidence, or maybe keeping you in a work routine?

Start by contacting Voluntary Action groups

<http://www.varotherham.org.uk/>

<http://www.vas.org.uk/>  
(Sheffield)



<http://www.vabarnsley.org.uk/>

<http://www.doncastercvs.org.uk/>

and visit

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/volunteering>

### Books

Have a look at one or both of these two books. Try your local library or go on line to find stockists

'What Color is Your Parachute' by Richard Bolles

'A Practical Manual for Job Hunters and Career Changers'

'Build your own Rainbow' by Hopson and Scally

'A workbook for Career and Life Change'

These tackle the issues of career/ life management in a very 'user friendly' way

### If you are finding it difficult to cope

Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau for practical help

Talk to your doctor

Consider Counselling visit

[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

to find an accredited counsellor/therapist near you

Relate can offer counselling support to couples and families

[www.relate.org.uk/education-and-learning/index.html](http://www.relate.org.uk/education-and-learning/index.html)

## Higher Futures contact network

### Barnsley College

Dan Vodden  
T: 01226 216 166  
E: [employer@barnsley.ac.uk](mailto:employer@barnsley.ac.uk)

### Chesterfield College

Lynn Marson  
T: 01246 500 562  
E: [higheradvice@chesterfield.ac.uk](mailto:higheradvice@chesterfield.ac.uk)

### Dearne Valley College

Andy Parkes  
T: 01709 513 147  
E: [headvice@dearne-coll.ac.uk](mailto:headvice@dearne-coll.ac.uk)

### Northern College

Beth Hutchinson  
T: 01226 776 000  
E: [b.hutchinson@northern.ac.uk](mailto:b.hutchinson@northern.ac.uk)

### Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

Daniel Cornwell/ Phil Roberts  
T: 01709 722 723/747  
E: [ecif@rotherham.ac.uk](mailto:ecif@rotherham.ac.uk)

### The Sheffield College

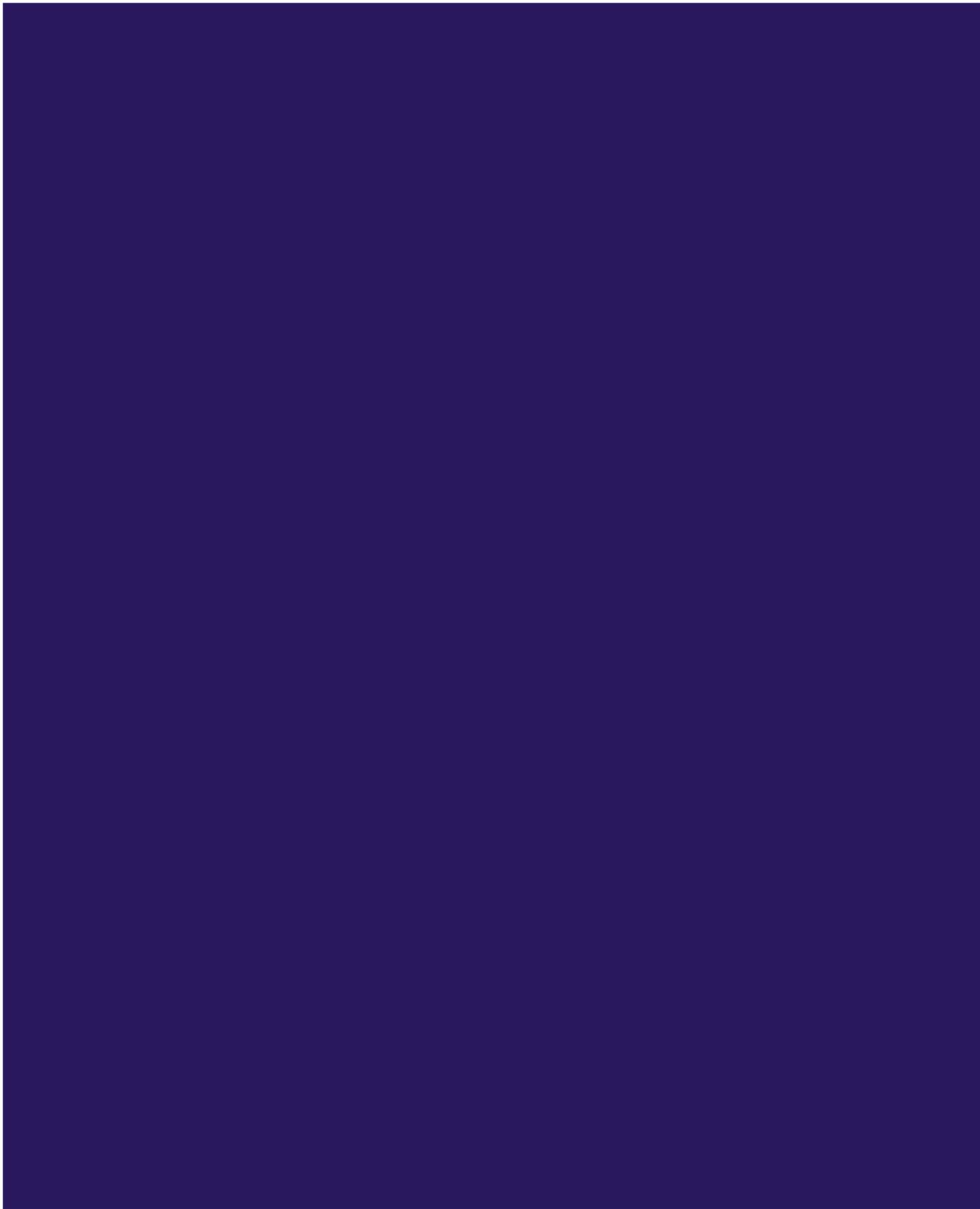
Catherine Ross  
T: 0114 260 2448  
E: [ecif@sheffcol.ac.uk](mailto:ecif@sheffcol.ac.uk)

### Sheffield Hallam University

Sue Fellowes  
T: 0114 225 5758/07826 533 244  
E: [sue.fellowes@shu.ac.uk](mailto:sue.fellowes@shu.ac.uk)

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Sheffield  
Hallam University  
SHARPENS YOUR THINKING



DVC  
Deane Valley  
College

ROTHERHAM  
COLLEGE  
OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY



BARNSELY  
College

The Sheffield  
College