

ASSESSMENT and DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are assessment and development centres?

An assessment or development centre is a process not a place. They are designed to provide a fair and objective measurement of job related skills, behaviours and preferred work styles. They are a much more accurate way of predicting future work performance than traditional methods such as interviews.

They are used for a number of purposes:

- Recruitment
- Diagnosis of training and development needs
- Organisational planning and capacity building
- Team building
- Career counselling or coaching

What sort of tests are carried out in assessment and development centres?

An assessment or development centre measures abilities/competencies using a variety of tools such as aptitude tests, work simulation exercises, occupational personality questionnaires. The particular tests or exercises used are geared towards measuring a particular competency and are tailored to different levels and types of job. Each competency is measured two or three times using different methods. This ensures that candidates get more than one chance to demonstrate a particular competency. It also means that the evidence collected is more comprehensive and substantial than that gathered through other methods such as interviews. This provides a fairer and stronger indicator of the individual's future performance.

Prior to coming to a centre information on the exercises to be undertaken and practice leaflets for aptitude tests are sent out.

What impact do the results of the assessment centre have on the interview?

In a recruitment situation the interview panel are given the results of the assessment prior to the interview; this allows them to follow up on particular areas during the interview. The information from the assessment is used in conjunction with information from the interview to enable the panel to come to a decision. The panel make the final decision on whom they will recruit – the assessment centre gives them additional information to use. Used properly the assessment centre increases the focus and meaningfulness of the interview. A typical interview has a 15% chance of getting the right person into post, using an assessment centre increases this to 65%.

Who carries out the assessments?

The assessors are either Occupational/Business Psychologists or HR professionals who have been trained and accredited to the British Psychological Society standards and who have considerable experience and expertise in occupational assessments. They are governed by the BPS guidelines on testing. Only assessors who have the relevant level of training can register with test publishers and use tests. In some cases – such as observing group exercises, line managers may take part but they too will have undergone training and supervision to ensure they comply with best practice.

What posts are subject to assessment centres?

All Agenda for Change posts that are fall within the normal recruitment process will be subject to assessments. This means permanent and fixed-term contracts, bank staff and applies to both internal and external candidates for jobs.

Development centres may be used as part of career progression schemes or where there may be new developments or new ways of working.

What are the benefits to individuals going through assessment and development centres?

The benefits to the individual are that they have the chance to demonstrate their skills; not everyone is good at talking about their abilities. It provides an opportunity for the individual to demonstrate the wide range of abilities they bring to a work situation. They also receive comprehensive feedback on the assessment or development centre; this is usually in the form of a report with an opportunity for a feedback discussion. Individuals can use the assessment results as a tool for their personal development and within the Trust it forms part of the Personal Development Plan. People who have been through assessment and development centres say that they find them very useful; it gives them a chance to demonstrate their skills and provides them with in-depth feedback that they do not receive anywhere else, highlighting both their strengths and areas for development.

Who develops the tests?

The tests are developed by psychologists who undertake extensive work to ensure that they are valid and reliable; the British Psychological Society registers tests using the European Federation of Psychologists Associations Review model. It has a Steering Committee on Test Standards which reviews and regulates the design and development of tests and their use. In addition to this test producers work with the Equalities Commission.

Disabilities

Candidates who have a disability that they feel may affect their performance in an assessment or development centre should please contact us as soon as possible. Generally we are able to make adjustments.

Confidentiality

All results from an assessment or development centre are confidential and are only passed to the recruitment panel, or in the case of development, to the line manager of the individual.

Statistical data is collected from individuals going through the process but this is anonymous.