



Wokingham Borough Council Assistant Director HR and OD Assessment Overview

Virtual Assessment Centre

As a national recruitment organisation, Solace have been delivering Assessment Centres for clients up and down the country for many years. Because we work with local authorities in some remote places, we had already been delivering virtual assessments pre-Covid-19. We have therefore been able to easily adapt our assessment services for a Covid-secure, virtual world. At a time where local lockdowns could become a factor, this is critical in terms of forward planning. In the spirit of learning, we have been sharing our innovations and experiences with HR colleagues within the Local Government sector throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our experience is that an assessment centre that includes a combination of management exercises, partner and stakeholder events and appropriate one-to-one discussions will give the best results and complement the information gained from more traditional interviews and presentations. However, the decision as to which elements to include in the assessment centre is one for discussion with you. We do not believe there is one preferred model that fits all cases: our approach is to agree a bespoke programme with you that meets your requirements and in which you have the degree of involvement you wish.

Our assessment team is led by our Chartered Occupational Psychologist, Victoria Wood-Williams, she will work with you to agree a bespoke design to assess candidates 'fit'.

Victoria will work closely with you to ensure a bespoke approach to assessment.

Interview with Susan Parsonage and other members of CLT (30 minutes per candidate)

For senior appointments such as this which has a strong focus on collaboration, we would generally recommend a form of stakeholder engagement with those the postholder would work closely with, in this case, the CLT.

- They are a very effective method of testing the credibility of candidates;
- They provide the opportunity to engage others in the recruitment process;
- They offer candidates a chance to sample the wider landscape and gather intelligence that can help inform their final interview performance

Panels do not carry any 'voting power' in terms of the final appointment decision, but their views are fed into the Appointment Panel's deliberations and potentially provide further areas of questioning for the Member Appointments Panel.

When considering the format of the sessions, as a starting point, you may wish to consider an icebreaker presentation which leads into a discussion. Typically, candidates are given the topic in advance and asked to prepare an oral briefing (no PowerPoints or visual aids) for up to 5 minutes on the topic. The panel can then agree follow up questions

Written Exercise (1hr 30 minutes)

Candidates would be presented with information relating to a fictitious local authority. The information would contain details relating to the objectives they were set coming into post coupled with the results of a staff survey, employee competency audit, workforce development plans and information around culture, engagement, and communication. Having analysed the information, they would be asked to prepare a report identifying the key issues and associated actions they would take.

Interactive Exercise (45 minutes)

This is a scenario exercise that is designed to simulate 'real life'. Candidates are given background information and after a short time to prepare, they are required to conduct a meeting with an individual to address issues

relating to people and performance management, motivating others to get on board with new initiatives, galvanizing support for managing and delivering transformational change.

Psychometric Assessment

We propose the candidates complete **2** online psychometric assessments prior and as part of the assessment activities a qualified Solace in Business assessor validates their responses to each and provides candidate feedback. Each psychometric assessment will take 45 minutes to complete.

The **WAVE Professional Styles** questionnaire invites candidates to describe their behaviour, preferences, and attitudes, in relation to different aspects of their working life, by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with a number of statements.

The **Leadership Judgement Indicator** provides valuable insight into the relative leadership strengths of participants and provides useful information to assist with ongoing development. The questionnaire consists of 16 specially crafted workplace scenarios, all written against a set of leadership standards. The process assesses how well a manager can perceive the key determiners of when to be directive, consultative, consensual or delegative. Equipped with these tools, we can create a profile of whether managers will, for example, engage and involve staff and stakeholders, take ownership of difficult decisions and understand when the specific decision they are faced with requires them to adopt a particular leadership style. The advantage of the measurement approach used by LJ is that the respondent is being asked to actually demonstrate their level of leadership wisdom through the questionnaire. The responses are scored for correctness in terms of achieving desirable business outcomes in specific situations.

Final Report

We will work with you to agree what criteria you would like the candidates to be assessed against. This will be formatted into a readable report with scores against each competency with bullet points as to suggested areas to probe.

Underpinning the principles of assessment centre methodology are to allow for a candidate to be observed multiple times by multiple assessors through the medium of multiple exercises. Best practice suggests that every competence should be assessed at least twice.

As qualified and experienced assessors, we recognise the importance of having to manage subjectivity and maintain objectivity. All of our assessors follow the ORCE technique (Observe, Record, Classify & Evaluate). This process is central to any assessment exercise and emphasises the sequence in which an assessor should attempt to assess the behaviour of a candidate against any competency.

Having classified the evidence gathered we would then seek to evaluate the behaviour which involves quantitative and qualitative analysis. In line with best practice, we typically use we will be using the following Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale which requires assessors to allocate a numerical rating against the competency.

1	2	3	4	5
Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Exceeded Requirements	Outstanding
Demonstrated significant negative indicators with little, if any	Demonstrated more negative than positive behaviours. Needs some	Demonstrated mostly positive but also indicated some	Acceptable showing more strength than development areas.	All positive behaviours, no negative evidence. Very strong examples

positive behaviour related to the competency. Strong development needed

personal development concentrating on strengthening desired behaviours for this role

areas for development

Development may be desirable but not essential



By rating candidates in this way, we are able to provide a clear method of comparing and contrasting individuals as well as identifying a benchmark.

As the process is being overseen by a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, you have our re-assurance that best practice guidelines in recruitment and selection methodology as set out by the Health Professionals Council will be adhered to. In addition, we promote quality assurance through peer review so that all exercises have been scored, evaluated, and discussed by two assessors.