

# PRE-CORE SKILLS ASSESSMENT CENTRE

## INTRODUCTION

The assessment centre process has been carefully designed to assess candidates' competence and commitment to motivate offenders, to examine their thinking and change behaviour. The National Probation Service needs staff who can demonstrate the necessary skills to carry out this challenging task with integrity.

Research suggests that effective accredited programmes are run by well selected and trained staff. The assessment centre improves the accuracy of those staff selection decisions. In the assessment centre the overall assessment is based on a collation of data from a variety of tasks and evaluated by several assessors. This gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your competence in more than one activity.

The assessment centre process is both rigorous and consistent in its application and is accessible and fair.

This document provides information about the assessment centre, the activities you will be expected to participate in and the preparation you may need to do in advance.

## WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT CENTRE?

The assessment centre is not a place but a process, which has been developed to assist Probation Trusts in recruiting and selecting appropriately skilled and experienced staff in delivering accredited programmes. At the assessment centre, your performance will be measured against a set of criteria.

This assessment centre is the gateway to all offending behaviour programmes training, except for Domestic Violence and Sex Offender Programmes, and is compulsory before access to training can be gained.

The length of the different assessment centre activities are as follows. There may be a break of up to 15 minutes between activities:

- a) *Presentation and Formal questions (consisting of 4 questions) (approximately 45 minutes)*
- b) *Formal Interview (consisting of 15 questions) (approximately 45 minutes)*

## THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The activities as listed above assess your performance against the following criteria:

- Responsivity with integrity
- Treatment style
- Facilitation skills
- Planning and reviewing
- Openness to learning

## THE PRESENTATION & FORMAL QUESTIONS

At least two assessors will conduct the presentation and formal questions. The presentation should be **no longer than 15 minutes** duration and the selected topic is specified in the accompanying invitation letter. The Assessors will inform you when you have reached 14 minutes to allow you to conclude your presentation. You may prepare visual aids to assist your presentation. A flipchart or overhead projector will be available for you to use if you wish.

The presentation is designed to test your ability in all five competencies. It also requires that you engage with the assessors.

Once you have completed your presentation you will be asked four questions relating to your presentation.

## THE FORMAL INTERVIEW

The formal interview consists of a series of questions and scenarios. The Formal interview consists of 15 questions relating to the abilities and experience you can bring to working with offenders in a group setting or on a one to one basis.

The Formal interview is designed to test your ability to demonstrate all the required competencies and a positive attitude to working with offenders, as well as the potential to develop the necessary skills required in the context of an accredited offending behaviour programme.

Two assessors will be involved in this activity, asking the questions. This will be explained at the assessment centre as both will be taking notes of your responses and assessing your performance. Following the interview the assessors will agree your assessment score.

You should note that you are not required to give deeply personal or sensitive information in your answers to the questions and you should carefully consider what information you decide to disclose to the assessors.

## **WHO ARE THE ASSESSORS?**

The assessment team are suitably experienced and skilled in the selection process and are all required to undertake training in the use of the specific assessment tools.

## **HOW IS THE ASSESSMENT CENTRE SCORED?**

The assessors have a score sheet, which they will work with and record the positive and negative aspects of your answers. Your answers will be scored on a rating scale of 0 - 2, as follows:

0	-	Not ready
1	-	Developing
2	-	Strong evidence

## **HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THE ASSESSMENT CENTRE?**

- The Assessment Centre is to assess your ability as a facilitator, carefully think of the skills that you feel you will need for the post you are applying for. Study the assessment criteria that you will be assessed against and ask yourself how you can demonstrate your competence in these areas.
- In order to demonstrate good planning and organisational skills, you should structure and prepare your presentation carefully. Prepare your visual aids in advance, ensuring that they are clear and not too complex. Your presentation should be as close to 15 minutes as possible. If your presentation is too short or too long you are likely to lose points. Practice your presentation to get the timing right and to build your confidence up.
- Think of and try to generate, as many examples as possible.
- Be yourself!

## **FINAL DECISION**

Once the assessors have seen all the candidates they will meet together and collate their scores. You should not expect to be advised of the outcome on the day although this may be possible at times.

All candidates will be advised of the outcome as soon as possible, after the assessment centre. All candidates will be offered the opportunity to receive feedback on their performance including any identified areas for development.