

How the Department for Transport (DfT) set up a Shared Service Centre and improved their assessment efficiency

Keywords: Shared service centre, Organisational change, Assessment centres, Psychometric tests, Interviews, Role-play exercises, Public sector efficiency.

→ The challenge

Sir Peter Gershon's review of public sector efficiency created the need for the Department for Transport to set up a Shared Service Centre in Swansea, which will employ about 300 employees once at full capacity.

Our task was to devise and deliver short-listing and assessment processes to identify the entire workforce at all levels. This work included advert design and placements, design of sift tools, assessment event design and putting response management mechanisms in place.

From the very outset we recognised a number of challenges that needed to be addressed timely for the project to be successful:

- Dealing with a variety of internal and external stakeholders
- Considerable time pressures
- The impact generated on individuals by the risk of redundancy
- The recruitment drive had to be fair across the DfT and not favour employees from any particular unit

→ The solution

We initially set up a Project team that based itself at Swansea during the early, critical phase of the project. The project team comprised of Chartered Psychologists who worked in close collaboration with the client to devise a number of assessment exercises that had to be adaptable for a range of levels across a variety of functions.

In detail, our work has extended to:

- on-line psychometric tests

- computer-based exercises
- competency-based and skills/functional interviews
- interactive role-play exercises, involving the 'managing up' and 'managing down' of staff (assessed via video-link in assessor pairs)

As with all our work, a particular focus was given to the candidate's needs to ensure that the process had a high level of transparency and that candidates were kept informed every step of the way.

→ The achievements

- We have run approximately 100 assessment centres, resulting in the appointment of 135 staff into 35 different roles, including senior and operational management.
- We were delivering the first assessment event within six weeks of project start-up

This work allowed us to show our experience in delivering a successful large-scale recruitment process in the context of a huge organisational change.

