Recruiting the 21ˢᵗ Century Local Government Manager –

a values and behaviours based approach

Aspire Strategic HR and OD Business Partner Programme 2017/18

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1.0   Executive Summary

Research has been undertaken into the practical implementation of values based recruitment (VBR) across a wide range of organisations.

Findings have shown that even where the culture of values is prevalent, organisations still need to make further progress to implement recruitment strategies to embed these values.

Recommendations are provided on how this may be achieved.

2. 0   Introduction

As part of the Aspire Strategic HR and OD Business Partner Programme we were asked to complete a group project on a topic relevant to the organisations we worked within. We chose to research values based recruitment for Local Government Managers.

We are a group of HR professionals from four Local Authorities (Lancaster City Council, Oldham Council, Richmondshire Council, and Wirral Council) of differing size and political leanings, facing different place based challenges yet we identified a common issue; many of our leaders and managers possess the right technical knowledge and skills but do not consistently demonstrate the desired management behaviours.

We have opted to undertake further research into this with a focus on the recruitment and selection of managers for the following reasons:

- Local Government has changed significantly in recent years, and it continues to do so. In order to operate in this changed environment, it has become even more important for Local Authority managers to possess the right attitude and behaviours so they're equipped to deal with the challenges they will face. The University of Birmingham's 21st Century Public Servant research (Needham and Mangan, 2014), identified a series of characteristics that effective public servants should display, including being 'recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise'.

- Managers who don't demonstrate the right behaviours have a detrimental impact on employee engagement, well-being, and attendance all of which affects the overall performance of an organisation, we have seen numerous examples of this in our professional experience.

- We have a responsibility within our professional roles to ensure our organisations recruit the right people but all of our organisations focus the essential criteria when recruiting on technical knowledge and qualifications rather than the ability to demonstrate the right attitude and behaviours. We recognise that this approach to recruiting may result in talent being lost, or managers being recruited with the wrong behaviours. It is often the case that staff with great technical abilities are promoted into management roles but they do not possess the right management behaviours. Spending time on a robust and values based recruitment process would reduce the time and resource needed to deal with unsuitable managers (e.g. a three stage capability process, the damage that may be done to the organisation and members of their team).

- The benefits of values based recruitment are well publicised, however none of our employing authorities adopt this approach. We are also aware of a number of Local Authorities and

other public sector organisations who have publically committed to the principles of values based recruitment but the operational reality often shows it has not been successfully embedded. We acknowledge that there are challenges as well as opportunities when introducing Values Based Recruitment within Local Government, and we wanted to further explore the barriers.

3.0   Context

3.1   The changing environment of Local Government

A reduction in government funding, as well as external factors such as devolution and the integration of health and social care has led to an increased focus on savings and commercialisation within Local Government. This has resulted in significant changes being made to our delivery models including an increase in partnership working and externally commissioned services. It is said that 20% of the population use 80% of government resources; to make a difference with a limited budget requires engagement with the 20% to reduce their reliance on those services.

As more change is likely (for example due to the impact of Brexit) there will be increased pressure in the system, and there is a reduced resource available to deal with it.

3.2   The labour market

We are also operating within a changing labour market where there is an increased competition for talent, new generations with different expectation of work, and an ageing workforce.

3.3   Human Resource implications

The impact of the above means that the expectations of our staff and managers has increased, and our workforce structures need to change. There is likely to be a greater need for;

- Fluidity of roles and people
- Agile working
- Change management capability to transform services
- Influencing skills (for external stakeholders where Local Authorities no longer have direct control of services)
- Engagement skills (to engage with customers to change behaviours)
- Good communication skills
- Improved succession and talent management
- Increased acceptance of job applicants who do not have the full range of technical skills

The above shows that it is not only technical specialism that will ensure Local Authorities are fit for the future; staff are needed who possess the right behavioural aptitudes and it is crucial that employers recruit, retain, reward and develop such staff. Using values based recruitment will enable councils to hire staff who demonstrate the ability to work in this way, to facilitate this.

4.0   Scope of this project

We have focussed our project on values based recruitment for management roles only because of the issues we have observed with this group of staff, and the importance of behavioural competency in managers as discussed in the introduction.

We are not trying to define the appropriate values and behaviours for organisations, and we have assumed that Local Authorities already have a set of values and behaviours, and that these are fit for purpose i.e. valid for the organisation, understood by staff, free from unconscious bias and inclusive.

We will endeavour to ascertain the following as part of our research:

- The benefits of values based recruitment, as outlined within the available research
- To what extent values based recruitment is undertaken within local government
- The perception of values based recruitment within local government
- The success of values based recruitment within local government as reported by those authorities who utilise this approach
- The barriers to success reported by authorities
- Make recommendations for how to launch and embed values based recruitment, including overcoming any barriers

Subject to our findings, we will also give consideration to producing a tangible and practical tool to facilitate the use of values based recruitment within local government.

5.0   Values and behaviours

5.1   What are values and behaviours?

Values are sets of views that people hold about what is right or wrong and reflect a person's sense of what is good or bad.

Values may have a strong influence upon people's attitudes and can act as a set of rules about how to behave in certain situations. Skills for Care provides the following definitions:

- A value is a measure of the worth or importance a person attaches to something; our values are often reflected in the way we live our lives.
- An attitude is the way a person expresses or applies their beliefs and values, and is expressed through words and behaviour.

Individuals may develop or alter their values throughout their lives, influenced by such factors as family, school, religion, employment and communities.

Organisational values are usually accompanied by a set of behaviours which translate values into more observable and measurable standards in relation to how they expect their employees to behave.

5.2   Values in the workplace

Values play a key role in organisational culture, and many organisations have made a commitment to adhere to a set of values which reflect their core convictions - what they have agreed is of most importance to them and which should dictate the way they operate, providing criteria for making strategic decisions and setting priorities.   A well-established example of this is John Lewis who have a clear set of values known as their 'Partnership Principles' which define how they run their business and were set out by their founder John Spedan Lewis in their constitution.

Shared values are an important mechanism for aligning organisations and their people and this alignment gives rise to employee engagement and commitment. If an organisation has managers who display, with a level of comfort, the organisation's desired values/behaviours, they are likely to be a more efficient and effective organisation.

People may experience difficulties if their personal values do not match other belief systems they interact with such as those found within the workplace.

6.0   Values based recruitment

In order to bring these organisational values to life, employers strive to embed them within the organisation by measuring employee's performance against the desired behaviours at all points within the employee life cycle. When this forms part of the recruitment and selection process it is known as values based recruitment.

The hospitality and retail industries have long focussed on recruiting front line staff who demonstrate the right behaviours, such as a strong customer service ethos. As far back as the early 1990s, one member of our team worked on developing a national assessment centre process to recruit bar staff with 'Buzz' for a national pub retailer. However this approach does not seem to have been consistently adopted across local government.

In assessing the use of behavioural attributes within recruitment we are recognising that these differ from technical competencies (skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications / education etc). Undertaking values based recruitment does not have to mean that technical competence is not assessed as part of a selection process, but that the process would also include an assessment of a candidate's values and behaviours. It would be recommended to adopt a recruitment selection approach which assesses competence in both the 'what' (technical competence) and the 'how' (behavioural competence).

Technical competence can be assessed through 'killer questions', application form, checking qualification certificates and work based assessments (e.g. Excel tests). In the future there will be more automation of the recruitment process enabling judgements against skills competencies will require a reduced resource which may enable a bigger focus on behavioural competence. Behavioural competence can be assessed through the use of psychometric testing, group assessments, role play activities and Situational Judgement Tests (SJT).

7.0   Secondary research

For our secondary research we have reviewed the available literature in this area in order to gain a further understanding of the purpose and potential benefits of values based recruitment. We have also researched a number of organisations across a range of industry sectors to ascertain the extent to which values based recruitment is undertaken, particularly for supervisory and management level posts.

7.1   The importance of having organisational values

Research suggests that behaviours and their underlying values are of key importance to the success of an organisation. This is based on an 'enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct is personally or sociable preferable to an opposite mode' Rokeach (1973).

Kunde (2000) talked about the importance of having employees that are aligned around a brand and values/behaviours can help reflect that in 'how' employees go about their daily tasks, terming this 'corporate religion'.

7.2   The purpose and benefits of values based recruitment

Research shows us that recruitment processes which incorporate an element of assessing a candidate's values and behaviours are the best predictors of success in a role. The table below shows research undertaken by Muchinsky (1986) and Smith, Gregg & Andrews (1989) regarding the validity of a variety of selection methods. This showed that the traditional evaluation methods of interviewing and references are low in validity. The most reliable selection methods are those which would incorporate a combination of task and behaviour assessments, such as would be used in an assessment centre process.

Selection Method	Evaluative Standard			
	Validity	Fairness	Applicability	Cost
Intelligence Tests	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low
Ability Tests	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low
Personality & Interest Tests	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
Interviews	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate
Work Samples	High	High	Low	High
Situational Tests	Moderate	Unknown	Low	Moderate
Biodata	High	Moderate	High	Low
Peer Assessment	High	Moderate	Low	Low
Self-Assessment	Low	High	Moderate	Low
References	Low	Unknown	High	Low
Assessment Centres	High	High	Low	High

This research is supported by James Meachin, an Occupational Psychologist and Head of Assessment for Pearn Kandola LLP, referencing work of McDaniel et al 2007, confirming that it is well established that Situational Judgement Tests can be valid predictors of workplace performance.

7.3   Review of current values based recruitment practice

Many organisations, across a range of sectors have committed to identifying, sharing and embedding their corporate values, with many going further and identifying the associated required behavioural attributes.

There are an increasing number of organisations who are embedding these values and behaviours into recruitment activity, particularly for supervisory and management level posts. We have selected a range of organisations, across both the public and private sector, who have made a commitment to undertake values based recruitment to assess the extent to which this is embedded into their recruitment process in practice, and to attempt to identify the barriers that an organisation may face in using values based recruitment.

7.3.1   Pret a Manger

Snack food chain Pret a Manger recruits for behaviours, and claims to seek "personality rather than skills" in their future employees. Candidates are assessed against three behaviours: passion, clear talking and team working. Whether someone has ever worked a day in retail before is unimportant. The corporate focus is on getting the right staff in place, rather than growing sales and profitability.

Whilst not explicitly stated, analysis of the Pret a Manger website does give a clear message about the organisation's values – the impression given is of an organisation that values its employees, invests in training, and has clear environmental and social justice leaning. On their recruitment pages, the emphasis is on the fun aspects of the role, and for entry level positions there is no requirement for previous experience or relevant skills. However, for any other role, including all supervisory positions and even Baristas, the only clear requirement is for "proven experience within a high-volume retail, hospitality or restaurant environment", which takes priority over the 'personality' requirements.

7.3.2 Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC)

The large accountancy firms are renowned for the opportunities that they provide for both new graduates and ongoing 'high flying' careers. PwC, the 2017 'Graduate Employer of the Year', has been selected for analysis.

On a dedicated UK careers website, PwC clearly set out their behavioural framework, stating that "All our people need to demonstrate the skills and behaviours that help us deliver our business strategy. This is important to the work we do for our business, and our clients. These skills and behaviours make up our global leadership framework, The PwC Professional". The PwC Professional focuses on five core attributes: whole leadership, business acumen, technical capabilities, global acumen and relationships, and defines a set of behaviours for each attribute. PWC state that they use this framework to recruit, develop and assess people at all grades and in all areas of the business, and use the SHL Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) for all applicants. This questionnaire looks at behavioural preferences in relation to a range of different aspects of working life, assessing how a candidate likes to do things, what approach they'd typically take and their preferred working style.

Whilst the OPQ is used to assess all candidates, the recruitment process varies, dependent on whether it is an entry level, or experience level position. Where school leaver and graduate applicants are required to undertake the OPQ as part of the first stage on line screening process, and will be screened out at this stage, based on the OPQ, experienced entry candidates will have successfully completed a range of ability tests, an in-tray exercise, and case studies, to demonstrate industry knowledge, prior to undertaking the OPQ. Experienced candidates are informed that the "Personality questionnaires are not used to sift candidates out of the recruitment process. Rather, they add to the richness of the information gathered in other parts of the assessment process which recruiters can use when considering a candidate's suitability for a particular role overall".

It can therefore be concluded, that whilst the OPQ results still form part of the selection decision, in more senior, experience roles, where there is a defined competence requirement, the behavioural attributes of the candidate are only part of the recruitment decision, and significant emphasis is placed on technical skills, knowledge and experience.

7.3.3 National Health Service

The increased focus on the use of VBR within the NHS and the social care sector came out of the Francis Report (2013) outlining high profile failures in patient care, and the subsequent pressure on all employers to be able to demonstrate that their staff possess - and are supported to maintain – the right attitudes and values to help and care for the people they work with.

Within the NHS, VBR is an approach to help attract and select students, trainees and employees, whose personal values and behaviours align with the NHS values outlined in the NHS Constitution. NHS employers and Health Education England (HEE), have developed a behaviours framework, which links the values of the NHS Constitution to behaviours which would or would not be expected of staff. A further standard VBR framework has been developed by HEE, which sets out a single, standardised process for recruitment aligned to these behaviours.

The framework includes evidence based national core requirements and NHS employing organisations are encouraged to adjust their processes to also embed these requirements. NHS employers, as an umbrella body, have then developed a full suite of tools to enable individual NHS organisations to benefit from an embedded, proven, nationwide process. It also provides information around the core requirements for VBR as well as a range of case studies, tools and resources to help organisations embed values through recruitment and beyond. This approach aims to ensure that the NHS has the right workforce, with the right skills, in the right numbers, with the right values, to support effective team working and deliver excellent patient care and experience.

As the NHS is made up of a wide range of employing organisations, uptake of the VBR approach is extremely variable. Analysis of the case studies on the NHS Employers website indicates that many large hospitals and primary care trusts have embedded VBR into the selection of senior medical roles, where there will also be the requirement to meet very exacting technical competence criteria. For example, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust developed its values, 'the Leeds Way', in 2013 and has successfully integrated aspects of VBR, including behavioural interviewing and assessment centres for senior appointments. It has now also developed a bespoke psychometric tool, via an external consultant mapped against the Leeds Way values, which is used within the assessment for senior positions.

North Bristol NHS Trust has piloted a comprehensive assessment centre for senior nursing staff, including individual values-based tasks, a group exercise, ranking the important behaviours, and time spent on a ward, to assess interaction with staff and patients. This approach is also in place for consultant positions, and these centres also incorporate psychometric testing to produce a report on behaviours and follow up interview questions, plus a role play, with an actor, of a patient consultation. North Bristol NHS trust report that this approach has increased retention levels significantly.

Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS foundation trust had identified that employee relations issues are not generally caused by the clinical skills of staff, but rather the behaviours displayed in the workplace. Whilst they need to test for clinical competency and qualifications when recruiting Consultants and other senior level positions, they are keen to test for values and behaviours, to ensure they find the best fit for their organisation. A values-related question is included in all job application forms and values-based questions are included at the interview stage. This is supported by the introduction of a bank of questions based on the values and behaviours framework to be used at interviews, recruiting managers can select the questions which are most suitable for the role they are interviewing for. These questions, based on the trust's values and behaviours framework have helped to recruit staff who are the right fit for the organisation, overall improving the patient experience.

Analysis of specific vacancies within the three large NHS employers in the examples above does demonstrate that some practical progress has been made in embedding the organisational values and required behaviours within the recruitment process, although in all three cases, this does not seem to be a fully integrated approach. Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has a dedicated recruitment website that is headlined 'A Clear Focus on Values' and each person specification has a section on the Leeds Way, and the core required behaviours. However, in ensuring that full details of all the role requirements are provided, the role profile information is long and repetitive, and some closer integration of the behavioural and technical requirements would be beneficial.

Conversely, the North Bristol NHS Trust recruitment web pages make no reference to the organisational values or required behaviours. Person specifications are primarily based on technical competency requirements, with a section on the personal qualities required but these link directly to the particular role rather than reflecting any organisation-wide values and behaviours.

It was not possible to assess the values-related question included in the Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS foundation trust application form, but the recruitment webpages and role details make no reference to corporate values and required behaviours.

Further analysis of the NHS recruitment pages, indicates that the vast majority of much smaller NHS employers are yet to address VBR.

7.3.4   Social Care Sector

Within the Social Care sector, The National Skills Academy for Adult Social Care, working in partnership with Skills for Care, and the MacIntyre Charity, developed a value-based recruitment toolkit for adult social care at the behest of the Department of Health. The toolkit was designed to help employers recruit people with the right social care values, and incorporates a full range of practical tools, including personality profiling, sample adverts, and standard values-based interview questions. Advice on VBR, and the practical toolkit has been extensively rolled out, with seminars and workshops available across the UK, and a practical 'hand-on' website with straightforward advice and guidance.

Feedback has indicated that the more practical 'off the shelf' tools have been particularly welcomed by social care employers, often small organisations with limited in-house recruitment resource. From feedback from employers using the skills for care framework,   58% agreed that staff recruited for values were better at developing the skills needed for the role; 72% agreed that staff recruited for values perform better than those recruited via more traditional methods, and 62% agreed that staff recruited for values have lower rates of sickness and absence.

7.3.5   North East Lincolnshire Council

North East Lincolnshire have recognised that Councils need to work differently, in a way that is more relevant to the current context in which we all operate. At North East Lincolnshire, a project group have analysed the characteristics of a 21st Century Public Servant and linked them into a framework of generic terms that was straightforward for all employees to understand.

This framework has been offered to all employees on a voluntary basis, to match against their own skills, and encourage self-development. Further, it has been used as the basis for the Council's Talent and Leadership programme. North East Lincolnshire Council are now looking to embed the framework further, and link it to recruitment, role profiles and succession, but are struggling to maintain the momentum, and find sufficient resource to move this forward.

7.3.6   Wiltshire Council

Wiltshire County Council has developed a comprehensive behaviours framework that defines 'how' things are done, alongside the 'what' is being done. There are six universal sets of behaviours, which define the attitude and approach that should be taken by all employees, and every member of staff is measured against a clear description of the behaviour so they are aware of whether they reach the expected, desirable or aspirational standard of each behaviour. The framework document informs all employees that "these behavioural standards are taken seriously" and, "continued disregard of behavioural requirements will be resolved quickly and efficiently".

The behaviours framework document specifies that the behaviours are supported in recruitment, as applicants are interviewed and selected following "behavioural based interviewing for cultural-fit as well as job-fit". On the recruitment website, the Wiltshire County Council values are clearly specified on the front page, and there is an informal 'quiz' for candidates to take to self-assess whether they match with the behaviours required before they submit an application. Once looking at specific vacancies, applicants are directed to the framework and informed that all candidates are assessed

against the Council's behaviours framework during the selection process, and approximately half of all interview questions relate to the framework.

Role profiles have been developed which encompass general information relating to job families- differing for each grade- and then a more traditional role description and person specification. The role profile references the behaviour framework, by stating that "The job holder will have the opportunity in this role to demonstrate all the expected, and be working towards all of the desirable behaviours in the framework." However, this is not embedded in person specifications, which still provide a long list of essential criteria for qualification, knowledge, skills and experience. It would seem that despite the values and behaviours being strongly embedded with Wiltshire County Council, recruitment against behaviours has become another stage of the process, rather than being integral to the roles themselves.

7.3.7   South Hams Council

South Hams District Council in Devon have made a strong commitment to embedding their values across the organisation, and engaged specialist consultants to define a comprehensive behavioural framework, and create assessment tools to assess against this framework.

Every service area, and the roles within the services were redesigned and then every member of staff's values and behaviours were assessed through an interview with an occupational psychologist. The Council acknowledges that many existing staff found this process very difficult, as their future employment may have been at risk and this was a new way of working. However, they consider the process has been successful in ensuring the right people are now in post, who understand and reflect the Council's values, and are able to deliver the right service for the future.

Analysis of the South Hams recruitment website reveals that the impact behavioural framework is provided for all potential applicants, with the statement that "the framework aims to enhance both individual and organisational performance and will be applied in recruitment, performance management and career progression. It defines the behaviours that all colleagues across both councils are expected to consistently demonstrate at work."

However, there is no specification that there is a formal assessment of candidates against the behavioural requirements, Role profiles are made up of a standard job description and person specification, and the only reference in these documents to the Impact behavioural framework is a general requirement to have a "willingness to work within the Councils' IMPACT Behaviours Framework", as an essential criteria in person specifications. Furthermore, there is a standard application form in place, which asks for a supporting statement, describing relevant experience, knowledge, skills and qualifications, so applicants have no opportunity to demonstrate how they match the required behaviours. Therefore, initial short listing from applications will be based solely on key competencies, so recruitment will still focus primarily on traditional technical skills and knowledge, rather than a match in terms of values and behaviours.

8.0   Primary Research

After undertaking our secondary research, we felt that it was necessary to find out what was really happening within Local Authorities in relation to values based recruitment.

8.1   Quantitative data

We felt the best initial approach to understanding this was to produce a survey and distribute this electronically to HR representatives from a number of different public sector organisations.

The purpose of the survey was to collect quantitative data, therefore we limited the number of free text boxes. We also designed it to be as user-friendly as possible so that it was quick and easy to complete online using Snap Surveys to maximise respondent numbers. In addition participants had the option of remaining anonymous. A copy of the survey used can be found in appendix one.

The survey was circulated to HR colleagues within 84 organisations, the vast majority of which were Local Authorities and the remainder were from the Fire and National Health Services.

We received responses from 19 organisations including Richmondshire District Council, Wiltshire Council, Northumberland County Council, Sheffield City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Oldham Council, North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Salford Council.

8.2   Survey results - highlights:

- 47% of respondents felt that when recruiting an organisation should prioritise assessing how well the candidate's behaviours are aligned with the organisation. Only 11% felt that the candidate's ability to answer competency based questions should be prioritised.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that values based recruitment leads to higher engagement levels and staff who are committed to achieving the aims and objectives of the organisation above and beyond their contractual obligations.
- 3 organisations did not have a clearly defined set of values, but all 3 believed their organisations would benefit from having these
- Whilst there were 16 organisations who indicated they have a clearly defined set of values, only 12 of these included their values on their public facing website (e.g. about us / work for us section), only 11 publicised their values on their recruitment pages/literature, and only 10 included these within job descriptions / person specifications.
- Of the 16 with a clearly defined set of values, only 13 have clearly defined behaviours in support of these.
- Of those 13, only 6 of these included their behaviours on their public facing website (e.g. about us / work for us section), only 6 publicised their behaviours on their recruitment pages/literature, and only 8 included these within job descriptions / person specifications.
- 31% of respondent organisations do not assess values or behaviours as part of their recruitment process.
- The 11 respondent organisations who assess values or behaviours as part of their recruitment process assessed these at all levels of role (entry level up to executive management).
- Of these 11, 100% use interview questions to assess values and behaviours, and 82% assessment centre style exercises / tests. Only 46% used psychometric testing to assess values and behaviours.
- In relation to what is stopping them assessing values and behaviours as part of their recruitment process, the majority of respondents indicated there was no clear agreed approach in their organisations for doing this. The 2nd most popular reason was that recruiting managers are not sure how to assess behaviours. The least popular response was that Recruiting Managers don't have time to do VBR.
- All respondents thought that ensuring recruiting managers have a greater understanding of how to assess values / behaviours as part of a recruitment process would support their organisation to undertake VBR. The least popular option selected was having clear descriptions of positive / negative examples (Do's and Don'ts) for each value / behaviour.

- In relation to what influences the recruitment decisions their organisations made, 12 organisations felt that this was weighted towards the candidate demonstrating they possess the relevant technical abilities (qualifications, experience etc.), only 3 organisations felt this was weighted towards the candidate demonstrating they work in a way which reflects the organisation's behaviours and values. 4 organisations felt it was 50/50 between technical abilities and values and behaviours.
- Respondents were less likely to recruit a manager without the technical knowledge or relevant experience but who demonstrated the right values and behaviours, than they would be to recruit a support level employee in this situation. Respondents were much more likely to recruit a Senior Manager/Director without all of the technical knowledge but had the right behaviours.

8.3   Qualitative data

In addition to the survey we also wanted to target Local Authorities who had undertaken values based recruitment to understand:

- what were their drivers for implementing values based recruitment
- what issues or barriers did they face, and how did they overcome these
- what tools they use to facilitate values based recruitment
- the impact that VBR has had on their organisation
- whether they have found there to be any limitations to their approach

As such we developed a number of targeted questions, and selected the appropriate organisations to talk to based on their responses to the survey, and whether they had indicated they would be willing to have a follow up discussion with us in relation to their values based recruitment practices.

We opted to have a more in depth discussion with Sheffield City Council and Salford City Council, a summary of which is below. A copy of the questions which we asked can be found in appendix 2.

8.4   Focussed discussion results

8.4.1   Values Based Recruitment at Salford City Council

Salford are in the very early stages of launching a values based approach to recruitment. This work is the culmination of a project spanning a number of years which has been focussed on developing and embedding values and behaviours within the Authority.

This work was commissioned for a number of reasons, including:

- There had been some feedback from staff that they did not understand or identify with the original values (for example, one of their original values was 'probity').
- The HR team were regularly supporting managers to address employee conduct issues which they believed could be attributed to employees not possessing (or consistently demonstrating) the right values and behaviours.
- It was observed that managers do not always lead in line with the council's expectations as outlined in their bespoke leadership framework which focuses on the 'how'.

A new set of values was produced (Pride, Passion, People and Personal Responsibility) and these are now being embedded across a range of people management areas, including within new role profiles (moving away from JD/PS), in the leadership framework, the appraisal process, employee reward scheme and employment policies (e.g. reference within the disciplinary policy to addressing concerns with staff who are not demonstrating the Salford values / behaviours, and providing clarity over where responsibility lies within policies to build in the Salford value of personal responsibility).

Salford have also noticed that references to values / behaviours have started to appear in reports and proposals which is testament to how embedded they have become within the organisation. In fact, an LGA Peer Review process confirmed this as they found that Salford's values were well understood by staff across the organisation.

A review of Salford's existing recruitment process established that this did not support managers to recruit the right type of leader or staff member – the process was traditional and competency based in its approach and did not consider behavioural fit. It was determined to define a way of recruiting that would consider values and behaviours.

To facilitate this a 'guide to recruitment in Salford' has been produced, which is designed to be a recruitment tool-kit for managers. There are 4 main sections within the guide:

1) A guide to recruitment in Salford - this guide provides some context and considerations in how Salford approach recruitment; it explains why they have adopted a values-based way of recruiting and some things managers need to be aware of such as the statutory requirement to ensure inclusion throughout the recruitment process

2) How to create an engaging and well-written role profile - this provides tips and tools to help managers complete the right role profile template for the role, and how to take a values and outcome-based approach to support their recruitment process as well as other people aspects, e.g., organisation design, job evaluation, PDRs, learning and development, etc.

3) How to create a great advertisement and market your service - this guide helps managers create a job ad and marketing strategy that will attract the right people with the right skills, values and behaviours

4) How to design an application, selection and interview process - this guide provides managers with tools to help get the results they want; to create the right foundation for a positive and values-based experience for both the manager and their candidates

The guide is very detailed and comprehensive, but Salford have advised it would never be used in its totality - it's been designed for the relevant section to be used depending on what part you are playing in the recruitment and selection process. The full guide is included within Appendix 3.

A new talent attraction and retention team has been created at Salford, and it will be part of their remit to break this down into short sharp guides for managers, as well as run master classes (training events).

The team feel it's important to do a soft launch of values based recruitment, as they did not want managers to feel they were launching a brand new approach, so instead have framed this as 'this is the way we recruit at Salford'. The master classes will initially focus on those managers who do high volume recruitment.

Early challenges Salford have faced were in relation to the move from job descriptions to role profiles. Managers have struggled with this, and often revert back to task based descriptions rather than outcome and behaviour focussed role profiles. As the move is being done on an as needed basis, managers have been supported / coached as required to undertake this.

As the work is in its early stages, there has not yet been any evaluation of the effectiveness of VBR, however initial feedback from managers has been positive once the concept of values based recruitment had been explained to them. Managers recognised the issues that VBR is aiming to resolve. Salford opted to stop using the phrase values based recruitment as they felt this confused some managers. Other feedback received from managers was regarding their concerns that VBR meant that they wouldn't be assessing candidate's skills or qualifications, which particularly concerned those managers in roles where technical competency was essential. Salford have ensured that in all their communications they have advised that this does not remove the importance of testing those aspects, but rather clarifies that behaviours are as important as competencies – an 'as well as' rather than an 'instead of' approach.

In terms of future plans for the development of VBR, the next step is to review the scoring model, with a view to moving away from scores which are focussed on the what not the how.

Their advice for other organisations launching VBR is that it cannot be done in isolation – if the values aren't embedded and lived across the whole employee life cycle introducing VBR cannot be successful. They'd also recommend de-mystifying values based recruitment, having observed that the phrase can sometimes scare people off.

8.4.2   Values Based Recruitment at Sheffield City Council

Sheffield City Council employs circa 7,000 employees and has a set of values which are called 'ways of working'. These were refreshed in recent years.

These are embedded across different HR processes including within the appraisal process where one of the questions specifically asks how has the individual contributed to the 'ways of working', the employee survey which asks how effectively staff think the organisation is living the values, and every service is required to deliver solutions based on the results of this, line management standards training programmes (an expectation that managing is done in line with these values), there is guidance about recognising / demonstrating the ways of working (what it is and what it isn't), they are displayed as the default PC screen, part of 1:1 discussions, within the induction programme and the 360 degree feedback process is based on the values.

Sheffield introduced values based recruitment at the end of 2016, as part of a wider initiative that interestingly wasn't led by their HR team - a programme had been set up to review and improve the customer experience at Sheffield Council, which focussed on technology but recognised that there was a clear relationship between the people they employed and the service that was being provided to their customers. This led to the initiation of a review of the Council's approach to recruitment.

Inspired by the Twenty-First Century Public Servant literature, the Project Manager wanted to ensure that the Council's recruitment process was fit for the future by ensuring it assessed Sheffield's values and behaviours. The Project manager considered that skills can be taught but core values cannot be changed, and attitudes and behaviours may be slow to influence.

It was decided to produce a manager recruitment tool-kit. Whilst the programme was relating to improving the customer's experience, it was determined this tool-kit was relevant council wide not just for customer-facing teams. The tool-kit contains practical support (e.g. example questions, assessment centre techniques) for managers. In a number of cases these were real-life tried and tested examples which were used by services in the Council who had already successfully adopted a VBR approach.

When producing the tool-kit there was awareness that 'one size does not fit all', so it was developed to provide managers with a flexible framework rather than a prescribed approach. The advice to managers has been to start by looking at the Council's values, but then consider what that means for your service to make this real (i.e what good looks like in your service based on the ways of working).

There was not a formal launch of the tool-kit but it was signed off by HR and then included on the intranet site as part of a suite of recruitment support documents for internal use. In addition the Recruitment Policy and associated procedures have been updated and now reference the new approach.

Following on from the launch of the tool-kit the L&D team then rolled out a 1 day training course for recruiting managers in April 2018, which it has been proposed recruitment panel chairs must attend.

Every JD/PS template has the ways of working included as default across all grades, therefore there is an expectation that this is tested at selection stage although this is not prescribed. OPQ psychometric testing is undertaken in-house for Heads of Service and above, this looks at behaviours but has not been developed specifically to measure if the candidate demonstrates Sheffield's 'ways of working' specifically.

As the customer experience project has drawn to an end, there has not unfortunately been an opportunity to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the tool-kit.

Sheffield would advise other organisations launching values based recruitment to ensure that the message to managers is that this is not brand new, and to make sure you talk to your services as they may well already be taking this approach in pockets.

The full Sheffield tool-kit is included within Appendix 4.

9.0   Key findings and Recommendations

As a result of undertaking both primary and secondary research into this area we have concluded the following:

9.1   Summary of findings from secondary research

- Using a range of selection methods will increase the validity of recruitment decisions

- Organisations are more likely to use behavioural competence as the key driver for selection decisions where there is no competency or experience requirement in place, e.g. graduate trainee programme or entry level positions, as demonstrated by Pret a Manger who only recruit to entry level roles based on behaviours, but use technical competencies for roles above this.

- Where there is a requirement for particular technical expertise, assessment against these criteria tend to supersede the behavioural attributes

- Behavioural attributes tend to be an 'add-on' to the recruitment and selection process, rather than being completely embedded within the recruitment and selection process. For example, they are often simply slotted at the end of role profiles. This seems to be the case, even in the NHS and in Local Authorities where the narrative suggests that significant work has been undertaken to embed VBR, e.g. South Hams, Wiltshire.

- Within the NHS and social care sector, there was a duty to consider the attitudes and aptitudes of employees as a result of patient care failures, and the requirement to address the behaviours of potential staff became compulsory. With significant resource and a national focus, progress has been made in embedding VBR across a range of NHS and Social care employers. However, despite many examples of good practice, there is limited evidence of a systematic, joined-up approach across NHS and social care employers.

- As evidenced in the social care sector, practical assessment tools are effective in making the introduction of VBR more achievable, where resources and/or specialist knowledge may be limited.

9.2   Summary of findings from the primary research

- It is common place within Local Government to have an established set of values and/or behaviours

- Values and Behaviours do not appear to be consistently or comprehensively embedded within Local Authorities, particularly within recruitment.

- Most Local Authorities are aware of the positive impacts of VBR

- The barriers to launching VBR appear to be a lack of buy-in from the top resulting in there being no clear agreed approach to VBR in their organisations

- It is not possible to undertake VBR in isolation of an effective and well embedded values and behaviour framework

- In order to successfully launch a VBR framework, communication and engagement with managers is key, including the provision of training and support tools.

- Evaluation of the success of VBR is not widely undertaken

10.0   Recommendations for successful implementation of values based recruitment

Whilst we recommend the approach outlined below, we recognise that there is no one size fits all solution and therefore the context of your own organisation should be considered first and foremost.

1. Ensure you have effective and well-embedded values and behaviours

2. Obtain Senior Leadership buy-in to adopting a values based recruitment approach

3. Assess where you are now to identify the scope of the work to be completed, including the resources required to undertake this

4. Ensure that job descriptions / person specifications / role profiles;
   a. Refer explicitly to the values / behaviours which are essential to the role
   b. Avoid being over-prescriptive about technical competencies whilst recognising the minimum critical requirements

5. Review your selection process, ensuring that any changes made to it are realistic and proportionate to the context of your organisation, and take advantage of available technology. Consider taking a stepped approach rather than a complete immediate shift. The selection process should;
   a. Include more than one method of assessment
   b. Incorporate methods which assess both behavioural and technical competence

6. Plan and deliver an appropriate engagement and communication strategy to ensure successful implementation giving consideration to;
   a. Engaging and consulting with Recruiting Managers to ensure the approach adopted will be practically achievable, and that you are 'bringing people with you'
   b. Consider developing clear guidance and practical tools (e.g. a bank of values based interview questions and sample exercises) to support managers to undertake VBR, which may include training sessions

7. Undertake ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of your VBR approach, being prepared to revise the tools selected as required

11.0   Practical tools

We have developed guidance on assessment tools to support managers to embed a values and behaviours based approach to recruitment.

This is provided as an example only as it will be important that whatever engagement and communication strategy and tools are chosen are appropriate to the organisational context, trialled with users, and that ongoing feedback is sought. Ultimately any tools need to work in practice and be valued by managers in order to overcome the barriers identified in this research.

The Manager's Guidance can be found in Appendix 5.

12.0   Our suggestions for areas of further research or consideration

We have posed below some additional questions and pointers that are out of scope of this research, but which may prove of interest for further consideration:

- In light of research suggesting that there are common behaviours required from a 21st Century Public Servant, in the future could there be a national behavioural framework for Local Authorities across the UK, and a national set of recruitment tools – an approach similar to the NHS.

- It may be appropriate to tailor examples of behaviours (dos and don'ts) to particular roles and service areas, to ensure that these are clearly understood and relevant to the people in that team.

- It is possible that the supply of talent or the size of the available candidate pool influences an organisations adoption of a values based recruitment approach. Private sector, national organisation may be able to attract a wider pool of candidates due to offering a more competitive package, and this may facilitate an emphasis on recruiting against behaviours. Conversely, in Local Government where the offer may be less competitive, and supervisory and management roles may require more sector specific technical knowledge and experience the candidate pool may be smaller meaning it might not be possible to recruit only those who display the right behavioural competencies.

- Are there some professions where values based recruitment is more appropriate or effective? NHS employers do not appear to struggle with the competency vs behaviour contradiction. This could be due to both the caring nature of health care professionals, whose career choice means they are more likely to reflect the NHS behaviours in the first instance. Due to strong internal progression and recruitment practices the majority of suitable candidates for senior roles will come from within the NHS roles, and so will already be committed to the values of the NHS.

- Can attitudes and behaviours be changed through development input such as coaching and mentoring? If there are concerns regarding a candidate's behaviours during a selection process should this not preclude them from being offered the role – can recruiting managers make a decision with 'open eyes' and a planned development programme.

- How can we ensure that we are objectively testing for values and behaviours?

- Is there a risk of our organisations becoming clone like, if we expect all our staff to demonstrate the same values and behaviours?

Appendix 1 - Survey Questions

**Values based recruitment survey
for HR professionals in Local Authorities**

Thank you for supporting us with this research into values based recruitment by completing this survey. Through this survey we are attempting to understand the use and prevalence of a values based approach to recruitment within Local Authorities.

For clarity and to help you when answering the survey questions, we have provided a definition of both values and behaviours below.

Values
A set of broad timeless guidelines which describe the principles, beliefs or philosophy of an organisation. Core values are what support the vision, shape the culture and reflect what the company values. They inform clients, customers and other stakeholders what is most important to the organisation. Values are usually expressed in one word, and a single value may have several behaviours sitting behind it. Some examples of values include 'Fairness', 'Accountability' and 'Integrity'.

Behaviours
Behaviours translate values into more observable and measurable standards and demonstrate the attitudes and approach we take to work; how we do things, how we treat others, what we say and how we say it, how we expect to be treated. Behaviours are usually expressed in a statement, and are more contextual to the organisation.

1. **Which of these statements do you most agree with?:**

   When recruiting, an organisation should prioritise assessing…

   a) The candidate's ability to answer competency based interview questions
   b) How well the candidate's values are aligned with the organisation
   c) The candidate's technical abilities (qualifications, experience etc).
   d) How well the candidate's behaviours are aligned with the organisation.

2. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?:**

   Values based recruitment leads to higher engagement levels and staff who are more committed to achieving the aims and objectives of the organisation above and beyond their contractual obligations.

   - Strongly agree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Strongly disagree

3. **Does your organisation have a clearly defined set of values?**

   Yes / No

   If yes please continue to question 5. If no please continue to question 4.

4. **If your organisation does not currently have defined values, do you believe they would benefit from having these?**

   Yes / No

   Please provide any comments regarding your response _____

5. **If your organisation has a clearly defined set of values, please indicate where these values are reflected (please select as many options as are relevant):**

   a. Job Description / Person Specification / Role Profile
   b. Recruitment pages or literature
   c. Public facing website (e.g. about us / work for us section)
   d. Corporate Plan / Corporate Strategy documents
   e. Appraisal / Performance Review process
   f. Internal communications platform (e.g. intranet)
   g. 1:1 meetings / Supervision / Team Meetings
   h. Contracts / Agreements with your partner organisations, suppliers or contractors
   i. Employee recognition awards
   j. Other – please state where _____
   k. None of the above

6. **If your organisation has a clearly defined set of values, do they have defined behaviours statements in support of these values?**

   Yes / No
   If yes please continue to question 7. If no please continue to question 8.

7. **If your organisation has defined behaviours statements, please indicate where these are reflected (please select as many options as are relevant):**

   a. Job Description / Person Specification / Role Profile
   b. Recruitment pages or literature
   c. Public facing website (e.g. about us / work for us section)
   d. Corporate Plan / Strategy documents
   e. Appraisal / Performance Review process
   f. Internal communications platform (e.g. intranet)
   g. 1:1 meetings / Supervision / Team Meetings
   h. Contracts / Agreements with your partner organisations, suppliers or contractors
   i. Employee recognition awards
   j. Other – please state where _____
   k. None of the above

8. **Does your organisation assess values or behaviours for the following roles as part of their recruitment process? (please select all relevant options)**

   a. Entry level / administrative / support roles
   b. Professional and Technical roles
   c. Supervisory / First line managers
   d. Middle Managers
   e. Senior Managers / Heads of Service level
   f. Executive Managers
   g. We do not assess values/behaviours as part of our recruitment process

9. **How does your organisation assess values or behaviours as part of their recruitment process? (please select all relevant options)**

   a. Application Form supporting statement / information
   b. Interview questions
   c. Psychometrics
   d. Assessment Centre style exercises / Tests
   e. Other - please state how _____
   f. We do not assess values or behaviours as part of our recruitment process

10. **If your organisation does not assess values or behaviours as part of their recruitment process, why not? What is stopping them? (please select all relevant options)**

    a. We do not have values/behaviours in my organisation
    b. There's no clear agreed approach in my organisation for doing this
    c. The benefits of this have not been recognised within my organisation
    d. I don't understand our values/behaviours enough to be able to do this
    e. I'm not sure how I would assess this
    f. I don't feel this is relevant to the recruitment process
    g. I don't have time to do this during the recruitment process
    h. Quantity and/or calibre of candidates
    i. Other – please state what _____

11. **Which of the following tools do you think would support your organisation to assess values or behaviours as part of the recruitment process?**

    a. Standard interview questions about the defined values/behaviours
    b. Standard wording in job descriptions / person specifications / role profiles about our values/behaviours
    c. Clear descriptions of positive / negative examples (Dos and Don'ts) for each value / behaviour
    d. Ensuring recruiting managers fully understand our values / behaviours
    e. Ensuring recruiting managers have a greater understanding of how to assess values / behaviours as part of a recruitment process

12. Please allocate a percentage to the following two options to indicate how much they influence the recruitment decisions your organisation makes? (100% total)

    a. A candidate demonstrates they possess the relevant technical abilities (qualifications, experience etc.) _____

    b. A candidate demonstrates they work in a way which reflects the organisation's behaviours and values _____

13. How likely is your organisation to recruit an employee into a support level role who demonstrated the right values and behaviours but did not possess all of the technical knowledge or relevant experience?

- Not at all likely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Completely likely

14. How likely is your organisation to recruit a manager who demonstrated the right values and behaviours but did not possess all of the technical knowledge or relevant experience?

- Not at all likely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Completely likely

15. How likely is your organisation to recruit a Senior Manager/ Director who demonstrated the right values and behaviours but did not possess all of the technical knowledge or relevant experience?

- Not at all likely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Completely likely

16. Please provide any additional thoughts or comments you have in relation to values based recruitment here _____

Appendix 2 - Qualitative discussion questions

- Why do they use VBR?

- How they currently go about VBR?

- When and how did they launch VBR?

- What tools they use? (i.e. to develop/support managers)

- Did they have any challenges when launching VBR?

- What did managers initially think when it was launched?

- Have they done any evaluation of the effectiveness of VBR? Positive and Negative

- How are values embedded within other HR processes / the complete employee lifecycle?

Appendix 3 - A Guide to Recruitment in Salford (separate document)

Appendix 4 - Sheffield City Council Recruitment Tool-kit (separate document)

Appendix 5 - Manager's Guidance

Guidance for Local Authority Managers on values-based recruitment

Introduction

Employees are an organisations greatest asset. The cost of not recruiting the person with the right values, behaviours and technical competences can be very costly in management time and detrimental to the organisation. It is better to invest the time in the recruitment process to ensure organisations get the best candidate.

We have produced this document to provide information and guidance on recruitment and selection techniques which use a values based recruitment (VBR) approach. It is envisaged that the tools described below can be used in their entirety to introduce a fully integrated VBR system, or individual exercises can be used to enhance recruitment effectiveness, by assessing against identified behaviours.

Aligning recruitment to the organisation's values

It is key that any VBR activity output aligns with the wider corporate values and behaviours identified by the Authority as a whole. The success of VBR will be dependent on the level at which the organisational values are generally embedded across the Council, and how relevant this is perceived to be, by recruiting Managers. Therefore, the initial task will always be to ensure that the VBR approach to be implemented is both fully reflective of the Authority's values, and is proportionate to their significance within the Authority.

Without this initial assessment of the relevance of the proposed approach to the wider Council, it will always be difficult to engender support. The values approach is not just for recruitment and any VBR techniques need to mirror other uses of values and behaviours, e.g. in performance management, day to day decision making, and development opportunities.

Role Profile

Whilst the approach to role profiling varies significantly across LAs, recruitment against these profiles is relatively consistent, with a focus on the traditional technique of identifying the required attributes for any particular position, and then assessing and selecting against these attributes.

Therefore, the most significant change in emphasis required to truly embed VBR, will be to ensure that the role profile provides sufficient detail on the required behaviours, and these behaviours are defined as essential for a candidate to be successful. It may be appropriate to tailor examples of appropriate behaviours for particular roles and service areas. Furthermore, these behavioural criteria should be given the same weight as competency requirements, be systematically assessed and this assessment be fully utilised in selection decisions.

It is strongly recommended that recruitment documentation is revised to ensure behavioural attributes are fully integrated into existing role profiles, and cannot be identified as a separate and additional set of criteria. A traditional job description can be updated, so it does not simply define a list of tasks, but should also provide clear guidance on how these tasks should be approached. For example, a simple change from "undertake performance appraisal of direct reports on an annual basis", to "provide empathetic support and guidance to all members of the team, including one to one meetings, as required and annual appraisal" informs an applicant that the organisation values employee support and development.

A traditional person specification defines the skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications required for a role. In LA Manager positions there is a tendency for this to be a very rigid and specific list of

requirements, based on the tasks of the role. The challenge for both HR and recruiting Managers is to think laterally and decide which technical skills and knowledge are absolutely required at the outset of the role, but to then further consider whether there are areas that can be developed once in post, subject to the availability of appropriate resource to make this realistic in an acceptable timeframe. Furthermore it may also be possible to develop behavioural competency once in post.

This more considered approach may allow for the selection of candidates who perform more strongly when being assessed against behavioural attributes, and who are likely to be a stronger candidate in the long term i.e. it is possible to recruit the candidate with the aptitude and attitude, rather than the core skills which are crucial for future LA managers; if you have the right people with the right values, attitudes and behaviours, they can be provided with all the training and development they need to acquire the competences to succeed.

Where the person specification is used as the main tool for identifying the required criteria, it is recommended that a behaviours section is added, with clear definitions of the essential behavioural criteria, so it is integral to the process, rather than being seen as an afterthought.

Advertising

All Councils have a recruitment website or web pages, fronted with general details on working for the Council. Corporate values, and expected behaviours should feature strongly in this information.

In relation to specific vacancies, in order to be sure that suitable candidates apply for a position, it is crucial that clear details of the role requirements are provided at the outset.

Any vacancy advertisements, both internal and external, should always provide full information on the Authority's values, and defined set of behaviours, so candidates are aware of what is important to the Authority, what is expected of employees, and whether they consider they may fit within that behavioural framework.

The style of advertising will also provide information on the organisation's values; for example, might a less formal, friendlier open tone attract the right people? Could a direct question, related to the role, but based on behaviours, catch the right person's attention? Ideally, this should be consistent with a corporate approach to communications on the organisation's values, but where this is not available, a defined standard wording to describe the values approach should be developed and used consistently for all vacancy advertising.

Assessment Tools

Having clearly identified the criteria, including behaviours, against which selection will take place, it is crucial that whichever tools are used to assess candidates are consistent and fair to all applicants, and provide recruiting Managers with accurate and relevant information to allow an effective selection decision to be made. Behavioural attributes, in particular, require systematic and validated assessment, in order to give recruiting Managers confidence to make selection decisions based on results that could be perceived as less tangible. A multi-faceted approach, dependent on resources available, is recommended, incorporating the following:

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews, are widely used across LAs to see if a candidate meets the criteria within the job profile and in many cases are the only technique used to assess candidates for a role. However, assuming the structured interview is based on a thorough job analysis and validated scoring criteria, and is carried out by fully trained and experienced assessors, then this approach can be effective in identifying the most suitable applicant. In order to develop the structured interview further so that behavioural assessment can take place, values based interview questions should be developed. A

bank of standard questions to support each identified behavioural attribute should be introduced and used for every recruitment process.

A values based question uses a scenario which is devised to allow the interviewee to describe and reflect upon a real life situation that has occurred in a previous work role - in other words, an example of what the person actually did. It is important that it is open-ended and has no obvious right or wrong answer. These questions are assessing the person's reasoning, trying to find out more about the beliefs, attitudes and values that inform their thinking, and illustrating how they behave in a range of work circumstances. In developing such questions, it is useful to assess the response based on the situation, the task, the action taken and the result, and these areas will allow for follow up questions to probe the circumstances, and understand the candidates' behaviour.

As with other structured interview questions, it is important for the interviewer(s) to have a clear expectation of the particular attributes or weaknesses they are looking for and what behaviour would be ideally required in that situation and the indicators for presence of the values or attitudes they are seeking.

Situational Judgement Tests

A Situational Judgement Test (SJT) is an exercise that presents applicants with a written set of hypothetical scenarios relevant to the job, and asks them to select their chosen response from a set of multiple choice options. The scenarios will ask the candidate to apply their judgement about what is effective behaviour in a work relevant situation rather than focusing on their knowledge or experience.

SJTs are widely used in both the private and public sector, and are seen as a valuable screening tool at the outset of a recruitment process, where high volumes of applicants are received, and will often form the first step of a detailed on-line process e.g. Civil Service fast track graduate programme, and Sainsbury's colleague opportunities.

Within Local Authority recruitment, applicant volumes are rarely sufficient to require screening tools at the outset, although if the VBR approach is truly embedded, it would allow any candidates who do not demonstrate the organisational values and behaviours to be eliminated at an early stage.

SJTs are only as valid as the scenarios that are presented, and these should be carefully devised to truly reflect the Authority's values, and provide meaningful situations that will give a clear reflection of the candidates preferred behaviours, based on the responses they select and the alternative responses that they reject.

An example of a Situational Judgement Test question would be:

You work in the finance department of a large business. A colleague who has recently joined the team asks for your advice about analysing some income statements. This is a task that you know well.

1. Tell your colleague that you are busy but will try to make time tomorrow.
2. Explain to your colleague how you would approach the task.
3. Ask your colleague questions to understand where she is struggling.

A wide variety of scoring strategies can be applied to SJT's such as single best answer, best and worst answer and rank ordering of responses. Work is on-going to understand the most reliable scoring strategy.

For this example, the critical judgement is recognising that option 3 is the 'best answer' because it supports what the organisation is trying to achieve in respect of both parties behaviours

Group exercises

One means of creating a less hypothetical scenario in which to understand the values and observe the behaviour of applicants is to set up an exercise with several candidates taking part. As the exercise involves interaction between candidates, it means that their personality traits, values and behaviours will emerge as they try to achieve a common goal. The way in which candidates interact, listen, take the lead, or work together on a task can provide a revealing insight into their own values and their understanding of the organisation's requirements.

The actual exercise itself is less important than ensuring that its content will allow for the required behaviours to be demonstrated and the presence of sufficient, properly trained observers to note down the behaviours as they arise. Therefore, careful planning and detailed validation will be required to ensure the outcomes stand up to scrutiny. However, once they have been developed, the exercises can be re-used on further occasions, as the behaviours to be assessed should be universal for a range of Authority roles.

The two most common group exercises are discussions or practical tasks. Discussion topics can range from issues relating to the role itself, or the organisation's values and behaviours framework, to completely unrelated issues, such as 'who should be thrown from a sinking balloon', or 'what five items should the group take to a desert island'. Group exercises which involve practical tasks can also be either role related, e.g. developing an action plan based on service priorities, or completely random, such as building the tallest tower possible from the equipment provided.

Role Play

Role play is an exercise where a candidate is asked to act out a scenario with the interviewer or group to demonstrate their suitability for the role. Role play tests a candidate on their suitability for a specific role. The scenario will reflect common work situations, which allows an interviewer to test a candidate's ability to perform under pressure as well as their behavioural competencies.

Psychometric Profiling

There are an enormous range of psychometric profiling tools available, some of these have more relevance to specific sectors, job roles or for a particular purpose (e.g. recruitment or personal/team development). In relation to psychometric profiling to assess values and behaviours, tools are available that focus on the following relevant factors, although in most cases, these factors are pulled together into a more generic 'personality' test;

- Emotional intelligence (EI) - measuring a candidate's ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of themselves, and others, and behave appropriately as a result of that insight.

- Attitude - assessing how an individual's values translate into behaviours by measuring their opinions across a range of topics.

- Motivation - assessing an individual's level of motivation across a number of work scenarios, to determine their key values and how this influences their behaviour.

- Cognitive reasoning - measuring mental processes that underlie behaviour, including thinking, reasoning, problem solving, decision making, creativity and to some extent motivation and emotion.

It is important to note that psychometric analysis is much more effective if validation work is carried out to ensure that the profile provided is aligned to the required behaviours. For example, Bury Council have worked with Saville and Holdsworth to map their defined 'Bury Behaviours' to OPQ profiles.

There are also a number of practical issues to consider when identifying an appropriate profiling system, primarily, the cost of both the system itself and each profile that is created. In addition, the choice of a profiling tool will be determined by the factors to be measured and assessed, how long and detailed the test should be, whether it is available on line, and how quickly a result is required.

<u>Assessment Centres</u>

As discussed in our report, research indicates that using a combination of assessment and selection tools will be the most effective means of 'measuring' the values and behaviours of applicants, against the organisation's requirements. An Assessment Centre bring job applicants together in a group, where they are required to complete a number of different tasks and undergo a range of assessment tools, including those described above, to allow a combination of ratings across a range of requirements, obtained from multiple sources.

Where resources allow, assessment centres are an effective means of managing the use of a number of tools, and ensures consistency for all candidates. In addition, it allows for significant input and feedback to candidates on the role and the organisation, including further details on the corporate values, and expected behaviours.

It is important that the assessment centre is professionally managed and overseen by experienced selectors to ensure objectivity and consistency. Selectors must be trained to observe, actively listen, record, classify and rate behaviours, and seek evidence accurately and objectively against the role profile, including behavioural attributes.

The British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology has created a comprehensive standard focused on the design and delivery of assessment centres. Its purpose is to raise the standard of assessment centre practice and enable poor practice to be identified and improved. The CIPD contributed to this standard which covers: specifying the purpose, scope and designing the centre, the standards of competence and professional behaviour required of the different roles involved, delivery and data integration and decision making, appropriate reporting and feedback of results, managing the data derived including access, use and storage and finally evaluation of centres. This standard is a useful starting point for developing an assessment centre approach, but will also highlight the resources required to run these events properly. Therefore, it may only be economically viable for more senior positions within Authorities.

Final check-list for Recruiting Managers

Have you:
- ✓ Identified why the organisation needs the post?
- ✓ Reviewed the job profile and person specification - which values, behaviours and technical skills best fit the job and the organisation?
- ✓ Have you shortlisted the candidates that demonstrate the right values, behaviours and technical skills?
- ✓ Have you used a variety of assessment methods to test the candidates against the job profile and person specification which incorporates values and behaviours?
- ✓ Have you gained enough information from the selection process to select the right candidate? If you can't answer yes, REVIEW the process again - do not select the person that is not right.

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- SR&A Occupational Testing Course Level A Competencies [British Psychological Society approved]

- Wiltshire Council, Jobs at Wiltshire website

- Wiltshire Council: Wiltshire Council's Behaviours framework: It's about HOW we work