

Assessment Centres – How to Cope

What is an assessment centre and why do we have them?

Assessment Centres form part of the recruitment and selection process and can vary greatly dependant on the organisation and the vacancy.

Typically, an assessment centre can last between one and two days and consists of a variety of exercises to assess particular skills/competencies required for the role. The exercises may be group exercises, role play, interviews, psychometric testing or even presentations.

The assessment centre is often held on the employer's premises or at a conference centre. They are typically viewed as one of the fairest methods of recruitment and selection, as a number of different selectors get to see candidates over a longer period of time, allowing them to actually see what you can do, in a variety of situations.

Activities

Group Exercises

Group exercises test your leadership skills and also assess if you are a team player. Usually, you will be given a group task which you will need to complete within a set timescale.

Role Play

This may be appropriate for a role where you would be required to deal with difficult situations. Role play scenarios may be used to assess how you respond to various situations and how you think under pressure.

Presentations

You may be asked to prepare and deliver a presentation, to show your knowledge and understanding of a particular topic – you should be given enough time to prepare the presentation, and it is helpful to write brief notes which you can refer to when delivering the presentation.

Psychometric Testing

Psychometric tests may be used to assess your ability or certain aspects of your personality. They are often taken in exam-like conditions.

The aim of these tests is to provide employers with a reliable method of selecting the best applicants and provide a fair method for testing all applicants.

Interviews

Panel interviews will be conducted in the way any interview is normally conducted. Recruiting manager's will ask you a series of questions to assess your competence for the post.

Other Details

Some assessment centres may take the opportunity to provide you with information regarding the department/authority. This will be useful as it may be appropriate for certain exercises throughout the day, so it is advisable to make notes.

How to prepare

Recruiting Managers will want to know if you have the skills outlined in the person specification, therefore all activities on the day will test for the skills and criteria outlined in the person specification.

Think about all the skills that are required for the role and how you could demonstrate your skills in any of the exercises described above.

It is helpful, before the day, that you gain some knowledge and understanding of the scope of work and any external factors affecting local government at that time. You can find this out by visiting the website or looking in local newspapers

An assessment centre is not only to assess your skills, but also an opportunity for you to learn more about Wigan Council as an employer and if you are suited to the job.