



**The British  
Psychological Society**  
Promoting excellence in psychology

# Guidelines for National Assessors

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# 1.0 Introduction

This guidance provides the basis on which National Assessors practice on behalf of the British Psychological Society (BPS). It sets out the role of National Assessors and the parameters under which assessors operate. The appointment of consultant psychologists needs to be seen in the context of clinical governance. The importance of this is highlighted by several key papers, including the Francis report. It is a key element of managing risk and maximising the chances that precious resources will be utilised optimally for the benefit of service users in a clinical effective and efficient way.

## 1.1 Background

The Society supports the National Assessors Group as part of the mechanism ensuring that high professional standards are maintained in the recruitment and selection of consultant applied psychologists. The service offered by National Assessors is not being offered by another system; therefore, its contribution is of great importance. The Society has managed the National Assessors Database since 1999 and there are over 80 assessors currently on the database. The National Assessors Group is managed by the Chief National Assessor and Lead Assessors who represent the sections of the database. This team constitutes the Lead Assessors Committee, which oversees all aspects of the role of National Assessors, to ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided. The Society works in collaboration with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) to safeguard standards and patient safety.

## 2.0 National Assessor's role

National Assessors work according to the guidelines within this document, which should also be read in conjunction with the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (March 2009). The role of a National Assessor is to represent the BPS and *advise* employers whether applicants meet the standards for appointment. This is the case for positions open to applied psychologists and positions open to a range of senior professionals (that include applied psychologists).

As a National Assessor you are acting as an agent of the British Psychological Society and as such will be indemnified by the Society, *providing these guidelines are adhered to*. In addition to this cover, individuals may choose to have the added protection of their own personal indemnity insurance.

National Assessors need to uphold the standard expected from a consultant psychologist in terms of training, skills and experience (both in clinical and management or leadership provision and overall applied psychological mindedness); consultant psychologists should be adding substantial benefits in terms of leadership and business consultation in the context of strategic negotiations for business development.

### **Regradings**

The remit of National Assessors is different from the work of the Agenda for Change (A4C) panels that deal with regarding of posts; in Agenda for Change contexts, decisions regarding regrading are made by job analysis and matching panels. However, National Assessors are able to offer advice and a sense of objectivity to ensure that the right skill level is required in a service when appointing consultant psychologists, which can lead to correct decisions about banding. National Assessors are also able to support recruitment into temporary and 'acting-up' roles. On very rare occasions, National Assessors can be used when a psychologist has been 'slotted in', due to organisational restructuring, to a revised consultant role that for the most part they already fulfil, or they are rebanded 'in post' with a revised job description that has been agreed that they are already fulfilling.

## 2.1 The selection process

The goal of the selection process is to assess whether applicants meet the requirements of the post (i.e. have the necessary competencies to fulfil the job description associated with the post). The National Assessor is there to advise the employing NHS Trust, higher educational institution or other employer (e.g. local authority, voluntary or independent sector). It is essential to ensure that the selection process is not discriminatory. The National Assessors will need to refer to the job description, person specification and, if applicable, Knowledge and Skills Framework Profile, to determine the competencies required for the post. It may also be beneficial to obtain the current post holder's contact details.

The National Assessors will assist the potential employer by commenting on whether candidates have the necessary competencies to meet the person specification and responsibilities of the role (as specified in the job description). This process will assist the appointing officer in identifying those applicants who are eligible for short listing.

National Assessors may also be asked to contribute to the design of the selection process including assisting with formulating presentation titles and questions prior to assessing candidates' appointability, drawing on the full range of information sources alongside the appointing officer and panel members. The National Assessor's role is to advise on the appointability of applicants. The appointing officer may request that the National Assessor also contributes to selecting the preferred candidate.

All selection criteria must be related to job requirements for the specific posts and must be applied consistently.

## 2.2 Pre-interview

2.2.1 When you are first contacted to do an interview, you must clarify whether another National Assessor has been approached and obtain the name of the other National Assessor, with a view to making contact with them. You should also ensure that the employer is aware that your role is advisory and has a copy of the Society's *Guidance on the Appointment of Consultant Psychologists Using National Assessors* which is available for download from the Society's website ([www.bps.org.uk/assessors](http://www.bps.org.uk/assessors)). The advice is that two assessors should be contacted, one from the specialty and the other from any section on the National Assessors Database. Both should be independent to the employing Trust; however, it is not unusual for Assessors to know applicants of this level of seniority professionally, although substantial and recent involvement should be avoided. You may also be asked to advise the employer on the composition of the appointment panels.

### 2.2.2 Expenses

Any expenses that you may incur should be agreed and discussed with the employing organisation prior to interview.

2.2.3 The employer should send you all relevant documentation, such as job description, person specification, framework of local service and other related documents (e.g. Knowledge and Skills Framework profile, post outline). National Assessors should support equal opportunities frameworks in line with ethical guidelines for psychologists. The National Assessors' contribution in the short listing process can be of great value to ensure that applicants who meet the person specification criteria are not excluded on the basis of direct or indirect discrimination. Similarly, National Assessors can be of great value in the review of draft person specification and job description documents to ensure that equal opportunities are adhered to.

#### 2.2.4 Concerns raised during shortlisting

Often issues such as the examples below occur during the short-listing process. Advice is given, but you should also consider each situation individually to ensure that all issues have been considered fully.

- ***The applicant does not have a UK-formalised statement of equivalence but has internationally relevant qualifications.*** These should be checked with the Society's qualifications team for UK equivalence.
- ***An applicant has applied for a role but their qualifications do not match the person specification.*** Then this applicant should not be short-listed for the role. If the role has changed then the person specification should be altered and the role re-advertised. This also highlights the importance that the person specification matches the job description and the person specification criteria do not create direct or indirect discrimination. An example would be making full membership of the Division of Clinical Psychology an essential criterion. This would prohibit an EU national with a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from overseas (e.g. the US) from having registration as a clinical psychologist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) in the UK and relevant experience in the NHS to apply for a post (due to the BPS regulations, an overseas-trained clinical psychologist cannot get full membership of the Society's Division of Clinical Psychology).
- ***A part-time candidate is being considered by the employer on time-based experience as opposed to competencies.*** The employer should be advised that this is no longer appropriate; all applicants should be measured on a competency-based assessment approach.
- ***Assessing experience.*** It may be possible that the person specification asks for a degree of experience. Prior experience should be assessed against the individual's ability to carry out the requirements of the role. Care should be taken not to discriminate against part-time applicants and number of years of experience should not be used as a benchmark or measure.
- ***An applicant does not meet all the criteria but the employer wants to shortlist/offer based on a development plan.*** In the first instance those applicants who meet the shortlisting should be considered. However, if there is a problem filling the role and both National Assessors agree, a development plan could be suggested. However, this is a very rare situation and at all times the person specification and job descriptions should be used as the tools to assess applicants for posts. Moreover, it is important that it is made clear in the advertising that capable applicants would be considered alongside a development plan, in the case that no applicants meet the essential criteria; this ensures transparency and that all applicants that would have met shortlisting standards were encouraged to apply for the post.
- ***You are asked to shortlist and assess non-psychologists for psychologist posts.*** If this should occur then you should treat them in exactly the same way as other candidates, checking their skills, experience and competencies against the job description and person specification.
- ***You have not been given the paperwork in time to help with shortlisting and the candidates have already been chosen.*** Ensure that you are agreeable with the choices and that they accurately reflect the knowledge skills and experience required in the person specification and job specification. You should register any concerns about the selections with the panel chair prior to the interview taking place. It is your choice to become involved at this stage of the process or not; it is recommended that you discuss this with the other assessor prior to making a decision to become involved. You should make it clear to the employer that further requests to use assessors should be done at the beginning of the process.

2.2.5 The interview arrangements and agreed short-list should be discussed by both National Assessors before the interview takes place. Any conflict of interest (e.g. if the interviewee is known to you on a personal basis) must be declared to both the other National Assessor and the chair of the interview panel. The interviewee may also declare a conflict and may refer this to the chair of the interview panel. Conflicts of interest need not prevent the interview from taking place, but do need to be recorded. The chair of the interview panel will take the final decision in terms of any conflicts of interest declared by assessors or interviewees.

2.2.6 In some interviews the panel may decide to ask candidates to give a formal presentation. This is not mandatory but it is one of the recommendations in the Society's *Employers' Recruitment and Selection Guidelines* as it can assist in the assessment of competencies. All candidates must be asked to give a presentation on the same subject, which must be relevant to the requirements of the job.

2.2.7 If one of the National Assessors is prevented from attending the interview at the last moment, then the remaining National Assessor must decide whether to proceed with the interview. This may be when there are other senior psychologists present on the panel. Advice from the Lead Assessor or the Chief National Assessor should be sought at this stage. You may proceed if you feel confident to do so and you should contact the absent Assessor to discuss the interview directly afterwards. You must discontinue the interview if you are not happy to proceed or if you feel there are any contentious issues that require additional input for resolution. Alternatively, if an employer insists on using only one assessor then please contact your Lead Assessor for advice. *It is important to note that indemnity cover from the Society stipulates that the Society's guidelines must be followed.*

2.2.8 You will need to agree with your co-Assessor who will complete the Society's Assessor's online Journal. One assessor will need to complete the details of the assessment; however, the other assessor will also have access to this record but will not be able to complete or change it. The journal can be found on the National Assessors' web page ([www.bps.org.uk/assessors](http://www.bps.org.uk/assessors)) in the 'Members only' area.

## 2.3 Conducting the interview

The panel should agree the content of questions, who will ask which questions and in what order these should link to the person specification and other related documents (e.g. job description, Knowledge and Skills Framework profile). The National Assessor should ensure that the same agreed questions are asked of all candidates and that the questions are appropriate and relevant. Supplementary questions to explore particular issues or clarify answers are allowed. It is common practice for the National Assessors to take the lead in questions concerning candidate's specialist clinical, leadership and academic experience and expertise.

All applicants should be measured against the competencies for the role. Appendix A gives an outline of how to interview using competencies. Sample questions should be deduced and used in the interview. Any queries about using competency-based assessment techniques should be directed to your Lead Assessor or Chief National Assessor for advice.

## 2.4 Concerns identified during the interview

As a National Assessor you may have concerns about one or more of the following. These should be dealt with in confidence and without malice, according to any relevant professional practice guidelines. Any identified concerns should be communicated urgently to the Lead National Assessor for your section of the National Assessors Database.

### **Concerns regarding the candidate's performance or disclosure at interview:**

- Document the concern(s) in detail and do so at the time of the interview.
- If possible, explore the concern as soon as possible to clarify the issue.
- Check out whether other panel members have similar concerns by the end of the interview.
- Determine an appropriate course of action (including whether the HCPC needs to be notified) and by whom.
- Discussion with the Lead Assessor is essential in all cases and should be undertaken as soon as possible.

**Concerns regarding the interview process (for example, if you feel that candidate(s) are being unfairly treated):**

- Document the concern(s) in detail and do so at the time of the interview.
- If possible, explore the concern(s) as soon as possible to clarify the issue with the interview panel and employing authority.
- If necessary, declare the interview invalid.
- Discussion with the Lead Assessor is essential in all cases and should be undertaken as soon as possible.

**Concerns regarding the other National Assessor (for example, if it is thought that they are acting in breach of the Code of Conduct):**

- Document the concern(s) in detail and do so at the time of the interview.
- Raise the concern(s) as soon as possible with the other National Assessor to clarify the issue.
- If your concern(s) remain, discuss with the Lead Assessor as soon as possible.

## 2.5 Assessing experience

Remember that the role of the National Assessor is advisory; *you do not have a vote* and the final decision rests with the employing authority. Commonly, at the beginning of the decision making process, you will be asked for your assessment as to whether each candidate is appointable or not, contributing to the governance of the selection process.

The panel can then consider the relative merits of those candidates that you consider to be appointable. National Assessors need to be alert to the implications of utilising rating scales that the employing organisation might use for each question of the interview; National Assessors may need to reflect whether this would constitute a form of voting and whether they would need to restrict their rating to above/below/borderline threshold. The panel may ask you for your recommendations as to who to choose; this is not your role and an opinion is best avoided. You can advise the panel as to the relative strengths of candidates with regard to the competencies required for the post and their continuing professional development needs. This may include advice relating to management and leadership training courses to contribute to a personal development plan.

## 2.6 Recording the interview and Data Protection Act compliance

Before the interview starts, a panel decision needs to be taken as to how the interview will be recorded. National Assessors need to ensure that they make contemporaneous notes of key panel discussions before, during and after the interview.

We recommend that these notes include details of the questions asked, by whom, in what order, and the timing of the interviews. Note broadly the answers given but note in detail any answers that cause you concern. You should also document which references were seen, when and by whom. This information is useful in an employment tribunal, as the assessor may be asked for their views and recollection of what happened. The standard of these notes must be clear and legible.

In addition to your own contemporaneous notes we recommend that the National Assessors ensure that the interview processes (including panel discussions) are recorded formally. The panel might consider whether to tape record the interviews. These formal records should be held by the employing organisation but the National Assessor could request a copy.

Records should not normally be retained by National Assessors, but if any are kept they must not be identifiable (i.e. all names and locations removed, ensuring compliance with the Data Protection Act).

Notes should be returned to the employing organisation for safe keeping after the interview and feedback to applicants.

The Assessor who has been agreed to complete the Society's Assessor's Online Journal should now do so at this point.

## 2.7 Feedback

Giving feedback to candidates can be a role for an assessor, especially when the post for which the applicants applied is that of the most senior psychologist in the organisation and therefore there will not be a senior psychologist within the organisation that could give such feedback. Moreover, there will be situations when an external National Assessor might be identified as the most suitable person to give post interview feedback. All applicants should be given the opportunity to obtain feedback on their interview.

Any feedback that is given would be in agreement with the interview panel and authorised by the employer at the post interview discussion. Should you be asked for feedback, this needs to be accurate, honest and fair. This feedback could include advice about their interview technique as well as what continuous personal development the applicant may need before applying for another consultant post.

Document in writing any feedback given, including date and time. Please be aware of the Data Protection Act regarding any papers, as this must be complied with at all times.

## 2.8 Complaints

There are several different types of complaints that could be made in your role as a National Assessor. Some examples are given below:

- ***An applicant complains either before or after an interview that you do not have the skill and experience to complete an assessment on a post.*** This could occur if you are assessing beyond your own grade. If you are assessing for a post above your grade you may want to consider before taking on the assessment whether you have the appropriate skills. This can be discussed with your Lead Assessor beforehand. If the assessment has already taken place, then you should request that the complaint be put into writing with clear information about where any gaps may have occurred and addressed to the Chief National Assessor.
- ***The applicant and/or the interview panel consider your behaviour during the interview to be unprofessional.*** The complaint should be put into writing and addressed to the Chief National Assessor at the Society where it will be investigated accordingly.
- ***The applicant disagrees with the decision taken by the panel of which you are a member.*** The chair of the interview panel has the final decision and any complaints should be addressed to them.

## 3.0 What is expected of a National Assessor?

When you apply to become a National Assessor, your application form, CV and references are considered by the Lead Assessor for your section of the database. If you are successful, you will be invited to complete the induction process which involves undertaking a number of interviews with an experienced assessor from your section of the database, under supervision from the Lead Assessor. You will be appointed for an initial period of three years; however, the Society retains the right to remove you from the database if you no longer meet the requirements of the job description. If a complaint is made about you whilst acting as an assessor, then you will be expected to declare this to the Chief National Assessor, who will then decide upon any action necessary.

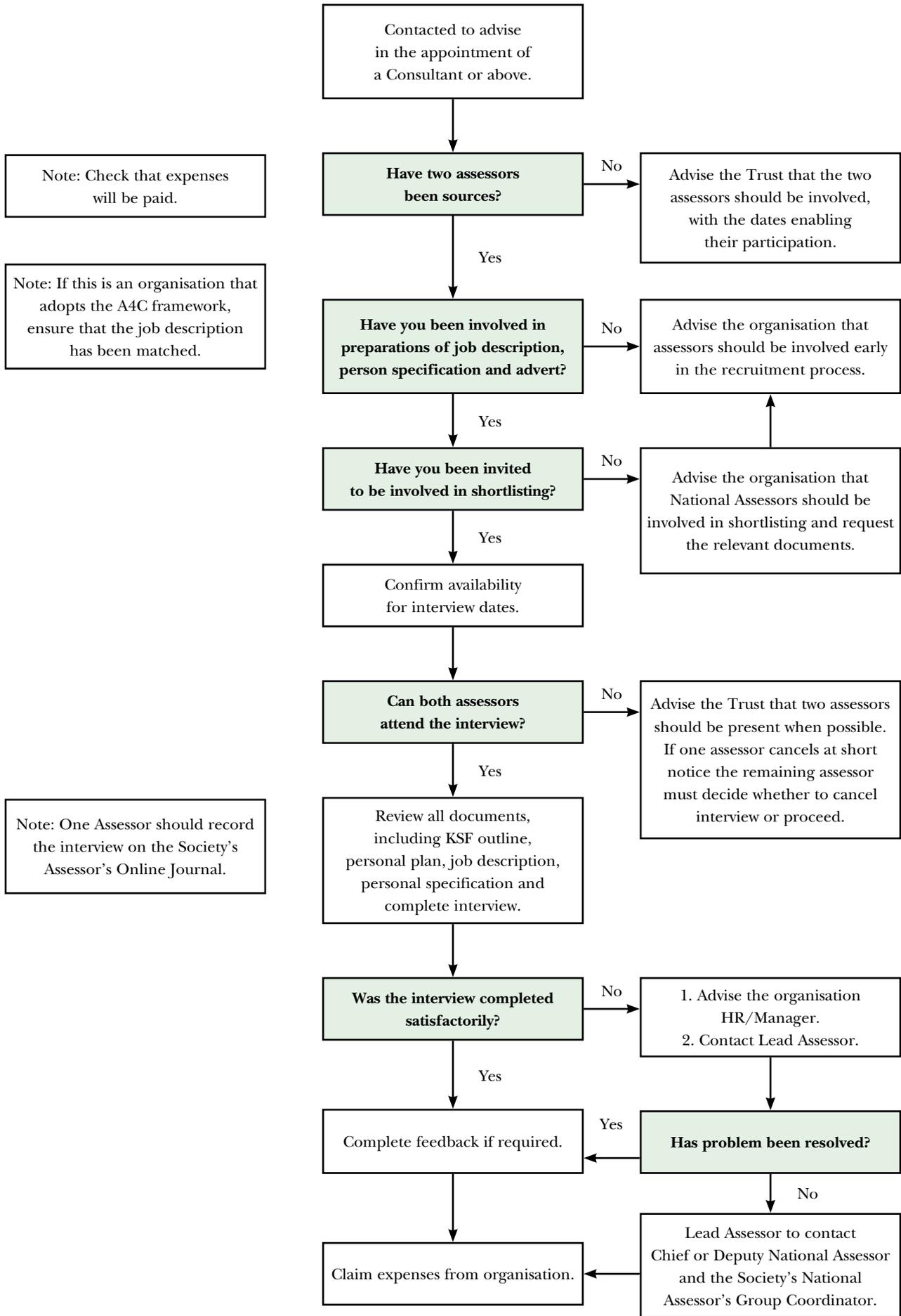
As a National Assessor you are expected to:

- (i) Carry out your duties as a National Assessor in line with the National Assessor Job Description (see Appendix B).
- (ii) Undertake a number of interviews per year.
- (iii) Attend National Assessor training as required.
- (iv) Log all assessments immediately on the Assessor's Online Journal; this forms part of an ongoing audit into assessor's workload.
- (v) Ensure your annual CPD log is up-to-date and includes the requirements of National Assessors. You may at any time be asked to submit this to the Society's National Assessor's Group Coordinator for periodic examination.
- (vi) Continually update specialist skills and knowledge in your area of expertise.
- (vii) Undertake regular training from your employer that must include:
  - Recruitment and selection training including training in Equal Opportunities and discrimination legislation; and
  - Training on diversity to include gender, race, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation.
- (viii) Ensure up-to-date knowledge of all:
  - Relevant current policy and legislation with regard to recruitment and selection; for example: Discrimination Act [Equality Act?], Equal Opportunities Commission, European Commission Code of Practice on the Protection of Dignity at Work; and
  - Conditions of employment in health and social care; for example: Agenda for Change and the Knowledge and Skills Framework.

## 4.0 Conclusion

These guidance notes have been produced to outline the National Assessor's role and procedures. However, if you require any further clarification, please contact either your Lead Assessor directly, or the Society's National Assessor's Group Coordinators (Helen Barnett (Advisor) and Carl Bourton (Administrator)).

# 5.0 National Assessor's Process Chart



# Appendix A

## Assessing competencies for 8C posts using A4C factors

### Background – A4C and competencies

This guidance is for National Assessors on how to assess for 8c posts using a framework based on Agenda for Change (A4C) factors.

The guidance is based on several assumptions. First the assumption that there are seven of the 16 A4C job factors which appear to differentiate 8c posts from those banded at 8b and below. Another assumption is that someone who is currently on band 8a/b would have the relevant competencies for that job (although there are cases following matching where this is not the case). It may be helpful for the assessor to make that assumption explicit to fellow panel members and possibly encourage others to ask a question to confirm that the applicant has the ability to work at level 8a/b before they are considered to be 'above the line' in considering potential to work at level 8c or above.

The guidance attempts to map out the competencies to look for when assessing for posts banded 8c and above. Often the competencies are different for bands 8c, 8d and 9, so this guidance specifically focuses on what to look for at 8c. The intention is to give enough detail on the relevant competencies to allow assessors to devise specific questions they might ask at interviews.

In addition, it is worth remembering that assessors are also looking at the candidate's potential to develop to the second Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) gateway in the 8c payband. However, the A4C job factors and KSF dimensions are not equivalent! If the post being interviewed for is a new post, it will be unlikely that the host Trust will have developed or agreed a KSF outline for first and second gateways. Under these circumstances, it is advisable to consult the BPS/Amicus guidance to gain a broad view of the expectations for development in the relevant band (e.g. 8c) as this may help generate relevant questions about how candidates will view the development of that post and themselves along both core and specific KSF dimensions. It is reasonable to assume that candidates for 8c and 8d posts will have achieved or be approaching the second gateway of an 8a or 8b post. Consulting these outlines in the BPS/Amicus guidance may also inform assessors of what could reasonably be expected as levels of development for foundation gateways for the post being assessed. Where the post being recruited to has been vacated, there should be an agreed KSF outline for foundation and second gateways that can be used as above.

Finally, it is clear that some of the factors (e.g. 3 and 4) in the *Job Evaluation Handbook* relate to specific *skills* that the person is expected to have, and these are labelled as such, whilst some of them (e.g. 7, 8, 9 and 11) are related to *responsibilities* the person would have. It is important that this distinction is understood and assessors realise that, in the latter instance the assessment is whether the candidate has the competence to fulfil those responsibilities.

Using the National Profiles<sup>1</sup>, the factors which appear to differentiate between 8b and 8c are factors 3 (Analytical and Judgemental Skills); 4 (Planning and Organisation Skills); 7 (Responsibility for Policy/Service Development); 8 (Responsibility for Financial and Physical Resources); 9 (Responsibility for Human Resources); 11 (Responsibility for Research and Development); and 12 (Freedom to Act).

The following suggestions rely heavily on the NHS *Job Evaluation Handbook* to identify specific competencies and possible questions.

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<sup>1</sup> NHS Employers (2006). *National profiles for clinical psychologists, counsellors and psychotherapists*. Leeds: Author. Retrieved 18 April 2017 from [www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Documents/Pay%20and%20reward/Clinical\\_Psychologists-Counsellors.pdf](http://www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Documents/Pay%20and%20reward/Clinical_Psychologists-Counsellors.pdf)

## Some general points to consider

It is essential for assessors to see the A4C matched job report in order to understand how a post has come to be banded, and thereby devise specific questions. This can be especially true when the A4C national profile suggests that there is a broad range of levels possible for a particular factor (see below):

- Part of the assessors' role at interview is to elicit evidence of competencies, and this includes seeking specific examples of the relevant competencies from previous experience. There may, though, be competencies needed at 8c which the applicant has not yet had a chance to demonstrate because they have been in posts where these competencies were not required. In these instances, the assessor will be expecting the applicant to tell the panel what they would do in the new post, based on their information about, and observation of, good practice. They should be on a *developmental trajectory* with respect to this knowledge and competence, and that might be evidenced by their CPD log.
- One interview question may well assess more than one competence. In part this reflects the fact that it is possible that the 16 A4C job factors do actually overlap and may in real life be hard to separate.
- One answer to a question may also reveal more than one competence (even if the question was worded to assess only one). This reflects the above point, as well as acknowledging that it is difficult to predict how a person will choose to answer a given question.
- Suggestions for questions are *examples only*. The purpose of the guidance is to provide a framework. A list of standard/set questions would obviously make interviews entirely predictable.
- Interview questions provide *only one element* of the total information available, which may also include the application form, CV, KSF portfolio, CPD log, and performance of any interview tasks such as a presentation.
- Remember to ask for the matched job report for the post, along with the other documentation to see how the final banding was reached.
- It is always useful to have a copy of the A4C *Job Evaluation Handbook* handy.
- Panels should determine beforehand what they consider is a 'good enough' answer.
- Although this guidance focuses on the seven distinguishing factors, interviews should ideally assess all 16 factors.

Quotations in italics in the following text are from the Department of Health *Job Evaluation Handbook* (4th edn, 2013).

### Factor 3 (Analytical and Judgemental Skills)

According to the national profiles 8a and b posts are at level 4 to 5 on this factor, whereas 8c to d and Band 9 posts are firmly at level 5. In the definitions in the A4C *Job Evaluation Handbook*, the skills required for level 4 are '*judgements involving complex facts or situations require the analysis, interpretation and comparison of a range of options*' while those for level 5 are '*judgements involving highly complex facts or situations, which require the analysis, interpretation and comparison of a range of options*'. The distinction is in the complexity of the facts or situations, and highly complex is described as: '*Complicated, and made up of several components, which may be conflicting and where expert opinion differs or some information is unavailable. This type of analysis and judgement may be required in posts where the jobholders are themselves experts in their field and judgements have to be made about situations which may have unique characteristics and where there are a number of complicated aspects to take into account which do not have obvious solutions.*'

- The essential element here appears to be whether or not the person can be considered to be an expert in their field. Questions such as 'What evidence can you provide that you have expertise in your field?' might be appropriate. What examples can the person give, and how can they demonstrate that they have been able to make evidence-based judgements where there are a range of options?
- This may relate mainly to clinical situations, although the Job Evaluation Handbook points out that these highly complex situations can be non-clinical. For some posts, it may be appropriate for Assessors to be encouraging answers from both clinical and non-clinical scenarios.

#### **Factor 4 (Planning and Organisational Skills)**

According to the national profiles 8c to d and band 9 posts are at level 4 whereas 8a and b posts are levels 2 to 3. The skills required for level 4 are *'planning and organisation of a broad range of complex activities or programmes, some of which are ongoing, which require the formulation and adjustment of plans or strategies'*, whereas the skills required for level 3 are *'planning and organisation of a number of complex activities or programmes, which require the formulation and adjustment of plans.'*

The skills required for level 5 are not required for 8c posts, and might be those which would involve starting a wholly new service:

- The level 4 skills appear to relate to, for example, critically evaluating an existing service, and making proposals to make the service more effective. Questions could be *'How would you critically evaluate an existing service?'* and *'please describe your suggestions in the context of a review for a service'*.
- Level 3 skills would include organising waiting lists; sorting out the work of assistants, and so on. Level 3 would be quite basic and is addressed by questions such as *'How good are you at organising the workload of others; can you give us some examples?'* It may be that someone coming from an 8b post could demonstrate competencies at organising departmental work, but would not yet have had a chance to plan programmes which impact across departments or services. Questions would have to tap into how well they recognised the organisational elements in doing this kind of task.

#### **Factor 7 (Responsibility for Policy/Service Development)**

According to the national profiles 8c and d posts are at level 3 to 4, whereas 8a and b posts are at levels 2 to 3, so there is a degree of overlap. Level 3 is *'implementing policies for own work and proposes policy or service changes which impact beyond own area of activity'* while level 4 is *'responsible for policy implementation and for district policy or service development for a service of more than one area of activity'*. The distinction seems to be between influencing the person's own service and impacting on other services that the person is not managing. Level 3 seems to be about persuading others within one's own service, rather than in other parts of the organisation. Level 4 responsibilities seem to be about implementing policy, when it impacts on other people outside the person's own area of activity; thus, it has a clear relation to factor 4.

- A candidate might be asked *'How would you go about implementing a specific policy across a Trust; for example, how to persuade all staff that training in basic psychological skills would help in their work?'* Furthermore, they could be asked *'How would you ensure that a development in your service permeates to other services that you do not directly manage but may be able to influence?'*

#### **Factor 8 (Responsibility for Financial and Physical Resources)**

According to the national profiles there is a wide range at 8c (from level 2d upwards) but this factor is at level 1 for 8b posts. 8d and band 9 posts are more straightforward, since they are at level 4a (which is *'holding a budget for a department or service'*). The specific competencies expected for an 8c post should be identified clearly in the Job Description. Some 8c posts might require the person to be a *'budget holder for a department or service'*, whereas others might simply require them to be an *'authorised signatory for small cash/financial payments'*. Still others might require the person to operate at level 3d, which is *'holding a delegated budget from a budget for a department/service'*.

- A basic question for anyone coming into an 8c post would ask *'what do you know about standing financial instructions'*, since it is hard to see how they can be a signatory for payments without understanding what they are signing for. For other posts, and certainly for band 9 posts, assessors should be assuring that the person understands about the organisation's finances in general and, for example, how they would meet cost improvement requirements.
- Candidates may be able to demonstrate competence in financial management from non-NHS situations.

### **Factor 9 (Responsibility for Human Resources)**

This is another factor with a wide range of responsibilities possible at band 8c, ranging from 2b to 3c, whereas 8b posts would be at level 2b. The specific requirements for the post should be in the job description, since the organisation may have delegated HR responsibilities to this post, or these may be exercised by other managers. The minimum requirement for an 8c post is to be *'regularly responsible for professional/clinical supervision of a small number of qualified staff or students'*. If this is all the post requires, then it is relatively straightforward to ask questions which would elicit relevant competencies.

- However, some 8c posts might have management rather than supervisory responsibilities. Level 3a, for example, is *'responsible for day-to-day management of a group of staff'*. 8b posts do not involve the management of staff, so a question to identify whether a person is ready for management would be to ask them to *'describe the difference between clinical supervision (which they should have experience of) and management (which they may lack experience of)'*.
- Candidates should know what constitutes HR advice; they should also know what the organisation's disciplinary systems would be, and what their responsibilities at the various stages might be. They could be asked *'who have you managed in the past and what issues were raised by this'*. It would be particularly important that candidates expected to manage could give examples of good HR practice, even if they themselves had not yet had an opportunity to implement such practice.

### **Factor 11 (Responsibility for Research and Development)**

According to the National Profiles, 8b posts are banded at level 2a to 3, whereas 8c and d posts are banded at level 3 to 4. Band 8d to 9 posts can be anywhere between levels 2 to 5! Level 3 is a *'major job requirement, indicating a continuous involvement for at least some part of every working week 20 per cent or more per week on average'*. The jobholder normally has to have *'at least one project on-going requiring this amount of involvement.'* Levels 2a to c only require research and development (R&D) to be a regular feature of the work which has been identified in a job description *'with relevant activity at least once a month on average and usually more frequently'*.

- Assessors could reasonably ask candidates *'what research are you currently doing and please describe the methods and the sources of funding that you are currently utilising'*. Additional questions would include *'please tell us more about your latest publications and how they fit in the dissemination strategy of your research'*. Audit activities are level 1, although complex audits using research methods may count as R&D activity at level 2a. The job matching report should be very important here, since an 8c post is meant to have 20 per cent of its time devoted to R&D. If the post is 8d then a level 2 might be appropriate, although even here R&D is a requirement of the job.

### **Factor 12 (Freedom to Act)**

The defining characteristic here is that 8c posts are at level 5, whereas 8b posts are at level 4. Level 5 *'is guided by general health, organisational or broad occupational policies, but in most situations the post holder will need to establish the way in which these should be interpreted'*. For level 4 *'expected results are defined but the post holder decides how they are best achieved. Is guided by principles and broad occupational policies or regulations. Guidance may be provided by peers or external reference points'*. The issue seems that there could be conflicts between level 4 and level 5 in terms of freedom to act and the post holder moving from 8b to 8c should be able to explain how an individual's freedom to act may be constrained by organisational factors. Level 4 gives considerable discretion to an individual, and this discretion appears to come about as a result of the individual being at a high level in terms of their qualification. Level 5, however, expects the individual to be able to interpret broad policies.

- An interesting question might be to ask candidates to *'explain the difference between level 4 and level 5 with respect to freedom to act'* (e.g. would a senior clinician's clinical decision always be unchallengeable, how is freedom to act constrained, pursue issues of conflict between an individual's and the organisation's freedom to act).

## Summary of assessing competencies for 8C posts using A4C factors

Factor	Further information	Example of question to ask relating to the factor
<p><b>Factor 3</b> (Analytical and Judgmental Skills)</p>	<p>The essential element here appears to be whether or not the person can be considered to be an expert in their field. This may relate mainly to clinical situations, although the <i>Job Evaluation Handbook</i> points out that these highly complex situations can be non-clinical. For some posts it may be appropriate for assessors to be encouraging answers from both clinical and non-clinical scenarios.</p>	<p>'What evidence can you provide that you have expertise in your field?'</p> <p>What examples can the person give, and how can they demonstrate that they have been able to make evidence-based judgements where there are a range of options?</p>
<p><b>Factor 4</b> (Planning and Organisational Skills)</p>	<p>Level 3 skills would include organising waiting lists, sorting out the work of assistants, and so on. It may be that someone coming from an 8b post could demonstrate competencies at organising departmental work, but would not yet have had a chance to plan programmes which impact across departments or services. The level 4 skills appear to relate to, for example, critically evaluating an existing service and making proposals to make the service more effective.</p>	<p>Level 3 would be quite basic and is addressed by questions such as 'How good are you at organising the workload of others; can you give us some examples?'</p> <p>Questions would have to tap into how well they recognised the organisational elements in doing this kind of task. Questions could be 'How would you critically evaluate an existing service?' and 'Please describe your suggestions in the context of a review for a service'.</p>
<p><b>Factor 7</b> (Responsibility for Policy/ Service Development)</p>	<p>Level 3 seems to be about persuading others within one's own service rather than in other parts of the organisation. Level 4 responsibilities seem to be about implementing policy when it impacts on other people outside the person's own area of activity, so it has a clear relation to factor 4.</p>	<p>A candidate might be asked how they would go about implementing a specific policy across a Trust; for example, how to persuade all staff that training in basic psychological skills would help in their work. They could be asked 'How would you ensure that a development in your service permeates to other services that you do not directly manage but may be able to influence?'</p>
<p><b>Factor 8</b> (Responsibility for Financial and Physical Resources)</p>	<p>The specific competencies expected for a post should be identified clearly in the job description.</p>	<p>A basic question for anyone coming into an 8c post would ask what they know about standing financial instructions. For other posts, and certainly for band 9 posts, assessors should be assuring that the person understands about the organisation's finances in general and, for example, how they would meet cost improvement requirements. Candidates may be able to demonstrate competence in financial management from non-NHS situations.</p>

<p><b>Factor 9 (Responsibility for Human Resources)</b></p>	<p>The specific requirements for the post should be in the job description, since the organisation may have delegated HR responsibilities to this post, or these may be exercised by other managers.</p> <p>Some 8c posts might have management rather than supervisory responsibilities. For example, is 'responsible for day-to-day management of a group of staff.' 8b posts do not involve the management of staff.</p> <p>Candidates should know what constitutes HR advice and also know what the organisation's disciplinary systems would be, and what their responsibilities at the various stages might be.</p>	<p>A question to identify whether a person is ready for management would be to ask them to describe the difference between clinical supervision (which they should have experience of) and management (which they may lack experience of).</p> <p>They could be asked who they have managed in the past and what issues were raised by this. It would be particularly important that candidates expected to manage could give examples of good HR practice even if they themselves had not yet had an opportunity to implement such practice.</p>
<p><b>Factor 11 (Responsibility for Research and Development)</b></p>	<p>This should be clearly defined in the job description.</p> <p>Audit activities are level 1, although complex audits using research methodology may count as R&amp;D activity at level 2a.</p> <p>The job matching report should be very important since an 8c post is meant to have 20 per cent of its time devoted to R&amp;D. If the post is 8d then a level 2 might be appropriate, although even here R&amp;D is a requirement of the job.</p>	<p>Assessors could reasonably ask what research are you currently doing and please describe the methods and the sources of funding that you are currently utilising.</p> <p>Additional questions include: Please tell us more about your latest publications and how they fit in the dissemination strategy of your research.</p>
<p><b>Factor 12 (Freedom to Act)</b></p>	<p>The defining characteristic here is that 8c posts are at level 5 whereas 8b posts are at level 4. The issue seems that there could be conflicts between level 4 and level 5 in terms of freedom to act and the post holder moving from 8b to 8c should be able to explain how an individual's freedom to act may be constrained by organisational factors.</p>	<p>An interesting question might be to ask candidates to explain the difference between level 4 and level 5 with respect to freedom to act (e.g. would a senior clinician's clinical decision always be unchallengeable, how is freedom to act constrained, pursue issues of conflict between an individual's and the organisation's freedom to act).</p>

# Appendix B

## Sample Job Description

### 1. JOB DETAILS

**Job Holder/s:** National Assessor's Group

**Reports to:** Chief National Assessor

**Job title:** National Assessor

**Date:** 1 January 2010

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### 2. JOB PURPOSE

To advise employers on the recruitment and selection of consultant psychologists ensuring that professional standards for employment are met. National Assessors work according to the Society's *Professional Practice Board Guidelines for Assessors*.

Appointed for a period of three years, renewable by agreement with Lead and Chief National Assessors.

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### 3. DIMENSIONS

*(List here financial measures or statistics relevant to the post.)*

- Chief Assessor – 1
  - Deputy Chief Assessors – 2
  - Lead Assessors – 16
  - National Assessors c.180
  - Budget £12,000 for 2009
- 

### 4. ORGANISATION CHART

*(Draw a chart to show how the job fits into the organisation including the manager's job, this job, the job titles of colleagues reporting into the same manager and the subordinates of this job, if any.):* N/A

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### 5. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

*(Detail here, the knowledge, skills and experience required for satisfactory job performance.)*

- Have significant experience as a consultant and above. (Normally this would be around five years.)
  - Relevant up-to-date specialist knowledge and clinical experience.
  - Fully trained and experienced in assessment and interview skills.
  - Evidence of personal development (i.e. completed CPD log).
  - Have knowledge of clinical governance and other NHS policies.
  - Trained in recruitment and selection practices, equality and diversification issues.
- 

### 6. KEY RESULT AREAS

*(List the four to eight key result areas for this job in the form of: WHAT IS DONE... TO WHAT... WITH WHAT RESULT.)*

- (a) To undertake a number of interviews per year.
- (b) To attend National Assessor training as required.
- (c) To log all assessments immediately on the National Assessor's website. This forms part of an ongoing audit into National Assessor's workload.
- (d) To ensure your annual CPD log is up-to-date and includes the requirements of National Assessors. You may at any time be asked to submit this to the Society's National Assessor's Group Administrator for periodic examination.
- (e) To continually update specialist skills and knowledge in your area of expertise.

- (f) To be involved in job adverts, short-listing, job descriptions and person specifications.
- (g) To contact the Lead Assessor in the event of difficulties being experienced with the recruitment and selection process.
- (h) To provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates upon request.
- (i) To undertake regular training from your employer that must include:
  - Recruitment and selection training including training in equal opportunities and discrimination legislation.
  - Training on diversity to include gender, race, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation.
- (j) To ensure up-to-date knowledge of all:
  - Relevant current policy and legislation with regard to recruitment and selection; for example, Equality Act, Equal Opportunities Commission, European Commission Code of Practice on the protection of dignity at work.
  - Conditions of employment in health and social care; for example, Agenda for Change and the Knowledge and Skills Framework.
- (k) To ensure up-to-date knowledge of all:
  - Relevant current policy and legislation with regard to recruitment and selection, for example; Discrimination Act Equal Opportunities Commission, European Commission Code of Practice on the protection of dignity at work.
  - Conditions of employment in health and social care for example, Agenda for Change and the Knowledge and Skills Framework.
- (l) Whilst acting as a National Assessor, the assessor becomes subject to a complaint, then this should be reported to the Chief National Assessor.

## 7. COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

*(Detail the working contacts within and outside the organisation, indicating the purpose of the contact.)*

- NHS Trusts.
- Private sector and non-voluntary sector organisations.
- Voluntary sector.
- National Assessor's Group Co-ordinator at the Society.

## 8. SCOPE FOR IMPACT

*(Give some recent examples of the work that illustrate in more detail the job's key result areas, together with the complexities and other significant aspects of the job.)*

- Assessors must be able to assimilate and provide an understanding of the needs of employers and of the professional standards that should be considered when recruiting and selecting at consultant level. Assessors provide advice and are able to influence the outcome of the recruitment and selection process. They do not have a vote on the interview panel but can ask questions of candidates and provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates.
- The NHS modernisation programme has produced a significant number of queries relating to the recruitment of consultants within the NHS. Assessors have been asked to deal with this ambiguity and have provided a significant service to NHS Trusts in clarifying procedures and on advising for appointments through the implementation period.
- Assessors have been involved in the development and clarification of the knowledge and skills framework as it has been implemented into NHS Trusts. This has required significant training of the assessors and their own ability to assimilate and practically apply a new competency framework.

## 9. JOB DESCRIPTION AGREEMENT

Job Holder's Signature:..... Date:.....

Chief National Assessor's Signature:..... Date:.....

# Notes

# Notes

# Notes



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