DWP Next Generation HR

Equality Impact Assessment for Next Generation HR recruitment system – Civil Service Jobs

Equality impact assessment for the Next Generation HR E-resourcing system (Civil Service Jobs)

Background

DWP's current processes of emailed applications, use of shared drives and a locally produced access data base used to manage the recruitment of people into the DWP will be superseded by the introduction of the Civil Service Jobs system.

Feedback from our customers and a recent independent audit suggests that parts of our recruitment processes are disjointed and take a lot of time, money and people to carry out. Therefore research has been carried out to look at alternative forms and methods to help improve this process. DWP therefore decided to be one of the two departments responsible for the design and subsequent implementation of the Civil Service Jobs project.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have carried out an equality impact assessment on the introduction of an online recruitment system. This is to meet the requirements of the:

- Race Equality Duty
- Disability Equality Duty
- Gender Equality Duty.

The equality impact assessment process allows us to make sure that:

- The DWP's strategies, policies and services are free from discrimination.
- Due regard is given to equality (specifically disability, gender and race) in decision making and subsequent processes.
- Opportunities for promoting equality are identified.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is introducing a new web based online recruitment tool which will accept online applications and manage and track them through the entire recruitment process up until the point of posting applicants.

This tool is being introduced as part of the wider Next Generation Human Resources (NGHR) project whose aim is to improve efficiency across government. The tool is called Civil Service Jobs and will be used to fill posts and facilitate redeployment across several Civil Service departments. It will give a more consistent, joined up, professional look and feel, to the application process and selection suite of tools. It will be more robust than the current blend of email, clerical and ad-hoc IT tools which DWP currently use to recruit. It will bring in to one solution all aspects of the recruitment and redeployment processes and give improved confidence as to efficiency and reliability of the processes. It will be introduced from the end of October 2010.

Purpose and aim(s) of the Civil Service Jobs system

Civil Service Jobs is a web based online recruitment management tool that incorporates on line application screens to replace the electronic application forms currently used within DWP. An on line assessment testing tool to replace the On Line

Capability Assessment Tool (OCAT) currently being used as well as an online scheduler to allow successful candidates to book their own interview slots. In addition Civil Service Jobs will store, manage and progress applications and applicant's details throughout the whole of the process allowing administrators within recruitment teams to monitor and administer exercises entirely online. This will alleviate the need for paper, printing and postage costs and allow some reduction in resources to be made.

Who will benefit mainly from this policy, process or service?

It will incorporate online application screens to replace the current application forms. This will:

- Reduce potential clerical errors made by candidates who currently have to follow protocols and conventions in order for the DWP to receive and filter emailed applications to the right place / team
- Reduce potential clerical errors of the staff handling, moving and transferring application information between various systems that make up the current process of work arounds
- Vary very little from the current application process in that almost without exception application forms are obtained, completed and submitted on line, albeit by email.

It will incorporate an Online Testing Tool which is based on the behaviors and skills that are needed to perform a job well. Overall DWP uses competencies in recruitment as recent research shows competency based tools to be the least discriminative. The tool is designed to assess candidates against the competencies required in DWP. All external vacancy adverts will detail the competencies required for the job and links the applicant to the main DWP website which explains DWP competencies.

Candidates are given a series of situations that could be encountered in the place of work and asked to identify what they would do in each situation. The exercise is timed but had been designed to give candidates enough time to complete all of the items.

Consultation and involvement

Online Testing Tool
The Online Testing Tool is being built along the same principles as the tool we currently use within DWP which has proven to have good diversity results.

During development of the original tool we were keen to examine test performance in relation to gender, race, and disability. To make sure that cut-off points and the outcomes, i.e. success rates would not disproportionately impact on race, gender and disability, pass rates for each group were examined during live exercises. The results were used to set the pass mark at a level where success rates were equivalent for each group.

Studies examining selection tests sometimes show group differences in performance where there is a timed element. Such differences usually have an impact in terms of race, but can also have an impact for other groups including gender and disability. Initially there was no difference found for the tool in terms of gender and disability but some for race. To reduce this impact the time allowed on the test has been increased

for everyone. Once the time has been increased evidence has also shown that the pass marks can be set higher and not have any differences in success rates for all groups. The tool will continue to be monitored and corrective adjustments made should any adverse impact become apparent.

Working in partnership with an external consultancy company (WCN) and the Ministry of Defence, DWP formed working parties and held focus groups and to assure the six case studies, each one built around a DWP competence and work area. To answer questions related to each scenario test takers would need to use core literacy, numeracy, and situational judgment skills.

Evidence and feedback has shown that there are occasions when test content can be biased. To make sure that there was no bias the test content was reviewed to ensure it did not have language or scenarios that would not disadvantage any group. Views were sought from DWP staff on each case study and were specifically asked to examine test content for bias in relation to diversity groups. No edits were necessary, but we made sure there were two opportunities to examine the need for amending.

Race impact

It is anticipated that by using the online testing tool we will be able to attract a wider range of candidates from more diverse racial groups this will help us to meet our goal of promoting opportunity and independence for all. However there may be an impact on people whose first language is not English. Although most DWP jobs do require a proficient level of English, candidates who take the test will be issued a questionnaire about how they found it. One of the questions is about how hard the test is in terms of English language used. Should response indicate the language is unfair steps will be taken to simplify.

Disability impact

Online applications and tests can present barriers for disabled candidates with certain disabilities, for example cognitive disabilities. To ensure all candidates are able to compete on a level playing field, regular monitoring will be carried out on the tool and test results and alternative methods of testing will continue to be available for those unable to use the online test.

The online testing tool could be of benefit to people with certain disabilities, for example restricted mobility or with reduced visual ability as candidates can complete the assessment on-line from their own homes. It has been tested for use with assistive technology and can be used with JAWs, Zoomtext, Super Nova and Dragon assistive software.

In addition the DWP has in place a Guaranteed Interview Scheme which means that disabled people meeting the minimum criteria can opt for a guaranteed interview. Information explaining the scheme will be shown within applicant information clearly available on the screen during the application process.

Gender and transgender impact

There are no fixed test times and there are many venues which can support those with caring responsibilities making it potentially more accessible to women. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to apply:

- Advertisements will continue to be placed in a wide range of medium including specialist outreach press.
- All candidates are provided with detailed information about the DWP in the form of 'A day in the life of' publications on the website.
- A detailed description of the recruitment process is provided so candidates can anticipate if they need any adjustment at any stage.
- Recruitment literature explains the definition of a disability for those who may not consider themselves disabled.
- Candidates are asked to describe what adjustments they need in order to be assessed fairly and to support candidates who may not wish to declare their disability.
- All candidates are given the opportunity to try a practice test before completing the actual scored test. This enables a 'practice run' to ensure a candidate has the right adjustments in place before undertaking the scored test.

We promote equality by ensuring that:
- Recruiting managers do not see any personal details on the candidates application form relating to age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or disability.
- The online test is scored with an automated package removing the subjectivity created by human intervention that occurs where selection tools are scored manually.
- DWP recruitment representatives are not allowed to operate the OTT test without having received both the online test and Selection departmental training. The selection training has a detailed section on Equality and Diversity. In addition all employees within DWP are required to undertake general Equality and Diversity training.
- The guidance and communications on the changes will promote equality, by having references throughout, to ensure that Diversity and Equality issues are high profile and to promote a positive attitude to managing those issues.

Learning and Development

All DWP people who are involved in the process including setting up exercises, sifting and testing applications and interviewing must go through the standard recruitment and equality training.

In addition to the above, intensive coaching sessions have been run with the DWP staff responsible for recruitment.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Next Steps

We will monitor the system via Management Information functionality which will allow us to collect data on total number of job applications, total numbers of applicants who are successful at the test stage, total numbers who attend and are successful at interview and the number of new starters. Information will be broken down by age, gender, race and disability. Applicants are required to provide their diversity data but will always have the option of choosing the 'prefer not to say option'. This approach enables us to gather a larger amount of data than we currently obtain which in turn will allow a more accurate view of any adverse impact. This approach has been cleared with DWP Diversity and Equality Centre of expertise. If there are any trends that are highlighted as problem areas these will be looked at and action taken where required. Management information will be collated and a performance year's annual view will be published.

Perception questionnaires will be issued during early tests carried out. These questionnaires will ask respondents, who reply anonymously, to give personal details such as gender, ethnicity, age and disability and their feedback on the tests .One of the questions is about how hard the test is in terms of English language used. Should response indicate the language is unfair steps will be taken to simplify.

We will therefore be able to assess the perceptions of all diverse groups in relation to their experience of selection processes that use the online test. We will be reviewing this on an ongoing basis.

In addition information about how successful candidates perform in the job once they have been in post for at least six months will be collected. At the online testing stage there may be some differences in performance. However, if there are also differences in on the job performance then this would add to the body of evidence suggesting that the online test is a valid test in that it predicts how successful candidates go on to perform in the job. This will allow DWP to carry out specific statistical analysis which examines if the test itself is responsible for differences in group performance.

The Selection Policy Team will also be carrying out random audits of online test exercises every 6 months to continue to monitor that the test is treating all groups of society fairly. If any issues are discovered actions will be taken to ensure that the test is selecting people fairly across all groups.

Conclusion

The evidence and information shows that the introduction of the previous online test resulted in a positive outcome across all groups mainly due to the removal of on site paper based testing. The new online test will be build on this move to online applications along similar lines and to similar principles as the previous test that we have used on over 30,000 applicants so far. The outcomes will be monitored and findings taken forward through continuous improvement activities and evaluation.

This assessment will be reviewed in March 2011.

Name and Contact Details of the Officer(s) responsible for the assessment:
Nicola Ellis nicola.ellis@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Kate Bonnar kate.bonnar@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk