



CASE STUDY

ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION FOR KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Getting it right when recruiting at the top

BACKGROUND

Kent County Council is one of the largest councils in the UK and provides more than 300 services for around 1.6 million residents. As part of an ongoing drive for efficiencies and effectiveness, including responding to the Government's latest directives regarding cost savings, the council restructured a number of its business areas, including the Highways Department.

This department in particular had seen an exceptional level of change during the preceding 12-18 months and was at a point where it needed to sensitively and fairly resource a number of strategically senior level positions. This included Head of Highways Operation, Head of Highways Transport, Resurfacing Manager and Drainage Manager.

OUR APPROACH

To resource these positions Criterion Partnership was tasked with designing and running a series of one-day assessment centres which would assess performance and potential in the key competency areas of:

- Leadership & Excellence
- Strategic Outlook
- Manage Problems
- Customer Care

Kent County Council needed a set of assessment solutions which would:

- Reflect the correct level of challenge for its senior level roles
- Communicate relevant key messages about what would be required within the roles and within Kent County Council as an organisation
- Be engaging for the candidates throughout the day
- Provide a cost effective solution
- Reflect the relevant competencies
- Represent a rigorous and objective mechanism for assessing each candidate's suitability

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THE RESULTS

Aware of the timescales for the project and need for an accessible and cost effective solution, we proposed using the Miramar portfolio from Criterion's leading-edge Odyssey range of off-the-shelf assessment and development centre exercises. Designed for use with senior/executive level roles, and a strong track record of use within high-level public sector roles, the Miramar portfolio presented the right range of activities to challenge and fairly assess the Highways Departments top-level managerial posts.

Centred on the theme of transforming the leadership culture within an organisation, the exercises selected from Miramar would measure the required competencies, and also reflect and represent activities the candidates would be expected to undertake in the role. These included:

- **Analysis Exercise** – presenting recommendations on top challenges and how they can be addressed
- **Influencing Role-play** – Engaging and establishing credibility with a non-executive Director
- **Influencing Role-play** – Meeting with a Senior Government Representative about possible funding
- **Non-assigned Roles Group Exercise** – Working collaboratively to create a clear plan for how to embed the organisation's new values

The assessment centres were delivered by a team of our highly experienced Consultants, who provided an objective and independent assessment of each candidate's performance in relation to the competencies.

In addition, the wider rolling assessment programme for these roles, which also included a separate panel interview, meant the Observers took a more flexible approach to providing the selection panel with feedback and regular updates.

Following on from the assessment centre the selection panel was provided with a comprehensive report for each candidate, identifying strength and development areas in relation to each competency and activity. Telephone support and further debriefing was also made available to the Chair of the selection board to explore connections between performance at the assessment centre and during the interview.

What the Kent County Council say:

"The team were supportive throughout the whole process and nothing was too much trouble. We were very pleased with the services we received from Criterion and would defiantly use them in any future assessment centres".

Helen Gillivan
LD/MH Executive Support Manager, Families and Social Care Directorate