

raising the standard: a person specification for directors of human resources in local government



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a national HR person specification

Raising the standard: a person specification for directors of human resources in local government is a self-assessment framework developed by leading HR professionals within the sector. It sets out a nationally defined set of criteria which seek to outline the skills, experience and qualities required to deliver strategic human resources in a local authority setting.

Its purpose is to develop a national standard that supports individuals to make robust judgements about their capability to perform against a set of indicators reflecting customer and industry expectations.

Our objectives, therefore, are to:

- deliver a nationally recognised set of indicators that will set an industry standard for HR professionals working in the sector
- design a framework from which HR professionals can determine appropriate and fit for purpose development opportunities
- develop a person specification that is created, lead by and supported by the sector
- work in partnership with key industry stakeholders for a joined-up approach – Public Sector People Managers' Association (PPMA), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Investors in People (IIPUK).

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context

Human resources, as a function, has been criticised for not being able to raise its game to deliver a more strategic approach to the services it offers. Most would agree that human resources is a core function for all local authorities and should be leading the way in providing modern, accessible, transparent and joined-up services.

Increasingly, the pace of change means that understanding, leveraging and creating capacity and competency is key. When HR practices are aligned with the needs of internal and external customers, organisations are more likely to succeed. If this can be delivered, the next ten years will be HR's to shape.

As an HR director it is important to know what you need to do to deliver results and identify gaps. HR directors are more than people administrators. They are experienced professionals who draw on a body of knowledge to make informed business decisions. It is becoming clear that simply delivering a function which is purely administrative, transactional and policy focussed is outdated. HR needs to deliver innovative, value driven, and results-orientated work. Attention should be paid to globalisation, organisational capabilities, culture change and intellectual capital.

Clearly HR needs to have a clear understanding between what it does and what the organisation delivers. Successful directors of HR understand this. They fully recognise that they exist to ensure that rubbish is collected, pot holes are filled, elderly people are helped into bed at night, and children are educated. Recognising that service delivery is the primary outcome ensures that HR is in complete harmony with the purpose of the council. Any activity that is extraneous to this needs to be questioned for the value it adds.

HR is a support service and as such the public do not vote for it. They vote for the services delivered in their community, so the resources deployed on HR need to be low cost and high value. The function therefore needs to continually assess its own performance and the contribution it makes to the council and the community.

Accountability for the day-to-day management of staff lies with line managers. HR should facilitate that relationship by assisting managers in making value judgements and undertaking risk assessments on decisions that relate to people.

HR policy should be formulated to ensure compliance with legislation, codes of practice and organisational objectives.

how this person specification fits with the broader HR agenda

These standards should not be treated as a stand alone document. They are not a one-size-fits-all solution for HR issues. The role and delivery of the HR function is only one element of a wider agenda of people management modernisation. This framework is designed to drive change, to enable individuals and organisations to move towards a modern, joined-up, accessible and outward looking function.

Individuals who subscribe to the specification will need to apply their assessment against the indicators according to their particular role, experience, organisation and local circumstances.

Individuals will need to decide:

- which standards apply to their authority. Not all authorities will carry out all of the HR services listed, for example, if part of the function is outsourced. However, if this is the case, these standards can still be used as a tool for establishing how the outsourced function should operate
- what partnership opportunities are available for working with neighbouring authorities in order to deliver modern and accessible HR functions across the region.

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While these indicators have been developed with HR professionals from English local authorities in mind, they are intended to be transferable and may be used by any organisation as a tool for improvement and modernisation.

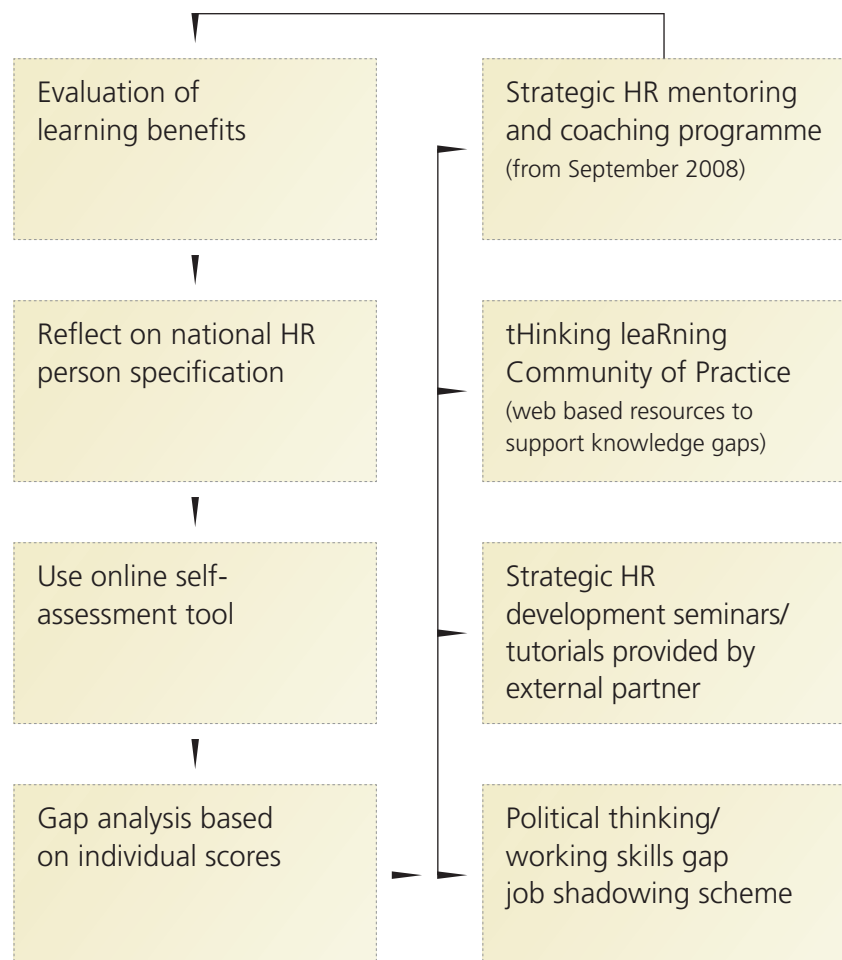
the benefits of adopting this person specification

By taking proactive steps to adopt this specification as part of a leadership initiative, senior HR professionals will be supported to develop an outcome-focused approach to their strengths, identify areas for improvement and, where appropriate, development needs.

The IDeA is developing a national development programme that will support the specification's implementation. This will include a national mentoring scheme, nationally managed job swap scheme, secondments, and the use of networks through a Community of Practice.

The following diagram indicates how this may work.

national development programme 2008/2009



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a draft national person specification for directors of human resources

Headings include:

1. Understanding the local government business and its key roles. Effectively working with and influencing elected politicians, the Chief Executive and senior managers.
2. Leading HR strategy, policy and practice at all levels in the organisation, including developing the people management capability of line managers.
3. Providing functional leadership so that the HR team is equipped to achieve its organisational goals, add value and deliver efficient services.
4. Ensuring the development of metrics that demonstrate efficient and effective HR management and contribute to the overall performance management of the organisation.
5. Contributing to or leading organisational change.
6. Leading the management of employee relations in a way that achieves organisational objectives and is consistent with good employment practice.
7. Promoting diversity at all levels in the organisation through policy development and practical implementation.
8. Ensuring the organisation has sufficient (human) resources, with the right skills and motivation, properly deployed to meet the business demands of the organisation.
9. Utilising learning and development and organisational development skills and knowledge to build organisational capability.
10. Communicating in writing, orally, and electronically to a variety of internal and external audiences to meet organisational goals.

Personal attributes:

11. Innovating and developing creative solutions to difficult issues.
12. Consulting, influencing and negotiating to achieve functional or organisational goals.
13. Facilitating and/or coaching senior colleagues to enable them to be more effective in meeting organisational requirements.
14. Developing personal resilience to deal with a challenging environment and having the courage to uphold good employment practice.
15. Building own knowledge, skills, and experience on a continuous basis of the organisation, the external environment and professional competence for own self-development and as a role model for others.

This model is for illustrative purposes only.

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what happens next?

The IDeA, along with a number of key contributors – Alan Warner, PPMA, Peter Reilly, Institute for Employment Studies (IES), liPUK and CIPD – is hosting and facilitating this process. We will be holding a number of focus groups to road test the model. If you would like to get involved or would like to comment or contribute, please get in touch.

We aim to implement the programme in September 2008 and would welcome your input to meet this challenging deadline.

The IDeA welcomes comments on this document and can be contacted through:

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