



These guidelines should be used in the recruitment and appointment of family and systemic psychotherapists.

Background

The AFSP National Assessors Panel was established to provide advice and guidance to employers with respect to the employment of Systemic and Family Psychotherapists in designated posts. It was originally a subcommittee of the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) but is now contained within the PAC which also holds responsibility, amongst its other tasks, for the AFSP **Recommended Standards for the Employment of Family and Systemic Psychotherapists** (Terms and Conditions of documents).

The advice and guidance provided by National Assessors has generally been appreciated by employers who are often accustomed to the use of external assessors within other disciplines – such as clinical psychology or child psychotherapy. Employers using the service have largely been within NHS Trusts as the majority of family therapists in designated posts are still within the NHS. However, there are now also a number of posts within social care and some in the voluntary sector.

AFSP recommends that all Systemic and Family Psychotherapist posts are placed on the AFSP recommended pay scales. Upon receipt of a request for a National Assessor AFSP Head Office will send the pay scales and the AFSP “Terms and Conditions” document to the employer. The Terms and Conditions document relates to the NHS banding structure but also acts as a guide in other sectors. Head Office will also advise the employer that it is a free service provided by AFSP, but employers are expected to pay travel expenses.

National Assessors have a particularly important public relations role for the profession. The service is for employers only and requests usually come from Service Managers or Lead Clinicians who are key individuals in the decision-making process regarding the development of Systemic and Family Psychotherapy posts within their particular service. Employers are encouraged to request assistance from National Assessors. It is a particularly useful service for employers who are recruiting their first or a singleton systemic post who do not have senior Systemic and Family Psychotherapists in post to advise. Equally, however senior colleagues in post often appreciate assistance from an external assessor so they can demonstrate a fair process. This is particularly the case when there may be internal applicants or applicants known to them.

AFSP cannot oblige employers to seek advice nor indeed oblige employers to take the advice given.



Nature of Requests Applicable to National Assessors

Requests may include the following: -

1. Advice regarding the drafting of job descriptions and person specifications.
2. Advice about the banding of a Systemic and Family Psychotherapy post or posts.
3. Advice and assistance in the recruitment process. This may include advice on appropriate qualifications and experience of applicants, professional registration, shortlisting and/or joining an interview panel to assist with interview questions and advise on suitability of candidates. In this respect AFSP National Assessors also have a role in maintaining standards within the profession.
4. Advice on where to advertise. Employers can be informed of the excellent advertising service provided by AFSP for its members.
5. Advice with respect to re-banding applications. This is less common now as generally people are expected to apply for a new post if they want a higher banding.
6. Employers who have not previously employed family therapists may want assistance in thinking of the future structure of the team when considering the job descriptions and grading of the initial post(s).

Possible Issues

1. Employers sometimes have a limited budget when considering the creation of a family therapy post. This might impact upon the banding that can be offered. Employers in these circumstances can be invited to consider amending the job description accordingly so that the pay band is coherent with the post's duties and responsibilities and the funding available. Alternatively, the employer might be advised to consider reducing the number of sessions to enable an appropriate pay band for the duties they want covered. Sometimes a discussion with the employer about the context of the post and their hopes for it can help clarify these issues.
2. Employers need to be aware that it is a condition for a UKCP registered family therapist to receive regular professional supervision. This can be provided by a more senior Systemic and Family Psychotherapist who preferably has completed an AFSP accredited supervisor's course and/or who is registered as an approved supervisor. Where there is a single Systemic and Family Psychotherapist employed within a service, an employer may need to budget for the provision of professional supervision from an appropriately registered external systemic supervisor.



3. Employers may need advice regarding the desirability of one-way screens and recording equipment.
4. Employers may also need advice and guidance in cases where a potential post contains additional duties and responsibilities outside the usual remit for a Systemic and Family Psychotherapy post. (One example may be when the post includes responsibility for a multidisciplinary service in the community). Whilst additional duties may be included in the job description this would need to be reflected in the grading.

Some Practical Points

1. National Assessors need to be familiar with good practice in recruitment and have previous experience of being part of a recruitment process.
2. Assessors are acting on behalf of AFSP, so it is important for advice to be consistent. It is strongly recommended that new assessors in particular consult with another assessor before offering advice regarding grading.
3. All requests for advice should be directed to AFSP Head Office even if assessors are approached individually.
4. Where a Consultant Systemic post is being considered a National Assessor, who is or has been employed at this level must be involved and where possible two assessors are desirable. It is recognized that in the current context the latter may not be practical, but it may be that someone wanting to gain National Assessor experience could shadow another assessor.
5. Posts should be graded according to the job description. The job description should be graded prior to a post being advertised, as it is the post and not the person that is graded. Even if the employer is not wanting assistance with the writing of the JD and person specification it is worth requesting this in advance of attending the interview process to check through it and raise any necessary issues.
6. An AFSP National Assessor joins an interview process in a purely advisory capacity and does not have formal voting rights. It is important that this role is clarified at the beginning of the interview and all candidates are informed.
7. If the National Assessor is not involved in shortlisting but asked to be part of the recruitment panel, it is advisable to ask for the names of shortlisted candidates in advance just in case there is any conflict of interest. It is possible that some or all of the candidates are known to the assessor. This has often been the case and is usually not a problem but there may be cases where the assessor judges it inappropriate to be involved.



Association for Family &
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Guidelines for the use of National Assessors

8. Employers should be advised to inform candidates attending for interview in advance that a National Assessor will be present and give the name of the National Assessor to candidates. Sometimes candidates will know the assessor and if they are made aware of the name in advance, they can be prepared and/or raise any concerns they may have. (In practice this has not presented problems, but candidates have appreciated knowing who will be present).
9. Written advice given to employers should always be sent via AFSP Head Office. This ensures that a record is kept centrally and that advice goes out from the Association. Since most written communication now is by email AFSP Head Office can be cc'd in so that there is a record kept. It is useful for Head Office to have a record of the outcome. There is a form available for this.
10. There is a feedback form, available from Head Office to give employers at the end of the process.