

Developing a Job Family Approach in Local Government

As many Councils move towards implementing new pay and grading structures, job families have increasingly become attractive. However there appears to be a lack of common understanding as to what this means in practice or the benefits it creates. The term job family can mean all manner of things to all manner of organisations. This can range from a list of jobs in Administration or Finance to a family of similar roles identified by common factors across the organisation arranged into a series of levels. The levels should recognise individual competence and contribution.

So how do you develop a job family in the midst of resolving pay and grading structures and equal pay issues?

The typical approach to creating a new pay and grading structure often involves evaluating a vast array of 'different' jobs creating a job evaluation industry without necessarily taking the opportunity to identify similar or generic roles that can be grouped together. Whilst this may be considered to offer the maximum protection against equal pay claims it also creates the possibility of similar jobs being evaluated differently. The actual number of different jobs in any organisation is always contentious with both staff and managers insisting that the roles in their area are somehow different. By developing job families the organisation can identify similar competencies and skills requirements and create a smaller number of generic profiles that apply to a range of staff thus creating consistency and reducing the number of evaluations.

Pay structures and job families

In some organisations it is not uncommon to create different pay structures for different job families to reflect the appropriate market conditions. However, local government competes in a variety of markets which would require significant resources to constantly check market data for different functional groups. Mindful of the current level of equal pay claims and the introduction of new job evaluation arrangements it is more likely that jobs scoring within a given evaluation range should be paid at the same level. This effectively creates a single pay structure where it can clearly be seen that similar jobs irrespective of their family are paid the same. This doesn't necessarily mean though that all job families will have the same number of levels or grades or pay ranges as this should reflect the evaluation outcomes and the position of jobs in relation to their own and other job families.

Levels within a job family

A further issue to consider is the number of levels as part of the overall approach sometimes known as operating levels or value add tiers. Within each level an employee needs to know what they need to be delivering to be at each stage, as they progress through a role this can range from a simple approach with an entry and fully competent level. This approach can, however, be further developed to reflect the number of agreed levels within any given job family taking account of the level at which the job holder is required to perform and the level of skill and expertise they have.

Pay Modelling

With any new pay structure it is clearly essential to understand the cost implications at implementation and in the future.

NorthgateArinso's Pay and Rewards consultants are experienced in developing job families and modelling the financial and employee implications of any new structure.

If you wish to discuss the introduction of job families or any aspect of your overall pay and reward strategy please contact us on 01244 572722 or visit our website.

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