



Post Selection Day Evaluation and Feedback Report

00234 Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)

October 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the selection days for 00234 Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), as well as capture general feedback on candidate performance. The report describes how selection days were undertaken by both panels and candidates; including what characterised stronger and weaker demonstrations of the competencies needed to fulfil the requirements of this role.

Competency Framework

The selection day was divided into two parts. The first part was a role play, which was designed to assess the following competencies:

- Exercising Judgement
- Assimilating and Clarifying Information
- Working and Communicating with Others
- Managing Work Efficiently

The second part was a competency-based interview, which was designed to assess the following competencies:

- Exercising Judgement
- Possessing and Building Knowledge
- Assimilating and Clarifying Information
- Working and Communicating with Others
- Managing Work Efficiently

The assessment criteria were developed so that candidates could demonstrate the proficiency and capability transferable to the role from other contexts. The specific behavioural indicators under each competency were designed to reflect the aptitude and faculties that an effective Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) is expected to have. This enabled us to assess candidates in a fair and consistent way.

Additional selection criteria

Although the role play for this exercise was designed to test a candidate's transferrable skills and their potential to work effectively as a Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), the additional selection criteria (ASC) for this selection exercise directed that candidates must be able to demonstrate knowledge and experience of criminal law and procedure. It was expected that candidates' evidence of knowledge and experience of criminal law and procedure would be within the last five years.

Performance of candidates

849 candidates applied for this exercise. Shortlisting involved an online qualifying test, which all candidates were invited to complete. This comprised two multiple-

choice tests: a situational judgement test and a critical analysis test. The 542 most meritorious candidates were then invited to complete a written online scenario test.

Following the shortlisting stages, the 269 most meritorious candidates were invited to selection day. The original vacancy request was increased from 50 to 100 (50 immediate and 50 future) by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) due to business need. A further 36 selectable candidates were also later accepted by HMCTS for inclusion on a s.94 list, for any potential future vacancies which might arise, thus increasing the VR to 136. Therefore, the 136 most meritorious candidates were recommended for appointment by the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) to the Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales.

In making this decision, the Commission took into account all relevant character checks, all evidence provided by the candidates at selection day, as well as the candidates' independent assessments and self-assessments.

Selection day

Selection days were held remotely via Microsoft Teams between 6 October 2025 and 7 November 2025. Candidates who took part in remote interviews were provided with technical support to prepare for their selection day, as detailed on [our website](#).

Development of the role play

The role play was devised and drafted by a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), acting as the drafting judge for this exercise. In common with all the selection tools developed for this exercise, the role play was designed to simulate a court environment, with candidates taking on the role of judicial office holders. The role play assesses how candidates deal with the situations they may face and decisions they would have to make, if appointed. Candidates are expected to demonstrate their ability to meet the competency framework and whether they can maintain their performance under challenge and pressure.

The materials developed for this exercise were reviewed internally by Operations, Policy, and Diversity and Engagement teams to quality and equality assure the material, to ensure it was an effective tool to assess candidates. The teams also ensured that the materials did not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any potential candidates undertaking the selection days on the basis of their diversity characteristic or professional background.

Following this internal quality assurance, the material was then reviewed by the JAC Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is composed of members of the judiciary, representatives of the legal professions and chairs of JAC selection panels and is chaired by a lay JAC Commissioner. It offers advice and guidance on the development of selection material, quality assures the material and considers – and mitigates – any negative impacts on diverse groups.

The effectiveness of the role play was assessed by means of a mock assessment with a range of volunteers from relevant candidate groups. This provided an opportunity to trial the test material and make any necessary amendments.

Structure of role play

The role play was designed to assess how candidates would deal with decisions they may be asked to make and situations they may encounter if appointed as a Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts).

The role play involved a fictitious drink-driving case. Candidates were required to focus on judicial decision-making in an overnight police remand case and a contested bail application, both arising from the drink-driving charge. Candidates were expected to apply the relevant legal principles under the Bail Act 1976, as amended by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) 2012, manage the courtroom, and deliver clear legal reasoning on bail and case management.

The script was designed to test a candidate's ability to appropriately deal with situations and the people appearing before them, as well as process information and make decisions.

Candidates were given information on the background of the role play and any relevant law during their preparation time at selection day. This consisted of:

- The scenario outline
- The initial details of the prosecution case (IDPC) Bundle (Police report and Witness Statements)
- Relevant sections of the Bail Act 1976, as amended by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) 2012.

Marking of the role play

A checklist and marking guide were provided to the selection day panels to guide them in what to look for under each competency.

The evidence for each competency is assessed as either outstanding, strong, sufficient or insufficient. The panels then make a final overall assessment of candidates as either outstanding, strong, selectable or not presently selectable.

Assessment of candidates' responses to the role play

Outstanding evidence included:

- Acting quickly and decisively, making all the necessary decisions with sound judgement and reasoning.
- Showing fairness to all parties.
- Fully absorbing the brief and the submissions.

- Spotting the key issues and asking appropriate, clarifying questions and listening.
- Demonstrating calm authority, inspiring confidence and defusing tension.
- Communicating clearly and succinctly.
- Being sensitive to participation issues.
- Effectively managing the time throughout.
- Managing interruptions, reducing distractions and allowing ample time for to give the final judgment.

Strong evidence included:

- Making the key decisions but may miss some smaller or more nuanced decisions and reasons.
- Showing fairness to most of the parties.
- Absorbing most of the key parts of the brief and submissions.
- Spotting most of the key issues and asking appropriate, clarifying questions and listening.
- Maintaining control of the hearing but may be slightly less clear or succinct.
- Maintaining some control of the time and move the parties through the different parts of the hearing.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Making some decisions but missing some or not giving full reasons.
- Absorbing some key issue but missing others.
- Being unclear as to how the Acts apply to the facts of the case.
- Maintaining some control of the hearing.
- Not always being clear and structured in their reasoning.
- Having some time awareness but not effectively managing all interruptions and digressions, therefore rushing or cutting short parts of their judgment to finish in time.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Not taking all the necessary decisions, making decisions that were incorrect, not logically reasoned, or not based on the evidence.
- Not grasping the basics of the hearing, missing key issues from the brief and from the parties.
- Showing weak authority.
- Not communicating clearly, or demonstrating impatience, or insensitivity with the parties.
- Running out of time before completing their final judgment.
- Missing out essential matters due to being rushed.

Feedback from panels on the role play

- Read all materials provided by the JAC thoroughly before starting any exercise.

- Pay close attention to instructions to avoid missing key details, which can weaken responses.
- Fully understand what is required for each task.
- Manage your time effectively, as failure to complete tasks on time affects performance.

Competency-based interview

Marking of the competency-based interview

Each candidate also underwent a competency-based interview. Here, the panel was seeking further evidence and examples from the candidate of the required competencies and in the context of the role of Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts). The panel drew upon evidence provided in the candidate's self-assessment, independent assessment and career history to inform their questioning.

Assessment of candidates' responses to the competency-based interview

Exercising Judgement

Outstanding evidence included:

- Examples involving complex, finely balanced and legally sound decisions, which were carefully reasoned and under significant pressure.
- Consistently applying relevant law and procedure to progress cases effectively.
- Demonstrating independence of mind.
- Ensuring fairness by acting with integrity and without bias or prejudice, even in challenging and complex situations.

Strong evidence included:

- Examples that were slightly less complex or finely balanced and involved less significant pressure.
- Generally applying relevant law and procedure correctly to progress cases, presenting decisions clearly.
- Demonstrating independence of mind.
- Acting with fairness and integrity, avoiding bias or prejudice, even when faced with challenging or complex situations.
- Clear decision-making, demonstrating sound judgement.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Providing less complex examples.
- Applying relevant law and procedure to progress cases, though not always consistently.
- Generally presenting decisions clearly, although the reasoning was not well articulated.

- Demonstrating some independence of mind.
- Acting with fairness and integrity, avoiding bias or prejudice.
- Judgement was evident but lacked depth or clarity.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Providing examples that were less relevant and lacked complexity.
- Not consistently applying relevant law and procedure to progress cases.
- Often presenting decisions unclearly or without sufficient consideration.
- Demonstrating limited independence of mind.
- Not demonstrating fairness, integrity, or objectivity.

Possessing and Building Knowledge

Outstanding evidence included:

- Demonstrating detailed knowledge of criminal law and procedure.
- Ability to acquire knowledge rapidly, particularly in unfamiliar and complex areas.
- Commitment to staying abreast of changes in the law, court processes, and procedures.
- Demonstrating continuous learning and professional development, regularly sharing relevant information and knowledge with others when appropriate.

Strong evidence included:

- Demonstrating knowledge of criminal law and procedure.
- Ability to acquire knowledge quickly, including in unfamiliar or complex areas.
- Commitment to keeping up to date with changes in the law, court processes, and procedures.
- Demonstrating ongoing learning and professional development, sharing relevant information and knowledge with others when appropriate.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating a working knowledge of criminal law and procedure.
- Demonstrating some ability to learn unfamiliar areas.
- Making efforts to keep up with legal changes and court processes.
- Engaging in professional development, occasionally sharing relevant information.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating limited knowledge of criminal law and procedure.
- Demonstrating limited ability or effort to learn unfamiliar areas.
- Making minimal effort to maintain current knowledge of legal changes or court processes.
- Demonstrating minimal engagement in professional development and rarely shared relevant information.

Assimilating and Clarifying Information

Outstanding evidence included:

- Well-developed examples, clearly aligned with the competency, and showing impact beyond their immediate role.
- Demonstrating an exceptional ability to quickly assimilate complex information under significant time pressure.
- Effectively weighing conflicting evidence and focusing on key issues.
- Identifying the essential issues with precision, and with clear, developed and structured understanding of issues.
- A structured approach enabling efficient decision-making in high-pressured contexts.

Strong evidence included:

- Assimilating large volumes of complex information and conflicting evidence promptly.
- Identifying key issues accurately and developed a clear understanding of the issues.
- Ability to clarify uncertainties when needed, though with less consistency or depth.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Providing basic examples with less complexity.
- Responses that focused more on case background than on specific actions taken.
- Limited evidence of assimilating, clarifying, and sharing information.
- Being prompted to stay focused on the questions asked and to relate their example to the specific aspects of the competency.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Not providing any clear account of what they did or how they did it.
- Providing responses consisting of generic commentary or unsupported assertions, even after probing by the panel.
- Not engaging with the specific criteria for the competency or demonstrate relevant behaviours.

Working and Communicating with Others

Outstanding evidence included:

- Establishing authority with courtesy, maintaining control and defusing tension.
- Communicating clearly in all settings.
- Listening attentively to ensure fairness and efficiency.
- Demonstrating strong commitment to diversity and sensitivity to individual needs.

Strong evidence included:

- Maintaining authority with courtesy.
- Communicating clearly in most settings.
- Listening to ensure fairness while managing proceedings effectively.
- Showing awareness of diversity and sensitivity to individual needs.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Maintaining some authority and courtesy during proceedings.
- Communicating appropriately across most settings.
- Demonstrating an ability to listen, allowing parties to present their case while progressing proceedings.
- Demonstrating some awareness of diversity and individual needs.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Providing limited or unclear examples that do not directly answer the questions.
- Demonstrating a lack of awareness of others' vulnerabilities.
- Not maintaining authority or courtesy and communicating ineffectively.
- Not listening to ensure fairness or manage proceedings efficiently.
- Demonstrating little awareness of diversity or sensitivity to individual needs.

Managing Work Efficiently

Outstanding evidence included:

- Succinct, well-developed examples demonstrating managing of time and prioritising tasks to complete work efficiently.
- Resolving problems independently while seeking advice appropriately.
- Remaining resilient and adaptable under pressure.
- Using resources and technology effectively to maximise efficiency.

Strong evidence included:

- Relevant and specific examples demonstrating managing of time and prioritising tasks effectively.
- Resolving most problems independently while seeking advice when needed.
- Remaining calm and adaptable under pressure.
- Making good use of resources and technology to support efficiency.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Examples that demonstrated an ability to manage time and prioritise tasks, though they involved limited complexity or challenge.
- Resolving straightforward problems with some reliance on advice.
- Remaining calm under normal pressure.
- Making basic use of resources and technology to support their role.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Providing generic or low-level examples, with little detail on their actions.
- Not managing time properly or prioritising tasks.
- Relying heavily on others to resolve problems.
- Showing limited resilience under pressure.
- Making poor or minimal use of resources and technology.

Feedback from panels on the competency-based interview:

- Prepare thoroughly. Review the required competencies and skills.
- Have strong examples ready for each competency, including those not used in your self-assessment form.
- Think carefully about how your examples demonstrate the competencies.
- Focus on your actions and outcomes, not just the background circumstances.
- Adapt examples to the question asked, rather than relying on rigid pre-prepared answers.
- Keep your application to hand for reference during the interview.
- Be authentic. Answer naturally and confidently.
- Do not ignore the question asked or rely solely on memorised answers - be flexible.

Welsh Questions

Candidates for posts in Wales were required to have an understanding, or the ability to acquire the understanding, of the administration of justice in Wales, including legislation applicable to Wales and Welsh devolution arrangements. This requirement was assessed via an online video assessment through a series of questions. Candidates were assessed as either suitable or not suitable for posts in Wales, based on their answers to these questions.

Feedback from Candidates

After the selection days, candidates were invited to complete an anonymous candidate survey. A total of 83 candidates responded to the survey. The following responses are taken from the results of the survey (these numbers have been rounded to one decimal point so may not add up to 100%):

The instructions provided beforehand enabled me to prepare for the selection day.

- 79.6% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 9.6% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 10.8% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I was confident I knew how to use Microsoft Teams before the selection day.

- 95.2% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 4.8% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.

I understood what was expected on the selection day.

- 84.4% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 6.0% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 9.6% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The role play, including the setting, scenario and actors, created a convincing situation.

- 60.3% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 12.0% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 27.7% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The role play enabled me to demonstrate my suitability for the role.

- 65.1% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 16.9% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 18.1% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I am confident in the roleplay as a JAC selection tool.

- 68.7% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 14.5% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 16.9% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The interview questions gave me the opportunity to demonstrate my skills, abilities and competence for this role.

- 53.1% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 14.5% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 32.5% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The panel behaved professionally and treated me with respect.

- 95.2% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 1.2% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 3.6% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I am confident in the interview as a JAC selection tool.

- 65.1% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 15.7% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 19.3% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

How would you rate the quality of customer service you received from JAC staff on the selection day?

- 97.6% of candidates rated it good or excellent.
- 2.4% of candidates rated it fair.