

# ACCREDITATION

## CASE STUDY



**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions

### Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is the biggest public service delivery department in the UK. It is responsible for welfare and pension policy and is a key player in tackling child poverty and serves over 20 million customers.

The DWP delivers its customer services through a number of operational organisations including the Pension Service, Disability and Carers Service, Child Maintenance Enforcement Commission and Jobcentre Plus, and aims for a high quality and efficient service to all.

Every working day the DWP will:

- Receive around 15,000 vacancies
- Receive over 1 million job searches
- Help over 5,000 people move into work
- Issue 18,000 pension forecasts
- Deal with over 1 million personal contacts

### Gateway to delivery

The DWP is the biggest spending government department, involved in often complex and high profile programmes and projects to deliver policy and strategic business change. As with all public bodies, it has to show it gives value for taxpayers' money efficiently and effectively.

The DWP portfolio has been updated to take account of the Cabinet Office review and the Departments spending review decisions and the updated portfolio now comprises 34 projects, broken down into 21 policy, eight business improvement, three infrastructure and two cross-government categories. Outside of the department's portfolio are a number of 'business as usual' change activities – often to do with the review and maintenance of existing systems and policies.

The department adopted the Office of Government Commerce's (OGC) PRINCE2® and Managing Successful



Programmes (MSP) as its guiding principles and processes. Progress and compliance are monitored through regular internal and independent gate reviews at key stages, including National Audit Office, Select Committee and OGC Gateway reviews.

This system has been running successfully for more than five years, with reviews handled at different management levels depending on the level of complexity and risk.

Effective improvement cannot be achieved by a myopic focus on technical aspects such as processes, workflow and systems. Lasting success can be only gained when these are blended with community issues such as human values, motivation, expertise and competence. But how do we know we are on the right track? APM accreditation is a very good start."

Joe Harley, DWP PPM head of profession

However, the DWP recognised that systems and processes alone were not sufficient – it is the people using them that are crucial to success.

The department has been aware for some time of the need for a programme and project management (PPM) structured development process but this has received added impetus through the introduction of the Major Projects Authority (MPA) whose aim is to bring about the successful delivery of major projects across central Government. The establishment of the MPA was sealed when the Prime Minister sent a MPA mandate letter to all Secretaries of State in January 2011. One of the key points was that the MPA would work with departments to build PPM capability.

PPM is the second largest of 23 recognised professions within the department, with a community of some 8,700 people who have chosen it as their primary profession. The DWP is committed to continually improving its PPM capability through the ongoing development of those within this community.

Joe Harley, the Government and DWP chief information officer and departmental head of profession for PPM sums up the general ambition of just what he wants from the profession as simply: "People capable of delivering the portfolio of programmes and projects – no matter how complex."



## Taking the professional route

The DWP PPM Community is all-inclusive, ranging from those at the very highest level to those in supporting roles. Despite the huge number of people involved, every individual has the opportunity to grow and develop through a clearly structured route.

Standards, qualifications framework, role profiles and visible career paths underpin the department's career development programme. The PPM Community is grouped into three areas – professional, practitioner and the wider community of practice – each with a defined set of minimum standards and qualifications.

Launched in 2009, the community is led and supported from the top through a council of senior management representatives from each area within the community. It is headed by the CIO and executive and departmental board member and is responsible for guiding and governing the development and strengthening of the profession, embedding strategy and direction.

This senior sponsorship right across the department has created a passion and enthusiasm for professional development and capability improvement with PPM and has created a receptive environment for a culture change of this magnitude.

At its core is the competency framework based around five generic competencies and one professional, which is aligned to the APM Competency Framework, Professional Skills for Government and linked to the APM 5 Dimensions of Professionalism.

The qualifications framework supports everyone within the community, from those who need a basic understanding of PPM principles and methodologies through to professionally accredited programme and project managers. It is built around OGC and APM courses and the APM Body of Knowledge and is being proposed as the model for the cross-Government qualifications framework.

Visible career paths set out the minimum qualifications and experience levels for all roles and grades. Each employee has key work objectives agreed during their annual appraisal and performance review, with a personal development plan constantly reviewed against the competency framework.

Specific PPM learning and development is provided by an external partner and is predominately classroom based, but increasingly self-study and online training is being utilised. The department backs this programme with a series of 'how to' workshops based around DWP best practice case studies on specific areas of known weakness. The programme of six workshops has recently been accredited by Cranfield School of Management.

As part of its aim to become even more closely aligned to APM, the department is aiming to assess all project professionals and practitioners against the APM Competency Framework by 2011. This will contribute to an enterprise skills management database allowing new projects and programmes to be staffed by the people with the right skills and competency.

Community members are also committed to both their own continual professional development and supporting others with theirs. Activities include collaboration and knowledge sharing among the three communities of practice and taking part in master-classes on a range of topics, with invited expert speakers from the public and private sectors.

Monitoring progress is not confined to individual members of the community – the DWP puts its whole PPM learning and development programme under regular scrutiny to ensure it reflects best practice. Annual reviews and independent assessments to benchmark it against other UK and global organisations highlight areas of improvement and weakness at all levels, allowing an action plan to be developed to address any issues.

## Association for Project Management and the DWP

The DWP has adopted the APM Competency Framework, the 5 Dimensions of Professionalism, the APM Body of Knowledge and suite of qualifications as the backbone of the development of its project and programme professionals.

Close alignment with the association is actively encouraged. PPM Community members are able to claim back membership fees when joining APM at an appropriate level and the aim is increase membership to 100 per cent of the professional group and 50 per cent of practitioners by 2015.

The DWP has supplied speakers for events such as the APM Conference, has hosted APM Board meetings and spoken to other gatherings about its PPM Community. It is a corporate member of APM and the PPM Community adheres to the APM Code of Conduct.

It is never easy to accurately measure success but the key in our view, is the allocation of the most capable people to the most demanding delivery initiatives, supported by similarly capable processes and tools deployed and understood across the department. The joining up of capable people with fit for purpose processes and tools all wrapped up in a supportive PPM culture has and continues to enable a genuine step-change improvement in departmental PPM capability."

Ian Anderson, DWP PPM head of profession manager,  
CIT Portfolio, Quality & Assurance



### Personal story

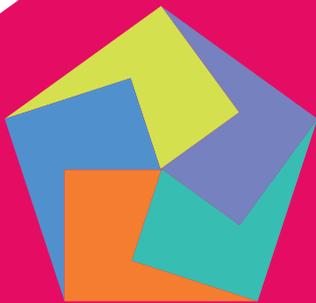
DWP project manager David Sobczak has worked for the Department or its predecessors for nearly 30 years, specialising in project management for the past six years. He is passionate about learning and professional development having trained earlier in his career to be a business excellence assessor.

He has recently added to his general management certificates including a Masters Degree in Business Administration with qualifications and learning in Prince2, APMP and APMQ. He is a member of the APM and an active participant in both the DWP PPM profession and his local APM branch.

"I believe that you can transform personal and organisational performance through learning and professionalism and as an active member of the department's PPM profession, view myself as a role model to colleagues.

"That said, I do not – and I know the department does not – take our success in delivering projects for granted. What drives our PPM capability improvement both personally and as an organisation is what we've achieved for our customers. We never forget that capability improvement and professionalism are not the be all and end all, they are a means to achieve better performance and greater business success."

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## **FIVE**Dimensions of Professionalism

### **APM Corporate Accreditation**

APM Corporate Accreditation will help you stand out as an exemplar in the development of project management professionals. It provides assurances to your customers and suppliers and allows you to attract and retain the best project management talent in the country.

APM Corporate Accreditation recognises the commitment of organisations and professional development services to the defined, APM Five Dimensions of Professionalism, each of which is supported by an APM standard:

#### **Breadth**

The APM Body of Knowledge defines the knowledge needed to manage any kind of project. It underpins many project management standards and methods including the National Occupational Standard in Project Management.

#### **Depth**

The APM Competence Framework provides a guide to project management competences. It is part of your professional toolkit; mapping levels of knowledge and experience to help you progress your skills and abilities.

#### **Achievement**

APM qualifications take your career in new and exciting directions. They are recognised across the profession and aligned with IPMA's 4 level Certification Program.

#### **Commitment**

Continuing Professional Development helps develop your project management practice. A targeted development plan will enhance your project management career.

#### **Accountability**

The APM Code of Professional Conduct outlines the ethical practice expected of a professional. Becoming an APM member shows your commitment to the Code and sets you apart from others.

## Association for Project Management

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