

Functional Assessor Recruitment & Retention Business Case

An evidence-led case for improving selection quality, reducing early-attrition risk and protecting recruitment investment

30% in 2021

training attrition; approximately 40% in 2018*

≈2.3

people recruited for every experienced assessor required*

£3,000

average recruitment cost per employee before training*

* DWP-commissioned research published January 2026; provider data examined historical recruitment and retention patterns, including 2018 and 2021. These are sector findings, not current provider-specific turnover rates.

Executive proposition

The commercial problem. Functional Assessor recruitment is not simply a sourcing challenge. Providers recruit qualified clinicians into a specialised role requiring intensive training, evidence-based report writing, auditing, productivity and adaptation away from conventional clinical practice. Historical DWP research identified retention as a major workforce challenge after clinicians entered training and the role.

The KJR response. KJR Clinical Consulting provides clinician-led pre-selection designed to reduce avoidable early-attrition risk: realistic role briefing, structured clinical interview, evidence scoring, role-fit assessment and a documented recommendation before intensive training investment is committed.

KJR does not need to eliminate attrition to create value.

Preventing even one unsuitable progression into a three-month training programme could protect a substantial proportion of the employer's initial recruitment and employment investment.

1. Verified DWP evidence

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Disability Assessor Recruitment and Retention, Research Report No. 1056, published 29 January 2026. Fieldwork was conducted in spring 2022.

Evidence point	What the DWP research found
Early training attrition	Detailed provider data showed training attrition of 30% in 2021, improved from 40% in 2018.
Established workforce attrition	Overall assessor attrition averaged 4.3% per month in 2021 - approximately 52% annual equivalent.
Recruitment intensity	Approximately 2.3 people had to be recruited for every experienced assessor required.
Recruitment cost	Average recruitment cost was estimated at £3,000 per employee before training costs.
Selection and role fit	The report recommends competency and role-fit assessment, realistic discussion of the role and earlier identification of unsuitable candidates.
Retention principle	The report states that good recruitment is fundamental to retention, alongside effective induction, onboarding, mentoring and support.

2. Conservative first-three-month cost model

This model estimates the minimum identifiable recruitment and employment investment committed during the first three months. Salary is remuneration for employment and training; it is not automatically “wasted”. The figures are an illustrative planning model, not a DWP cost estimate or guaranteed saving.

First three months	£39,500 salary	£47,000 salary
Historical recruitment cost	£3,000	£3,000
Three months' salary	£9,875	£11,750
Approx. employer NI	£1,294	£1,575
Minimum employer pension	£249	£306
Minimum identifiable investment	£14,418	£16,631

Assumptions. The £39,500 and £47,000 salaries are illustrative Functional Assessor salary scenarios and should be refreshed before each proposal. Employer NI uses the 2026/27 rate of 15% above the secondary threshold. Minimum employer pension uses 3% of qualifying earnings.

Not included. Specialist training delivery; Clinical Standards Lead or experienced assessor time; supervision; auditing; management and HR time; equipment and IT; pre-employment checks; reduced learning-period productivity; vacancy impact; or restarting recruitment.

3. Cohort economics and potential KJR value

A ten-person cohort illustrates the commercial exposure. The 30% scenario reflects the report's 2021 training-attrition figure; the 40% scenario reflects the earlier 2018 level. These amounts represent identifiable initial investment associated with early departures - not guaranteed KJR savings.

Historical scenario	Early departures	Lower salary	Higher salary
30% training attrition (2021)	3	£43,254	£49,893
40% training attrition (2018)	4	£57,672	£66,524

The DWP's 2.3-to-1 recruitment ratio also shows why selection quality matters: the initial three-month pipeline expenditure required to produce one experienced assessor can be substantial, even before specialist training and supervision are included.

4. How KJR addresses the identified risk

Realistic role briefing — Tests expectations before training investment is committed.

Clinician-led CV screening — Assesses relevant clinical evidence, professional judgement and transferable skills.

Structured clinician-led interview — Explores communication, reasoning, resilience, report-writing orientation and professional judgement.

Role-fit and retention-risk assessment — Tests understanding of productivity, audit, evidence-based reporting and the non-traditional assessor role.

Evidence-scored recommendation — Provides a Green, Amber or Red recommendation supported by numerical scoring and concise evidence.

Post-appointment follow-up — Identifies emerging retention concerns and feeds learning into future selection.

5. Client proposition

How much is early Functional Assessor attrition costing your organisation?

KJR offers an independent clinician-led selection layer designed to improve role understanding, strengthen appointment evidence and reduce avoidable early-attrition risk before significant training investment is committed.

Retention outcomes cannot be guaranteed. KJR's value is in strengthening the quality, consistency and transparency of the decision made before training begins.

Discuss a measured Functional Assessor recruitment pilot

Suggested measures: training entry, completion, accreditation and 3-, 6- and 12-month retention outcomes.

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Evidence basis and limitations: DWP Research Report No. 1056; HMRC employer rates and thresholds 2026/27; The Pensions Regulator minimum contribution guidance. Historical findings must not be presented as current Maximus, Ingeus, Serco or Capita provider-specific turnover rates. [DWP report](#) | [HMRC rates](#) | [Pension guidance](#)