HDRC Economist Technical Assessment (1 Hour)

Instructions

- This assessment is designed to be completed within 60 minutes.
- It consists of three sections of technical questions and one additional question focused on your work experience.
- Please submit your responses as a single file to kate.sheffer@newcastle.gov.uk by 27th July 2025.

Section 1: Data Interpretation (15 minutes)

You are provided with the following simplified dataset:

Local Authority	Working Age Population	Employment Rate (%)	Supported Employment Programme Cost (£m)	Social Housing Waiting List
Northborough	120,000	71.2%	2.5	3,200
Eastmere	140,000	76.5%	3.0	2,100
Southfield	160,000	68.9%	2.8	4,500
Westport	130,000	74.0%	2.2	2,800

Questions:

1. Calculate the cost per working-age resident for the supported employment programme in each local authority.
2. What patterns do you observe between employment rates, programme costs, and housing demand?
3. Northborough council is considering reducing the funding for their Supported Employment Programme. You have been asked to provide advice to the senior leaders in this council about the possible impact. What would you share?
4. What additional data would help you assess the possible impact of reduced funding?

Word limit: 300 words total for this section.

Section 2: Evaluation Design Scenario – Retrofit Programme (15 minutes)

Your local authority is planning to implement a retrofit programme to improve energy efficiency in its social housing stock. The aims of the programme are to:

- Reduce fuel poverty among tenants,
- Improve health outcomes (e.g. respiratory conditions, mental wellbeing),
- Contribute to local net zero carbon targets.

You are asked to support a service lead in designing an evaluation for this programme.

Task: Write a short briefing that:

1. Proposes a clear and focused evaluation question (or set of questions).
2. Recommends an appropriate evaluation design.
3. Suggests how findings could be used to inform future policy or commissioning decisions within the local authority.

Word limit: 300 words total for this section.

Section 3: Economic Modelling (20 minutes)

Scenario: You are asked to estimate the economic impact of a new housing first initiative for people experiencing long-term homelessness. The programme provides stable accommodation alongside wraparound support.

Task:

1. Which economic model or analytical approach would you recommend for estimating the impact, and what is the rationale for your recommendation?
2. What information would you need to develop your model or approach?
3. What steps would you take to evaluate and communicate the uncertainty in your estimates?

Word limit: 300 words total for this section.

Section 4: Your Work Experience (10 minutes)

Tell us about a time when you applied an economic model or evaluation approach to a real-world scenario. What was your role, what steps did you take, and what recommendations did you make based on your findings? Use the STAR framework (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure your response. Word limit: 300 words.