

How Coventry won the Qualifications & Curriculum Development Agency.

"As a forward-looking organisation, we feel that our choice of Coventry represents a real opportunity for a secure relocation that will contribute to the regeneration of this historic city.

Andrew Hall, Chief Executive, QCDA

QCDA is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It maintains and develops the national curriculum and associated assessments, tests and examinations; and accredits and monitors qualifications in colleges and at work. Further information on the QCDA can be found at www.qcda.org.uk

The QCDA Board made the decision based on the findings of the Lyons Review that the organisation will relocate outside London and the Greater South East by March 2010. Approximately 500 staff are based at offices in Piccadilly and there is a small office in Belfast.

The Relocation Requirements:

- 60,000 sq ft - one building or two buildings, with an aggregate space of 60,000 sq ft is acceptable. However, buildings must be within a 15-minute walk of each other.
- Ideally office(s) should be available for 1st phase move by March 2008. However, a temporary 2008 accommodation solution, with full availability by March 2010 is acceptable.
- New build or refurbished acceptable.
- City centre, business park and university campus sites all considered acceptable at this stage.
- Locations that have more than one potential property solution will be favoured (as the QCDA must retain a negotiating position with property companies).

Initial site visits and tours were made during June 2006 to visit potential sites, assess the local labor market, discuss relocation support from the local authority and familiarisation of the city. After the initial city visits, the six short-listed locations were invited to present to the QCDA Executive Management Team. Once selected, Coventry was also invited to host various staff meetings in the city.

The practical and measurable support that will be provided both to the QCDA and its staff (e.g. schools, housing, partner employment options, recruitment assistance, reconnaissance visits, office selection) was a key decider in the decision to choose Coventry as its preferred location. The city worked very hard to provide comprehensive statistics and data and to guarantee the provision of a dedicated support officer.

Coventry was chosen as QCDA's preferred location in August 2006.

A total of 21 property options were originally put forward to QCDA, the final choice was MCD's development at Earlsdon Park, Coventry. A new build 65,000sq ft, BREAM "Excellent" rated development.

During this period QCDA was restructured and a new regulatory authority Ofqual (Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator) was launched. Ofqual was also to be based in the city but in separate premises. Temporary office space was located at Spring Place, Coventry Business Park in order for QCDA to begin the early stages of their relocation and in time to provide a permanent home for Ofqual.

Why did QCDA choose Coventry?

Coventry was evaluated against an extensive list of operational and financial criteria.

- Availability of top quality city centre or out of town office accommodation at competitive rates
- Coventry's unrivalled location, excellent transport links by road, rail and air, and most importantly under 60 minutes from London Euston
- The commitment of Coventry to provide a dedicated resource for relocation support
- Coventry has a large, diverse and readily available pool of labour resource. The city has a population of over 306,000 people; there are 1.14 million people within a 30-minute drive of the city centre
- Our reputation as one of the safest cities in the UK
- Quality and range of housing
- Quality of our schools
- Graduate supply – 35,000 students between Coventry and Warwick and over 272,000 at 15 universities within 1 hour drive.

"When considering the benefits of moving our offices from central London, we carried out a full evaluation of a number of cities in England. All of them made presentations and held information meetings for QCDA's staff. We were pleased that the Secretary of State approved our Board's recommendation that we move to Coventry.

"As a forward-looking organisation, we feel that our choice of Coventry represents a real opportunity for a secure relocation that will contribute to the regeneration of this historic city.

"People still ask us: why Coventry? Had it not been for the Lyons Review we probably would have stayed in London. But having to relocate, Coventry was the ideal location for us. It's probably the best-connected city in the country in terms of transport and we forecast that we will make significant business cost savings.

“But relocation is as much about people as it is about these factors. We are finding that the pool of skills in Coventry is excellent and that for each post we’ve advertised there have been around 30 applications.

“In London, that is simply not the case and we have found this city to be extremely determined to ensure a soft landing for us here.”

Andrew Hall, Chief Executive, QCDA

Coventry City's support for QCDA/Ofqual

Coventry recognised that it was a key benefit to provide a dedicated support officer who has been pro-actively engaging with key relocation personnel and employees, our unique and personlaised services includes: -

- Develop a relocation support package to assist staff in:
 - Identifying new homes
 - Accessing mortgage providers and solicitors
 - Placing children into local schools and nurseries
 - Identifying job opportunities and support for spouses
 - Finding care for dependent relatives
- Provide expert local knowledge and expertise to assist staff with the familiarisation of the city and wider area:
 - A total of 16 Familiarisation tours were offered to all staff and approx 290 people came along to have a look, which represents nearly 60% of the organisations staff at that time.
 - Attending various open days, events, and presentations.
 - Assist with Internal communications by the production of a bi-monthly newsletter including Coventry news and features
- Production of dedicated relocation brochures and fact sheets and the launch of the new website www.relocate-to-coventry.com
- Develop a recruitment strategy with you to identify potential staff to fill your vacancies and utilise our job search and recruitment network to put forward candidates for posts
- Provide a coordination role to manage support from other local agencies and relocation specialists
- Work with both the universities to develop a graduate employment programme to enable you to establish the company as a local recruiter of new graduates

What do QCDA and Ofqual think of our service?

"I chose to relocate to Warwickshire for the more relaxed pace of life, where I could live in the beautiful countryside and yet be only a short drive away from the many facilities that Coventry and its neighbouring towns have to offer."
Nikki Greenway, Accreditation Services Manager

"You might think moving from London to the West Midlands would limit your opportunities in life but for me it has created them. I have moved from living in a one-bedroom flat with a one hour commute to work to the prospect of buying a house with a garden that is only ten minutes walk from my desk! My quality of life has vastly improved with more time to spend with my family and to enjoy where I live. I would recommend the move to anyone."

Amy Budd, Communications Manager

"Coventry has worked hard to sell itself as a key location for business after the Lyons Review stated more civil service jobs should be moved out of London to the regions.

Coventry has the potential to attract further relocations out of London after a number of previous successes, including the QCDA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority).

The QCDA has had only good things to say about the positive approach of Coventry City Council and the expert support that they have received from them. By 2010 I predict that Coventry will be in the top five for government relocations."

Stuart Ladds, Relocation Programme Manager, Office for Government Commerce.



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