

Empowering managers with HR training

When the London Borough of Hackney Council (LBHC) decided to change its approach to HR, we trained its managers and team leaders to play a bigger role in managing their teams, showing them how to identify HR risks and get the right support at the right time.

HR issues can be tricky for even the most experienced managers and not following the right steps can expose organisations to reputational and legal risks. In 2015, LBHC decided to move to an HR business partner model, in which the HR function focuses on HR strategy, policy and high-risk matters, and line managers take care of day-to-day employee issues. This enables the HR team to operate more efficiently with fewer members, and encourages managers to take responsibility for their teams, while still having access to expert advice and governance if they need it.

To help it to move to this new model, LBHC appointed Capita HR Solutions in 2015 to create a development programme for its managers. The goal was to equip managers to deal with everyday issues that they would usually refer to HR, and to educate them about how to get support from the new HR business partners. They would have expert HR support when they needed it but, at the same time, the council could reduce the size of its in-house HR team.

Our brief was to design and develop a range of HR training sessions for LBHC's managers, and to develop 'how to' guides that they could refer to afterwards. Our wealth of experience in both HR and developing managers fed into a tailor-made programme of seven workshops covering key HR topics:

- Absence management
- Capability management
- Conducting an investigation
- Dealing with disciplinary matters
- Employee relations (grievances, bullying, harassment)
- Managing performance
- Recruitment and selection.

We worked hand-in-hand with LBHC to develop the training course material using our in-depth knowledge of HR, and the council's need to clarify its line managers' roles and responsibilities.

Demand for the workshops was much higher than we had anticipated, and we had to add several extra sessions so that there was room for everyone who wanted to attend. The sessions were delivered by the same trainer, providing continuity as our relationship with LBHC grew. In total, over three years, we delivered 97 workshops attended by more than 1,000 employees.





“ We received excellent HR support from Capita throughout this complex and difficult staffing issue. A real strength of the service provided by Capita was the advice from our HR advisor, which was calm, consistent and completely reliable at all times.”

The feedback from managers who attended the sessions was overwhelmingly positive. “I now understand the process and how to go about dealing with issues which may arise, and I am more likely to deal with under-performance,” said one.

Another said: “My knowledge has improved immensely. I now have the knowledge and tools to implement the relevant HR policies.”

And another added: “I feel more confident and have more knowledge on the subject and will be able to undertake disciplinary action in line with policies and process.”

Astrid Keogh, LBHC’s Senior HR and Organisational Development Adviser, said: “Chris Chesworth, Head of HR Advisory Services at Capita, and Sarah Pickthall, HR Consultant at Capita, had a huge impact on how prepared our 800 managers and team leaders were to work in a completely different way. We were supported and consulted throughout every step of the process and the result has been a very smooth transition to ‘A New Way of Working’.”

We’ll leave the last word to Dan Paul, LBHC’s Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development: “We have been particularly pleased with the way that the workshop sessions have run and the overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received from our managers. The Capita team have been knowledgeable, friendly, efficient and approachable.”

So, what’s next for HR maturity at LBHC? Capita HR Solutions has provided the council with guidance for measures of success including the hard metrics of employee retention, numbers of dismissals and instances of tribunals, plus more qualitative measures such as levels of engagement and the candidate experience during recruitment.

As the new way of working becomes the new standard, all new managers joining LBHC will be able to attend the workshops. As part of the council’s commitment to training and development, team leaders will be equipped with the skills, and support, to deal with all the topics that they cover.

To find out how we can support you in a challenging situation with specialist HR support, contact education.hrservices@capita.com