

CASE STUDY:

# INVESTIGATIONS TRAINING



UNISON is one of the UK's largest trade unions and Europe's largest public service union, with more than 1.3 million members. They represent members, negotiate and bargain on their behalf, and campaign for better working conditions and pay. UNISON's membership is drawn from the public services, for private contractors providing public services, and also for utility companies.



## Targeting issues

Prior to the beginning of 2021, UNISON had a serious lack of competently trained and experienced HR officers to advise and assist managers to conduct effective investigations.

When undertaking investigations, there was no template or clear framework for investigators to follow. This meant that the process was inconsistent and open to interpretation, lacking a clear UNISON approach, vision, and styling. It was difficult to get people to meet: a senior staff member stated that investigations were a lengthy and drawn-out process, sometimes taking months to complete.

*"A casework log was the only implement used by investigating officers, filing nature of complaint, date notified, date investigation initiated, name of investigator and so forth. Since TCM training, we have streamlined an investigative report template for officers to use. This was based on guidance received during the training and Gary Rogers also helpfully offered to meet with us to discuss it before it had been finalised. This will be followed up with a 'Guidance for the Investigating Officer' brochure based on content from the TCM training."*

LUCY MACKLIN, HR OFFICER AT UNISON

The template used by officers consisted of a casework log, purposed to file nature of complaint, date notified, date investigation initiated, name of investigator and so forth. This provided basic information but lacked a broader framework for officers to build the scope and narrative of their investigations. A movement from data-driven, simplistic logging to clear, detailed, and thorough templates was needed to avoid inconsistency and a lack of direction. This new report framework was imperative to compliment the training of investigating officers, providing them with the tools necessary to conduct an effective investigation.



## Making resolutions

### Training

In February 2021, The TCM Group facilitated and delivered a one-day investigation training programme to a HR team at UNISON. The partnership between UNISON and TCM was instigated by a previous meeting between Davinder Sandhu, Head of Learning and Development at UNISON, and Gary Rogers, Head of Investigations and Audits at TCM. Gary's previous work with mediations at UNISON and Davinder's attendance of an investigations masterclass, also hosted by Gary, established a line of trust and familiarity between the two organisations.

*"It felt right to work with TCM. There was constant communication to ensure that they delivered training that was bespoke and relevant to UNISON's unique aspects."*

DAVINDER SANDHU, HEAD OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT UNISON

The programme centred on equipping HR Officers with the tools to:

- ✓ Become confident in supporting managers.
- ✓ Expand pool of trained investigators.
- ✓ Enhance capacity.
- ✓ Resolve investigations quickly.



Previous investigations training failed to cover all the skills needed for investigations, until The TCM Group revolutionised this. 3 x 3-hour sessions were delivered on a virtual platform, over the course of February 2021, providing delegates with:

- ✓ An overview of investigative practices.
- ✓ Practical advanced interview techniques.
- ✓ Hands on experience of reviewing evidence to establish findings and provide recommendations.

## Toolkit

The casework log was transformed to a clear and detailed report template. Gary and TCM designed criteria that would enable investigators to build a narrative, telling the story in a way that moved beyond facts and figures, leaning more into the people and emotions involved:

- 1 Terms of reference
- 2 Investigating officer
- 3 Executive summary
- 4 Investigative methodology
- 5 Investigation findings
- 6 Interview details
- 7 Specialist advice and comparative standards
- 8 Recommendations
- 9 Appendices

## Impacting culture



Delegates were asked to provide feedback after the three sessions. Evaluations found that all participants felt more confident in conducting an investigation in an objective, robust and fair manner with some scoring it as excellent. They felt the sessions were engaging, and that the advanced interviewing techniques were useful in conducting objective interviews and in drawing maximum detail from witnesses.

In terms of the new and improved template for reporting, managers have expressed the usefulness of having detailed guidance in place to Lucy Macklin, HR Officer at UNISON. Through TCM guidance, reporting has moved from logging data to methodical, detailed storytelling for conducting reasonable investigations. This has enhanced the consistency and thoroughness of all investigations conducted by officers at UNISON.

*"I loved this training (I think we all did) and I couldn't recommend Gary as a trainer enough. He was so engaging which says a lot as it must be hard to keep people switched on for 3 hours at a time when training through a screen! I really think our managers would benefit from this, even more so than us, because we will be supporting them as the investigating officer."*

LUCY MACKLIN, HR OFFICER AT UNISON

## Looking forward

As a result of overwhelmingly positive feedback from staff, UNISON have commissioned The TCM Group to deliver a roll-out of five further sessions to managers to enhance their investigator skills as well as support UNISON to develop appropriate templates and guidance documents. We were also commissioned to conduct two of their most complex investigations, on an outsourced basis, and provide ongoing support in the form of a confidential advisory service.

In the future, UNISON aim to train all senior managers on investigation skills to continue expanding their pool using a blended online and in-house approach. A continued collaboration with The TCM Group would be paramount to the success of this project.



**If you would like more information on how your organisation can benefit from investigations training, call today and speak to a member of the team.**

**TCM**  
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