

CASE STUDY:

CONDUCTING A NEUTRAL EVALUATION



Introduction

London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) chose to conduct a neutral evaluation to further understand the employee culture and consider future learning points.

Neutral evaluations are chosen by organisations when they wish to carry out an independent examination, often for complex workplace issues such as multiple and counter grievances, collective disputes, team conflict or allegations of bullying, harassment, or discrimination. This service explores issues through extensive evidence gathering and proposes an appropriate route to resolution, allowing organisations to outsource the often-contentious nature of decision making.





Andi Hargreaves was appointed as the neutral evaluation assessor for LLDC due to her specific expertise on safeguarding.

She has a wealth of experience in both investigations and evaluations, dating back to 1997,

typically centring on diversity and inclusion and bullying and harassment cases.

Whilst at the Department of International Trade, Andi led on training for bullying, harassment and discrimination. She was also the senior lead on all allegations for misappropriate behaviour following Oxfam, Department for International Development, and #metoo media reports. Her clients include, but are not limited to, the NHS, Universities, NGOs, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Targeting issues

The neutral evaluation assessor was entrusted to evaluate the following concerns:

- 1 Breakdown in trust and a lack of support for wellbeing.
- 2 Amplified workload as a result of lockdown pressures combined with less operational support.
- 3 Lack of promotional/developmental opportunities despite increased workload and responsibilities.

The assessor made clear the understanding that these complaints were personal perceptions, meaning that an empathic approach must be undertaken so as not to discount individual perspectives.

In order to fulfil the evaluation effectively and thoroughly, documents were supplied to the assessor which helped to illustrate LLDC's workplace culture and support given during the pandemic. Policies surrounding Bullying and Harassment, Sickness Absence, People Strategy, Appraisal and Performance, and Code of Conduct were integral to the evaluation process.

Making resolutions

The investigator held interviews with all parties. The emotions of all parties, following email correspondence, were validated, and taken into consideration. All parties were upset and affected by the circumstances of the grievance. Emails and messages were supplied to the assessor in order to gain a wider evidence-based evaluation of the case at hand.

Based on this evidence, the assessor recommended that it should be internally acknowledged that the workload was high, but attempts were made to de-prioritise and support the party in question.

Upon resolution, the following recommendations were made:

Consider
revising
the current
Sickness
Absence
Policy.

Clarify
support from
Occupation
Health/
Beneden
Health to staff.

Consider
whether a
formal route
for Band re-
evaluations
is necessary.

Consider
using Exit
questionnaires
and interviews.

The assessor stressed that recommendations were not criticisms of the organisation, but rather a suggested guidance to make policies and procedures clearer for staff with an identifiable audit trail in the future. All individual perceptions of loss cannot be judged or discounted by evidence, so it is important to view the case with a compassionate approach. The pressures of the pandemic, isolation, and mental health were all important mitigating factors in this case.

Looking forward

Moving ahead, the assessor suggests using stress risk assessments when staff are signed off due to mental health with clear, extensive support from Occupational Health. This would help to prevent future grievances and threats to employee wellbeing. The assessor also proposed the benefit of a team facilitation to ensure that everyone is aware of support mechanisms.



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

TCM
GROUP

© 2021 Copyright of The TCM Group. All rights reserved.
TCM® is a registered trade mark of The TCM Group.



Business Design Centre,
52 Upper St, London, N1 0QH



Email: info@thetcmgroup.com



Call: 0800 294 97 87
+44 (0)20 7404 7011



Website: thetcmgroup.com