

Evaluation Case Study: LCC Safer Communities

Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) governs the non-metropolitan county of Lincolnshire in England. It covers an area of 2,286 square miles, within which lives a population of 714,800. The Council headquarters are based in the City of Lincoln and the Council currently has 77 councillors.



Safer Communities Team

The Safer Communities Service was created within the Council in 2011, bringing together the Community Safety and Trading Standards teams. The service works with partners across the county to help make Lincolnshire a safe place for residents to live. This includes reducing domestic abuse, ensuring a safe, healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefit of consumers and the rural economy, supporting economic growth especially in small businesses and playing a coordinating role in relation to community safety.

Understanding the Challenge

During 2014, The Safer Communities team, in common with many other Local Authority Departments, was facing the prospect of a major restructure and therefore planning for the future was essential. Knowing the scale of the transformation ahead, Ian Newell and Mark Keal, Business and Public Protection Managers for the Safer Communities Trading Standards Team at LCC was keen to ensure their whole team was not just on board with the changes that were ahead, but were integral in the decision making process leading to the changes and consulted on every step of the way. With this in mind, Ian and Mark wanted to create an environment in which they could enable their team to think about what they would want the service to look like moving forward and gather these thoughts so as to make these future decisions collaboratively.

Agreeing the Solution

Ian and Mark worked alongside Chris Malings, OD Practice - OD Consultant at The Beech Centre to develop a facilitated two day intervention, designed to enable all of the Senior Trading Standards officers to be fully engaged in the change process by being able to give their thoughts, views and opinions. This was also an opportunity for Ian and Mark to gain a better understanding of both how their workforce feel things have been over the last few years and their ideas around how things could be improved moving forward.

Successful Implementation

It was agreed from the outset that there would not be a strong agenda attached to these two days; Ian and Mark were clear that they wanted the specific content to be led by the participants, with the only thing clearly positioned being the purpose for the participants being in the room, and what success would look like in terms of outcomes by the end of the session. With this in mind, it was agreed that Chris would agree with the group from the outset how they wanted to use their time to best effect as from Ian's perspective, "anything goes"- they were encouraged to be as creative and exploratory as they wished to be.

Facilitator's Viewpoint

Chris facilitated the programme on behalf of The Beech Centre: "What struck me from the outset was a clear commitment to engage the team in the transformation process, both in commissioning the 2 days and also through leadership team presence at the start of each day to confirm their support and to provide appropriate positioning. They then 'got out of the way' to let their team generate ideas. It was great to work 'in the moment', in a non-directive way and with a loose structure in mind, and to experience such commitment and engagement from the team. These were 2 memorable days' facilitation, working with people who are engaged in really important work for the people of Lincolnshire."

The Impact

It was clear right from the beginning of the evaluation process that the impact of the two days was substantial on the participants from the Trading Standards team. Here are a few quotes from some of the participants:

“ I really appreciated the structure of the day. We discussed what we've done well, what we're good at and what hasn't gone so well too. We wrote lots of ideas on post it notes and put this up on the wall for everyone to see. It was good to see what everyone thought up on the wall in writing. ”

“ I really enjoyed it- it was so different to anything we have ever done before. ”

“ I didn't really know what to expect coming into the day due to their not being a specific agenda set beforehand but I actually found this totally new way of working to be a really beneficial experience. ”

“ It was clever how Chris got us talking. Everyone had an equal opportunity to contribute and this was enabled subtly by his facilitation style. ”

“ The most profound thing I have taken away from the day was the tool we learnt about the things that are in our control and the things that are out of our control (Stephen Covey's Circle of Influence model). I have taken this learning with me and find it a helpful way of being resilient to the stress that work can sometimes bring. ”

Mark and Ian received several comments and complements from the team, saying that they felt engaged in the process of change and that their ideas were wanted and had been listened to. The leadership team were re-assured that staff understood the challenges ahead and had arrived at similar and workable solutions, to those management had foreseen.

Next steps

Following the collation of the feedback and views gathered from the two days, Ian and Mark were able to incorporate their team's thoughts and ideas into his planning process ahead of his team's restructure, allowing their team to feel the decisions were made with them, as supposed to done to them.

On publication, the new hierarchy was in fact pictorially represented by diagrams drawn on the Beech days, as staff ideas were integrated into the management solutions. For more information on how The Beech Centre's bespoke facilitated days could benefit your organisation, please contact us at info@thebeechcentre