

CASE STUDY #2

Flexing the Neuroscience of Wellbeing

DEVELOPING ENHANCED RESILIENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE WORKPLACE



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA



City of Westminster

In 2016, the Maria Paviour Company were awarded the tender to deliver a programme of bitesize Leadership workshops to the management and leadership communities across three London Boroughs:

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Westminster City Council

Initially the contract was awarded for 1 year, however due to its success and positive operational impact, it has been renewed on two occasions and we are now in our third year of delivery.

During this time, there have been a number of high profile incidents in these Councils and using the **NeuChem**[®] neuroscience based approach to leadership and resilience, we have been able to adapt and positively respond to the extreme and unique challenges facing each Council. This in turn has enabled us to support the individual employees effectively by equipping them with tools and techniques that can be immediately applied in their specific service area. Our central ethos is always to ensure that the personal health and emotional wellbeing is central to how we support and coach in order to enhance levels of personal resilience and operational performance. It is important that employees are able to, using an airline metaphor, 'pull down their own oxygen mask first, before helping others'.

Using neuroscience based techniques we helped people respond to challenges, and equipped them with tools to support themselves, and deal with high emotion in both themselves, and others.

Westminster City Council

An example of this approach is illustrated by events that unfolded on **22nd March 2017**. We were working with a group of employees from Westminster City Council in Kensington Town Hall, and during the afternoon news filtered through to delegates that there had been a terror attack in Westminster, close to City of Westminster's council offices. The delegates from Westminster City Council were informed that for security reasons they were not allowed back to their offices and had little information about the safety of their colleagues and friends.

Our facilitator was able to use our **NeuChem® techniques** to immediately work with and coach these delegates to be able to move from a position of threat and fear, into a state of empowerment. Using simple neuroscience based techniques our facilitator responded to this challenging situation and equipped delegates with the tools to support themselves in the moment of crisis and fear - and understand how they could be self-sustaining in the future.



Moving from
threat and fear,
to empowerment

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Since the **Grenfell tower tragedy of June 2017**, delegates from across the three councils and **particularly Kensington & Chelsea** continue to work under conditions of extreme pressure. Using the existing Leadership programme, our facilitators have adapted the content and tone to enhance the resilience of the leadership community, and coach them to confidently support the development of the resilience of their teams.



Using
neuroscience to
address tensions
and challenges

This included developing techniques to enable delegates to safely deal with housing issues with residents when they may be upset and angry. We looked at the neuroscience of co-regulation, body language and how to successfully deal with high emotion and by using the **NeuChem®** model of conflict management they could successfully address the tensions and challenges at hand and again how they as leaders, they could pass on these messages to their team and support them with confidence.

We have worked closely with the commissioning officers from the councils to create a safe environment where delegates feel able and secure to share their experiences and express their emotions openly. This includes talking about how events have impacted both on their work performance and mental health and emotional wellbeing. We used these personal and real life challenging experiences and case studies in the post Grenfell environment to identify how delegates could bring the learning positively into the workplace. We have supported delegates through a programme that enabled them to understand why we behave in the way that we do and provided them with the opportunity to be coached and practice in a safe environment the NeuChem techniques to deal with personal and operational challenges. This includes managing the responses from the community, and dealing with the trauma, guilt and fear.

The interventions we have created, including the use of our diagnostic tool **CARI™**, have enabled delegates to be more positive and transformed their approach to dealing with day to day challenges.

This was all done, and continues to happen, against a background where delegates felt disempowered and perhaps that they were failing their communities due to greatly increased influence from external parties such as central government.

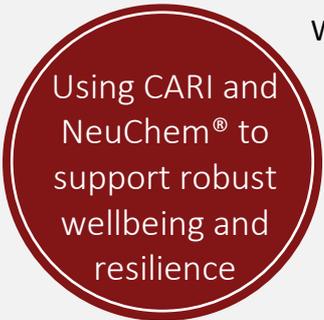
To improve this situation we worked with delegates on their **'Circle of Influence and Concern'** and their perception of their role within the Council. This simple, yet powerful technique helped delegates to clearly identify with the value they bring to the workplace every day. This in turn has enabled employees to reconnect with the reason why they work in public service and for the council and identify once again with the local communities they support and serve – helping their communities live safe and secure lives. Delegates were then coached in ways to share their vision and purpose, applying the techniques we shared with their teams. We provided our delegates with the understanding and confidence to ensure the learning was sustainable.



Reconnecting
people with the
reason they work
in public service

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

In **2016** we designed and delivered a comprehensive programme of support to enhance the wellbeing and resilience for the **Housing team at the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham**. The team had been challenged for a considerable time by lack of funding and resources and poor facilities. These pressures and other external influences were identified as having significant impact on the wellbeing of the team. This work was part of a wider culture change programme, in which we identified with the teams the areas where they needed to most support, logistically, physically, resource-wise, emotionally and psychologically. This information was then built into a plan of action that was taken to the Board and applied to specific changes that the council undertook, to respond to needs from all sides, with a focus on wellbeing, rather than simply operational.



Using CARI and
NeuChem® to
support robust
wellbeing and
resilience

While this programme was on-going the team had to deal with the aftermath of the fire in a **Shepherds Bush Green** tower block in August of **2016**. A significant number of residents needed the services of the housing team and therefore the members of the team had to be personally resilient to provide the support necessary in the most timely and effective way: their robust wellbeing was essential. Applying CARI and our **NeuChem** coaching techniques, the team were able to rise to the challenges presented with greater confidence and clarity of purpose.

The knowledge we developed and the process that unfolded provided additional intelligence, that, resulted in MPC having even greater insight when it came to immediately and responsively supporting employees during and after the Westminster terror attack and Grenfell Fire tragedy in the following year.

The above case studies demonstrate how MPC took an existing Leadership programme and with the flexibility of our neuroscience based approach, were able to adapt and respond to the needs of the leadership community. We successfully coached the leadership community to enable them support their teams and enhance their levels of personal resilience and be in the strongest position to provide the best possible service to their communities in what continues to be a challenging environment.

Key Learning Points

Our work with these three organisations is still on-going and demonstrates that to address the mental health and emotional wellbeing within an organisation is not a quick fix. Just as important as the financial resources is the leadership time, commitment and belief that this way of working makes a real difference.

Organisations employ people who are complex and emotional who respond to change and challenges in different ways but they all respond positively to compassion and kindness. An employee who is mentally, emotionally and physically well will be highly engaged and productive – this is evidenced through Engage for Success research and the results from our on-line tool, **CARI™**.

We will continue to track and monitor the progress each of these organisations make and update our findings over coming months.

“The best training I’ve attended – should be mandatory for all housing managers.

RS, DELEGATE

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