

Someone Else's Eyes - cultural transformation, improving performance and retention in a contact management department

A psychologically-based development programme, conducted by Someone Else's Eyes (SEE) Ltd within Dorset Police's contact management department. The programme is focussed on delivering cultural change within a department evidencing improvements in performance, retention, wellbeing and group engagement.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Independently evaluated
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Training and professional development Wellbeing
Organisation	Dorset Police
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Education Private sector

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	May 2023
Completion date	November 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The aim of the cultural transformation programme was to improve performance and workplace culture within Dorset Police’s contact management department.

Intended outcome

The programme had several intended outcomes:

- improved performance, particularly in relation to achieving critical key performance indicators (KPIs)
- increased wellbeing of staff and a reduction in sick days
- higher retention and reduced turnover of staff
- increased sense of teamwork

Description

The Someone Else’s Eyes (SEE) intervention uses the approaches, insights and interventions of clinical psychology to target culture within Dorset Police.

SEE's methodology

Using a 4D methodology to *diagnose, design, deliver,* and test through *data*, SEE has provided a department-wide operational intervention that innovates using psychological techniques often

reserved for a clinical setting.

This approach brings a rich sense of group dynamics, by focussing on the deeper issues that may be systemically holding the team back.

Diagnose

SEE diagnoses using four sources of data:

- embedding its experts into the organisation to gain an understanding of the lived experience of the department
- honest and authentic interviews and focus groups across the entire department and associated functions (e.g. HR)
- performing a review of all written materials to date
- inputting normed and validated psychological instruments to build a multimodal assessment using psychological, statistical and organisational tools, digging under the surface and asking the question 'what is the department's culture?'

SEE takes the assessment data and synthesises it to tell the story of the organisation, utilising deep psychological tools and theory. They then formulate the issues to explain the organisation's culture.

Develop

Using its co-design principles, SEE creates an intervention to meet the organisation's needs: collaborating, generating, piloting, refining, and iterating the programme to build the best toolkit.

SEE combine research evidence, sector expertise and client values to give a current, valid and relevant programme.

Deliver

SEE delivers the programme through a Train-the-Trainer (T3) model.

They train in-house facilitators to take the work and reach the entirety of the department, providing supervision throughout. This bespoke in-person package teaches each facilitator how to deliver the workshops to their colleagues – training process and content. Facilitators are supported by

manuals, videos and other learning aids.

Data

SEE finds the organisation's baseline using start-point analysis and benchmark them through sector comparison. To ensure responsible results and value-for-money, they evaluate progress to demonstrate impact, analysing change using research methods and exploring results.

Assessment

Data collection took three forms: immersion, conversation, and review of documentation. This provided a story of contact management's culture, allowing greater understanding of underlying norms, assumptions and rules to identify root causes of culture.

SEE initially processed the data using the 5Ps framework:

- Predisposing factors – Pre-existing factors that may have contributed
- Precipitating factors – What factors may have contributed to the onset of current problems
- Presenting problems – Details about the current problem: the thoughts, emotions, behaviours and stories presented during conversation, immersion, and identified from documentation review
- Perpetuating factors – What is maintaining the current issue
- Protective factors – The strengths, positive action and resources that help maintain good culture

Design and structure

The intervention was co-designed and piloted by SEE and Dorset Police. Contact management provided a representative group of staff from across the rank structure and disciplines this included:

- an inspector
- a deployment manager
- supervisors
- dispatchers
- non-emergency and emergency call handler
- counter-services officers

A process of co-design, piloting and refining the intervention content was followed. Practical testing of all parts of the manual took place with the co-production group so that design was not simply a theoretical practice but had a tangible and hands-on experience. The intervention always ensured to address the issues scoped in the assessment and formulation stages.

The intervention comprised two sessions delivered by two trained facilitators from within the police department to a group of 10-15 people, 10 weeks apart. The facilitator training involved five days of training and their delivery was supported by a process of quality control and supervision provided by the researcher. The psychosocial groups were conducted in suitable rooms at the force headquarters and formed part of the police department's mandatory training cycle.

Risk and safety

Welfare concerns are appropriately addressed in this programme, inviting deeper conversations and openness. Facilitators are trained to recognise and respond to difficult topics that may be discussed in the workshops, particularly regarding wellbeing and service issues. They are taught how to empathise, signpost and follow-up any concerns. Supervision is provided to the facilitators and liaison with the department's chain of command. Over two years of working with the Dorset Police, the programme has strengthened individuals by offering them the opportunity to address their own issues and access the necessary support.

Evaluation

Results have been evaluated by SEE and a full programme report can be found here.

Data was collected from three different sources:

1. Analysis of data already collected by the department that focuses on: performance (e.g. emergency and non-emergency response times), retention, other HR data (e.g. time off work for work-related stress)
2. Self-report questionnaires that measure: wellbeing, resilience, psychological flexibility and group climate
3. Feedback interviews following the programme (subject of future analysis)

Departmental data:

The department has consistently fed back to SEE the ongoing realised benefits of the programme. During SEE's engagement with contact management:

- Rates for meeting KPIs has increased (both emergency and non-emergency response times)
- Retention has increased (from approx. 20% attrition to 5% attrition)
- Staffing levels have not been as affected by work related stress

Overall, the programme has had positive results, evidenced by the following statistics:

Significant changes in:

- Wellbeing (11.2% improvement)
- Psychological flexibility (15.9% improvement)
- Group engagement (23.8% improvement)

Promising change in:

- Resilience (improvement)
- Group conflict (reduction)

Limited change in:

- Avoidance

A comparative programme, using the same design and psychological principles, was delivered simultaneously to a Brigade in the British Army, reaching 7500 soldiers, through which the results were reproduced within an acceptable margin.

Limitations and caveats:

As this was an exploratory evaluation of a pilot intervention, there are limitations to the evidence. Not all participants in the workshops offered their feedback for the self-report measures. Some of the predicted changes in self-report measures have not occurred, perhaps calling into question the predicted specific underlying mechanisms of change. Longitudinal data for a fuller analysis of self-report variables is not yet available.

Overall impact

This programme is due to inform broader cultural transformation across Dorset police due to its success.

Statistical results show improvements in all areas following the delivery of each workshop except for avoidance. While some results returned to baseline after the first workshop, these changed to improved levels following the next workshop. This demonstrates that continuity is essential; and the department now has more regular, shorter workshops scheduled throughout the year (every five weeks) to 'top-up' these areas.

The programme is moving sentiment in the right direction and the work will continue to build on that success with the top-up manual, the results of which will be monitored. An understanding of the ideal period between each workshop is being researched.

For the first time in several years, the KPI board, usually displaying red statistics, has turned more consistently green. This programme has allowed the staff members within the department to build bonds with their colleagues and feel a part of the team. Their sense of purpose has increased alongside retention, absence has reduced, and there is a renewed focus on providing the expected services.

Staff testimonial, Deployment Manager, Dorset police:

"I volunteered to assist with the Cultural Change programme not really knowing what I was volunteering for, but did so because I feel passionately about my place of work, and I wanted to make a positive change for the better for my team and my colleagues.

When working with SEE on the workshops, I soon realised that this work was not like anything I had ever done before. It was incredibly refreshing and interesting to be involved in something so innovative, and I could instantly see the potential for the programme. My team were the first to experience the workshop, and to say it has had an impact on them is an understatement. There has been a significant change on my team for the better. People are more patient with each other, they are kinder to one another and more tolerant. The entire team dynamic has changed, and it is just generally a more pleasant squad to work on.

There has also been an improvement in performance because people are making more of an effort to pull together to try and achieve a positive outcome. The change on my team has not just been noted by those of us working on it, but also by colleagues from other squads who have noticed the

change in atmosphere on the team when handing over – commenting on how much more “happy” and “chatty” everyone seems to be.

Since all the teams have gone through Workshop 1, I have had some interesting conversations with colleagues that I wouldn't previously have had. Conversations about some of the toughest shifts we've worked, and the hardest jobs we've dealt with and the impact that these experiences have had on us. We are allowing ourselves to be more open and vulnerable with each other and letting down that “armour” just a little bit.

There has also been an impact on the way I manage my team; I am more flexible in my approach to staff, encouraging openness and trying to be more accommodating to staff's welfare needs, rather than focussing solely on performance. I have a clearer understanding that “short term pain = long term gain” when it comes to the wellbeing of my team and therefore if someone needs me to be flexible and allow them a short amount of time off to prevent a longer-term impact, I will endeavour to facilitate this as best as I can.

I have really enjoyed being involved in this process and am keen to see the work continue on into the future to really reap the long-term benefits and instil the positive changes that we are already witnessing.”

Learning

- The work is a “force multiplier” to enhance other changes (e.g. systems changes, leadership changes) and can operate in the context of challenging environments (both internally and externally).
- Having the leadership team as willing partners on the journey supported the delivery (identifying champions, creating space in the programme, putting forward the right people to be facilitators).
- Desire for improvement. Despite some scepticism, a critical mass of participants are passionate about a continued journey of culture change to improve the lived experience within the department / police force and lift performance.
- Supporting our people. The workshops enable individuals that are not yet receiving support for wellbeing or other similar concerns to be identified and better supported – as well as those who would like to further their careers within policing to be empowered to do so.
- Change can be challenging. In the qualitative feedback, some participants found the new approach to be different to how they have engaged within work in the past. This could feel

different and the department ensured that suitable welfare wrap was put in place.

SEE has identified four key changes:

- Facilitation training. Rather than deliver multiple facilitation training events over several months, a new offering of a week-long T3 programme could be delivered to train facilitators. This will allow SEE to have a captive audience, provide better supervision over that period, create stronger bonds with the team, and, importantly, evaluate the facilitators suitability for delivery across the force. This will include the possibility of accreditation or appropriate further training.
- Executive team development. Rather than solely delivering a bottom-up intervention, our research has identified that training must be provided to the executive team to ensure top-down success.
- Targeting middle management. Experience has shown that the biggest blocker to success is middle managers: they have too little time and one of the largest workloads, but also have the greatest effect on culture. Our design would include the specific targeting of middle managers, with regular touchpoints, to ensure success filters down.
- Communication. An organisational communication intervention will be identified, to ensure conversation can continue after the programme has been completed, and Senior Leadership can monitor progress and stickability.

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