



The Houses of Parliament: Management Development

About the Houses of Parliament & the Parliamentary Security Department

The UK Parliament has two houses that work on behalf of UK citizens to check and challenge the work of government and make and shape effective laws. It holds the power to set taxes and members debate the issues of the day.

The Parliamentary Security Department (PSD) is responsible for the security of both houses and it works in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service to provide physical security that allows or denies access to a large and very public estate.

This department is also responsible for the security vetting within parliament. A security clearance is mandatory for everyone who works on the parliamentary estate, requires access to the parliamentary network or has been given access to sensitive parliamentary information.





The Challenge

Keeping the parliamentary estate safe is a huge task. Security challenges come from many sources, including individual protestors, foreign governments or other organisations seeking to cause damage to the democratic process.

Approximately 13,000 people are pass-holders, including MPs, Lords, special advisors, government employees and contractors. In addition, every year, the estate receives diverse visitors ranging from specialists appearing at select committees to children who visit on school trips.

The PSD is a relatively new department comprised of security staff recruited from the police, military, prisons and intelligence services and newer staff recruited directly into the department. Managers from these different organisations sometimes had similar management styles, but often, their approaches to managing people varied. A cohesive and common approach for all people managers was needed.

Due to operational challenges, line managers were only free for release in short bursts (two hours maximum). Many managers worked shift patterns and were not always available. Therefore, the programme design could not be based on managers learning in sequence, module 1, module 2, etc. Similarly, placing managers into cohorts was not a realistic possibility. Any design needed to cater for a "pick and mix" approach to learning.

Many managers took an action-oriented hands-on approach and were very kinetic with a short attention span and passionate about security. They used models of human behaviour and motivation drawn from their experience in, for example, the military, police or civilian roles.

The design of this programme needed to be able to effectively blend groups of office-based vetting staff and physical security staff.

This was the first departmental-wide management development intervention attempted in PSD's seven-year history. Another one of the programme's desired outcomes was to spark a change in attitudes towards management learning and development.



Our solution

Following focus groups with key stakeholders, PEAR designed a management development programme for all 67 PSD managers. Three key themes were: understanding and managing myself, understanding others and developing the skills to effectively manage people.

Content included understanding motivation and performance, self-awareness building, coaching and development (GROW model), coupled with building accountability in others, change management, having difficult conversations, along with other management skills.

The programme was bite-size, with each of the eight modules of two hours working as stand-alone units. It was run seven times over six months, with learners able to complete modules in whichever sequence fitted with their working pattern, thus supporting a "pick and mix" approach. Each participant generated their own development plan and implemented learnt skills between modules.

Delivery was highly interactive using applied theatre, thematic games, pair exercises, group discussions and skills practice. Part of the programme's differentiation and value came from modelling rather than talking about management skills. Through this, managers saw and experienced poor practice and good practice, rather than simply being told what optimum management behaviour was.

We used adult learning principles, making it explicit that as learners, participants were free, autonomous, had choices and were responsible for themselves. Group sessions were tailored to participants' needs during which individuals contributed as sources of expertise. Their growth was related to their immediate problems at work and solutions were practical and implementable.

Each session was co-facilitated by one female and one male facilitator during which PEAR demonstrated a collaborative approach, not a command and control approach to working. Management beliefs and behaviours that might be considered traditionally masculine were challenged - a significant cultural shift for some of the group.



The Impact

Participants assessed each of the eight modules using a simple Likert scale. We used four criteria:

1. Overall satisfaction with respect to this learning activity
2. The trainers' expertise and knowledge of this subject
3. The trainers' ability to relate the training to your work
4. My confidence to take something from the module and apply it to my work

Reflecting back, the team would highly recommend the training to other similar groups.

Over the length of the programme, the average scores for the modules varied between 8.6 and 9.4 out of 10.

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Learning that emotions have a massive effect when it comes to difficult conversations and understanding behaviours now gives me a different perspective

John S, participant

“
I really enjoyed the training and I'm struggling to find something to change that would improve the course...
want more time

Angie S, participant

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Love how interactive this session was and the real-life examples

Amal B, participant

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I've done a review of the management development programme ...[and] I'm delighted with the outcomes The fact that so many of the participants, in the section asking what would you change, said 'more, of this please,' just shows how well this has gone down

Jo D, HR Commissioning Manager