

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and their association with The Baobab Centre

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's association with The Baobab Centre began in 2004 with a small number of managers attending one to one coaching sessions. These managers were often working in difficult situations that challenged the range of experience and development they had previously received. Following on from this initial contact The Baobab Centre were asked to deliver the excellent "Motivational Styles" workshop to a wider group of managers. This event was very well received by those taking part and led to the development of a positive working relationship that continues to grow.

Four years further down the line and The Baobab Centre now provide a wide range of services to the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services (NYFRS) such as:

- Counselling for staff, including those suffering from symptoms of stress, which has resulted in staff returning to work much earlier than had previously been envisaged. In some cases counselling has enabled staff to remain at work.
- Mediation in workplace disputes between individuals providing independent advice.
- Coaching for middle managers enabling them to be more effective in their role both now and in the future.

"The centre has helped me a great deal in understanding how discussions and working relationships really work. A more detailed understanding of transactional analysis has proved of great benefit to me and more importantly the people who work with me." Middle manager.

- Facilitating team development days for both senior management teams and departmental teams.
- Bespoke development for managers dealing with unusual or unique situations that don't require full development courses.

Most recently The Baobab Centre was instrumental in intervening in long-standing problematic working relationships. This group of individuals were brought together for a bespoke development day. The staff attending were at first sceptical and defensive but throughout the day the skills of the facilitators brought the issues to the surface, challenged the behaviours, and

set boundaries to allow the staff to come to terms with events and move forward to resolve the issues. Such was the success of these days and the issues that were raised by the staff that The Baobab Centre is providing two further follow-up sessions to develop the staff to meet the needs of the individuals and the organisation.

"I feel that most if not all people found the day useful, hopefully people (I know I do) will now be able to see how they relate to others and change ways that are not helpful, this of course will be of great benefit to the organisation as it will result in a happier (less bitchy) environment with fewer psychological games!"

The Baobab Centre adds real value to NYFRS in a number of ways. The staff who have worked with the centre are happier, more engaged and more effective. The management of cases handled by The Baobab Centre is a confidential relationship between the member of staff and the centre with information provided to management only on a consensual basis. This builds trust between the NYFRS, its staff and The Baobab Centre.

The Baobab Centre's professionalism and awareness of the need for NYFRS to provide Best Value in the use of public funds ensures that budget management meetings are open, transparent and constructive. The investment in staff development and counselling gives NYFRS effective, engaged staff who value the support that has been provided through The Baobab Centre. Long may our association continue.

Jez Rushworth
Group Manager