

# Join the Dots

Recruiting & developing **extraordinary** people



staffordshire  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



**Join the Dots delivers ilm leadership and management development for Staffordshire Housing Association Group.**

Based in Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire Housing Association (SHA) owns and manages approximately 2800 high quality homes for a diverse range of individuals often those most vulnerable, including single people, families and the elderly.

SHA also supports communities through a range of additional activities that include regeneration, supported housing, a home improvement agency and management services for other organisations. In addition, through their subsidiary company Blue Mountain Housing Association they also provide housing and support for refugees and BME communities.

Due to the diverse range of activities that SHA is involved in, the structure of the organisation is complex. This was resulting in a tendency for managers and their teams to focus on their own areas of responsibility.

**As Frank Hammond, Director of Resources at SHA explains:**

“We have an excellent team of experienced managers here, all of whom have worked with us for over 5 years and some as long as 15 years, each one manages a team of up to 20 staff. They really do understand our organisation and are highly skilled in

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their specific areas of responsibility. What we recognised though, was the need for systematic management training to bring everyone to the same level.

For the SHA management team to further develop and continually improve the way we operate as an organisation, it is essential that we give our managers the skills that they need to do their jobs as efficiently as possible. It is vital that we help our managers to achieve the desired results by effectively managing, motivating and coaching others.



We wanted to help the management team to work more closely together so that they can make better decisions, manage their teams more effectively and ultimately continue to improve results. That's why we instigated the ilm level 3 and 5 certificates in leadership and management and approached Join the Dots to deliver it.

## **Mr Hammond continues....**

"We have worked closely with Join the Dots for a number of years already and during that time they have become a valued supporting partner. Because we've worked together for such a long time, Join the Dots thoroughly understand our organisation and the challenges that it faces and they know many of the people within it. It is this inherent understanding of SHA that makes such a positive difference when identifying development requirements and building the appropriate programmes."

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Led by the Join the Dots development team, 21 members of the SHA management team embarked on the ilm level 3 and 5 certificates in leadership and management. The programme was carried out over a period of 12 months and was structured to utilise a range of learning techniques including; one-to-one coaching, tutorial support, team sessions and individual assignments.

*On a personal level the ilm programme helped me develop my relationships with other manager colleagues to a much higher degree than I would have if I hadn't completed this course with them. On a day to day level, I feel better equipped to deal with any given situation, and know there is a support mechanism there in the form of assistance from my colleagues. I spend more time looking forwards, with a more strategic outlook"*

## **Manager ICT**

Six key units from the modular programme were identified as areas of focus for the SHA programme:

- Communication in Management
- Understanding the Management Role
- Innovation and Change
- Assessing your own Leadership Capability
- Leading Teams
- Managing Individual Development

The 21 participants came from diverse functions within SHA, each manager having varied levels of existing management skills and team communication. Furthermore, with each manager having been part of SHA for more than 5 years, naturally assumptions and pre-conceptions about individuals had formed.

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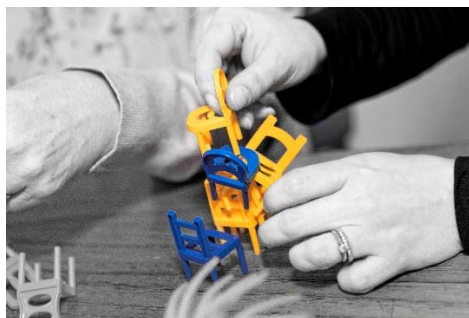
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The challenge for the Join the Dots team was to successfully breakdown any misconceptions, adapt to the varied mix of abilities and ultimately create a single, unified management team that was built on strong communication. Key to the success of the programme would be to help the managers gain a thorough understanding of the roles they play in their management capacities. They also needed to develop the skills to enable them to manage their own teams and nurture the individuals within them in order to achieve improved results.

In addition, the Join the Dots team needed to help the managers challenge upwards, develop a consistent management team approach and deal with the many issues that come with management responsibility. In essence learn the skill of effective management.

One year on the programme is now complete and the benefits are noticeable. Today the management team are exactly that – a team. Armed with their extensive training, each individual is now sufficiently capable of dealing with the challenges that they face in their management roles. Moreover, there is a noticeable improvement in the approach they have to working together as a team. They have a better understanding of their respective challenges and considerably improved levels of consistency, decision making and communication, both within the management team and across the wider organisation.



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Other noticeable outcomes have included; improved self-awareness and confidence to challenge and influence, the ability to manage relationships and improve behaviours, a closer working relationship with other managers, an understanding of how to improve team performance and motivate and increased strategic awareness.

## **The Results and return on investment**

Commenting on the changes, Frank Hammond states “embarking on a leadership and management programme like this one is not without its own challenges. It involves a considerable commitment on the part of the participants, they have to have a genuine desire to want to succeed and improve. That’s exactly what they’ve done and the results have been well worth the effort that each one of our managers has put in. We’ve all seen a noticeable difference in the combined performance of the management team and are already starting to benefit from that change within their respective teams too.

Join the Dots have done a tremendous job in managing this programme. They clearly understood our unique challenges and carefully tailored the programme to help us overcome them. They have worked alongside us every step of the way, constantly communicating with us and readily available to adapt as necessary to achieve the target outcome.

This is a long-term process but I’m in no doubt that it is worth it. SHA is developing a decisive, confident team of managers with the ability to communicate effectively, deal with difficult situations, influence decisions and seek to continuously improve the way that we operate as an organisation.

*The ilm training provided me with new skills and confidence. I have put into practice some of the very useful practical tips and the training has influenced my management style and approach becoming more results orientated.*

**Assistant Director.**

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