

I started working for Oldham Council as an agency worker in 2010 and was placed at Oldham Council for 5 years. No issues with the manager or team I worked with/for.

I gained substantive employment in 2015, firstly with the Client Finance Team, then with brokerage and following a consultation implemented from Jan 2022 I was the only member of the team who was displaced. I do not recall any selection process, nor satisfactory answer to my question of why only I was the only person being moved. The only answer I got was that staff were given a 1 to 1 and Client Finance and the Brokerage Team would be working closely together. I do not feel this was a reasonable explanation.

### **1. PLACED UNDER UNDUE STRESS**

Change management is a well known and documented stressor for employees:

**Acas.org.uk**

Changing contracts can sometimes cause tensions in an organization. Risks include

- Damaging working relations
- A decrease in commitment and performance if employees do not support the changes or feel they have not had the opportunity to inform decisions
- Increased level of stress or absence

**Oak.com**

**Lisa Wheatcroft Oak Engage Change Report**

“I’ve seen lots of employee disengagement during periods of transformation”

I felt I was singled out to be moved and this caused me months of anguish and undue stress.

On top of this rather than being given chance to embed in a new role, I was asked to help out with the backlog in the brokerage team, to assist them work through the backlog from a mix of covid, picking up business as usual emails and payment queries. That being said I am happy to help anyone.

In March 2022 my frustration is recognized in Appendix 3 “I understand that you are frustrated at the moment in regards to the team and staff taking ownership and doing things for themselves, even after training has been provided and you stated that you seem to get all complex queries to solve. I did advise that this isn’t the case, although you seem to get the majority from managers contracting you directly and this is the reason why we need to share your knowledge and skills to ensure the rest of the team are skilled and experienced to deal with them.”

Since April 22 and being placed under Sophie Harland I have been constantly micromanaged and watched, timed and criticized, given a prescriptive set of duties to uphold.

To add further to my frustration I was not set up properly to support the Client Finance Team as I was given no access to the system “SearchLight”, as this had not been sent up for me.

When access came through I needed in house training, and was met with further frustration as the “SearchLight” champion was on annual leave.

I escalated my frustrations to my line manager.

## **2. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REPORT 29.9.22**

“He reports symptoms of low mood, anxiety, palpitations, sleeping problems and irritability”

From a nationally recognized questionnaire the results indicated I was experiencing moderate symptoms of anxiety and depression. Work stress should be treated as a serious matter due to the detrimental impact it can have on an employee’s physical health and overall well being.

How could I undertake a stress risk assessment with the manager who is causing me work related stress.

## **3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

A large quantity of this report around my conduct is based on witnesses – Lisa Entwistle, who’s sister is in a relationship with Sophie Harland. Sophie Harland. Angela Barnes who is mother to Kelsey Barnes, and Kelsey Barnes.

How can such close relationships be allowed to work together in such close proximity, it is a conflict of interest and not in staff interest for such close relationships to be linked as managers and senior managers within an organisation.

I believe these close relationships place me at a detriment to a fair investigation process:

To confirm or refute this belief I placed on SAR request with this organization on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Appendix 14 is the response asking for more detail. I did send the further information I requested however have had no response. It is my intention to follow this up with a re-request. I would not consider the contents new information following any decision today from the panel.

## **4. I would like to highlight the panel to responses that are not highlighted in the investigatory management report as I feel the report is weighted towards negativity**

### **LM appendix 14**

I have worked with Ian for a long time. Ian has not changed. Ian is helpful.

I have not witnessed anything that is untoward in the office. It is so busy and I am not paying attention. I do my work.

### **KM appendix 15**

“Have you witnessed any inappropriate behavior or conduct from Ian towards a colleague”

No I have not seen anything. I have not seen any issues with management although there can be some tense issues. You can see there is tension. The tension doesn’t affect me, I don’t think it affects the team.

No one has discussed or raised issues with me about Ian. Ian joined the team in April 2022.

I don’t recollect a time that Ian is challenging. Ian has opinions’ its reasonable to share that. I get on well with Ian and he is helpful. Ian is always there to support. My personal observation is Ian is very helpful.

#### **BS appendix 16**

“Does the team work well together”

There is one member of the team that can be difficult but no with Ian. Generally the team work well.

Changes are difficult for Ian, but working the ways of 20 years ago is not the way now. Change needs to happen.

#### **RS appendix 17**

“Have you witnessed any inappropriate behavior or conduct from Ian in the office”

No, I have not witnessed any issues. My opinion is of Ian’s personality. Some people’s personality clash and Ian can clash with others.

#### **MT appendix 18**

“Have you ever witnesses any inappropriate behavior or conduct from Ian in the office”

No. Ian was in the Army, he is the way he is. People could take offence to his straight-talking approach. I have worked with Ian for many years and he is good at his job.

### **5. Inferences that my behavior targets women**

KL appendix 24 Question 6

GL appendix 20 Question 3

This implies that I am a sexist bully. In my 13 years working with the employees of the council, the report recounts two previous instances, one relates to a male colleague. The majority of my character references (Appendices 1 – 12 and appendix 17) are from women. There are only 3 males.

### **6. Indirect discriminatory remark about me**

5.27 Kelsey thinks that Ian does not like that she is 25 year old, younger than Ian and working at the same grade as Ian.

### **7. DBS**

I have a valid DBS (appendix 13) I have attached recent email correspondence to HR (appendix 15 and 16).

### **8. PREVIOUS INVESTIGATION REFERRED TO APPENDIX 2 14 February 2020**

Following this recommendations were to be put in place:

The implementation of a Personal Performance Improvement Plan

Regular monitoring of attitudes and behaviours

Additional training relating to managing behaviours within teams and as an individual for example communication, managing difficult situations, teams relationship management. Mentoring will also be considered.

The only action that has been taken from this is that there is a regular monitoring of attitudes and behaviours.

If the report is referring to previous documented instances, then how can I improve if the plan for improvement was not put in place.

#### **9. GRIEVANCE SUBSTANTIATED WITHOUT HEARING TAKING PLACE**

**Acas code of practice for grievances and disciplinary cases**

Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.

Point 6.20 in the investigatory report states “the allegations submitted in the grievances are substantiated”.

This should be decided at the hearing not by the investigating officer.

#### **10. FAILURE TO OBTAIN A BALANCED VIEW OF MY CHARACTER OUTSIDE OF THE STRUCTURE WHICH I PERCEIVE TO BE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Appendix 29 witness statement Ian Barkley

“I was temporary redeployed from October. I have worked with the manager there previously and as far as I am concerned relations are good, and I would hope as part of this investigation you would try and see if you can corroborate my interpretation of this situation”

I see that this has either not been sought, or not included in the report.

#### **IN CONCLUSION**

In my thirteen years of working with Oldham Council I have always held a reasonable belief of myself to be doing the job to the best of my ability and pride myself on being helpful to service users, council staff and other stakeholders involved in the client journey. I have been adaptable and my attendance record is good, coming in to work when I have felt like turning straight around and going home.

Over the past few years I have suffered management styles that I have found the most challenging of my career. I have suffered stress for the first time in my life. I do not recall a lot of the issues documented as stated in my occupational health report I was suffering from symptoms of low mood, anxiety, palpitations, poor sleep pattern and irritability, as well as one documented occasion of chest pain.

I do not get on with everybody, but I have friends and colleagues who I have worked with previously in the council, managers and peers alike. It is only since the pandemic that I have lost touch with my previous manager Trevor Kavanagh. .

I have attached a number of character references to give the panel a more balanced view of my working life and trust that consideration can be given to these when the panel are making their decision.

I am 60 years old, I have worked since I was 16 years old. I have never come across such a toxic environment in my whole working life as I have done in the previous few years before being temporarily redeployed into another team. In the 7 months I have been with a different team I have not been subjected to the treatment I received under the management structure that have brought the case here today. I have had no concerns about my work or attitude.

As stated in my interview if my behavior was construed in a way to cause upset it was not my intention. My actions were reactions to what I felt was constant persecution.