

C4: Supporting Burnout in a large HR team



In our assessments, we:

Discover

To fulfil its remit to stand up for diversity, take creative risks and inspire change, Channel 4 knew they themselves needed to change. They needed to look and feel different; behave differently; and most importantly, get outside the M25. It was critical that as an organisation they represented diversity of thought and opinions from across the UK, as well as across all of their broadcast content. The original strategy was to establish Leeds as the Channel 4 national HQ, as well as the founding of regional creative hubs in Bristol and Glasgow, in addition to their already thriving 4Sales team in Manchester.

While all this represented the change the various C4 businesses needed, the strategy also required an entire organisational redesign and full consultation period (not to mention the heavy task of possibly moving teams and individuals with their families to other parts of the UK). Channel 4 at Horseferry Road in Victoria had become an 'institution'; and while the strategy was understood, activating it at scale & speed was going to be challenging for all.

Define

C4 had appointed a new CHRO, and it wasn't long before she started to notice that her team were paying an emotional toll for the increased workload and difficult conversations ensuing from these large-scale strategic changes: burnout was rife. Quick to act, she engaged The Work Psychologists and asked us to provide ten coaches to work alongside her 30 strong team, supporting them on this turbulent journey. We worked with the CHRO and her team to understand what would be most helpful to them and co-created a support plan.

Deliver

Individual and systemic interventions were put in place. We specifically selected coaches based on two factors: those who had therapeutic training to tackle the burn out and the emotional pressure; and those with the ability to offer coaching and support around difficult conversations. Each member of the HR team had a total of six 60-minute support sessions. Additionally, internal peer-to-peer support groups were set up and facilitated, which meant the HR team were able to support each other on an ongoing basis after the coaching had finished. Our deeper analysis indicated those employees higher in EQ (emotional intelligence) were experiencing greater distress, and so extra sessions were given to these individuals to help them develop healthy boundary-setting. As a result of our interventions, the levels of learned helplessness across the team dissipated, as members leaned into their shared experiences of the N&R project and normalised many of the issues they were grappling with. And thankfully, burnout across the team decreased dramatically.

[Every year, burnout costs the UK economy upwards of £45 billion. The pandemic has created fertile conditions for burnout which means that team leaders need to be vigilant for its signs, in both themselves and their teams.]

