



COMPLY, our retained employment law and people management advice service, specifically designed for civil society organisations.



CASE STUDY

Since its inception in 1994, Witton Lodge Community Association used secondments to resource roles, bringing in employees from another organisation through a procurement agreement. In 2010, it was time to take control and employ their own workforce. After interviewing 4 HR providers, the Directors of Witton Lodge chose Roots HR to support them through this change and beyond. Since then, the Roots HR team have taken key strategic and operational HR roles as **Linda Hines MBE**, Chair of the organisation explains.

About Witton Lodge Community Association

In 1994 Witton Lodge Community Association was formed with help from Birmingham City Council, to manage the redevelopment of the Perry Common Estate. Over 900 council houses in the area faced demolition and there was no funding to build new homes. A combination of pressure from 4 residents' associations, determined locals and a strong will from the council to find a solution for Perry Common led to the innovative proposition of forming Witton Lodge.

Shared values

Having created the energy and initiative to found Witton Lodge and either used or commissioned out work, the Directors felt they needed to recruit a qualified workforce that could deliver Witton Lodge's vision. Seconded workers from Castle Vale Community Housing Association were used to initially fulfill their employment requirements, but this posed various management and financial related issues in the longer term.

Linda recalls the reasons for moving away from seconded staff. "Line management was the main problem – we wanted closer control ourselves. There was a line manager in the seconding organisation and two at our end. We also had to pay VAT on the invoice for seconded staff which we could not reclaim."

The Directors of Witton Lodge recognised the risks of employing their own workforce and the limits of their knowledge. They undertook a 2-stage procurement process to find an HR services provider to guide them through the transition.

"As soon as we interviewed Roots we knew they were right for us" Linda remarks. "It was much more than the brief, the ethos is important. They may not have been the cheapest or had the most glossy marketing materials, but Roots were genuinely interested in what we do, they formed a relationship. Others tell you what you want to hear, but really are just interested in your chequebook."

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End to end HR

Witton Lodge entered into a subscription for ongoing retained HR through Roots HR's COMPLY service and contracted separately for one-off projects through the PERFORM service. Roots HR immediately took an active role, handling end to end the first recruitment process in May 2010. For Linda this was invaluable. "It wouldn't have happened otherwise. We had no resources and would have made many mistakes. I had trust in Jan and Louise and they guided me on the best value options. I think we, as humans, are made to make mistakes and being involved in the process taught us. The advice was invaluable; you couldn't put a price on it."

Roots HR continues to work with Witton Lodge to deliver projects such as delivering away days and establishing an ongoing cycle of performance management in line with business planning.

Setting new standards

Witton Lodge have previously not found away days to be effective in the longer term, but Linda comments on the feedback of a member of staff to the away day facilitated by Louise at Roots HR. "They said it was the best away day they had ever been on, there was real energy. The actions and recommendations from the away day have come alive and this has helped us succeed."



The results

Witton Lodge is now a well-established employer, providing meaningful work and development opportunities for a team of 7 from the local community and beyond. Directors and managers alike have learned greatly from the involvement and experience of Roots HR. Linda ends by saying proudly, "A member of staff has recruited volunteers from our community to knit a vegetable garden that will be at NEC Gardeners World. The staff member has developed well and has become a line manager herself."

COMPLY

One of the biggest benefits of the COMPLY service for Witton Lodge is the flexibility of being able to obtain information out of hours, by advance arrangement. "I know we make mistakes and when we need help I say, 'Just ring Roots'. We feel more than just a client; it's more personal. A query with a typical supplier would have to wait till Monday morning, but Jan gives you the ability to ring her early morning or late evening and you never feel like you are being a pain."

PERFORM

Recruitment: "It was a whirlwind, with 4 staff including a Hall Manager being recruited. Roots HR placed the adverts, handled the application process through their website and led the Directors through the shortlisting, selection, offer and induction processes."

Terms and conditions: "Roots HR put in place terms and conditions of employment, policies and a staff handbook. It's been really informing and our staff now write our Volunteer policy and review existing policies"

Complex cases: "Roots HR have also helped us through one or two intricate and complex HR cases. They handled the employee relations cases absolutely wonderfully, I felt alone and very exposed. It was a struggle for the Directors to make quick decisions on occasions, but we did it."

www.wittonlodge.org.uk



Louise Beasley
Director & Lead Consultant
Roots HR CIC

"Witton Lodge Community Association is a prime example of an organisation whose HR needs have followed a natural progression from employing no staff and possessing little HR knowledge to strategic HR planning and aligning this with the overall business strategy. The delivery of our COMPLY and PERFORM services has provided the Board of Directors with the knowledge and confidence to achieve this transition. The successful management and delivery of the knitted vegetable garden is a great achievement and shows the value of effective HR practice"



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