

<i>Meeting</i>	OLC Board	<i>Agenda Item No.</i>	9
		<i>Paper No.</i>	103.8 (c)
<i>Date of meeting</i>	26 March 2020	<i>Time required</i>	20 Minutes

<i>Title</i>	Update on the last two groups of new starters-outcomes and experiences during probationary period
<i>Sponsor</i>	Marcus Passant
<i>Status</i>	OFFICIAL
<i>To be communicated to:</i>	Members and those in attendance

Executive summary
<p>1. This report provides an overview of the July and September 2019 waves of investigator recruitment. Five team members joined the organisation in July and eight joined in September following the usual recruitment process which included use of assessment centres. Of these, three have now resigned.</p> <p>2. The Head of HR were able to contact seven of the thirteen individuals informally and gathered their views on a range of topics. The feedback is drawn together in Appendix</p> <p>3. The report summarises the key learning from the feedback received.</p> <p>4. In some areas the feedback is positive and in some respects complimentary about the experiences of the staff who were consulted. However, there are also serious issues that require decisive action. In particular there is a need to review how the transition between training/induction and the start of case work is handled and to review how new starters are introduced to the performance framework.</p> <p>5. As a result of this feedback a review will be conducted of all the points made with the aim of providing a smoother and better transition for new joiners particularly brining greater reality to the induction. In addition this feedback process will be undertaken with all waves of new starters moving forward and this will be reported periodically to RemCo.</p> <p>6. The feedback gathered does not chime directly with the other sources of feedback (e.g. Staff Survey) although there is a common theme about the focus on targets and quality of line management. Work to improve the culture and wellbeing of staff in the Operations Delivery team and more generally is embedded in the People Plan and the delivery plan that underpins it and this will be closely monitored by RemCo under the revised RemCo terms of reference that were agreed by Board in Autumn 2019.</p>
Recommendation/action required
OLC are asked to NOTE the report

Summary of Experiences

The commentary below sets out the sentiments expressed by the seven new starters who provided feedback. The matrix at Appendix 2 indicates the number of starters who referred to a particular feedback point.

Recruitment and on boarding: 2 people commented on recruitment and 5 on on- boarding. Very positive, challenging, professional and tough – Proud to have come through it.

Diagnostic: *From a candidate perspective recruitment is a positive and effective process and is a strong start in defining our values. This should not stop LeO from refining the tools and assessment used to secure the best people. As a number were terminated by us in probation, we need to further understand this dynamic.*

Induction Training: This was considered generally good, but the perception was of a disconnect between the classroom and the ‘real job’ which created a shock when the day to day role started. A suggestion was made that starters would have benefitted from going through a dummy file from start to finish before beginning to work on real cases. Relationship building with colleagues was good and it gave an effective overview of the organisation, case studies and the sector. The knowledge of the facilitators and speakers was very good. The Areas of Law training was top heavy and more input from current Investigators and L1 Ombudsman rather than senior staff may have improved the relevance. An extra week of practical hands on training would have helped as well. There was a lack of available buddies when coming out of Induction and it felt very overwhelming.

Diagnostic: *The feedback is consistent with views expressed by other staff. Induction training must be grounded in more practical and realistic terms to avoid the difficulties in transition to real job. Follow up development and intervention is also required to embed skills and avoid Investigators feeling unsupported.*

Targets: This was the most significant area of comment, with 6 of the 7 interviewed having a view. These were thought to be unrealistic, particularly for new people; “More time should be invested in the individual to give them time to develop in the role and once the footings are established then introduce targets. As a new starter there was too much emphasis on targets and not a lot of concern for the individual.” The starters felt timeliness measures seemed unachievable when they are reliant on responses from other staff who perform a key role in the operating model but are not within the influence of the new starters. It was felt that the workload is a “constant struggle for the majority of colleagues.” Preparing for and catching up after taking leave is a, “big negative”, with no proactive help, cover or allowance considered and this leads to further stress. It was felt that “The ramp up to full case holding needs to be slower.”

Targets are given out on sheets or emails initially and there is a lack of engagement and explanation of these.

Diagnostic: *This is consistent with the feedback from established staff around the quality of line management. In addition to that, a significant piece of collaborative work between Operations and HR needs to be undertaken to consider how performance and targets are set for new starters. How this relates to the previous comments on “reality” based induction also needs consideration, as do the reasons why we terminate during probation. Although the Quality and Feedback model gives structure for new starters, there is a clear disconnect between our expectations and the experience of investigators. The detailed delivery under the People Plan will explicitly address this.*

Probation period: Only 2 people commented on probation. Generally enjoyable but pressure to pass probation is “constant and exhausting”. It is suggested that it would be more appropriate to look closely at effort, timeliness, progression and an individual’s commitment to resolve matters. There was a suggestion that LeO over emphasised targets. One respondent said that extension of probation to 9 or 12 months appears to be the norm and the organisation’s approach seems to be to manage people out rather than support them to develop. Advice and coaching in the office is not always available. Restrictions on home working feel arbitrary and unfair.

Diagnostic: *The organisation has taken a much more robust approach to induction monitoring and performance in the past year and this has been effective in identifying early those who will do not have the capability to perform at the required levels, even with development. However, closer monitoring going forwards will assist with calibrating this.*

Communication, culture and management style: 2 people provided feedback, 1 positive, 1 negative. Team leaders are supportive, “Everybody is very friendly and willing to help but just don’t have the time and capacity to do so”. Face to face sessions are generally good but there are “far too many emails”. Jokes about the high turnover such as ‘oh you’re still here...!’ are made by even the most senior people and this is disconcerting and inappropriate. Retention is clearly an issue but there seems a reluctance to gather feedback or work with colleagues to improve this. “The organisation’s aim is great and the people that want to be here will stay with the right support.”

Diagnostic: *There remains green shoots in this area and the organisation can be a positive place to work, but workload pressures are cascading down the organisation and may be driving negative leadership behaviours.*

Facilities: Great office environment, break out areas and kitchens appreciated and valued. IT and systems generally good but some profile and systems issues reported. Questions as to why laptops are not issued to new starters from the start as this seems ineffective to working practices.

Diagnostic: *This is entirely positive with no action required.*

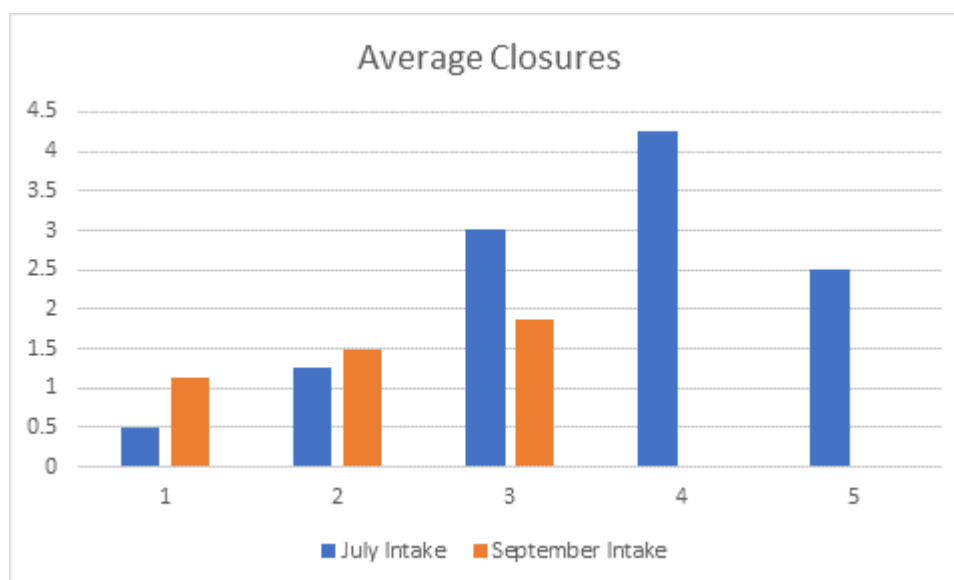
Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall there were positive sentiments running through the feedback but it was clear that new starters felt under significant pressure to perform and all believed that the organisation's expectations of performance were unrealistic as they came out of induction. Culturally the organisation is unsettling to new starters because of the high turnover, pressure and drive to perform translating into a sense of tension that is being reflected through line management and organisational communication.

There is further work to get to the root cause of this and LeO will be taking effective action to deal with the issues. Feedback from new starters will become a regular and assured process moving forward. Progress will be reported through RemCo as part of the periodic review of the People Plan which is already scheduled.

Appendix 1: Investigator intakes – July and September 2019 - Feedback

Investigator Wave	Start Date	Status
Investigator x 5	08/07/2019	1 Leaver 24 Jan 2020 (probation) 4 Still employed
Investigator x 8	09/09/2019	2 Leavers 12 Feb 2020 (probation) and 20 March 2020 (resignation) 6 Still employed



Expected average closure rates for new starters is 25 over the 6 month probation period based on the following closure patterns and objectives.

Closures:
Month 1 = 0
Month 2 = 1
Month 3 = 4
Month 4 = 6
Month 5 = 7
Month 6 = 7
25 over the probation period

Timeliness:
90% of all closed cases to meet external timeliness target
75% of all active cases to be achieving milestone timeliness targets

Quality:
90% conversion on checkpoints
Sign off on correspondence with 6 consecutive V1 approved letter
Sign off on calls with 6 approved calls across a range of call types, including sharing views
Sign off on evidence bundles after 6 consecutive L1 approval
Sign off on combined assessment scoping checks after signed off calls and letters and 6 consecutive approved assessment checks

Appendix 2: Investigator Feedback Summary

Seven new starters provided feedback, under the headings below and it is classified as either broadly positively (✓) or negatively (x) or left blank if a nil response.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recruitment	✓				✓		
Onboarding	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Induction	x	x		✓			x
Probation period					x		x
Targets & workload	x	x	x	x	x		x
Communication	x						
Culture & Management style	✓						x
Facilities	✓				✓		