

# Psychotherapy on offer for county staff

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HUNDREDS of county staff are set to receive psychotherapy as part of a radical bid to improve performance, the Evening Star can reveal today.

As part of a £400,000 initiative dubbed "the leadership improvement programme", around 400 staff at Suffolk County will be taught about leadership, personal resilience and change management.

The course will include the use of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques, described as "communicational psychology" and practiced by famous hypnotist Paul McKenna.

NLP is claimed to assist people in personal development, creativity enhancement, increased performance, improved communicational skills and accelerated learning through encouraging them to adopt a "successful mindset".

However, Andrew Cann, deputy leader of the Lib Dems on Suffolk County Council, said the outlay on the course "beggars belief".

"Suffolk County Council has clearly lost its way recently on delivering the basics at a cost people wish to pay.

"At a time when we are all feeling the pinch, the county council should be working harder and harder to identify savings and stop wasting money on schemes designed to make it look better.

"It's about time they just concentrated with getting on with the job."

Julian Swainson, leader of the Labour group, said his party strongly believed in training staff but would examine the training given to "ensure it is relevant and good value for money".

Suffolk County Council has defended the programme, arguing it is a continuation of normal staff training with the cost being covered by the current budget pot.

Sally Marlow, head of HR at Suffolk County Council, said: "At Suffolk County Council, like most major employers, we are deeply committed to the development of our staff and we run continuous training programmes for them.

"The programme is aimed at all levels of staff.

"It is vitally important that we invest in our people so they are well equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

"The cost of the training is just under £400,000, an average of £1,000 per person - this is not new money.

"This is an investment in staff who will stay within Suffolk whichever council they work for."

The programme will run for five months from now until February 2009.

Is the council right to spend £400,000 on a leadership programme?

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FAMOUS hypnotist Paul McKenna is among the leading practitioners of neuro-linguistic programming techniques.

The star, famous for making people do strange things as part of his 90s TV show - such as pretending to be a chicken - claims the technique can change people's lives.

NLP was co-created Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) by Richard Bandler in the 1970s.

The technique is based on a strong belief in the possibility of change.

It proposes that people already possess all the resources they need to succeed and achieve their desired outcomes - they just need to learn how to unlock them.

It is claimed that those who master NLP change into the person they always wanted to be, becoming empowered and inspired to help others to change as well.

A spokeswoman for Suffolk County Council said she was not aware of any plans to employ Paul McKenna on the leadership programme.

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