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To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Marilyn Smyth

Marilyn Smyth was commissioned to investigate a case linked to our Local Authority Children's Services in Bedford Borough Council.

The case related to safeguarding, which for us in a local authority Children's Service is a critical procedure we are stringently aware of and have rigorous procedures and policies. I myself was one of the witnesses.

Marilyn through her structured questioning and clearly extensive experience portrayed a sound knowledge of safeguarding legislation, broader procedures and policies. Clearly this knowledge assisted her in composing and asking the questions necessary to undertake a thorough investigation.

The situation was stressful and complicated, with high levels of uncertainty which I assume are typically associated with such circumstances. I was very impressed by the professionalism and personal skills demonstrated by Marilyn.

I am a psychologist with extensive training and experience in communication skills and in a range of interviewing techniques. I was impressed by the ability of Marilyn to provide a context and framework that not only set me at ease, but also encouraged an openness on my part to be frank and forthcoming about all questions posed.

She was able to reflect on my responses, challenge me if needed, and enabled me to clarify events with an expertise that is testimony to her experience. Throughout this process Marilyn was mindful of my stress levels, and was able to gauge my responses not only in terms of whether I was being open and honest, but also whether there were any signs of distress which in turn could have hindered the interview process.

Marilyn was clear about how the outcomes would seek to safeguard the wellbeing of all concerned, and that a resolution would need to be evidence based, and therefore all comments needed substantiation with reference to the documentation of factual evidence.

Marilyn also seemed to have a wide range of knowledge derived from a variety of settings, she was very clear and confident on legal aspects of the proceedings and very direct about what information and documentation was needed to conclude the investigation. This provided me with assurance and also meant that I didn't waste time providing unnecessary documentation.

I can only praise Marilyn's approach in a very difficult interview process. She was sensitive, insightful, enquiring and specific, in drawing out clear and succinct replies. From the outset I was secure in that her focus was not to trick me or incriminate me, but rather to seek the truth and to evidence this through information and events of substance.

Marilyn's investigation was extremely thorough and where insufficient evidence had been provided, she did not hesitate to ask for more, until she was satisfied that a robust explanation of the events had been determined.

I would fully support Marilyn being used in these types of processes and saw her experience, insight and expertise (namely safeguarding this case) as highly valued and at appropriate levels at all times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Long', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Long
Head of Student Support and Principal Educational Psychologist