

**Children, Education and Families
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To whom it may concern:

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MARILYN SMYTH

Marilyn has worked as consultant on a regular basis in Thurrock since 2003. Her predominant role has been as an HR consultant and Project Manager for our Professional Development Centre.

In this role Marilyn's initial function was to prepare a development plan for the Centre, which she has implemented on a phased roll-out basis over the last 3 years. The work has given the Centre a mature, business focus, which has made The Culver Centre a venue of choice in Thurrock. The Centre operates on a full cost-recovery trading basis in a local government context, and includes conference facilities, hire services and a full catering function. In addition, the Culver Centre site hosts a wide range of other Council services, and part of Marilyn's brief has been to maintain a full overview and development of the facilities provision. This has often required the reconciliation of conflicting requirements between internal and external users.

Marilyn has brought to the role a focussed, determined approach with a strong business emphasis. She has excellent skills with staff and a wide range of clients. Her presentation of reports and financial information is clear and succinct, and she has been particularly adept at staff development, including engendering customer care skills in a disparate staff group. Her vision for, and procurement of, building changes has been cost effective and very well managed, bringing a corporate style to what had previously been a neglected site and buildings.

In addition to the Culver Centre role, Marilyn has undertaken staff team development work in other parts of the Children's Service Directorate and has acted as an external investigator on a number of complex HR cases. Marilyn is a serving member of Employment Tribunals and in terms of HR investigations has a sound analytical and organisational approach and her reports are clear in identifying the key issues involved, helpfully informed by her Tribunals experience. She is a skilled interviewer who has handled sensitive cases with discretion and tact.

On a personal level I find Marilyn responsive, focussed and dedicated. She tackles her work with lively good humour and enthusiasm and it has been a pleasure having her working here in Thurrock.

Stuart Freel

**Stuart Freel
Head of Resources, Development and Lifelong Learning**