

Sodexo's Lived Experience Programme Wins Best Learning Initiative at Business Culture Awards

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Sodexo's Government and Energy & Resources business in partnership with The Happy Consultancy Group won Best Learning Initiative at the 2025 Business Culture Awards for its *'Lived Experience: it's all about you'* programme which was developed and rolled out across military sites managed by Sodexo.

The initiative, launched in 2024, was led by Samantha Hockey, Head of HR (Defence) and Duncan Limbert, learning and development business partner for Sodexo's Government business.

In 2022, Sodexo introduced *'The Lived Experience'* - a programme designed to address the need for attractive offers and environments that focus on enhancing wellbeing and delivering a consistent, high-quality experience for its diners on military sites.

The programme was part of a number of operational changes within Sodexo's food service offers and to bring this to life for its employees, a people-led behavioural change programme was needed.

Samantha and Duncan worked with The Happy Consultancy Group to devise a series of vibrant, fun, and engaging sessions, which blended Sodexo's core values (Service Spirit, Spirit of Progress and Team Spirit) with its employee value proposition (Belong, Act, Thrive) with storytelling that truly empowered employees to become heroes of their own stories.

Designed to boost engagement, confidence, well-being and pride across Sodexo's teams delivering services at military sites across the UK, the programme was developed in line with Sodexo's commitment to address the evolving needs and challenges of the UK Armed Forces.

To date over 2,500 employees, from frontline to senior leaders, have participated in the campaign and engagement events, also incorporating photoshoots, video footage, and printed materials. Team sessions achieved an impressive 92% overall satisfaction among all participants.

Mark Baker, Chief Operating Officer for Defence, Sodexo UK& Ireland said: “We wanted to connect hearts and minds and embrace change with passion, pride and confidence, encouraging colleagues to play their part in the Lived Experience. This programme is designed to transform from the inside out, and it’s working. Thanks to Samantha and Duncan’s hard work and the deployment of this transformation programme with support from The Happy Consultancy, we have seen a marked increase in retention alongside a reduction in absence rates and increase in customer satisfaction.”

This recognition reinforces Sodexo’s commitment to the Armed Forces community, which has spanned for more than 30 years, with tailored solutions to help military leaders and service units improve the quality of life of individuals, the community and on-site environment.

Sodexo was an early signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and received its first gold under the Ministry of Defence’s Employer Recognition Scheme in 2017, for its commitment and support to the UK’s Armed Forces community. The gold status was re-awarded in 2022.