



Brighton and Hove City Council

Skills for Life in Local Authorities

A Case Study

Kim Hailstone, Regional Development Officer
The Network



Network Involvement

- Initial request for help from one Learning and Development Manager.
- The Network provided consultancy advice to the L+D department.
- Carried out a full review of their existing and previous S4L initiatives.
- Considered their policies and procedures for staff learning and development.

Brighton and Hove City Council

- 8,000 staff- the third largest local authority in Britain.
- Exponential organisational change within the last year.
- Change had impacted on the L+D team.
- Previous Skills for Life initiatives had focussed on ' low skilled' workers and Care staff.

Skills for Life at Brighton and Hove City Council in 2004

- No corporate commitment or whole organisation approach to Skills for Life - work was driven by individuals.
- S4L was embedded in some activities, but there was no capacity to follow this up.
- Difficult to 'sell' S4L as a priority to many LG 'managers of people'.
- LLN provision for staff was arranged and marketed, with very little take-up.

Get On Local Government

- A DfES funded campaign in partnership with the Employers' Organisation.
- This has provided a strategy and award system for S4L within Local Government.
- The campaign clearly linked the aims of S4L with other LG priorities such as CPA (*Comprehensive performance assessment*)
- Crucial in engaging top level support and encouraging a whole organisational approach

What was offered?

- Help for the Learning and Development team to elicit corporate support for S4L.
Helping them identify and 'sell' the links between Skills for Life activity and mandatory processes in order to nurture a whole organisational approach.
- Identification of differing target groups of staff - *'people' managers, front line staff, strategists and trainers.*
- Support to develop internal marketing - *selling the benefits as relevant to targeted groups.*

The training offer

- Contextualised training- based on the 9295 Level 2 in Adult Learner Support
- This was developed into sessions that could be delivered in 2 hour slots to fit around 'core activities' times
- Training was contextualised and targeted at differing staff groups- *e.g. 'people' managers, front line staff, whole departments*

The training offer

- An initial 3 hour awareness raising session for people managers
- Followed up with an offer of further sessions in signposting and informal assessment methods
- A series of 2 hour sessions for front line staff- contextualised to the service they were delivering.

What worked and what didn't!

- Huge take up by front line staff - *they viewed the training as augmenting their offer to service users.*
- Very limited take up by 'people managers' - *many viewed S4L as outside their remit and had concerns about release time.*
- Corporate buy in - Brighton and Hove City Council is signing up to the GO LG award.

Lessons learned

- Training sessions will not result in a sustainable whole organisation approach to Skills for Life. Additional support to develop strategy and procedures is essential.
- Need a strong focus on middle managers - *they can act as gatekeepers to learning for their staff.*
- 'People' managers do not always view themselves as employers - *" if staff cannot be released for training, it is not my fault".*

Recommendations

- Secure 'top down' commitment - involve elected members as well as CEO's and Directors.
- Invest time in learning the structure and motivating factors for each local authority.
- Offer flexible time tabling- respect the need to deliver to service users.
- Horses for courses- be prepared to adapt and contextualise training.



**The Network
CSET, County South,
Lancaster University, Lancaster
LA1 4YD**

Tel: 01524 59340 Fax: 01524 844788

www.thenetwork.co.uk

