

ASDA Offers LLN Training in the Workplace

ASDA in Lower Earley recently gave their colleagues a chance to improve their literacy, numeracy and computer skills by running a series of courses. ASDA wanted to offer their staff something that was over and above the standard workplace training that they already received. These courses were designed for staff that did not normally receive staff development, for example nightshift workers and checkout operators.

This programme was initially brokered through a local Life Long Learning Partnership. The library had an initiative to start a book group to tie in with 'The Big Read'.

By getting involved in these courses it was hoped that colleagues would have the knowledge, skills and confidence to push themselves further or think about promotion.

Marketing the Training

Talking directly to colleagues was an effective way of getting interest in the planned courses. Posters were put up inviting people to come to road shows in the colleagues canteen. During these road shows, those interested were able to talk to tutors and find out more about what kind of courses were on offer. The road shows were timetabled to take into account those on shift work, including the night shift colleagues. Those people interested in courses were invited to do initial assessments. To encourage people to get involved each person who completed an initial assessment went into a prize draw for a DVD player and cash prizes.

Training at work

Sarah Cass a personal Clerk at ASDA felt that having the training during work time was vital. "Outside of work you are plunged back into your own family commitments. I could learn without worrying about the time and where else I needed to be. You also benefit from being paid to do it."

The training was done on work premises and was timetabled to fit around work patterns. There was a mix and match of paid and unpaid training. The training was run at the same time each week and if people were working during this, they would have the time off to attend the training. If not they would have to come into work.

The benefits of training

Colleagues who are not confident in their own skills often spend time avoiding doing tasks. This was the case for Sarah Cass who did the numeracy course that was offered. "Before going on the course I was frightened to be given any statistical work. I had already been asked to do tasks and I was spending a lot of time trying not to do them" Now

Sarah feels much more confident with doing these kinds of tasks at work. Training has allowed colleagues to become more confident in their work and develop flexible skills.

There have been other benefits too. She has been able to help her children with their homework "Before I would have asked them to wait until their Dad gets home. I was able to help my son to change improper fractions into proper fractions. I have gone up a notch in his eyes."

Sarah found learning as an adult a different experience as well. "As an adult learner I was not worried about peers and asking questions in training. There was a camaraderie of working together which was uplifting, and it was also good to meet other people in store who have the same difficulties."

Challenges

Several courses were run at ASDA. During one of these courses there was a change in tutor. This led to confusion about when the course was running, and many of the learners felt the focus of the course had changed. This led to a decrease in the numbers of students attending the course. It is important to keep the focus of a course as it was originally intended, especially if there is a change in the tutor.

Staff release was also a challenge within some departments. There was some frustration that staff would leave a busy department to attend the course. "Various other colleagues missed sessions because they felt they were letting manager down." The key to staff attending was having the support of their line managers, which meant they were not made to feel guiltily about attending the courses.

Qualifications.

At ASDA getting qualifications is seen as a very positive experience. Getting a Level 1 qualification was a confidence booster for Sarah and she is planning to go on and do a level 2 certificate when she gets the opportunity. "I suffered for years because I did not have any maths qualification on my CV- that has been prohibitive in doing some of the things I would liked to have done."

To celebrate this there was an awards ceremony and a presentation at a monthly meeting.

ASDA are hoping to continue their training programme offering more colleagues the chance to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.