

Workplace Basic Skills in Greater Merseyside: Case Study

Liverpool City Council Leisure Services

The Company

Leisure Services is a portfolio that sits within the services offered by Liverpool City Council. It offers a full range of leisure facilities across the Liverpool area and employs over 200 staff.

Evidence of need

Initial need was identified through the union learning representatives who carried out 1 to 1 assessments and interviews with 85 members of staff.

The Partnership in Learning (PiL) Co-ordinator researched the area and found that Liverpool Community College had received a Grade 1 for basic skills provision in its last inspection. The college was also involved in a Pathfinder project and was able to offer valuable support to leisure services of up to a maximum of £50.00 to cover staff release.

Setting up the programme

Initially, the provider was able to make use of Pathfinder funding to support the initiative. The only area that needed consideration and management by the college was staffing of the provision. This was managed through the workplace manager and pathfinder leader.

Following initial assessments, a programme offer was proposed outlining possible times and days. This was presented to relevant employees and the programme was agreed.

The Programme

In total 48 learners took part in the programme. They were mainly pool-side staff and receptionists. They had previously undertaken only mandatory training such as health and safety and lifeguard training.

Individual learner needs were assessed through the use of planning files and individual learning plans which were negotiated with the tutor. Goals and targets were reviewed as the course progressed.

The programme ran over 6 weeks for two full days each week. Delivery was in two-hour blocks and most delivery took place in a classroom setting with group delivery. Learners were also offered 1 to 1 support and tuition as part of the package.

The application of literacy and numeracy skills learned was reinforced using workplace literature, forms and other paperwork used within the organisation by the people attending the course.

Learners were offered the opportunity to take the National Tests at Level 1. College certification was available for those who did not feel that the tests were appropriate for them.

Outcomes

The course was evaluated by both the co-ordinator for Partnership in Learning (PiL) and Liverpool Community College.

The course was successful in providing opportunities for people to improve their skills, confidence and gain recognition through national certification. It was also discovered that employees who had attended the course became more actively involved in the daily process in the workplace.

There were many benefits for learners:

- Confidence in expressing learning needs
- Increased confidence in carrying out workplace tasks
- Better able to ask for support when needed
- Sense of being valued in the workplace
- Real sense of team working together on the 'shopfloor'
- Confidence to apply for promotion within and outside of the city council.

The business also identified clear benefits:

- Workers confidence shown in every day working environment – greater involvement in day to day issues, attending meetings etc
- Improved staff morale
- Reduction in absenteeism from work amongst those taking the course.

Lessons learned

- Short intensive courses work well for both learners and employers
- Setting up a small resource base on site is necessary if delivery is to be of a good quality
- Learners are more willing to take nationally recognised qualifications than at first thought
- Learning representatives can be crucial to the success of provision in the workplace where they are actively engaged, understand the agenda and positive about the process.
- Cover costs for small units or companies who can get cover can determine the success or failure of an initial course. (N.B. This does not mean that funding is always needed beyond the first course. This company is willing to release staff without funding because of the success of the first group.)

Future Plans and Issues

- Work to develop skills of supervisors
- Ongoing work with PiL to continue to provide courses for staff across leisure services
- Roll out the model to other portfolios in the city council