



Staff could see the benefits of brushing up on their skills

How to get buy-in from staff to Skills for Life

■ Clare Learwood, Skills for Life Manager, Tyne Metropolitan College

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Tyne Metropolitan College (‘TyneMet’) was formed in March 2005 following a merger of North Tyneside College and Tynemouth College. Subsequently in July 2007 in response to a greater focus on a demand led culture and the Leitch agenda the college realigned its structure into two distinct centres the Academies (school leaver provision) and Career Development Centre (19+ curriculum).

It became apparent during the realignment that we needed an audit to establish a baseline of the literacy and numeracy levels for all teaching staff and as we had recently signed the Skills Pledge we therefore decided to audit all staff. The college was also involved in the embedding Skills for Life and Whole Organisation Approach support strands with the Skills for Life Improvement Programme. The original plan was to undertake Skills for Life screening with all staff at our Learning and Development Day in November, however that had to be rearranged as it fell within Ofsted week.

Screening compulsory for all staff

A screening was implemented in March and was compulsory for all staff to attend. The rationale for the process was explained via line managers, although in practice the Skills for Life manager ended up briefing staff and allaying their concerns. Once the sessions were under way staff seemed to buy in to the process and could see the benefit of brushing up their skills. All teaching staff not at Level 2 are now required to achieve both qualifications by September 2009.

TyneMet will support staff to achieve these skills by a combination of further development sessions on the three Learning and Development days, open access to the on site Skills Centre, part of the induction process for new staff, Skills for Life objectives set as part of the Performance review process and further support from the Skills for Life Improvement programme.

The data analysis from the screening showed that the almost all of our office staff were operating at Level 2 in literacy;



Skills for Life champions drove the screening process

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however numeracy showed a significant proportion at Level 1. All teachers were at or above Level 2 in literacy but 16% were at Level 1 in numeracy, which highlighted a concern over the delivery of key skills. Assessors and trainers demonstrated lower Skills for Life levels than teachers or business support staff. All managers were at Level 2 or above in both.

Greater buy-in from all staff

The impact of the audit provided us with an accurate baseline of literacy and numeracy levels

across college; this has resulted in Skills for Life being included in the personal development plan for all staff. Skills for Life champions have been put in place for each curriculum area and a greater buy in from staff has assisted with the whole organisation approach strategy. Recruitment procedures have been amended to include Skills for Life screening, and support is now in place for all staff to achieve at least Level 2.

The challenge now is for TyneMet to continue with the development of staff to beyond Level 2 and have more specialist literacy and numeracy staff available across college. A new action plan is in place to enable the momentum to continue to grow and develop.

New resources available on our website

A recent edition to the Improvement Programme website resource section is the updated and refreshed version of the Raising Standards Guides.

Produced previously by the DfES Skills for Life Strategy Unit, the guides are now the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). They have been designed to help teachers, trainers and managers to improve the quality of their work with learners in literacy, language and numeracy.

The Raising Standards Guides that are available include: Community-based Adult Learning, Embedded Learning, Family Learning, Further Education Colleges, Jobcentre Plus Programme, Offenders Supervised in the Community by the National Probation Service, Prisons, The Secure Estate for Young People aged 15 – 17, Voluntary and Community Sector, Work-based Learning and Young Offender Institutions for Young Adults aged 18 – 21. A further two guides, e-Learning and LLDD will be available shortly.

Please go to www.sflip.org.uk/resources to download your copies.

