

Fareport Training shifts focus to numeracy

Stephanie Bond, Skills for Life Development Adviser

‘Increasing the confidence and competency of staff in numeracy has impacted positively on our learner experience across all programmes and increased engagement. This has raised achievement rates and increased satisfaction levels* which is good for us and our partners.’

Mick Reeve, MBE, managing director of Fareport Training Organisation Limited

* For example advanced apprenticeships rose from 47% in 05–06 to 75% in 07–08 and apprenticeships rose from 67% in 05–06 to 74% in 07–8



Fareport Training staff working together to improve their numeracy problems

Fareport Training Organisation Limited has shown how a continual cycle of self-improvement in Skills for Life can lead to increased levels of confidence in the numeracy skills of staff and learners.

The provider was involved in the 2007–08 Skills for Life Improvement Programme that led to them writing a new strategy for Skills for Life. Whilst the training during 2007–08 led to an increased confidence in delivering literacy, Fareport felt the need to shift the focus to numeracy for 2008–09. This was not only in an attempt to meet the Leitch targets and their own targets under Train to Gain, but also due to the results of their own Skills for Life staff survey.

Fareport Training is a private training provider delivering a range of training opportunities for businesses and young people throughout Fareham, Gosport and the greater Hampshire county. Programmes offered include E2E, apprenticeships, NVQs through Train to Gain, literacy, numeracy and ICT, Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector

and Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector.

Jackie Oldham, The Programme Development Manager, asked all assessors involved in delivering or supporting the delivery of Skills for Life to complete a staff survey. This revealed that while 52% of staff felt very confident in embedding literacy, only 23% were very confident in delivering numeracy. While all assessors were confident to embed literacy, 24% indicated that they were not confident to embed numeracy.

Although all staff have Level 2 qualifications in numeracy and some are working towards Level 3, it was thought necessary to support staff further.

Numeracy survey for assessors

To identify the numeracy needs of the assessors, Sue Gunther, the Skills for Life Manager, designed a numeracy survey that was sent out in November 2008. Assessors

were asked to rate their confidence in specific areas of numeracy. An analysis of the survey was represented as pie charts and these showed clearly the areas that needed support. The survey also revealed that 71% of the staff were willing to attend numeracy support sessions.

Numeracy support sessions are now offered to assessors regularly. Since December, three sessions have been delivered: using fractions, decimals and percentages; ratio and proportion; and converting between systems. Attendance has been good and feedback very positive (see staff quotes below).

In addition to this, a CPD session was delivered to all the assessors in January 2009 on 'Approaches to supporting numeracy needs'. This was planned according to the results of the numeracy survey and assessors took part in active learning activities on using decimals, percentages, fractions and proportion. Activities were taken from 'Maths for Life, Thinking through Mathematics' and 'Improving Learning in Mathematics' (both of which can be found on the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching Mathematics website – www.ncetm.org.uk). Participants worked together to complete the activities and to compare the methods used. This showed up numerous ways of solving the same problem and participants were able



Sue Gunther, Skills for Life manager at Fairport Training, delivering numeracy training to Fareport staff

to learn effective strategies from each other.

Achievement rate for numeracy is up

To date, assessors have participated in a total of three numeracy support sessions and another five are planned. The focus on numeracy is already impacting on the learners. In Care, the achievement rate for numeracy is up from 57% to 83%. A target has been set for an 80% achievement rate for numeracy in Childcare. 'Without a doubt, the main reason for the increase in achievement on advanced apprenticeships is the increased success of learners in application of number, particularly in Care. Our staff feel more confident in delivering

numeracy and this is showing in the achievement data,' says Jackie.

Staff confidence and motivation has increased significantly, with one assessor commenting after a support session: 'I was terrified of coming to the numeracy session today but it's really good and I feel a lot more confident. I would now like to attend more of the support sessions.'

Strategies which have been demonstrated in support sessions and the CPD have been passed on to learners successfully.

The way forward

In addition to the numeracy support sessions, Fareport Training are also focusing extra support for numeracy in vocational areas where achievement needs to be increased. Childcare learners will be given 1 to 1 and small group numeracy sessions at their place of work and evening sessions will be offered at the training centre. MIS data for Skills for Life will continue to be analysed to establish which vocational areas need to be provided with extra support.

The numeracy survey will be sent out again in July 2009 to establish whether staff feel more confident in the specific areas of numeracy. An annual Skills for Life survey will continue to be sent to all staff to establish further areas for development.

What staff said about numeracy support sessions in response to 'What did you like the best?'

'I learnt about ratio which I had no idea about previously. I've learnt that proportions are not as hard as they sound.'

'Getting the opportunity to work through the problems and visit things in maths that I haven't done for a while.'

'Handouts that I can share with learners and refreshing my own knowledge as well.'

'You make it all seem so easy.'

'I have previous knowledge of ratio and proportion but it was nice, 12 years later, to go over it again.'