

Nottingham City Council's Building Works Dept

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Council house workers train as ‘ambassadors’

Background

The aim is that Council tenants in Nottingham will have a more professional service from the workers who repair and maintain their homes in future.

The workforce, from Nottingham City Council’s Building Works Department, are responsible for 140,000 repairs a year, and have undergone a unique customer care training programme developed in partnership with New College Nottingham (ncn).

The innovative package has earned the department and its partner, ncn Basford Hall, a finalist’s place in the National Training Awards.

The training, piloted with a group of team leaders earlier in the year, will now be rolled out to over 500 council workers.

Specific Training requirements

The package is designed to help workers improve customer satisfaction, reduce complaints and insurance claims for damage and eliminate incidents involving racist or sexist allegations.

The programme was designed around quality standards agreed for staff, including introducing themselves to the customer by always showing their identification cards to overcome fear of bogus callers.

Other standards cover the following:

- explaining the work to be carried out
- completing the work to standard
- holding an exit conversation
- dealing with outstanding issues.

The training process

The course was 6 hours long. The length of time was carefully considered as appropriate for the first introduction and return to learning for this cohort. The actual award was from the National Training Award Organisation. Their role is to identify and celebrate any form of training.

The website where people can find out more is www.nationaltrainingawards.com

The process started in April 2003 when 15 departmental managers attended an awareness raising as to the potential of S4L to meet the needs of employers.

58 team leaders were then given the opportunity in May 2003 to evaluate the training which had subsequently been developed.

Feedback from the team leaders resulted in the training pack being refined, prior to it being rolled out to 32 front line operatives between July and Oct 2003. Since that time New College Nottingham has trained NCC staff to deliver the training and it has been delivered many more times in house.

A video is included, showing 'before and after' scenarios for each standard – illustrating poor practice and good practice.

The training, which has been endorsed by tenants and trade unions, covers the 'soft skills' needed to deal with tenants. These include body language, speaking confidently, listening, asking the correct questions, using polite language and avoiding technical jargon.

Results

Since the completion of the first roll out of the course Oct 2003 and April 2004 the following data was collected;

- The number of employees described as helpful and courteous increased by 14% (2% increase on target)
- The number of operatives showing ID cards increased by 27% (2% increase on target)
- The number of employees protecting and safeguarding properties appropriately increased by 13%
- Course evaluation forms. 100% of delegates said the course met their personal objectives
- 100% of delegates felt comfortable to practice the skills learnt.
- 94% felt comfortable to recommend the programme

Achievements

The model has inspired similar customer care training for home care workers, and has led to the development of a Foundation Care Course to be integrated into the induction of all Nottingham care workers.

Quotes from management

Carol Aaron, the city council's training and equality officer, said: "Employees, the organisations involved and the people of Nottingham are gaining benefits of the transfer of learning in terms of improvements in customer care, equality practice and essential skills." Kath West, the Coordinator for Essential Skills in the Workplace at Basford Hall College, New College Nottingham, felt the training demonstrated a creative and innovative approach which met the needs of predominately male construction workers.

Essential Skills for Business – FREE Courses

- ◆ Do you have employees who are required to take an NVQ qualification?
- ◆ Would these employees benefit from a course designed to give them the necessary underpinning skills to achieve an NVQ qualification?
- ◆ Subject specific knowledge is not enough to succeed, employees need support in the language and process skills to demonstrate their knowledge.

This **FREE** course will help them develop the following skills:

- Ø to write effectively
 - Ø to identify key points and arguments
 - Ø to recognise fact, opinion and bias
 - Ø to cross reference written documents
 - Ø to analyse written documents
 - Ø to improve spelling
 - Ø to understand and practise evaluative skills
 - Ø to understand and practise relevant feedback skills
 - Ø to understand and practice reflective skills
 - Ø to understand and practice analytical skills
 - Ø to write in a range of appropriate formats including witness statements
- ◆ Courses can be designed to include some or all of these topics plus any others required for specific client groups

- ◆ Course lengths will vary according to content.

For further information please contact;

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