


Adult & Community Learning

Case Study

Generating Hot Topic seminars and delivering bespoke training to help reach the highest of standards in teaching for the Derby Adult Learning Centre Service.

FPM, in partnership with NIACE, were requested to deliver four one-day Hot Topic seminars in 2007-08 for the Derby Adult Learning Service (ALS). The client had previously attended the industry-standard FPM/NIACE programmes, 'Managing Better' and 'Leading Adult Learning'. All of these programmes are subsidised by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL).



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Jim Beizsley

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Cath Harcula

Welcome to Allen Park Centre



We spoke to Cath and Jim a year after the programme was delivered to discover the impact it had on individual participants and the organisations they work in.

Contractor and Participant:
Cath Harcula
Head of Derby City Adult Learning Service

Cath Harcula, Contractor and Participant

Why did you ask FPM and NIACE to deliver the Hot Topic seminars?

We chose FPM for a number of reasons. Most importantly, I'd been on other FPM courses and so knew they would be high quality. We also knew they'd been developed for ACL staff specifically – a rare thing in training – and that the trainers would understand our staff and their needs. So many training events are generic or aimed at school or college staff so it was fantastic to have something aimed at us.

The seminars we opted for were chosen because the topics they covered were just right for us at that time. They were extremely relevant and fitted in perfectly with our restructuring plans.

The funding was very important. Whilst the need for the seminars was so great, and we would have brought in some training anyway, the funding meant that we could do all four days instead of having to choose just two.

What did you hope to achieve by running the seminars?

As part of the restructure, I hoped they would enable us to embed the changes within the management and administration teams and present our staff with the bigger picture in ACL. We wanted the service to understand how it fits into the national scheme of things, reflect on their roles and realise what a good job they're doing.

It was also a good opportunity for staff who normally only meet every half term to meet in an atmosphere where operational issues weren't on the agenda.

Did the days meet your expectations?

They certainly covered everything we wanted to and exceeded our expectations. I'm surprised at just how much the participants refer back to the training, especially the materials. I don't think they could have covered any more in one day on each session.

Jim Beizsley, Contractor and Participant

Why did you choose to run these seminars?

As well as the timing for us, and the core content of each seminar, a key factor was the ability to fine-tune the content to meet our needs precisely.

Our decision was vindicated as the training got better and better after the first day. It went beyond the seminar topics as Deirdre (the trainer) encouraged us to explore who we are, what we do, our strengths and weaknesses and where we need to head as a service. As the days progressed, we built up a rapport which underpinned the whole initiative, making it much more effective. Those on the first day were really fired up and looking forward to the next one.

How do you think the training affected the service?

We wanted the management and administration teams to look beyond their environment and personal workloads to the wider picture, i.e. to understand what was going on nationally as well as locally.

It certainly did this in the first instance and the quality of the courses also reversed the participants' attitude to training, as some had poor experiences in the past. The first seminar created a 'motivational cycle of interest' which meant subsequent seminars had a real impact.

How did the participants rate the seminars?

The participants really appreciated the time to reflect on their role and where they fit in locally, regionally and nationally. They now have more confidence to articulate their issues and ask more questions. They've all illustrated an increased understanding of their peers throughout the city.

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