**Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment: case study on operational project led by City Gateway on study programmes**

**Personal and social development project for learners**

**Introduction**

The lead organisation for this study programme project was City Gateway. City Gateway began life under current CEO Eddie Stride in 2003, training 15 unemployed learners in job seeking skills. Now a registered charity with free school status, its mission is to support and empower young learners and families in Tower Hamlets. It currently provides key stage 4 courses, 16-19 pre-employment training, a children and families project and apprenticeship training.

The project partners were Hackney Community College, which is a large further education college in Hackney, and LOOP (SHM Foundation) which is an innovative, student-driven ratings and review site for colleges and schools.

This project aimed to enable learners to explore their barriers to learning, to help remove or reduce them and increase their awareness of aspects of equality and diversity through the development of employability skills. This crucial development need was identified by employers and its resolution will not only greatly increase the learners’ life chances but will address the Ofsted requirement to enhance employability and meet the criteria for the new ‘personal development, behavior and welfare’ judgment.

A secondary aim of the project was to develop the classroom delivery skills of the retention workers, who deliver the personal and social development (PSD) sessions; through support, professional development and experiential learning in the classroom.

**Approach**

The project activities included the development of a series of 12 x 1.5 hour PSD sessions. Retention workers delivered the sessions and received training from internal and external specialists in order to develop their practice. Learners graduated from the programme in June 2015. These sessions were mapped both to the ‘skills’ framework’ which was developed through consultation with employers, and to the vocational specialism of the young person.

In addition, the project developed the teaching skills of the retention workers, who prior to this project had never been in sole charge of a group or their learning. Continuing professional development (CPD) was provided each week for the retention workers who have also benefitted from a bespoke training session delivered jointly by an expert practitioner on classroom management and learner behaviour and an Ofsted Inspector.

The project concluded with a field trip to Canary Wharf that included an employers’ review of learners’ progress in their development of employability skills. The final PSD session was a review of learners’ development and a celebration of their achievements in the programme.

The rationale for the project was to respond to employers’ concerns that young people participating in apprenticeships do not always demonstrate the awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues, or the ability to adapt to different and challenging situations that are essential for success in the modern workplace. In addition, this project addressed an area for improvement that will help City Gateway’s apprenticeship provision move to outstanding, since the learners undertaking study programmes will progress to apprenticeships with enhanced personal skills, addressing a key employers’ concern and Ofsted criteria.

What was different about the approach was linking employability skills to the removal of barriers in young people relating to equality and diversity. The development of the retention workers’ skills, by helping them to become outstanding classroom practitioners and gain confidence, was also a particular strand that is unique to City Gateway.

The project involved: 70 learners, 4 retention workers, an employers’ forum, managers at City Gateway and the collaborative partners at Hackney Community College and LOOP (SHM Foundation). In addition, a large employer, International Construction Services who worked with City Gateway apprentices during their review task at Canary Wharf, noted the improved behaviour and confidence of the apprentices, which will help promote further apprenticeship opportunities.

Employers’ feedback on the young people on apprenticeship programmes in their organisations inspired this project and the continued involvement of employers will be utilised at the end of the project in their evaluation of learners’ development through the programme.

Good practice in embedding equality and diversity was assured by ensuring a diverse group of learners develop their understanding, challenging any inappropriate attitudes and helping learners to understand all aspects of equality and diversity, including those they find most confronting, such as their attitude to the police.

**Outcomes and impact**

The project outcomes include:

* The development of 12 high quality PSD sessions, a scheme of work, evaluation tools, tracking documents, teaching resources, learner surveys and case studies.
* 12 weeks of training on the teaching materials with the retention workers and a bespoke training session delivered by an Ofsted Inspector and an external expert practitioner.

These resources and their effectiveness were quality assured and checked in delivery. The resources developed will be used with over 200 learners each year.

The delivery of these resources has impacted most strongly in the affective domain of learning which enables attitudinal development. This feature has been observed in lesson observations, noted by retention workers and the employers’ review of the learners.

Impact thus far has been monitored by the learners’ and retention workers’ evaluations that follow each PSD session and the verbal evaluations that are captured after each session.

There has been good development of 70 learners’ attitudes to aspects of equality and diversity, such as their feelings about authority and the police, and this development has powerful implications for their future as it helps ensure that their attitudes and behaviours are congruent with those expected by employers and society at large. The development of the skills and confidence of retention workers in managing whole groups of learners, adapting their teaching styles to suit individual learners’ needs, has also been a key achievement.

There has been good development, via weekly meetings to discuss the PSD resources, the CPD session and weekly reflections of the skills and confidence of the retention workers. For example, following feedback on their lesson observations, retention workers developed a set of ‘question cards’ to help build their skills in oral questioning.

Potential long-term impact is that the above would be achieved for larger cohorts of learners both at City Gateway and beyond and that as a result, ever greater numbers of learners would achieve greater success in the workplace. Monitoring of the future impact of the PSD programme and resources will be part of City Gateway’s usual quality system including a mock inspection scheduled for 2015-16 with a team of Ofsted Inspectors. In addition, the usual employers’ form will review its impact and effectiveness.

**Lessons learned**

Busy organisations who have to respond to constant learner issues have essential priorities and even though the best of intentions are to prioritise the project, there may be other more pressing matters, and a couple of delays were experienced during the project as a result. Further to this, the collaboration was slow at first due to busy schedules, but through the willingness of the participants, in particular Hackney Community College, it was fruitful – e.g. through the use of students in programme planning meetings (introduced June 2015) and the planned development of a two-week joint project for City Gateway and Hackney Community College learners to work together in the development of course materials.

In addition, it was found to be counter-cultural to prioritise PSD delivery over that of vocational learning, and on two occasions during this project we needed to ‘claw back’ learning time for the PSD from the vocational lessons due to two bank holiday Mondays (the PSD delivery day). This was interesting as it sent a strong message to tutors and learners that PSD time was ‘protected’ and in the life of this project, took priority over classroom learning. This helped all participants see the high value placed on the development of equality and diversity awareness by City Gateway and the employers they work with.

There were some difficulties experienced in obtaining timely feedback from employers during the project which will be addressed in planning for the next programme.

**Sustainability and transferability**

The PSD provision, developed and trialled as part of this project will now be rolled out to the rest of the City Gateway programmes, reaching over 300 learners. Further, City Gateway is committed to developing differentiated PSD provision and resources that will meet the needs of 100 learners at entry level so that equality and diversity, embedded in PSD, is experienced from the first week of their City Gateway journey.

The two main outcomes of the project are:

1. The scheme of work, which is available as part of the shared resources arising out of the project, and the ‘learner reflective journal’ which helps participants capture and maximise their learning. These resources could be applied in any setting which supports young people on their journey towards employment.

The approach of embedding equality and diversity training into personal and social development delivery, which is vocationally relevant and specific*,* is an efficient and effective way to meet learners’ needs and interests at the same time. As such, this model is highly transferable to any setting which seeks to promote learners’ employability by the development of soft skills and promotion of a positive approach to equality and diversity.

1. The aspects of the project which relate to the development of the retention workers could be applied to other settings where staff are working towards teaching such as classroom assistant and learning support advisors. These staff could utilise the model adopted here of weekly meetings with tutors and bespoke CPD to ensure they maximise their impact in the classroom.

The last word of the case study should go to the project organiser, Joanna Fellowes who shared this in an email:

*“We've created something to be proud of that will have a lasting impact on our young people. Hurrah!”*

**Case study written by Philip Elliott, Peer Advisor, supported by Joanna Fellowes, City Gateway**