

Skills for Life Support Programme



Case study overview

Title: Developing resources for embedding within the Horticulture programme at HMP Leyhill

Introduction

HMP Leyhill is a male open "D" category prison located in the South West of England which can accommodate up to 532 prisoners at any one time. The establishment takes a broad range of prisoners with little restriction on type of offence or length of sentence; the prison population can be categorized into 3 elements, Lifer-Long term prisoners, Determinant prisoners with 3 to 12 months and Short term prisoners with approximately 2 to 12 weeks to serve.

A4e is an education provider within the Learning & Skills Department whose main delivery is in the Social and Personal Development strand. We also deliver one vocational course, Horticulture, which was the focus of this project. For this academic year the LSC awarded us 8078 hours of which 495 hours were given over to the delivery of Horticulture, which breaks down to 2 days delivery per week over a 45 week period.



Context/ rationale

Horticulture is accredited through NPTC (National Proficiency Test Centre) which is part of the City & Guilds group. It has historically been on offer through the prison for a number of years and at the start of this academic A4e engaged with the prison to help deliver the course. A4e has recently taken over the qualification outcomes and the registering of the students with City & Guilds.

As this course was still relatively new to us we decided that we would like to develop new sets of lesson plans and work sheets that concentrated on embedding and this was supported by a grant that was achieved through LSIS. It was hoped that if we could reach a high standard of quality in what was produced that we would then be able to "sell" what we were doing across other areas of industry with in the prison and push the embedding agenda.

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How they worked/ what they did

The Horticulture course is made up of sixty two units in all, four of which are mandatory and the rest being optional units, the number of which a learner will engage with dependent on whether they were taking an award, certificate or diploma. Reviewing what these units were it was decided that we would concentrate on three of the four mandatory units and one of the optional units. These were: To plant container grown plants in a prepared area of soil; To apply mulch to a 5m square area as designated by instructor and Water a bed, border or area of plants in containers using hand-held equipment (Mandatory) and: To produce a hanging basket (optional). Lesson plans were produced for each of these. These each show how the lesson links to relevant policies/codes of practice e.g. ELM/Youth Matters; what differentiation takes place; which functional skills can be found within the session. There is also clear cross referencing to National Occupational Standards, Wider Key Skills and the Core Curriculum.

For each lesson there was a specific task designed, which includes an activity sheet that has been printed on card and laminated ensuring sustainability.

It was agreed that we would only use tasks that were practical to the course, we did not want to produce something that didn't fit in with the criteria and would be seen as something that was additional to the good work that was already going on; it had to be something that enhanced it and added a new dimension to it. We were also aware that the materials also had to clearly show the naturally occurring functional skills that were taking place in the task.

Additionally, a weed identification booklet produced in association with the print shop within HMP Leyhill which although is specific for one of the lessons can be used in a variety of ways in further teaching with Horticulture

The final element to the project, the CPD, was to be delivered as a Train-the-Trainer so the tutor and I would be able to go out to the wider industry area and explain the importance of what we were doing and how the same principles could be applied across the prison and how this would benefit these areas. This would then allow us to deliver outside of the timescale for this project at a time when we felt industries would be most receptive to us.

G Student Voice

"When I was told I had to mow 50 sq m- I really didn't know how big an area it was until I undertook the training with Clive. Now when given an area to work with, I feel more confident and understand how big a task is and how long it will take to complete." *Chris-Student*

H Challenges and learning

The biggest problem we had was copyright laws. The weed identification booklet was re-formatted from another book and while that in itself did not breach any copyright laws we found that it took time to get it cleared to use the material in conjunction with the project.

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I Benefits/ impact

We feel that the project has helped set the standards of the quality of the materials being used and this is now a benchmark for further development of materials within Horticulture and to dissipate this quality through the other areas of industry where learning takes place.

It is due to what has been produced and the way in which it naturally fits in with the course it is seen by the learners as being something that is relevant and enjoyable and encourages completion of the course and possibly moves candidates on to try other courses as a result. This in turn leads to some amount of job satisfaction on the part of the tutor.

As with most things in the prison uptake on courses is mainly down to word of mouth by the learners who have already taken the course so it is hoped that as the benefits of this project gain momentum more learners will engage with the Horticulture programme and benefit from the quality of what is being delivered. This will also give the learners a real chance of a job opportunity on release and in turn reduce recidivism which will mean that the prison will be achieving their targets. This would mean that Horticulture would be viewed as a success and ensure its continual delivery in the future.

J Quotations to capture staff voice

"Through the NPTC Practical Horticulture I am able to embed and increase candidate knowledge of areas and general mathematics through the activities within many of the tasks.

In addition, this qualification is recognizable within the Horticulture sector and offers our candidates a real opportunity to gain employment upon release." *John Lumber A4e Tutor*

K Lessons learnt

The biggest thing that we found of use to us within the prison is that what is being done has to be relevant to the learner. If the learner can't see the point or the use of what they are doing they will not engage, no matter how charismatic the tutor. This has been the main point of focus for us during this project.

The materials that are produced have to be of the best quality to show a professional standard of the tutor and that they care about what they do and that they see that it matters to the learner.

The materials that are produced need to be clear and easy to understand for the learners. However, that is not to say that the tasks should not be challenging. They should be differentiated and suitable to the learner so they feel that they are achieving in what they are doing and not just coasting.

Any embedded learning does not have to be highlighted in every case to the learner but if they are able to see the functionality of what they are doing and can then take it to apply in different situations then some success can be measured from that.

M Next steps

From this point we have a good template lesson plan that can be used for future Horticulture lesson plans. Over the course of the project this was revised a number of times to the point where we felt all information on it was relevant and of use to the tutor and learner. The next point to be carried forward will be to use the train the trainer information we have to go and sell the idea of embedded learning into other areas of the prison where we do not have direct education links to. Here we will be able to introduce the lesson plan format to them and offer any support that may be needed to help implement this. .

It has also been decided that the Weed Identification booklet that has been produced is a very useful tool for the learner/tutor to have at their disposal so this is going to be developed further and other booklets are going to be produced relating to the other kinds of flora and fauna that is found at Leyhill. We hope to also move this away from reproduction from books and have colour photos from examples on site.