

Kingston College

Supporting Learners with behaviours which challenge



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Kingston College is a general college of further education in South West London. The college has a discrete provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that is based on a shared site, not located on the main campus. The provision has ten staff plus several learning support assistants (LSAs) and approximately 80 learners who are studying a mixture of full time and part time courses. The courses are branded under the name The Skills Centre, and are intended to provide a range of opportunities to help people with a disability develop their skills. Learners attending the Skills Centre have the opportunity to develop skills to progress to further learning, to find employment, to live independently and for personal and social development.

Supporting Learners with behaviours which challenge -Background information

Over the last three years the college has noticed a change in the learners applying to attend The Skills Centre. The college is now much more likely to have learners presenting with challenging behaviour. As the provision was not originally set up to support such learners there were no procedures in place or established links with supporting agencies.

This initially created problems as staff were not trained to deal with the behavioural challenges that were being presented to them in class and there was a lack of joined up thinking with supporting agencies on how to manage the behaviour effectively. There was also an issue on the lack of information from carers being passed to the college in addition to poor identification of behavioural issues and support needs at interview.

How has this been addressed?

This document explores the approach the college has taken to addressing these challenges and exemplifies the impact through a case study.

The first step was to develop a form to be sent to parents or supporting agencies prior to the interview to allow the college to capture as much information as possible on the behaviours applicant. This is called the *“Initial Assessment Form Used Pre Interview”*. It is important that this form is completed before the interview, and where necessary a chase up phone call is made to ensure this happens. This is important as sometimes learners come to the interview with an adult who knows very little about their needs and history.

This information is then used at the interview to discuss with the applicant, their parents or the supporting agency the supporting strategies that will need to be in place to ensure the learner has positive learning experiences.

After the interview and prior to the learner starting at college a behaviour management plan is then developed which sets out the likelihood of the behaviour occurring, the potential impacts of the behaviour and the techniques needed to minimise the behaviour occurring and to reduce its impacts.

Using these resources

Example of Learner X

Learner X applied to Kingston College. The pre-interview form was sent to his carer. This was completed by the carer and returned to the college before the interview took place. On the form it indicated that Learner X can present a range of behavioural challenges including:

- *Aggressive Behaviours (biting, kicking, punching, spitting, pulling people to the floor and punching and kicking, throwing items at peers, staff – whoever is close to him)*
- *Verbal Aggression (using profanities and verbal insults)*
- *Absconding (attempting to climb over seats while vehicle is in motion, scaling fences and leaving groups when in the community)*
- *Inappropriate interaction with peers (encouraging peers showing signs of challenging behaviour, swearing and teasing)*
- *Obsession and inappropriate interaction with staff (showing interest in young female staff members, involving hugging and massaging them, finding it difficult to manage them moving away or remaining close for any length of time and becoming aggressive if people try to manage the situation)*

This information was then discussed at the interview and the potential triggers that make this behaviour more likely to occur were identified. This included

- *Unreasonable demands by him not being met*
- *In response to reasonable demands by staff*
- *Low stimulation levels*
- *Preferred staff (especially young female staff) working with someone else*
- *Being told he is too late to join in*

Based on this information a challenging behaviour assessment form was completed to develop a plan to minimise the chance of this behaviour occurring. For example part of Learner X's provision involved him going to an allotment to study horticulture. As the learner relies on a carer to transport him to the allotment he can sometimes be late. If this occurs he cannot join the class and he becomes aggressive and confrontational.

To prevent this behaviour occurring at Kingston College it was agreed that the tutor would be given a college mobile phone and that the carer should telephone if learner X is running late for

the session. When they arrive at the allotment they then telephone again and wait about 100 metres from the allotment. The tutor comes to meet Learner X and includes him in the activity.

Impact

By using these techniques there has been a complete transformation in learner X's behaviour and he has now successfully completed two years on the course. When he first attended he would have his coat pulled up over his ears and a cap on his head to cover himself. He did not speak very much and did not mix well with other learners. A year on he has changed considerably. He no longer covers his head; he communicates with staff and his peers and participates in all class activities. He is particularly keen to do well in maths.

Summary

At Kingston College this is now the standard procedure for all interviews. Interviews are conducted by a course tutor and if specific issues are identified in the initial assessment specialist staff from the college welfare services are also involved in the interviews. Currently 90% of learners have completed this form and send it to the college prior to interview. The review of applicants shows that the college now accepts applicants with behavioural problems that two or three years ago it would have not accepted on the grounds that it was unable to manage the behaviours.

There have been significant improvements to course retention; a 5% rise this academic year (2010/11) and the number of serious incidents involving behaviour has seen a 17% reduction in the past two academic years.