



North Devon College in partnership with Freedom Social Projects

An initiative to support the homeless and chaotic toward regaining independence, contributing to society, raising self esteem and employability opportunities

Rob Barnes 01.05.09



Introduction

The Freedom Centre is the drop in centre for homeless and any other disadvantaged people such as drug and alcohol dependencies among other issues. The Centre provides a free meal at lunch time and other facilities such as showers and support personnel on site. The idea is to use the kitchen at the Centre to deliver NVQ 1 Food Preparation and Cooking to the population using the centre or any other unemployed or applicable applicant.

To do this we needed to improve the kitchen facilities at the centre to accommodate the delivery of the NVQ qualification.

With financial support from the LSC, North Devon Council, Devon County Council and solid support from Productive Skills for Devon (PSFD) we have now done this and the pilot scheme is up and running.



At this point I would like to point out that these initiatives would never happen without positive and forward thinking followed by direct support from both councils and the LSC.

The Pilot Scheme

It was our intention from the start to mix the group up with different types of candidate based of course on the population using the Freedom Centre. To meet this objective we enrolled:

1 member of the full time staff on NVQ 2 Food processing and Cooking who is the cook at the centre. Our intention is to provide the necessary training for this individual to become the foundation of the training programme in the future.

2 volunteers who work in the kitchen were enrolled on NVQ 1 Food preparation and Cooking

7 service users were enrolled on NVQ 1 Food Preparation and Cooking as the core group

The main class runs on a Tuesday and Wednesday for the service users.

The pilot scheme has taken a while to settle down as this project differs considerably from the original Osborne project. The main difference being that we are working the training courses into an existing operating system as opposed to the Osborne where the hotel is mostly closed so we don't have to worry too much about fitting in etc. This resulted in some initial confusion over who exactly was responsible for or supposed to be doing which training or tasks with the students.

We have re-organised ourselves and things are beginning to run more smoothly. We have assigned a new tutor to the operation who is actually the tutor from the Osborne Project.

The new kitchen is excellent and Catertech have done a very good job on the re-fit. The effect of the new equipment and environment has a positive effect on staff and students alike.

As expected this group of students are more difficult to track as they have additional issues to contend with in their daily lives. Attendance has been an issue for some. We have not experienced any adverse behaviour in the kitchen from any of the students.



Results to date

The cook at The Freedom Centre is progressing very well through the NVQ 2 and will soon complete. With the Osborne project complete the tutor will begin to give more guidance with how to run this course and record evidence for the NVQ standards. This training will be reinforced through the level 3 programme we have planned.

The two volunteers after an initial slow start are now progressing well and will complete the NVQ 1 shortly. They agreed to come in on some different days to gain more experience and evidence.

Of the seven NVQ 1 students (the service users at The Freedom Centre):

2 have completed level 1. One of whom will be progressing to NVQ 2 Food processing and Cooking.

Of the other 5 we have two very close to completing but have had some serious personal issues to deal with recently so have a delayed for a short time.

One actually found a job and started work. He did three days in his job and then failed to show again. We are actively trying to find him now and get him back on track.

One other has also experienced some serious difficulties in his personal life which affected his behaviour a little. We hope to continue with him when he has better control over his problems shortly.

One other individual we believe may have had a problem with the law and we are actively working with The Probation Service to find him and get him back on track.

As you can see this programme is a real challenge with this population. We are learning how to best offer this provision as we go, as we did with the Osborne.

Development

- We have decided to trial each applicant before enrolling to make sure they are committed and suitable. This is going well as it allows the potential students to decide more definitely if this training is suited to them.
- We will also extend the length of the course for this programme to accommodate the inevitable issues and problems faced by this population of students, preventing them from attending as well as others might.
- We are working much more closely with Jobcentre Plus and The Probation Service as they are very familiar with this population.
- The next group of students to enrol are trialling now and we will be enrolling them shortly.
- The new kitchen is performing very well.



Conclusion

This is an excellent project which is sustainable in the long term. With some adjustments it will yield better results for the target population.

Verbal feedback from the students is very positive and they are moving closer to employment with their qualifications and experience.