

NVQs – as a progression route

While the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) were supporting the personal development of staff they entered discussions on the lack of qualifications of many staff and the possibility of using the NVQ to both develop them and give them an accredited qualification.

This possibility was discussed further with senior management and the Department's NVQ Centre and in May 2005 a pilot NVQ level 2 in Customer Service was launched. The opportunity to complete a qualification was offered to staff and a total of eight of the DEL messengers opted to take part.

It had been some time since any of the candidates had completed any form of study and most were lacking in confidence. As the candidates needed additional support it was recognised that the choice of assessors was important and would have a bearing on the overall success of the programme.

The programme was delivered via monthly workshops where the Internal Verifier took the candidates through their induction and provided information on the NVQ process; the paperwork involved and discussed each of the units of customer service. Candidates were matched to assessors and built up a rapport quickly. The workshops created an open atmosphere in which candidates were encouraged to talk about their evidence and any difficulties they were having getting started.

Despite some initial nerves, the candidates quickly adjusted to the NVQ and began generating a range of evidence from their jobs. According to one of the

assessors, the enthusiasm and sheer determination of the candidates made it a pleasure to be involved in the programme.

Excellent progress was made with all eight candidates achieving their NVQ level 2 in Customer Service ahead of schedule. The outcome was far more beneficial than merely accreditation as was determined from the evaluation. Amongst other skills the evaluation highlighted that candidates had increased confidence levels and improved problem-solving skills when dealing with customers.

Of the group of 8 candidates that gained their awards 4 have been promoted into administrative grades.



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