

Wightlink

Wightlink provide vehicle and passenger ferry services between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. Two vehicle routes are operated, one between Portsmouth and Fishbourne and the other between Lymington and Yarmouth. The passenger ferry provides a high speed service between Ryde Pierhead and Portsmouth Harbour. The vehicles ferries operate 24 hours a day and provide a peak frequency of a ferry every 30 minutes. New vessels are scheduled to enter service on the Yarmouth to Lymington route in November 2009. The company is based in Portsmouth giving them access to a wide range of potential training providers.

An enquiry was received at The Isle of Wight College from Linda Bulcock, the new Wightlink Customer Services Manager in February 2007 regarding a range of diverse, nationally certificated and bespoke pre-season training solutions for 2007.

The dedicated Customer Liaison Officer (CLO) for sector met with the employer to assist them in understanding their training needs and priorities. A second visit was arranged during which the CLO was accompanied by the Trainer to help ensure they understood the skills requirements of the organisation. Priorities emerged as:

- Customer Service
- Induction
- Communication
- DDA (Disability Discrimination Act)
- Complaint Handling

Following the initial meeting, the CLO and trainer met again to discuss the detailed logistics of providing training to a continuously moving workforce. In addition the trainer followed up with an additional meeting with the Passenger Services Manager and the Training and Development Manager for Wightlink, to drill down to the finer detail of the identified training solutions and to identify the company's objectives, which were:

- To reduce customer complaints
- To raise awareness of managing customers with disabilities
- To introduce customer service standards for customer facing staff
- To improve public perception of the company as a lead provider of marine transport to the Isle of Wight

WightLink primarily wanted NVQ training in Customer Service and Team Leading. The CLO and trainer also discussed the Train to Gain initiative and advised the company of the criteria to enable some of their staff to access Level 2 funding.

By involving the trainer in ongoing meetings with Wightlink from the start enabled an excellent working relationship to be forged between trainer and employer. Follow up meetings were held after each training session to give immediate feedback to the employer. The employer works directly with the trainer to agree content, objectives and feedback. Proposal was made via email with

objectives which were embedded into the course content. The trainer also agreed a range of training dates in Portsmouth and Lymington according to the preferred dates identified by the company.

The pre-season (07) training was followed up by a meeting in the summer of 2007, when the CLO and trainer visited the company head office once the training was completed. The company indicated they had a high level of satisfaction with the training that had been delivered. Discussions focused on a further range of training solutions, which would incorporate agreed changes such as moving from half-day bespoke customer service sessions, to be replaced by full day training sessions to incorporate input on DDA.

The employer indicated that they would like additional staff to undertake NVQ Level 2 and Level 3 Work Based Learning specifically for those who fell outside the funding criteria for Train to Gain.

The trainer is still involved in the ongoing delivery of a programme of training solutions programme and continue to meet with the employer to make sure it continues to meet the needs and objectives of the company and to make any identified adjustments to the training programme or content as agreed with the company.

The company continue to indicate a high level of satisfaction with the training delivered. This was endorsed recently by a report produced by an external consultancy firm, which has undertaken some work for the college.

Following the arranged meeting with WightLink on 22 August 2007, the CLO arranged for part funding to be provided by the college to help the company provide additional NVQ Level 2 and Level 3 WBL training for their staff. These are staff who were over-qualified and therefore unable to access Train to Gain funding. Wightlink staff are still being enrolled onto part-funded and Train to Gain NVQ programmes. A review meeting at WightLink head office by the CLO and trainer in January 2008 the college will be providing an ongoing schedule of training solutions through to December 2008.

Further review meetings were held at WightLink head office by the CLO and trainers in July 2008 at which two new training solutions were added to the WightLink portfolio. These first is bespoke Customer Service training for the 'New Vessels', which will be operating on the Lymington/Yarmouth route for customer facing crew and captains. This intensive on-board training will commence in September and last for six weeks. The second is Conflict Avoidance training for Marshalling Reception Staff, which was identified by the staff as a training requirement.

The CLO and trainer will be meeting with Linda Bulcock in January 2009, to discuss the portfolio of activities through to December 2009.