

The journey to embedding Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead adult learning



Collaboration between neighbouring boroughs

This project brought together the neighbouring adult education departments of Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in Berkshire. Both organisations offer a range of adult education classes which include maths, English and ESOL, family learning and vocational courses. Approximately 60 tutors deliver classes over 14 sites across the county. Slough has approximately 750 learners per year, mostly in ESOL classes, and employs around 20 tutors. Windsor and Maidenhead employs between 35 and 40 tutors who between them deliver 63 classes to approximately 2500 learners per year. Most tutors are part time working between 2 and 16 hours per week.

The challenges

At Windsor and Maidenhead Ofsted identified that “there was insufficient focus on the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills”. Managers are aware that opportunities exist to practise these skills in a range of vocational classes but know that tutors have neither the knowledge nor the confidence to exploit these opportunities.

Slough wanted to explore new delivery models which would contribute to adult skills and employment opportunities and identified that embedded maths and English would help to address this issue.

Both organisations wanted to develop a pilot project where selected vocational courses would embed maths and English.

How were staff development needs addressed?

Awareness raising

We ran two events aimed at raising all tutors’ awareness of the national literacy and numeracy curricula, based on the original Skills for Life National Curriculum Awareness Training programme. 44 tutors (of the possible 60) attended and were reassured that they were not being asked to teach maths and English. Instead they were encouraged to recognise that they were already doing it to some extent. They became sufficiently familiar with the national curriculum documents to start using them for lesson planning, and to be more explicit about the maths and English skills they were using in their sessions.

Supported providers

Slough Borough Council:

- Saira Minhas, Skills for Life Curriculum Manager

Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead:

- Kosser Choudry, Community Projects Manager

Improvement partner

CfBT Education Trust:

- Gill Mattock

“I gained confidence and clarity. This class is so much fun.”

“Overall good session, informative and useful. Thank you”

How to embed

Four courses were selected: dressmaking, web design, file management and beauty. The tutors came together with their Skills for Life colleagues and revisited schemes of work and lesson plans in order to recognise where English and maths skills were already being addressed in their lessons.

“Successful embedded delivery consists of three stages: identifying existing literacy and numeracy; developing existing literacy and numeracy; creating additional opportunities to include literacy and numeracy. The training done so far has achieved the first stage and touched on the second.”

Gill Mattock

Shadowing

A member of staff from each organisation shadowed the improvement partner with a view to developing sufficient expertise to deliver the staff training sessions themselves in the future.

Lesson observations

Both managers will do lesson observations to evaluate how well embedding is working.

Progress and impact

We anticipate the need for further work with the pilot course tutors that addresses how to create additional opportunities for embedding maths and English. Once we have formally evaluated the pilot courses, the strategies used will be rolled out to all other courses.

“Through this support and our joint working we are working through our original plan of action quite well. We have managed to hold three training sessions for our staff and tutors which have had very good response from colleagues. We are definitely enjoying being part of this project and the fact that some of our tutors are already implementing what they have learned from the training shows that it’s working for us. The timing is good for us and we really did need the support and guidance in getting started with embedding numeracy and literacy across the board. We are confident that the rest of our journey will continue in the same light.”

Kosser Choudry

As a result of the improvement project, Saira Minhas feels they have:

“Better working relations with RBWM (Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead), greater understanding of embedding literacy and numeracy into vocational subjects, examples of good practice in other organisations and introduction/access to various materials online.”

What made this project successful was:

- both organisations were very clear what they wanted to achieve;
- the identification and participation of key staff and decision makers;
- excellent attendance at the training events;
- all staff had received the message to bring schemes of work and lesson plans;
- all key documents were printed and available.