

HULL YOUTH SERVICE MANAGERS QUALIFY FOR AN EXCITING FUTURE

Senior managers in Hull's Youth Service are now better equipped to meet the challenges of their new role after participating in a custom designed 11 day NEBS Management accredited training programme.

Youth Services have an increasingly important role to play in the Government's agenda to eliminate social exclusion, and with the introduction of *Connexions* to help young people identify learning and work opportunities and qualify for employment and training, many of the changes in work practice and delivery have been profound and far reaching.

Hull Youth Service has made a commitment to management training, to enable the service to take full advantage of Best Value, OFSTED action plans and the development of Connexions.

As Paul Vincent, Senior Worker, Development and Professional Practice with Hull Youth Service says: "The Government's agenda specifies that senior youth workers and managers are required to have management qualifications. They need to be better equipped to deal with management issues."

When Government funding for management of youth service workers was identified, Hull Youth Service was able to explore opportunities for development. CCDU was asked to undertake a tailored pilot programme for 13 members of the senior management team, some of whom were new to senior positions.

Paul says: "The initial programme more than satisfied the requirements of the brief and we agreed to continue the development." A series of integrated programmes was designed and delivered during the period September 2001 to April 2002 for two days a month. The whole range of management topics was covered and led to all delegates gaining a management award from NEBS (now the Institute of Leadership and Management).

One of the delegates Gary McManus, Senior Worker for Learning Support Projects for Hull City Council Youth Service commented: "The programme has seemed to mark a break from the historic role of the youth service management. It has been a very positive experience and by no means an abstract one – it has reflected the reality of our work through using real life situations."

"The flexibility built into the programme was very important to us; it enabled us to 'steer round the bouys' he says – a suitably maritime metaphor in a city which has always had strong links with the sea.

Gary started in Hull as a part time assistant worker then moved to North East Lincolnshire Authority's Multi-Agency Support Team and Counselling unit on completion of post graduate study. Two years ago he returned to his home city to take on his present role.

Speaking about a second programme that has now been designed for the "next tier" of senior practitioners, he says "it goes that step further and makes us pull our professional socks up. Cascading the development programme to employees at the other levels in this way, means that ultimately the youth service can offer more meaningful benefits to Hull's young people."

Paul Vincent moved to Hull in 1988 to work for the now dismantled Humberside County Council as Assistant Youth Worker at a secondary school in Hull. He had previously worked for the Inner London Education Authority on the Isle of Dogs in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and it was, he admits, a considerable culture shock moving North, though he enjoys the life.

Paul says he now feels far more confident managing people at a time when the demands on the service and its managers and workers have become more complex. "The training programme gave us a chance to reflect on where we are going. People looked forward to the sessions because they saw it as an opportunity to develop themselves. The structure of the programme gave us the focus and the discipline to do it."

He likens it to a journey in which CCDU has become a 'critical friend' as the senior managers enter what is for many of them, new territory.

Significantly, those in the Youth Service no longer see the organisation as some form of Cinderella activity - there is a far more strategic approach and the Youth Service is seen as a significant player in the Connexions Strategy and very much at the forefront of the Government's policies. NEBS accreditation is essential in the ongoing development of youth workers and their managers.

Hull youth service works directly with approximately 7000 young people aged between 13 and 19 years. The work range includes the unique Pioneer Project, Learning Support in schools, accredited personal and social development programmes, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Lord Mayor's Award for 11 - 13 year olds, and two motor projects as well as the geographical youth centre based work and the city's detached youth work team.

The service is also involved in special projects such as externally funded summer schools, youth counselling, work with young people in hostel accommodation, those who are looked after by the local authority and those in youth engagement programmes, which follow the Youth Work Curriculum. A major strength is the partnership work with the voluntary and third sector youth organisation, which support the City's strategy for raising achievement.

The big challenge now for the Youth Service is to enable young people to further develop their skills, confidence and knowledge so they can contribute to more effective management of the Service through having a real say in the quality of facilitation and services on offer.