

Lewisham College incorporating Southwark College

Learning and Skills Eco-skills to influence communities

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Two years ago Lewisham College Trade Union Studies Department and the construction union UCATT were founding members of the Green Skills Partnership for London (GSPL). It is a London consortium of employers, Councils, Unionlearn, community organisations and education providers. Its success is based on a joined up approach between groups enabling:

- sharing of resources and expertise – venues, staff, learner support
- funding bids,
- training opportunities,
- apprenticeships, job and work placement opportunities.

It has enabled Lewisham College and UCATT to achieve successful joint bids for funding from Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and recently won the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) Green Gown Award for Learning and Skills. This innovative programme learning included highly visual and 'hands on' activities including a DIY solar panels course using re-cycled materials.

Project partners

The initiative:

Meets the needs of learners – Lewisham College Trade Union Studies Department and UCATT worked with several GSPL partners to share information and expertise to develop and deliver 2 types of environmental courses:

- a trainers/mentors learning package on carbon free and environmental sustainability providing skills to support young people, adults, green reps and vulnerable workers to establish workplace projects around the green agenda.
- an employability skills unit on green issues for those entering the job market.

Demonstrates partnership working - sharing of resources and expertise to identify:

- progression pathways for learners starting out on the 'green agenda' to become 'green' ambassadors
- models of learning that can be replicated elsewhere – how to access community groups, course content to meet challenging learners (mental health, long term unemployed)
- joint funding opportunities



Profile

- FE
- 15,500 students
(includes full and part
time students)
- 800 staff
- Urban

Section 2 The results

Learner data

Engagement with local communities and hard to reach and vulnerable adults:

- ✓ 54 people trained as Discussion Leaders from local housing estates in community venues (hall and café) who would never have had the opportunity or confidence to attend a formal course.
- ✓ 17 participants to progress to start a Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course.
- ✓ 4 shadowed College tutors on further environmental courses with apprentices and community groups with a view to taking a formal teaching qualification
- ✓ 2 people attended a 5 day course on retro-fitting. 1 on a DIY solar panels training day. 1 will start an Environmental Sustainability degree. These 'eco-skills' have been incorporated into later environment courses and provide practical skills that can be used in community gardens and housing estates. The DIY solar panels course using re-cycled materials has been particularly well received by challenging participants.
- ✓ 15 completed an Ascentis online Environmental Sustainability course
- ✓ Discussion Leader model has been incorporated into 2 multi-million pound building projects in London to engage with the community

Opportunities for further training, jobs and apprenticeships

- ✓ Follow up days have been held to progress ideas and encourage sustainability including a 'We Love Co-operatives' day to set up local energy and community garden projects and a PTLLS information day.
- ✓ Further financial bids have been made to Jobcentreplus, Draftbusters (community group for environmental/ sustainability training/awareness) and BeOnsite Elephant and Castle Regeneration Project to extend the mo (community group for environmental/ sustainability training/awareness) to run environmental awareness courses and for full time Project Workers and more training courses on loft and cavity wall insulation, solar paneling and rain water harvesting.
- ✓ 4 employers have offered work placements, 2 multi million pound projects will adopt the training model (BeOnsite at Elephant and Castle and Carillion in Tower Hamlets energy sustainability project).

Improved communication and links to meet local needs

- ✓ Between partners in the initiative to meet local needs, influence course content, develop direct routes into jobs, apprenticeships, training and work experience, financial contributions, facilities and resources.
- ✓ A better understanding of environmental literacy among trainers and learners to influence green initiatives with employers, employees, the unemployed and community groups to set up further projects.
- ✓ A web site blogs all the developments of the initiative and enables course participants, partners and others to add their comments and experiences. <http://ecoskills.blogspot.com>
- ✓ Demonstrates a learning model to engage with hard to reach and vulnerable people utilising local venues on estates using sustainable development principles as part of a 'bottom up' development so that people can improve their own labour market prospects and living standards through more active civic participation
- ✓ Bridges a gap in the development of new eco- skills in rapidly growing environmental markets and sustainable literacy skills in all sectors and businesses.

The approach

Reaching learners who have not been reached by other parts of the skills system?

- Highly effective contact by College tutors and Union Project Workers/Union Learning Representatives with employers, other trade unions and community organisations utilising social meeting places such as local cafés and residents groups on housing estates to recruit people to courses
- Ability to communicate with hard to reach workers, communities and challenging learners as have empathy and knowhow of construction work and its challenges to support them
- Visual and 'hands on' activities achieves a better understanding of environmental literacy among trainers and learners to influence green initiatives with employers, employees, the unemployed and community groups to set up further projects.
- Develops links with other providers, eg. Lewisham College construction department, to:
 - run sessions with existing apprentices
 - utilise their facilities to show how rain water harvesting and solar panels can be set up
- Establishes a progression pathway route arising out of the needs of participants to ensure each was able to take their next step. This covers 6 areas – entrepreneurship and co-operative working, environmental, health and safety, tools and trades, teaching and education. Later gardening added as this is an important development area for environmental sustainability i.e. opportunities to grow own food, develop energy projects, bring communities together in collective working

What sort of learners?

Mixed groups are very effective as enable mutual support, confidence building and know how on the green agenda. Team leaders, staff with environmental responsibilities, community workers, youth workers, union reps, unemployed have participated in courses. Particularly engaging for those with mental health or learning disabilities – course content is practical, visual and 'hands on'.

Our goals

To link workplaces, trade unions, employers, Councils and community groups to maximise use of resources and know how on green issues to improve their local living and working standards.

To raise awareness of the benefits of environmental sustainability with vulnerable groups both in work and out of work.

To provide practical, hands on, activities that are meaningful for communities around the green agenda eg energy efficiency, recycling goods, improving local workplace and public facilities

Obstacles and solutions

employers and communities still don't understand the link between environmental sustainability and the creation of jobs	build this into all activities with factual information about job creation statistics and examples
funding and staffing for challenging learners	more partnership working to prepare funding bids and co-ordination of stakeholder resources

Performance and results

Impact of this activity in terms of economic growth

- effective, joined up use of resources and know how
- employers, unions and Councils working together in community engagement for learning with some of the most hard to reach people
- progression routes to qualifications helping people to access learning, improve their job prospects
- dissemination of the learning model to be replicated by others at:
 - ⇒ national construction union, UCATT, learning reps conference in Derby to promote the model (28 March 2012)
 - ⇒ EAUC annual conference in York (29 March 2012)
 - ⇒ Unionlearn London Region ULR Network conference at the TUC (30 March and 9 November 2012)
 - ⇒ Green Skills Partnership for London (GSPL) (27 April 2012 and updates reported at all GSPL meetings)
 - ⇒ Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) Green Gown Awards case study/winners brochure page 28 (5 November 2012) www.eauc.org.uk/green_gown_awards

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

- More partnership working
- Gain funding to build on what we have already achieved
- Perfect the teaching and learning product for publication and dissemination for others to use

Further information

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