

A Vision in Workplace Learning

A Workplace Learning Project at Anglian Windows in Norwich has just been recognised by the National STAR Awards in Warwickshire as being selected as the Regional winner for Outstanding Support Team in Workplace Learning. Out of 7000 nominations they are through to the national final in London at the end of October.

If successful former Olympic champion, Dame Kelly Holmes will present the award along with a cheque for £5000.

Part of the Trade Union role is to promote workplace education and skills. Historically very little learning took place at Anglian Windows amongst shop-floor workers, but that's not the case now.

Led by the GMB Union's Project Co-ordinator Steve Walker from Thetford and supported by the Union Learning Reps, (ULR's) Mike Loynes, Paul Millington and Freddie Tanti that are all employees of Anglian Windows.

Since Feb 2006 great successes have been achieved with over a 100 employees

Stepping back into learning thanks to the guidance and support of the Reps.

At the start A plan of action was constructed with clear aims and objectives set. All four-shared responsibility to ensure it was time scaled and achievable.

For the GMB (ULR's) it was a steep learning curve as training and development was something rarely offered to them or colleagues. The team surveyed the learning needs of the workforce, arranged courses and liased with providers. The company employs 1200 people across 19 factory units This team had a clear understanding of the learning needs of colleagues.

Football theme days were organised embedded with skills for life. Lot's of interest and publicity was created from, posters and word of mouth.

The second phase was a Presentation Evening at Norwich City FC.

Prizes of signed footballs and shirts were on offer to successful attendees from the previous events followed up with a tour of the ground.

Publicity was created from the evening by the Co-ordinator that was then distributed by the ULR's.

Phase three was to now enrol colleagues onto IT Computer courses embedded with Numeracy and Literacy. The team aims were to break down barriers to learning

Within a few weeks courses were started that averaged 10 learners on each. Running every day of the week on site.

Many of the learners have achieved national recognised qualifications of level 1 and 2 in literacy and numeracy along with computer entry level 3 certificates. Key to the learning was the support from Easton College and in particular David Bale the Director of Learning at the College without his commitment and delivery of excellent courses it wouldn't have been so effective.

Learning has become an exciting and much sought-after activity for the workforce of Anglia Windows and is supported by the company. Dean Hunter HR Manager said, " it has been a fantastic success so far and the company are 100 percent behind the project. It's great that the Team has got this award for all the hard work they have put in. and I'm hoping they go all the way and win the National award.

Steve Walker said, " This is the best job I've ever had. Helping people develop their full potential is so rewarding. We all have it in us to learn and do more if

we are given the opportunities. In the last two years similar GMB Union workplace projects have helped nearly 1500 people access learning at work in Norfolk and Suffolk.

The GMB has also reached the Regional Finals of the National Training Awards at Cambridge in October.