

Skillnet Edinburgh: College Partnership Case Study

Skillnet Edinburgh has operated training courses for the past 15 years, focussing on ESOL/language support, IT and employability in the BME community. Through our links with Nisus Scotland, we were able to offer a mixture of accredited and non-accredited training. In 2008, Nisus was forced to close through lack of funding, and as Skillnet was not an accredited learning centre, we were no longer in a position to offer accredited training.

We turned to Jewel and Esk College and initial discussion with their Community Outreach team were very positive. As well as offering to provide accreditation and verification, they also offered the use of facilities within the Hibs Learning Centre, which was situated opposite the Skillnet office. Within a few weeks we were able to offer accredited training within a dedicated training suite. The College registered the students, thus meeting their targets in relation to engaging with hard to reach learners, particularly from the local BME community, whilst our students gained access to the latest learning materials and equipment. The College also provided an IT worker who would deal with any IT problems, and provide teaching support where required. Skillnet provided and funded the teaching staff through grant funding received from the Scottish Government and the Big Lottery. The partnership has worked very well over the past two years, with over 90 students gaining SQA qualifications on ESOL and/or ECDL IT qualification.

The College have recently approached Skillnet regarding accrediting the employability elements of our work, in line with the revised employment SQA modules.

The partnership has provided mutual benefits to Skillnet, the College and the learners: For Skillnet, we are able to provide accredited training for clients, offering recognised qualifications. We also gain access to modern training facilities. For the college, they are able to register hard to reach learners, and receive the SUMS funding. For clients, as well as the qualification, they are registered as students, with some of the benefits that brings. In addition, we include sessions on progression onto college, and college staff visit and discuss with students various courses and options, thus providing a progression route for a number of them.