

## **National Occupational Standards Case Study**

### **Learning Skills Wales/ Dysgu'r Ddawn Cymru**

[www.learning-skills-wales.com](http://www.learning-skills-wales.com)

#### **Organisation**

Learning Skills Wales/Dysgu'r Ddawn Cymru is a not for profit company, limited by guarantee. Established in 2003, it is an expanding community learning provider, and an accredited training provider, with bases in Anglesey, Wrexham and Merthyr Tydfil and a growing outreach service.

They provide a range of accredited and unaccredited training programmes, aimed at helping harder to reach groups access education and employment, with many of the qualifications offered at level 1 or 2. Clients include young people excluded from school, school leavers, and people with disabilities. Training covers a variety of fields including Basic Skills, Sports and Recreation, First Aid and ICT. Learning Skills Wales also run a structured volunteer programme for their client group, aimed at developing skills and leading to qualifications such as Community Sports Leadership, Football Leaders Award, First Aid and NVQ's in Sports & Leisure, ICT and Customer Service.

The organisation started involving volunteers in the delivery of services in 2004, and now has 12 fully vetted operational volunteers, and 6 in training. Volunteers perform a variety of roles, for example providing basic (unaccredited) IT tutoring, Sports Coaching, Football in the Community Programme and Mentoring.

#### **Uses of National Occupational Standards**

Learning Skills Wales are currently using National Occupational Standards as a framework for developing their volunteer policies, having been introduced to the standards by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

#### **Benefits and Challenges**

National Occupational Standards are being used as a framework for developing a range of volunteer policies and practices. Policy areas developed so far include role descriptions and person specifications, induction training and supervision.

According to business manager, Colin Hawkins, this process has been extremely helpful: "We knew nothing about volunteers when we started, so have been developing our processes from scratch. We found the standards illuminating"

Challenges have included ensuring that policies and paperwork do not remain on the shelf as written documents but are used and adapted to become genuinely useful learning documents. To address this, the organisation uses standards as a checklist in preparation for meetings on policy issues, and is looking at ways of including information on relevant standards as part of the induction process.

#### **Future Development**

Learning and Skills Wales have found the standards useful in highlighting the value of evaluation. As a result of an evaluation exercise emerging from the standards, a number of development areas have been identified. Work is underway at board level to develop policy in the areas of volunteer expenses and to clarify the situation with regard to contractual issues, and the formation of policies affecting volunteers as opposed to paid staff. The organisation emphasised the importance of ensuring volunteers are valued and respected and that clear expectations are established on both sides.