



# Chamber of Commerce

Milton Keynes and North Bucks

## **National Vocational Training (NVQs) Bedfordshire Police Case Study**

**'Ello, 'ello, 'ello. Do you have an NVQ sir?**

The police service in England and Wales is made up of 43 local forces and, until fairly recently, there hasn't been a national standard qualification for their support staff. The result is that what the larger Thames Valley Police does can be different from the smaller Bedfordshire force.

Now a government-driven scheme to introduce a national competency framework is being developed, looking at what skills, knowledge and competencies will be needed in the future. This should go a long way towards alleviating the differences which stem from having 43 forces doing things 43 different ways.

Facilitating this locally is Richard Parsley, Management Development Service Provider for Bedfordshire Police. His strategy was to look at training opportunities which would assist individuals to meet their current job roles and help them grasp more challenging ones in the future.

First, he looked at how their support staff were operating to see where there were gaps. "This is a learning process for everyone," he says. "There is structured police training in specialist areas, such as the law, driving or firearms, but the support staff are often recruited against a job specification, leaving a gap in their training."

The decision was to pilot an NVQ scheme. "When we started to plan this, we wanted to keep the scheme local. We talked to Crystal Techniques, whom we knew, and found that they had a close working relationship with the Milton Keynes Chamber who had experience in NVQ training, so it made sense to link up with them."

Richard is enthusiastic about the Chamber's response at the outset and their continued support: "As a training department we're an embedded part of Bedfordshire Police, so I'm more interested in their training and development links than the more commercial aspects, but whenever I need something, the Chamber staff are very responsive. They certainly make me aware of what's going on and if I want to buy in, I can. I like their approach."

The pilot scheme was introduced in two areas: customer service and call handling operations. The intention was twofold: to prepare a training needs analysis to set against the national standards and to recognise the support staff by measuring them against an external standard.

Richard admits that there could be a significant number of people involved, constituting about a third of the total workforce. "We're learning about what we can do, how to engage with people and make the sector more attractive for people to work in."

The pilot scheme overcame the candidates' perception that they would sit in a classroom and be taught. Says Richard: "We said, 'Here's the standard, here's the type of things you should be doing, go and do it and provide us with evidence.' As well as achievement, we're looking for the gaps in what we're asking them to do, so there's learning on both sides."

The success of this approach is illustrated by the number of people completing the NVQ scheme and the positive feedback. As with previous Chamber NVQs, candidates exude an overriding sense of achievement and a quiet confidence in their own abilities. On completion, a presentation ceremony involves senior officers recognising individuals as having achieved the standard.

Bedfordshire Police are currently running a second group of customer service qualifications and completing their pilot scheme in the call handling centre. Interest is such that they have a waiting list and are considering running further NVQs from April.

"It's early days, but what I'm working towards is to run more and more of our qualifications as a local centre, using a partnership agreement where I provide the bulk of the internal assessment and then use the partnership element to provide the external certification."

Underlying the pilot NVQs is the introduction of the national occupational standard designed to give police forces the skills and knowledge to introduce a national competency framework. "This will draw in a whole raft of different approaches, including NVQs where they already exist, on the assumption that if you've got a wheel, why reinvent it," says Richard.

"Our experience working with the Chamber has allowed us to influence the development of the Police National Occupational Standards and the assessment strategies. We think it's achievable and attainable. It's been a very useful vehicle in getting to grips with the concept and practicalities of taking this forward."

Richard is also delighted that Bedfordshire Police have set up their own NVQs before the national scheme has gained too much visibility. He concludes: "My feeling is that there will be the opportunity to deliver many of the qualifications using local providers. With the Chamber's help, we're in reasonably good shape to take on these developments as they come along."

For further information, please contact the Sales team on:

**Tel:** 01908 259409 or 01908 259000

**E-mail:** [sales@mk-chamber.co.uk](mailto:sales@mk-chamber.co.uk)