

An Evaluation  
of

‘The Enhanced Mentoring in Managing Challenging  
Behaviour Programme’

delivered  
by

Life Change UK

for

the

SWitch CETT

Mentor Support Programme

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## Background

Life Change UK, a training company based in Exeter is an active member of the SWitch CETT and has developed a range of closely related training courses that deal with challenging behaviour and increasing the motivation of marginalised groups, including offenders and other long-term unemployed individuals. Whilst such training is increasingly recognised as an essential part of every teachers skill set it has been recognised in discussions at the CETT forums that this area of expertise is not adequately addressed on the current PtLLS / CtLLs / DtLLS or PGCE courses. As a consequence newly qualified teachers will enter the workplace ill prepared for the challenges they will face. Furthermore in some instances, existing trained teachers can also lack training in this area and so if asked for advice their responses may fail to get to the core of the issue.

It has been acknowledge by the CETT that those being trained to teach in many of the varied delivery establishments are facing growing levels of challenging behaviour from their learners. While it has been well documented that there has been a rise in such behaviour amongst school children the problem is by no means restricted to them. The government's commitment to a social inclusion agenda has meant that many teachers and trainers are being asked to work with young learners who previously would have been excluded.

It has to be accepted that the raising of the staying on at school or in training age from 2013 is going to create further problems. Those who currently leave school at the end of year 11 and enter jobs without training or become NEETS (not in education, employment or training) will be required to engage with the teaching and or training fraternity for a further two years. Consequently many of those are likely to resent the change in the law and will present a very challenging cohort. Since many establishments tend to timetable new or difficult to place staff with such groups it is apparent that there will be a real training requirement for trainee teachers currently undertaking a teaching qualification.

In a similar vein recent projects have also highlighted the increasing challenge to teachers and trainers of educating the rising numbers within the prison service. The very low levels of literacy and numeracy amongst the offender population allied to extreme social problems make this an extremely difficult group to work with without even beginning to consider the myriad of problems which working within a prison brings.

The spotlight is now being turned onto two new 'challenging' groups. Many colleges and some private providers are now working with people who have been recently made redundant. Many such people feel extremely resentful and angry about what has been done to them and will take out their frustrations on any authority figure, often their trainer. Another related group are those who had been hoping to retire who now find themselves having to re train in order to prolong their working lives. Once again the front line

delivery staff are in the firing line.

At the heart of Life Change UK's programme is a "Train the Trainer" course designed for staff working with learners who have the highest levels of Basic and Life Skills deficiencies. It has developed from the wide experience of the Life Change UK Directors and their highly regarded residential work in rehabilitating persistent young adult male offenders at C-FAR.

The two day workshops were set up slightly apart to allow the participants to reflect on the content of the first session before moving onto the second one. There was then a 'follow up' session over a month later to enable everyone to reflect on the programme as a whole. Venues ranged from the Committee room of a cricket club to bespoke training facilities at Learning South West. Joining arrangements and refreshments were of a high standard.

The overall aim of the sessions was to expand the understanding of those with a central role in the training and development of new teachers and trainers in particular to look at the issues underpinning challenging behaviour and to provide them with a range of tools to help them to equip their new teachers and trainers with the basic skills they will need to resolve the situations they might be faced with.

The specific aims and objectives of the sessions were to

- Increase the capacity for peer mentoring within colleges and the wider WBL environment
- Identify the components of 'beliefs' and how they can cause negative behaviour and responses
- Improve participants' understanding of various behaviour models and how to respond to them
- Improve communication skills needed to promote positive behaviour
- Promote increased understanding of the difference between shame and guilt, recognising how each contribute to anger and affect behaviour
- Increase understanding of the ways in which interactions with learners require different professional boundaries, identifying unhealthy boundaries and how to break them
- Provide an introduction to Transactional Analysis and the ego state model, avoiding the pitfalls of unproductive interactions and relationships
- Provide a range of new skills and strategies that will reduce personal stress, inform practice and increase confidence and sense of purpose

Where possible the workshops were delivered by two of Life Change UK's most experienced staff. They broke down each day into a variety of linked topics and tended to alternate the delivery between themselves, interspersed with a variety of group and individual activities and an ongoing dialogue drawing out key issues as they emerged. The central elements of the course focussed on getting the participants to gain some understanding about different types of behaviour and start to appreciate why different people behave as they do. The challenging communications package was designed to enable them to gain an insight into the dynamics and emotional reactions experienced through differing levels of

communication which in turn would encourage them to attempt new and different approaches in discussions and meetings with colleagues. Both day's sessions were supported by the production of accompanying notes of a very high quality which discussions confirmed, were used by the attendees outside the session.

The recruitment for such a programme inevitably presented the organisers with a challenge. In the event the workshops were promoted through the SWitch CETT across its entire membership, the majority of whom delivered the ITT programmes, and through other networks such as the Training Provider networks and the Adult & Community networks who are aligned to the CETT. Because of the short time available for recruitment it was necessary to fix dates and then promote them to everyone, rather than being able to identify certain sessions as being more for those actually delivering to challenging groups and others for those who were working exclusively on the new ITT programmes. Because of the demography of the South West the delivery of the workshops were organised in a variety of venues spread across the region and in the event it appears that the it was the location of the workshop that was the deciding factor as to which individuals joined which group rather than their background or previous experience.

The target audience was of necessity very diverse both in job role and in working location. On the one hand there were those who were themselves delivering on ITT programmes, the original intended main target audience. They were by definition experienced teachers and were in a good position to influence to content of the courses they were delivering. Interestingly the extent of their own awareness and recent personal exposure to the full spectrum of challenging behaviour varied greatly, partly due to the nature of the job they were now doing. To be fair to them however, they did have a good awareness of the problem and their commitment to providing a higher quality programme for their trainees teachers and trainers was unwavering.

At the other end of the spectrum some recruits were the front line practitioners who delivered in the field on a daily basis, often working with extremely challenging groups of individuals who had a range of very complex needs. Several of these individuals were also responsible for the training of entire teams who worked under them. Added to this, somewhere in the middle ground, there was a cohort of teachers and trainers who were engaged on some of the more conventional 'fringe' programmes such as the Prince's Trust, Entry to Employment and Return to Work. Although there were huge potential 'wins' in having groups with such a very diverse background and experience there were also real risks linked to the huge variations in the participants previous knowledge and in ensuring that everyone got what they wanted out of it.

This required that the deliverers pitched the sessions at a level appropriate for the very experienced practitioners and yet provided the discussion and the tools which would be of use to those learners who were less experienced. The balance created an ongoing challenge and at times tension which was quite evident in the sessions and required great skill from the session leaders to make them fully inclusive.

In order to carry out the evaluation there was attendance at the initial workshops and at a follow up session, as well as accessing feedback first hand from participants and through their formal feedback forms.

Feedback Form Results. Life Change UK average scores for all courses in brackets.

Overall evaluation of training	-	8.75	(8.65)
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How comfortable with exercises?	-	8.5	(8.4)
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Usefulness of handouts	-	9.1	(9.2)
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The ratings for the trainers were as follows: -

Knowledge and expertise	-	9.0	(9.3)
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Clarity	-	9.0	(9.1)
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Appropriateness	-	8.6	(9.1)
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Course management	-	8.6	(9.2)
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Responsiveness	-	8.6	(9.2)
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Presentation	-	8.6	(8.7)
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The results from the feedback forms provide additional evidence to the 1:1 discussions carried out by the evaluator. The marks for the overall package were slightly higher than the benchmark for Life Change UK's course delivery. However the marks for the trainers were lower in all six categories than the benchmark. This is confirmed by discussions with the participants. There appeared to have been two factors which contributed to this. Firstly many of the cohort were the best teachers and trainers in the region and hence they were likely to be more critical of the delivery than anyone else. Secondly there was comment about the real difficulties that working with such diverse groups created, Life Change UK themselves altered the content after two sessions as it became clear that many participants required more training on Transactional Analysis and those interviewed did comment on the problems of such a difference in the experience of those participating.

There was rightful concern about the low turn out for the final follow through session which was both disappointing and made it hard for the tutors to generate the necessary dynamics to help those who did attend to get the most out of it. The course was ham strung on its dates due to the need to have the delivery completed at exactly the same time as the participants faced their busiest time of year. In future a pre course contract where participants have to lodge a bond which is refunded on successful completion, or an agreement to pay for any session which was not attended might be an answer.

Hopefully the programme has wetted the appetite of the Teacher Trainer community for more of this work. Feedback shows that the course was greatly appreciated and valued by the participants. It is to be hoped that it will become incorporated into more main line delivery. Its importance was best summed up by the participant who said to me: -

*'This isn't like doing other qualifications, it is more like sitting my driving test, gaining something that I know I'll use every day of my life.'*