

The Impact of Evaluation

Sarah Turnbull
&
Sarah Woods

Our Area Partnership

- 5 Local Authorities, including 58 Schools and Sixth Forms
- 3 Campus-based Universities, plus the OU in the North
- 5 FE Colleges

Aimhigher Area Co-ordination Group (ACG)

- 5 Local Authority Co-ordinators (3 days per week)
- Education Liaison and WP staff from each University (4)
- Aimhigher Co-ordinators from each FE College (5)

Where we started

Grass roots and inclusive:

1. Informal discussion about current and potential evaluation at ACG
2. An initial CPD session to improve understanding and generate further interest, build confidence (Dec 2007)
3. Voluntary involvement in the pilot
4. Based on areas of personal and professional interest, linked to Aimhigher
5. Supported by:
 - The ASG, through resources and funding (strategic)
 - Area staff, administrative and co-ordination support (operational)
 - Access to CPD and email/telephone support (professional)

Piloting Success

6 Pilot Evaluation/Action Research Projects:

- 2 Local Authority projects looking at aspirations and perceptions of HE
- 2 University projects looking at Master Class programmes and STAR student board game
- 2 FE College projects looking at Foundation Degree students and reasons they 'DO' progress to HE

Where CSET has taken us

We provided:

- An opportunity for delivery partners to steer the direction of evaluation from the start
- Strategic and operational support for the pilot evaluations undertaken
- Access to a basic CPD programme which built capacity and confidence – including CPD for Area staff

To date, our CSET consultancy has provided us with:

- Valuable input and guidance in defining our 'pilot' approach
- A simple and effective model for planning the delivery of our evaluation pilots (RUFDATA)
- Professional support for the pilot evaluations which delivery partners could access as and when appropriate
- Professional support for the development of our online evaluation tool

Achievements and Added Value

Our approach has provided us with:

- A 'bottom-up' approach to evaluation which has given delivery partners ownership of evaluation
- A 'top-down' approach to support which has provided commitment to evaluation at all levels
- A partnership that understands the key principles of a range of basic evaluation techniques
- 'Real life' experience of how to plan and implement a range of evaluations
- A more realistic appreciation of effort -vs- outcomes

Where we plan to go next – 2008/11

- Continued 'top down' strategic support from our APC – local co-ordination increased from 3 to 5 days per week to support targeting and evaluation
- Develop our detailed evaluation plan with direct support from CSET consultancy, based on our experience of evaluation
- Reinforce our shared understanding of the value of evaluation
- Ensure that 'bottom up' approach to implementation continues through the ACG and consultation with delivery partners
- Expand and roll out a programme of CPD opportunities which builds capacity and understanding of evaluation during 08/09

Questions?

Contact details:

Sarah Turnbull
Aimhigher Tyne and Wear Co-ordinator
Tel: 0191 515 2747
Mobile: 07748 334 764
Email: sarah.turnbull@sunderland.ac.uk

Sarah Woods
Aimhigher Tyne and Wear Project Support Officer
Tel: 0191 515 2746
Mobile: 07748 334 711
Email: sarah.woods@sunderland.ac.uk