

Innovative Research Solutions with Industry

Services

CLIENT:
Citizens Information Board

AREA:
Innovation in Services



Innovation in training for providers of advocacy services



The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services. It supports the delivery of information through three channels: online, telephone and face-to-face.

The Citizens Information Board also funds and supports the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities.

Recent legislation has widened and extended the functions of the Citizens Information Service to include the provision of advocacy services alongside its roles in delivering information and advice. Advocacy is a means of empowering people by supporting them to assert their views and claim their entitlements and where necessary representing and negotiating on their behalf. This widening in scope and remit, added to the economic downturn in recent years, has placed new demands on the Citizens Information Service and its development managers.

The number of advocacy cases has increased and they have become more complex. Those who manage the work of individual staff and volunteers providing advocacy services require excellent management skills to ensure that these services are being delivered effectively and efficiently and that there is adherence to best practice policies and procedures. The development



CIB participants on the advocacy programme

of accredited training for managers of such services was therefore recognised as a key priority.

The School of Business and Humanities at ITB has a team that is actively involved in both private academic research and industry based research/ consultancy including the delivery of industry specific training programmes. The academic team includes practitioners with many years of experience in management and advocacy services. By using this expertise together with the facilities and resources available at the Institute and its LINC facility, an accredited advocacy programme was developed to meet the needs of CIB. →

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•> The School worked with key stakeholders within the CIB to develop a Special Purpose Award at level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications providing a Certificate in Management Skills for Managers of Advocacy Services. The innovative nature of the partnership between CIB and ITB which underpinned programme development, ensured its design responded to development manager needs and stands as a good practice model of external engagement in Higher Education.

The subsequent programme developed is also relevant to managers of advocacy services outside the CIB. It offers formal accredited training worth 20 ECTS credits and develops skills and expertise within the following areas: Managing Advocacy Services; Advocacy Casework and Supervision; Principles and Practice of Advocacy Strategic Planning; Leadership; Human Resource Management; Motivating Teams and Individuals; Managing Conflict; and Problem

Solving. This wider relevance is reflected in the 2013 participant cohort which includes those from Third Age Advocacy service, which supports the needs of older people.

CIB took on a significant proportion of the development cost for the programme and were intensively involved through the accreditation process and continue to be the key stakeholder for the successful delivery of the programme.

The Development Managers who participated on the programme have been very positive about its relevance to their daily work. Many have indicated that they changed their approach to managing their service and feel that this has resulted in more efficient service delivery. The effective supervision of the advocacy work of staff was one key area of improvement cited with, for example, one development manager putting in place a supervision system across the service since completing the course. ■

TESTIMONIAL

Deborah Dwyer

Meath Citizens
Information Service

“Academic and theoretical content is balanced with organisationally relevant practicals and assessments. The lecturers have solid qualifications and credentials, bringing ‘real-life’ experiences to the course and they were experienced in delivering executive education. Administration, hospitality and IT support provided by the LINC Centre was superb. This allowed for blended learning - the use of online learning, tutorials, case studies and lectures. The course is pitched at a level that whilst challenging in parts is also rewarding and yields great satisfaction upon completion. It was not purely about the education and learning but also about the experience. I can truly recommend this course to my Citizens Information colleagues and I walked away from this course knowing that I was in a position to make a positive and immediate impact within Meath CIS. Overall an enriching experience”



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