

National Learning Network's Satisfied Customers

Research examining the experience of learners on National Learning Network's Employer-Based Training Programme has revealed high levels of work satisfaction among those on work placement.

Some 65 learners from throughout the midlands, west and north-west region completed the study, which sought to find out the extent to which learners were satisfied in their work placement, were happy with the level of supervision they received and were mentally stimulated and challenged in their role.

A key element of the study was the inclusion in the research of National Learning Network instructors, who were asked to rate their perception of job satisfaction levels among the learners who participated in the study.

The research was conducted by Denise O'Dwyer, Suzanne Allen and Mary Hughes, all of whom are Rehabilitation Psychologists with National Learning Network. Both learners and instructors completed the WORKPART scale, which measured various aspects that contributed to job satisfaction, including mental stimulation, interaction with colleagues, teamwork and level of supervision.

Despite the fact that a large proportion of those on Employer-Based Training programmes

eventually end up working for the company in which they conduct their work placement, until now very little research has been carried out in this area. The results of the collaborative research show that three-quarters of respondents report being satisfied or very satisfied with their work.

On the whole, the report clearly shows a close correlation between levels of job satisfaction among learners and levels perceived by instructors.

According to Suzanne Allen, these results indicate a very positive outcome from a staff perspective, in that they show an awareness by staff of learners' experiences in the workplace. However, the importance of actually asking learners how they feel about their job was highlighted in the report as the impressions of staff can vary from the actual experience of learners.

One area where learners' results did differ considerably from those of staff was the question of learners' ability to work independently. While staff felt that 83 per cent of learners were capable of working without supervision, only 51 per cent of learners felt that they could do so.

According to Suzanne, there could be a number of reasons for this disparity, including learners under-



Above: Pauline Byrne hard at work in SuperValu in Eyre Square, Galway. A highly-valued member of staff, Pauline completed her Employer-Based Training in 2003 and has been working with SuperValu ever since.

estimating their own ability. "The nature of some disabilities, such as mental health difficulties, may also result in people feeling more negative about themselves and their abilities. While this study did not categorise respondents in terms of disabilities, it may be an element worth considering for any future research in this area." ■

Who to contact

For further information please contact:



Suzanne Allen
*Rehabilitative Psychologist,
National Learning Network*

00353 91 796650
suzanne.allen@nl.n