

Case Study

ALS Administration at Oaklands College: Raising the Bar by Sharing the Workload

This is an edited transcript of an interview with Karen Kilkenny, ALS Administrator at Oaklands College, Hertfordshire, in the Spring of 2011. The college supports over 1000 learners across 5 campus locations in St Alban's, Welwyn Garden City, and Borehamwood.



Introduction

The implementation of SpirALS and TEAM at Oaklands College has brought about a step-change in the speed, quality, and accuracy of ALS administrative functions. Here, Karen Kilkenny talks about some of the labour-saving options she now has, and how managing data for funding purposes can now be more naturally shared with the primary support staff.

(Question) What were the biggest ALS administration problems you were facing?

(Karen Kilkenny) "The collation of data was the biggest challenge from my perspective. My work load was continually increasing because of extra data demands to justify funding. Every time more data is needed, it fell to the administrator to manage, enter and provide it.

Support staff sent me their log books at the end of every term. I then had to go through the books to extract data about the support, particular attendance, e.g., authorised/unauthorised and staff absence for un-funded sessions. Sometimes I had to send log books back because I couldn't read the handwriting or understand their amendments.

All this data entry used to take me about 3 weeks at the end of every term, didn't give a true picture of the support, and was an absolute minefield."

(Q) How has that changed?

*(KK) "Now TEAM includes all the information I need and most of it is entered by the support staff themselves in 'real-time', and this has cut these **3 weeks** down to about **3 days**. The TEAM information also automatically updates the cost records and each time I click on that button [cost calculator update costs] I'm effectively saving up to half an hour of time!*

Another great benefit is that support staff now have a better understanding of the admin tasks, and take responsibility for, and have ownership of, their data. As a result, the information - particularly around attendance - is more accurate. I also feel that using TEAM has increased support staff awareness of the value of the data they

are providing, and, e.g., no longer leave just to me the responsibility to work out which is a fundable or non-fundable session.”

(Q) How much do you actually use SpirALS and TEAM?

(KK) “The time spent changes at different times of the year. At the beginning of the year, I used TEAM almost all the time to set up Support Programmes for staff, now it’s more like 10–15% to keep up and running.”

(Q) How much training did you need before being able to use the modules to best effect?

(KK) “I am now advanced practitioner, after 16 hours of formal training and around 8 hours of calls over about 5 months to the Midas Help-desk – which has been very, very supportive.”

(Q) Have there been any other benefits to the college, i.e., beyond the ALS Department?

(KK) “Yes, e.g., ensuring of consistency of relevant ILR data with MIS. Also in terms of how the college is seen, TEAM replaced the old method of entering support records from log-books at the end of each term, and that was a problem if auditors came in mid-term because it looked as if the learners weren’t being supported.”

(Q) Do you see any further changes in how you work?

(KK) “I feel that I’m beginning to appreciate now how I could be offering more in terms of information and statistics to help in improving provision. This would mean taking on some tasks that are additional to my administrative role. This will be important in increasing my knowledge and improving and extending my job role which will enhance my future career prospects.”

End of Case Study