

# Case Study

## Halton's Adult & Community Learning (ACL) Team, Halton Borough Council

*"The work that Capita staff have put in has been excellent and particularly responsive to our specific needs."*

*Siobhan Saunders, Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator*

### Summary

Capita Education Services (Capita ES) have delivered professional support that has enabled Halton's Adult Learning Team to deal with the demands of the complex data requirements of the LSC and also utilise the high quality management information from the same system. This has enabled the staff to concentrate on delivering targeted community based learning effectively. The UNIT-e Student Records and Tracking Solution (SRTS) system has also been adopted by other learning centres in the Greater Merseyside area and they have benefited from visiting Halton and learning from their practical advice on the implementation of such a system.

### Background

Halton's Adult Learning Team within Halton Borough Council provides a diverse mix of courses to the communities in the towns of Runcorn and Widnes, which spread across both banks the Mersey as well as the surrounding, more rural, areas.

The Team's mission is to deliver learning wherever it is perceived to be needed and this means that over 50 outreach centres are used. These are frequently located in non-traditional educational venues such as community centres and village halls as well as many local schools. This delivery system means that the Team requires one main centre through which most administration work is channelled.

There are over 1,000 students enrolled on a wide-range of courses including ICT, Holistic & Beauty Therapies, Assertiveness, Creative Crafts, Childcare and Family Learning.



### The situation

The borough includes several areas of deprivation where the take up of services, including learning, is very low. This has meant that Halton's Adult Learning Team has had to monitor access to learning in order to make the most of funding streams such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) where funds can be linked to students from specific postcodes and local authority wards.

The advent of the LSC has also required the Team to develop its own information and financial systems because of the shift in funding from the local council to the LSC.

### How Capita ES became involved

The Adult Learning Team's manager, Siobhan Saunders, believes that they were one of the first providers of ACL within a local authority to realise that, with new forms of funding and the consequent increase in reporting required, they would need their own Management Information System (MIS). The most important aspect of the competing systems was the level of customer care that would be available and Halton felt that Capita ES's Partnership approach was the most appropriate.

The Capita ES brief focussed on the need to develop a robust and secure system that could handle generic ILR issues as well as deal with enquiries, admissions and enrolments. In addition Capita ES would advise on how Halton's Adult Learning Team could optimise its funding opportunities through use of the system. In the longer term the system needed to be flexible enough to incorporate extended functionality including timetables and registers.

Siobhan has found Capita ES staff "highly responsive and aware of the changes to funding regimes."

## Why Capita ES and UNIT-e SRTS work for Halton's Adult Learning Team

The nature of Halton's ACL work and the associated geographical spread with one central base means that there has to be centralisation of the administrative function. This means that all the information from the numerous outreach centres has to be channelled back to the control centre.

Although this works well it means that staff inputting data are frequently working with unfamiliar information. It has, therefore, been essential that staff are familiar with the information systems they are using and to assist with this. Capita installed a dummy system for training purposes alongside the 'live' system.

This has, Siobhan Saunders recognises, "been invaluable because it has meant that we have been able to maintain and grow our core team as circumstances have changed."

The relationship has developed extremely successfully. The Capita ES Partnership approach coupled with the very flexible UNIT-e database has so impressed other ACL providers in the Greater Merseyside region that they have migrated to it. This has had considerable benefits locally in that there is a developing conformity in reporting formats and procedures.

The management information has also been invaluable in targeting educational provision. "We have been able to compare take-up of learning at a very localised level and this has enabled us to benchmark and determine priorities" says Siobhan Saunders.



## Some of the benefits of UNIT-e SRTS to Halton Borough Council's ACL Team

- ✓ Full student tracking system including production of ILR
- ✓ ILR analysis prior to submission
- ✓ Supply of standard reports enhanced by the production of ad-hoc reports to Halton definitions
- ✓ Enquiry tracking facility with quick enrol facility
- ✓ Student Perception of Course analysis reports  
Data upload from franchising partner systems
- ✓ Complete database management including user security, Oracle management, backup of all data daily, upgrades and application of updates
- ✓ Complete hardware support including specification and purchase of server, full maintenance, repair on fail, upgrades where necessary and operating system support
- ✓ Mirrored servers in case of irrecoverable disaster

