

Tower Hamlet College **Press Release**

College courses improve bus services!

15th June 2009

Bus drivers in East London are having fewer accidents as a result of staff training delivered by Tower Hamlets College. First Capital (East London) says that customer complaints and driver sickness rates have also fallen since they asked THC Employer Services to provide classes in literacy, IT and customer service.

Last week (June 4) the success of the training programme was recognised when the bus company won an award from the Learning and Skills Council. First Capital was named Train to Gain Large Employer of the Year in a ceremony to celebrate the achievements of businesses and learners in London.

The training programme was initiated by bus driver Nerbel Singh, who realised that many drivers were unable to follow instructions due to poor literacy and numeracy skills. Nerbel, who is also the Learning Representative for the Unite union, approached his employer First Capital about the problem. Working with tutors from Tower Hamlets College a range of courses were set up for employees, funded by the Government's Train to Gain initiative. Three years ago an IT suite was set up at one of the garages, and since then the training programme has expanded, with six more learning centres and computer training suites at every bus garage.

Nerbel says the results have been astonishing: "The number of accidents reported by the drivers has plummeted from as many as 70 a week to around 26. Drivers are now fully aware of the need to behave professionally at all times, which is reflected in customer complaints falling to their lowest-ever level. Over a six-month period, sickness absences dropped from 10 per cent to just 2.5 per cent."

He adds: "Profitability has also improved, and there is a strong expectation that the improvements that have been achieved as a result of the skills provided by this training will help First Capital business."

Some drivers who have received the training have reported an additional personal bonus, that they feel more confident and able to help their children with homework.

The Principal of Tower Hamlets College, Michael Farley, said: "This award is a testament to the excellent training and education that the college provides to business and the whole community in east London. First Capital showed exceptional commitment to working with us in improving the skills of their employees and the success of their business."

For more information please contact

Koyer Ahmed

PR & Events Coordinator

kahmed1@tower.ac.uk

Tel: 0207 536 5704