Case Study

Heather Heelis
Pitstop Out of School Club

Project: Leadership and Management
Business Sector: Childcare
Location: Melton, Suffolk
No. of Employees: 5

"All our staff have qualifications in playwork or are working towards them. The Leadership and Management programme offered by TCHC allowed me to focus on gaining business skills that, as a small organisation, we would not normally be able to fund."

Heather Heelis, Manager
Pitstop Out of School Club

Pitstop Out of School Club provides after-school and holiday childcare from eight in the morning to six in the evening, as well as school pick-ups during term time.

The club's manager, Heather Heelis believes training and development to be a core element of the management of the club; her staff hold NVQs in Playwork and are working towards NVQ Level 3 in Early Years & Childcare while one has also started an Apprenticeship in Playwork

Heather is herself is working on her Foundation Degree in Playwork and has been awarded the Suffolk Playworker of the Year 2009. She is responsible for the commercial management of the club, as well as its marketing and sales.

"We've been working with a TCHC skills broker who has been a great help, supporting us with our NVQ programme," explains Heather. "In fact, that broker suggested I could also benefit from training under the Leadership and Management programme, which is aimed at the managers within small businesses."

"Heather was very keen to build on her marketing and customer care skills," says Beverley Wallman of TCHC. "After we completed a training needs assessment, we agreed that she would benefit from ongoing coaching, rather than a one-off course."

Heather was put in contact with John Porter of Business Improvements "We worked through her sales process and, when I asked what she did when there was an enquiry from parents " tells John. "Heather said she invited the family to come and visit. So I suggested that instead of this, she goes and visits the family at home to learn about them and their child's needs."

John and Heather worked on a plan for home visits that proved to be instantly effective, as Heather explains. "From the very first home visit, this approach proved a resounding success." In fact, since adopting the home visits, Heather has converted every lead into a sale!

"My TCHC Leadership and Management Adviser, Bev, picked the perfect coach for me and I started seeing the impact of my work with John within weeks. Over the six-week summer holiday, our turnover was a third of what we had achieved in the whole of the previous year," says Heather. "We are a small organisation and don't have training budgets, so the financial assistance arranged by TCHC meant I could undergo training that would otherwise have been far too expensive for us to contemplate."

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The Pitstop

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Leadership and Management is a programme supported by the European Social Fund and Train to Gain.

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