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Training for success

Whitefriars Housing Group's pioneering work to promote equality and good customer service has seen the not-for-profit group scoop a national training award.

More than 700 organisations from across the UK entered the National Training Awards competition, and Whitefriars staff learnt that their innovative approach, including a theatre training programme to raise the curtain on culture change and good customer service, had scooped a top national award.

Whitefriars beat off entries from 220 finalists from 25 industry sectors to win the title and put Coventry at the heart of the training map.

The theatre aspect of the training programme, delivered by Oddsocks Productions, saw staff face a range of challenging scenarios including the way language or behaviour can exclude people, ways of tackling obvious prejudice, and what needs to be in place to ensure customers can achieve the same outcomes in terms of service.

After each of these scenes the audience worked out what they wanted to change.

Director of organisational development Judy Ryder said: "We are delighted to have won a National Training award. It is fantastic that Whitefriars, and Coventry, has been recognised for its training expertise and customer service.

“Forum theatre has proved a very flexible medium. First of all most people hate role play, so we don’t use it. We have developed and presented extreme scenarios, which are guaranteed to provoke a response.

“For judges, this means awards, and, more importantly for our customers, an outstanding level of service.”

The National Training Awards are the UK's number one accolade for businesses, organisations and individuals who have achieved lasting excellence and success through training and learning.

Dr Graeme Hall, chief executive of UK Skills commented: "The quality common to all winners is that they demonstrate significant benefits from exceptionally effective learning and skills development. Winners show, not only good people development, but also the outstanding results gained by putting what has been learnt into practice.

“Whitefriars Housing Group has undertaken some truly exceptional training, earning them a National Training Award. This training has engendered a cultural change that really is working and making a real impact on individuals, clients and the business. I would like to offer them my sincerest congratulations.”

Whitefriars Housing Group was able to get creative thanks to grant funding from the Housing Corporation and the Arts and Business Council.

Customer Sylvia Lannigan said: “Tenants have now seen a difference in the way they are treated. They go into the office and each one is treated like they are the first customers of the day. It makes a big difference.”

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