NEWHAM COLLEGE LONDON

DYNISTICS BRINGS DATA ACCURACY, AVAILABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO NEWHAM COLLEGE

Newham College of Further Education has over 12,000 students and 2,500 apprenticeships with two main teaching sites in East London at East Ham and Stratford, and a further five community-based sites across the borough. With around **400 teaching staff,** it uses several different training providers including Newtec, which delivers Early Years training, and Digital Skills Solutions (DSS), which delivers IT and digital skills.

The Challenge

"We spent a lot of time and energy looking for data that wasn't always easy to come by."

'In terms of our data management, we look for the three 'A's of data: **accuracy**, **availability** and **accountability**, and before the implementation of Active Dashboards we were falling behind in each of these areas. Whilst we did have data management systems in place, these didn't link up or provide enough quality information. This meant we spent a lot of time and energy looking for data that wasn't always easy to come by. It became apparent that we needed something to work quickly, pulling all up-to-date data into one portal,' explained Carlos Cubillo-Barsi, Vice Principal at Newham College.

"A robust integrated solution"

With the college spread over numerous sites, each using different student monitoring and information management systems, Newham needed a robust integrated solution.

Outcome: Improved Availability, Accountability & Accuracy

While the system took about 12 months to fully mature, the college started to see tangible results after just a few months.

"Directors can highlight any issues as soon as they occur and take action quicker"

Availability

'The dashboards are far more **intuitive** to use and **much more accessible** than the systems we had previously,' says Cubillo-Barsi. 'Our data is linked to ADS so when the executive team log on, the dashboard automatically filters to the **key information relevant to them**. A nightly email goes out to all the directors and heads of schools so regardless of how busy they are or if they can't access the dashboards, they still receive top level information so they can highlight any issues as soon as they occur and take action quicker.'

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Accountability

'The dashboards have helped enormously by providing a **consistent set of information** to review, while the drill down facilities means data can be tracked all the way down to lecturer level, with much of the information reported in real-time.'

"A consistent set of information...in real-time"

For example, curriculum directors can not only monitor staff utilisation for their department and the constituent schools, but also drill down to individual staff and review timetabled hours versus contracted hours and even see where remission has been agreed. In addition, the dashboard shows, at staff level, when registers have been completed. The real-time nature of the information ensures that any discussions around performance are based on information that is completely **up to date**.'

"A culture of management review"

Accuracy

'The college now has a data quality dashboard which has greatly improved accuracy. While electronic registers have been in place for a long time, the dashboards help to **pinpoint data omissions and errors**,' says Cubillo-Barsi. 'It has also helped the college to establish a culture of management review. Improved data accuracy has also been achieved simply from people being **more aware** of the information that they hold. For example, we use the dashboard software to report on students who may have potentially withdrawn, or are at risk of withdrawal. Potential withdrawals are reviewed daily to ensure that the college has accurate data and information on actual student numbers, funding, class sizes, etc.'

"With live data we are able to monitor attendance and pinpoint at risk students"

Improved Student Retention, Funding and Success Rates

Year-long wait for student withdrawal figures reduced to four weeks

Active Dashboards have contributed to the college improving their student retention levels. 'With the availability of live data we are able to monitor attendance and pinpoint at risk students, such as those with low attendance or receiving care. We developed a specific dashboard for these students in order to monitor them more closely,' says Cubillo-Barsi. 'We had previously had to wait till the end of the year to review student withdrawals, but with a dashboard this was reduced to just four weeks, allowing action to be taken where necessary and with increased effectiveness. Accurate month on month reports have helped us to keep on top of student numbers, prevent loss of funding through early withdrawal, and more accurately forecast success rates.'

Improved Financial Health

"The college has moved from *adequate* to *good* financial health"

Over the last two years, the college has moved from the 'adequate' to 'good' financial health category. 'That's not entirely down to the dashboards, of course,' Cubillo-Barsi clarifies, 'but they have certainly helped **avoid any nasty end of year surprises**. We use a dashboard to track staff utilisation, which in 2016/17 improved by seven per cent, equating to a saving of tens of thousands of pounds.'

"7% increase in staff utilisation equated to a saving of tens of thousands of pounds"

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OFSTED Preparation

Using Active Dashboards has helped the college to better prepare for OFSTED by enabling the various departments and service providers to **share information clearly and consistently**. Whereas previous systems didn't 'speak' to each other and different versions of reports resulted in discrepancies, Active Dashboards now ensures college-wide data consistency.

Cultural Shift

"There's no 'us' and them' about data anymore"

At first, the college regarded the dashboards purely as a report writing tool. **'I don't think anyone anticipated the level of engagement that we have managed to achieve** but there has been a definite cultural shift; there's no 'them' and 'us' about the data anymore and it's changing the role of MIS,' agrees Cubillo-Barsi. 'Before, we were very much seen as gatekeepers but now we get far fewer requests for information as people can, and feel confident enough to, access it themselves knowing that that they are accessing the most up-to-date and accurate information available. This saves us a lot of time and Dynistics' Active Dashboards have been instrumental in affecting this change.'

"People feel confident enough to access information themselves"

The Future

With such a wealth of information, the college is looking to incorporate a **health check scorecard** into Active Dashboards. Key metrics, such as staff utilisation, student attendance, percentage of registers completed on time, would be given a rating to indicate to staff how well they are performing in each area. 'This will be incredibly useful; you can immediately see how each department has performed that week and identify which factors have affected that score and require attention' explains Cubillo-Barsi.

The college also plans to use some of the new Dashboard **gamification** features as part of the visual interpretation of the data, with departments represented as athletes running around a track and the college would like to develop this further, creating league tables to show which departments are performing best without naming and shaming.

"Creating league tables to show which departments are performing best"

With the **increased digitisation,** the college is developing its Intranet and moving a lot of paper-based data online. 'We anticipate using a new campus within a few years: using Active Dashboards embedded into the web pages will help us to move data online and, if necessary, to work remotely,' concludes Cubillo-Barsi.

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