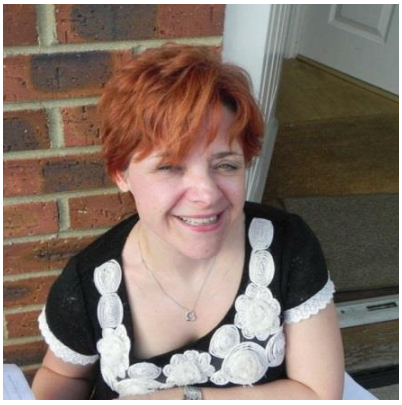
Case Study: Kay Sidebottom: Northern College, Barnsley

Northern College is committed to education with a social purpose; our aim is to transform individuals and communities. We encourage our trainee teachers to challenge how language is used, whether in education policy or in how we communicate with students, colleagues or partner organisations.

We've been struggling with how to respond to the expectation (now mandatory) that teachers promote British values and challenge radicalisation. I could see that Community Philosophy would be a great vehicle to do this in a different way.



I knew the students would really 'get' it, because it is underpinned by scholars they already know, such as Paulo Freire, John Dewey and bell hooks. The 'philosophy' part, though, would be a new experience, and I wanted to find out if our trainees would find this approach useful.

Graeme used a range of techniques to ease us into a 'philosophical' way of thinking and get everyone feeling comfortable. After the first day, we had time to put a few of the ideas into practice, and by the time we met Graeme again we were ready to have a go at facilitating our own enquiries.

I've never seen people buzzing like this after training. We've all carried on reading; we talk about it in meetings; and we've set up a social media forum to continue the conversations. It's had a real impact in terms of enabling us to make changes.

Having trained in Community Philosophy, we can now look at issues critically and challenge ideas. We plan sessions where people can think about their own values and come up with their own questions, including about the Prevent Agenda. We might, for example, choose to think about affirmative concepts such as 'belonging' and 'community', instead of focusing on 'difference' and 'deterrence'.

The ripple effect has been amazing, and we're hoping to make Community Philosophy an integral part of the practice and ethos of the whole college. The University of Huddersfield (on whose behalf we deliver teacher training) has now given us some funding to run Community Philosophy sessions in several other colleges facing similar issues.

"I've never seen people buzzing like this after training."

Graeme was brilliant; extremely well prepared. His whole approach was really professional and very inclusive. It felt genuinely co-created, so everyone got out of it what they needed. CPD is so often off-the-peg, but this was customised to our needs.

Community Philosophy got people to start thinking in a more mindful way. It's not just a technique: it's a shift of mindset. I've never seen people buzzing like this after training.

graemetiffany@gmail.com 07949 595219 @graemetiffany UK Community Philosophy Network
www.graemetiffany.co.uk/