

**Case Study:****Enabling learners with learning difficulties to have a voice within the college**

*'Assessment and learning: involving the learner'. LSC funded project.*

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**The context:**

The Foundation Learning Department (FLD) at Northumberland College specialises in working with learners aged 16-50+ who have moderate to severe learning difficulties. It is 1 of 18 departments within college and delivers full and part time courses in Preparation for Life and Work programmes.

**The challenge:**

Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are taught within the FLD and access vocational tasters according to the course they are on. However, staff felt that it was important for learners from the FLD to have a voice within college.

**What we did:**

- Staff encouraged and provided the opportunity for learners to appoint course representatives (through an election process) to attend the College Learner Parliament.
- Course representatives attended a Learner Parliament once a term with the Head of Department, and a separate one with the Curriculum Area Manager
- The Course Representatives' elected 1 Departmental Representative to meet with the Director of Learner Services to discuss learner issues. The departmental representative then gave feedback to the other course representatives who cascaded this information on to their fellow learners in tutorial time.

**The outcomes:**

- Learners are actively taking part in formal discussions with the Learner Parliament forum.
- During the recent Ofsted Inspection one learner was invited to show an Ofsted Inspector around the college and the Inspector praised the learner on the way she had conducted herself.
- A number of issues raised by the Learner Parliament representative have been acted upon by college management eg putting on lunch time activities for learners.
- Learners from the FLD integrate more on a regular basis with learners from other college departments.

**The impact:**

- Taking part in the Learner Parliament has raised learners' levels of confidence and self esteem.
- Given them a greater sense of belonging and identify more strongly with other learners within college.
- It has also raised the profile of FLD learners within college and learners and staff from other departments are more proactive in engaging with the learners.

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