

## Gathering Learner Voice

### Walsall College (GFE) Keeping learner voice fresh



### Background

When learners are empowered to engage with and change their learning environment, and when organisations know how to listen to feedback and embrace student involvement, there is great potential for cross-organisational change.

This section provides examples of innovative and effective mechanisms for generating and capturing learner feedback.

### About Walsall College

Walsall College is a leading provider of further education vocational courses in the West Midlands, supporting young people, adults and businesses to develop their skills and achieve success. From vocational to Higher Education courses, Walsall College are committed to equipping students with the relevant knowledge, skills and experience employers and universities are looking for. Walsall College is the first Outstanding general FE college in the UK under the new Ofsted inspection framework.

### Their Story: What has Happened and How

Walsall College has an active, independent students' union and college-wide elected class representatives system. Each term, there is a dedicated "Learner Voice Week" during which time every curriculum area holds a meeting where class reps can discuss matters affecting the quality of their course. Lead Course Reps are invited to attend termly Student Voice Committee meetings (a subcommittee of the College Board), SU Representatives attend various SMT meetings and service committees (Canteen Forum, Sustainability Committee, etc), and more generally, learners are encouraged to attend termly forums with the principal.

There is an annual Student Conference where students are invited to engage in discussions, workshops and training sessions to influence teaching and learning, and to shape partnerships with community organisations. At the most recent Conference, learners participated in Classroom Observation training and a speed-dating exercise to meet with members of the local council, police and other community services to find out more about improving opportunities for young people in Walsall, amongst other sessions.

Traditional methods of gathering Learner Voice are also employed, including online and paper-based surveys, "pop-up" notifications via the in-house VLE with links to polls and questionnaires, events in the atrium to meet with students face-to-face, SU facebook and twitter accounts, and newsletters.

Walsall College SU often promote opportunities for engagement or highlight the impact students have had from previous engagements by using a loud hailer and sandwich board in their atrium and café! “You Said We Did” posters and pull up banners are updated termly after the Learner Voice Week and are displayed prominently. There is a strong focus on gathering learners’ views through the Learner Satisfaction Survey (LSS) and the SU and Learner Voice team will have laptops set up ready for students to use throughout a promotional event. Students have also been encouraged to set up their own groups and from this initiative, a successful student-led anti-bullying team (Safe And Sound) has been established.

### **Impact, Successes and Ideas for Action**

The success of Walsall College is the use of a variety of learner engagement methods coupled with effective feedback mechanisms informing students of the impact their engagement has had. In the recent Ofsted inspection, they observed that:

“the college listens to, and makes very good use of, students’ views to improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and to enrich their overall experience of college life. Students are well informed of the college’s response to their comments and suggestions through a feedback process known as ‘you said, we have . . .’, and college managers take great care in evaluating the impact of the actions taken.”

The college and the students’ union regularly review the activities and systems for gathering learner views to ensure they are innovative, engaging, effective.