Enhancement of Learning Support 2010/11

Involving Learners in directing their own support
North West Region
Final Report

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Contents

An overview of the Enhancement of Learning Support (ELS) Programme

In January 2010 LSIS commissioned Natspec (the Association of Specialist Colleges) to explore the training and development needs of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and those who manage them across the lifelong learning sector. The first phase of the project, the Enhancement of Learning Support, involved talking to practitioners and learners and scoping existing work and expertise in order to make recommendations for future training and development activities. Drawing on all the initial research findings, the final report identified a series of recommendations, which were accepted by LSIS and used to form the basis of a national development programme.

The 2nd phase of the project has been jointly undertaken by Natspec and the Association of Colleges (AOC), between September 2010 and March 2011. 20 lead colleges, both General Further Education Colleges and Independent Specialist Colleges, were supported by nine specialist advisers. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and learning support staff have continued to be heavily involved in the latest project. It aims to improve the quality of learning support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the learning and skills sector and to promote and enhance the important work of learning support staff.

The development programme, which finished in April 2011, has produced a series of reports and resources. This report is one of those. The remaining materials can be accessed via the ELS section on the Excellence Gateway.

Summary

Learners often know their own support needs better than anyone, even though they may find it difficult to describe or articulate them. During the initial Enhancement of Learning Support Project – Phase 1, some innovative work was undertaken to enable learners to inform the findings and describe their own experiences of learning support; the results indicated that learners have clear and strong views, which should be taken into account in the planning and delivery of support. As a result of this the North West (NW) strand of Phase 2 of the project looked to further develop these approaches, identifying and using the skills and strategies already employed by colleges to listen to learners and finding ways to apply these approaches to learning support and to share them widely. Learning Support Assistants also looked at several resources to facilitate involving learners in planning and directing their own support. The project outcome for the NW region was therefore to develop:

> A range of resources and approaches that enable learners to be involved in identifying, planning, managing and where appropriate directing their own learning support

As a result of this a range of resources and approaches were shared and then five were selected to test and trial by different organisations, with the agreement to evaluate and feedback to the NW regional network of learning support practitioners. There were other resources as well, but testing and trialling them as approaches had

already begun with a discrete cohort of Independent Specialist Colleges or they were developed and used for other purposes within the project, and as a result became additional project outputs.

Introduction and Background

David Lewis College and Wirral Metropolitan College worked together with other providers in the North West region to develop resources to enable learners to become more involved in identifying their own support needs.

Learners know their own support needs better than anyone, even though they may find it difficult to describe or articulate them. This strand produced resources that will support providers to use the skills and strategies already employed to listen to learners and find ways to apply these approaches to learning support and to share them widely.

The project was related to Performance Criterion CP2 and CP5 of the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Assistants[1] and the element related to supporting disabled learners described in the application guide[2], p16 and p21 respectively:

CP2
Use their specialist knowledge to identify and address individual learners' learning support needs.

CP2.2DL
Know how to use learner-centred approaches to actively involve learners in making decisions about the nature and level of the support they need.

Learning support assistants supporting disabled learners:

• Use communications methods particular to the needs of the learner for example communication passports, British Sign Language (BSL), Makaton, picture communication symbols and eye pointing.

• Provide learners with a range of learning support options, for example adapting learning resources and materials, note taking, introducing computer technology and assistive technologies.

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[1] Lifelong Learning UK, (2009) National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Staff. Lifelong Learning UK, London

[2] Lifelong Learning UK, (2010) Learning support for disabled learners: Application of the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Staff.   Lifelong Learning UK, London

• Encourage and assist learners to articulate their learning support needs and preferences.

• Use person-centred learning plans for people with a learning disability as appropriate.

CP5
'Support learners, colleagues and others in the selection, development, use and evaluation of resources in providing specialist support.'

'CP5.1DL 'Know how to select learning support resources to support disabled learners.

Learning support assistants supporting disabled learners:

- Use knowledge of the learner's needs to select appropriate learning support resources;

- Use a range of learning support resources including technologies and assistive technology to support the learning process;

- Work with person(s) leading the learning to overcome any physical barriers to taking part in learning activities; and

- Keep up to date with new and emerging learning support techniques and resources.'

North West Region Project Brief

- Identify and evaluate resources and approaches to involve learners in directing their own support.

- Consult and work with a regional Learner Reference Group to guide us.

Approach

An initial event was held in October 2010, at which providers shared approaches and resources they used to involve learners in directing their own support. Workshops were held for providers to look at a selection of approaches and resources in more detail. Providers then selected the approaches and resources they wished to trial in their own organisations.

A second event was then held in February 2011 for providers to report back on the approaches and resources they had trialled and 5 were presented and then quality assured. They are as follows:

a. Accessible Risk Assessment;

b. Catching Confidence;

c. British Sign Language Glossary;

d. Working Styles Analysis; and

e. Edu Apps – JISC resources.

Progress on other developments were reviewed and are as follows:

- Foundation Learning Units - Directing own Support; and

- Infolio - Accessible e-portfolio.

The opportunity was also taken to run a workshop on making the "Learning for Living and Work Framework – Part 1, Section A – The Young Person's View" more accessible and as a result of this a further resource was developed.

The resource evaluation tool used with the learner reference group was also enhanced as part of the project and became a tool for involving learners in selecting and evaluating learning resources and/or assistive technologies.

A learner reference group was established to work alongside the North West and South West project strands with the brief to evaluate the approaches and resources being trialled. The learners also reiterated the feedback from the learner reference workshops in Phase 1 of the project. The learners also attended the second North West regional meeting and the national conferences to share their involvement in the project.

Another reference group emerged after the first North West meeting held in October 2010. This was a Work-Based Learning reference group with committed input from 2 work-based learning providers and with support from the Greater Merseyside Federation of Learning Providers. Project staff also attended one of their Learners with Learning Difficulties and/ or Disabilities focus group meetings to gather their contextualised support information and processes, to share the emerging outputs of the project and ensure the voice of Work-Based Learning support practitioners was included.

North West Regional Project Activities

Two regional meetings and two learner reference group meetings were held. Three meetings were held with the Work Based Learning sub-group. The aim was to establish a sustained community of practice to continuously enhance learning support across the region and to be leaders in effective practice in involving learners in identifying and directing their own support. The milestones were:

- Hold first regional event by end October 2010 to share effective practice and identify a range of resources and approaches to be trialled;

- From November 2010 to February 2011 to trial a range of resources and approaches in North West organisations;

- Hold second regional event to share findings and determine most effective resources and approaches to put forward for outcomes of project; and

- Contribute to a sustained community of practice taking forward outcomes from full project.

Regional Meeting 1

The main aim of the event was to launch the North West strand of the project. Providers were invited to bring resources and approaches they were using to involve learners in directing their own support. Beforehand, providers were asked to complete the following and to bring examples with them to share in swap shops:

Enhancing Learning Support – NW Regional Network Meeting 22nd October 2010

LSIS
LEARNING AND SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

Pre event activity – please complete and bring with you on the 22nd October 2010. Be prepared to bring examples of resources and/or approaches that you use and to also share your examples with others during Swap Shops.

Name of resource/approach	*(Please bring an example with you)*
Setting in which this resource is used	
Profile of learner	
Stage of support journey	*(Initial/diagnostic assessment, support planning, on programme support, review and evaluation)*
Learner feedback	*(What makes this resource/approach particularly effective? Are there any limitations/aspects that you feel might be improved?)*
Practitioner feedback	*(What makes this resource/approach particularly effective? Are there any limitations/aspects that you feel might be improved?)*
Organisation	
Contact details	
Additional Information	

Meeting Evaluation

The first regional network meeting took place on 22nd October 2010 at Wirral Metropolitan College and all the Key Performance Indicators were achieved.

- 64 people attended with an additional 4 organisations receiving 1:1 support from Anne Price or Lin Etheridge after the event as they were unable to attend due to their own organisation running their in house staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Total of 68 people engaged.

- This represents 13 Further Education Colleges (FE), 8 Independent Specialist Colleges (ISC), 5 Work Based Learning Providers (WBL), 3 Lifelong Learning Providers (LLL) and 2 Sixth Forms.

- 46 evaluations received 43 / 46 good or better = 93%, 3 satisfactory = 7%, 0 unsatisfactory.

- Feedback from some learning support staff that attended was that they did not understand the abbreviations that the sector often uses e.g. LLDD meaning Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities. Interestingly two feedbacks commented that they thought there was too much emphasis on ISCs, when in fact the input from ISCs and FEs was exactly the same. By the end of the event 20 of the 31 providers had signed up to trial 9 different approaches / resources. Several organisations presented resources and approaches that they were using or developing.

- Swap shop workshops were held where approaches and resources for involving learners in support were exchanged.

- Representatives from each North West organisation signed up to trial 1 or more approaches or resources that they had seen demonstrated or discussed.

- Feedback was to take place at the 2nd regional meeting.

- Unplanned outcomes:

  - The 1:1 input for some organisations was not planned but we were very keen to enable all interested parties to participate;

  - Another unplanned outcome, but one we should not be surprised by is the impact of the wide variety of providers coming together, which has generated new partnerships overnight through the trialling of the resources / approaches that were shared during the meeting;

  - Raised awareness of the difficulties colleagues in the WBL sector face in the deployment and resourcing of learning support. This is especially relevant considering the increased focus by Government on the delivery of Apprenticeships and the inclusion of apprentices with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities; and

  - Follow up meetings were arranged with WBL providers to look at approaches and resources which they could consider within their organisational and funding constraints.

Regional Meeting 2

- The second regional network meeting was held on 18th February 2011 at David Lewis College and the main aim was to share findings and determine the most effective resources and approaches to put forward for outcomes of the project. The resources and approaches would also be quality assured using the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Practitioners[3] and the Application Guide[4] for Supporting Disabled Learners.

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[3] Lifelong Learning UK, (2009) National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Staff. Lifelong Learning UK, London

Meeting Evaluation

- 58 people attended: 18 staff representing 8 x ISCs, 26 staff representing 11 x FE, 3 staff representing 3 x WBL, 3 staff representing 3 x Adult and Community Learning (ACL), 8 staff representing a range of other organisations including 3 x local authorities, 1 x special school. The roles of those attending were as follows: 32 managers (includes 3 managers within other category above), 21 learning support practitioners (this represents 8 x learning support tutors and 13 LSAs but contracts are different in the range of organisations so it is not that simple), 5 other.

- 42 evaluations completed with the overall satisfaction rating by those attending. 41 good or better / 1 satisfactory.

- 7 organisations provided feedback on the approaches and resources taken forward. Each resource or approach that had been trialled was quality reviewed by all the delegates and the tool used can be accessed from the project resource bank on the project website. The tool enabled practitioners review the resources using the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Practitioners and the Application Guide for Supporting Disabled Learners.

- Further enhancement of accessible resources e.g. One organisation had endeavoured to make the Catching Confidence tool[5] (NIACE 2006) accessible to learners who use symbols to communicate. Grids and guidelines have been produced to guide practitioners.

Resources and approaches trialled and that also were developed/contextualised as part of the project

Nine approaches/resources were trialled and further developed in the project. They were:

a. Accessible Risk Assessment;

b. Catching Confidence;

c. British Sign Language Glossary;

d. Working Styles Analysis;

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[4] Lifelong Learning UK, (2010) Learning support for disabled learners: Application of the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Staff.   Lifelong Learning UK, London

[5] NIACE (2006) Catching Confidence: The nature and role of confidence – ways of developing and recording changes in the learning context

e. Edu Apps – JISC resources;

f. Foundation Learning Level Units for Involving Learners – yet to be accredited;

g. Infolio – JISC resource;

h. Learning for Living and Work Framework – Part 1, Section A – The Young Person's View; and

i. Resource Evaluation Tool (Upwardly Mobile, LSN) – developed in different context.

Five of the approaches and resources were reviewed by the Learner Reference Group and the section that follows presents their feedback.

Learner Reference Group

The Learner Reference Group was set up to ensure that the voice of learners was driving the project and that learners were involved in reviewing the emerging approaches and resources. The first Learner Reference Group Meeting was held at David Lewis College on 19th October 2010 to gather learners' views about their support. The meeting took the form of a workshop and the questions outlined below were discussed.

A total of nine learners attended the group meeting; four from David Lewis College and five from Wirral Metropolitan College. The learners' abilities and support needs were as follows:

Learner ID	Support Need	NQF Level
1	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Pre entry milestones
2	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Entry Level 1
3	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Entry Level 1
4.	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Entry Level 1
1.	Moderate Learning Difficulty, Visual Impairment, Physical	Entry Level 3 – Skills for Working Life

	Impairment	
2.	Moderate Learning Difficulty	Level 1 – Introductory Diploma in Caring for Children
3.	Specific Learning Difficulties	NVQ Level 1 – Performing Engineering Operations
4.	Deaf	Level 2 – Diploma For Progression (Pre Access - Humanities)
5.	Visual Impairment	Level 3 – BTEC Diploma in IT

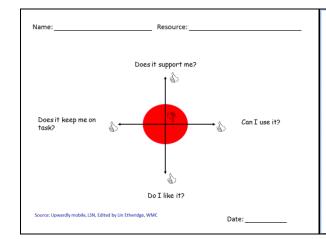At this meeting, a workshop was held with the learners to gather their views on the following:

a. How do you tell an LSA you want to be more independent?

b. How are you involved in planning and managing your support?

c. What do you think about the support that you get?

d. How can we gather your views about support?

e. What types of support resources do you like using?

f. How can we gather your feedback for this project?

g. How do you feel about being part of this project?

A summary of their feedback is contained in Annex 1

The second Learner Reference Group Meeting was held at Wirral Metropolitan College on 26th January 2011.

The learners used the following accessible tool to evaluate five support approaches and resources as selected:

Name: _____ Resource: _____

Does it support me?

Does it keep me on task?

Can I use it?

Do I like it?

Source: Upwardly mobile, LSN, Edited by Lin Etheridge, WMC

Date: _____

Evaluation of Resources

- Describe how to use the resource
- Conduct the learning activity
- Support the learner to complete the chart
    - Mark on the line how good you think the resource is
    - The nearer you mark to the 👍 the better you think it is
    - The nearer you mark to the 👎 the worse you think it is
- Draw straight lines with the marks you have made
- If any of your diamond is in the red, then this resource does not meet your needs
- We can then say how it can be made better for you

Inclusive risk assessment

This resource was originally developed by Arden College, of Craegmoor Healthcare. It is a resource to use with learners who may have speech and language difficulties to help them conduct their own personal risk assessments. We used A4 and A3 versions and also divided up the time line and the choices to individual strips and cards.

This resource was trialled by 3 learners from David Lewis College and a tutorial group from Wirral Metropolitan College who are all pre entry level learners.

Feedback and recommendations are as follows:

Feedback	Recommendation
Some learners found it difficult to concentrate on the task	Select one activity at a time (cut the timeline into individual strips). Concentrate on 1 sequential step at a time
Too many steps to work through	Cut the time line in to strips. Concentrate on 1 sequential step at a time. Progression activity – support the learner to build the steps in the correct sequence of planned activities. Build steps up a bit at a time.
Did not recognise the symbols	Use symbols learner recognises.
Too many symbols to choose from	Only provide a limited number of choices that you know the learner is able to choose from. Slowly build up the choices.
Needs to be person centred	Get the learner to choose their own symbols, pictures etc. that they recognise. Produce own choice boards and timelines.

Working styles assessment

This is a visual tool to enable learners to identify their own working style preferences. It can be used with supported learners on work based learning programmes or vocational programmes that include work placements.

We did this online using the free grid and also trialled an inclusive model similar to the inclusive risk assessment. We adapted the Dunn & Dunn Learning Styles Assessment[6], used the same elements but applied them in a work-based context as learning styles and working styles are closely related

This resource was trialled by two x Level 1 learners; one with a moderate learning difficulty and 1 with a specific learning difficulty.

Feedback	Recommendation
Online version – flickers when you move the mouse over the graphics.	Move the mouse slowly over the required symbol.
Online version – lot of text and long words (e.g. perceptive, hemisphere) to describe meaning of each graphic	Suggest that the text has a screen reader built in so that you can listen to the definitions. Use simpler words
Online version needs clearer images to represent the styles. They are a bit fuzzy.	Use Zoom facility on the web page. Select sharper graphics.
Adapted paper based version –need clearer pictures. Preferred the multi-coloured version rather than black and white on toned paper.	Have the resource printed on a range of colours (Irlen friendly). Use clearer and larger graphics on the multi coloured printed version.
Liked the table to fill in	Use the table for learners to record and remember their choices
Liked the alternative individual pictures which you could select and place on the grid; however the grid needs to be larger for the pictures to fit.	Enlarge the grid to A3 Use graphics, symbols that the learner recognises or chooses for themselves.

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[6] Dunn, R., & Griggs, S. (1998). Learning styles: Link between teaching and learning. In Dunn, R. & Griggs, S. (Eds.), *Learning styles and the nursing profession* (pp. 11-23). New York: NLN Press.

My Study Bar

My Study Bar is a tool which helps overcome problems that students commonly experience with studying, reading and writing. The tool consists of a set of portable open source and freeware applications, assembled into one convenient package. Although My Study Bar is designed to support learners with literacy-related difficulties such as dyslexia, the toolbar can offer potential benefits to all learners. It also provides learners with resources that they can choose and personally configure to support them and thus promotes independent learning.

This resource was trialled by two learners with a visual impairment; one learner was on Entry Level 3 Skills for Working Life and the other learner was on a Level 3 BTEC Diploma in IT. The free software was uploaded on to a laptop. It can also be run from a pen drive. The learners reviewed the following features: Magnification, Sonar Ring, Speech Facility

Feedback	Recommendations
Magnifier – have to be careful using it as when opening another programme, the magnifier switches off and you have to switch it back on again	Use Microsoft Magnifier instead which is in the Accessibility Programme group Use Zoomtext
Magnifier – In Photoshop, the menu bar was in the way at the top of the screen, made icons difficult to see	Use Microsoft Accessibility to enlarge icons Use Zoomtext
Magnifier was in the way of the Start button so found it difficult to locate, clicked and magnifier went off.	Don't use the magnifier when opening Start button on the desktop Use Zoomtext
Sonar Ring – not compatible with Vista so could not use and was also slow to load.	Prefer to use "Show location of pointer" in Microsoft Accessibility options Use Windows Ctrl Key to make choices
Speech – better part of the programme	Would use the speech facility to read out text on page
You get what you pay for	As this is free software, it has its limitations. It is not useful for learners with significant visual impairment

Catching Confidence

The original Catching Confidence Tool was designed to capture changes in learners' confidence levels during an episode of learning and was produced by NIACE (2006).

The project trialled the tool with learners who have mental health support needs or confidence support needs. This resource was trialled by two x Level 1 learners; one with a moderate learning difficulty and 1 with a specific learning difficulty. You can access the templates and how to use the tool from the NIACE website listed in the Power point link above.

Feedback	Recommendations
Like the simple grid and choosing my own colours to represent confidence levels	Use the basic grid. Encourage learners to choose colours to represent confidence levels
Can see at a glance where I need to improve my confidence	This gives the learner specific information so that they can set their own targets in the situations and settings required
Can see at a glance where I am confident already	This boosts self-esteem.
Enjoyed the discussion about confidence in different situations and settings	You can also change the settings and situations – contextualise it for different learning programmes and skills etc. (see appendix 2)

BSL glossary for Pre Access course

This resource was developed in partnership with a Deaf learner and was designed to minimise barriers to accessing academic terminology on a Pre-Access Course.

The Learning Support Practitioner had the Psychology module glossary ready and some signs prepared. She also had a Busbi video camera (http://www.busbi.biz/) to point and shoot the signs. A learner's mobile phone can also be used to produce the glossary. The video clips can then be uploaded to a pen drive or computer, saved and sorted in alphabetical order.

Feedback	Recommendations
Glossary of words is hard to learn in isolation	Besides the word sign, you must also sign the meaning
Liked the Busbi camera, easy to use, only 3 buttons.	Can also use video on mobile phone or webcam on a PC, laptop or netbook.
Need to download signs to pen drive or PC and then catalogue, rename so that they are easy to find.	Rename files to glossary term, sort alphabetically and create a glossary folder with the subject as the title e.g. Psychology.
May need higher quality video than Busbi if uploading to Moodle or other student intranet.	Depends on the learner's needs. If subject matter is highly specialised or affected by learner's BSL ability and language needs, then a personal BSL glossary on mobile hand hold technology may be more appropriate as this is a Deaf learner's main tool for communication with non-Deaf learners.

Work-based learning subgroup

The work-based learning sub groups came about after the first regional network meeting. It became apparent that the model for delivering additional learning support and involving learners was very different, largely due to funding constraints and resulting organisational support infrastructures. Some providers felt out of their depth and were not aware of the resources and approaches being shared at the first regional meeting.

A follow up meeting was held with two providers to explore and share resources and approaches used in their support of work based learners. These providers then agreed to review their approaches in the light of the project aims and to provide feedback at our next regional meeting. North West Community Services agreed to trial the working styles analysis and Training Plus Merseyside would share the tool they use for screening learners with dyslexia as part of their initial assessment process.

A project representative also attended the Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Forum Learning Difficulties/Disabilities sub group to brief members about the project and to involve them in the wider aims of the project. As a result other providers became project partners and attended our second regional meeting. North West Community Services and Training Plus Merseyside also presented their approaches and resources for involving learners at the second regional meeting.

Training Plus Merseyside also provided a demonstration of the Instines dyslexia screening tool.

Outcomes

All project outcomes were met and enhanced by other positive outcomes not originally planned and include:

a. Total number of participants exceeded;

b. Project tools produced which have become part of the toolkit for evaluating resources and approaches

c. Expanded professional networking for colleagues across differing sectors, learning support models and local authorities;

d. Involvement of Work Based Learning and raised awareness of the inequitable model of funding and therefore availability of support and resources to support learners and the practitioners;

e. Three sub group meetings were held with Work Based Learning Providers; and

f. Work based learning shared approaches at our 2nd regional meeting.

Evaluation of the project

Twinning an Independent Specialist College with a General Further Education College to manage the regional strand enabled the effective coverage of the whole breadth of learning support needs. It also promoted cross sector partnership work and a greater understanding of support cultures and the needs of learners accessing these providers. The success of the project and the great involvement of the North West providers was as a result of tapping in to existing practitioner networks and contacts. As with many short term projects, the short time span did not allow providers sufficient time to fully trial the resources over an academic year and so impact reports can be compromised and should perhaps be presented as indicators to emerging success and difficulties encountered. Regular communication with the North West regional network was essential to maintain momentum and to support providers who had committed to the trials.

The project also revealed that particularly in Further Education, practitioners were already involving learners in directing support and this was embedded in support practice and in other activities such as student councils, disability forums, impact assessments and other learner voice activities. However the project raised their awareness and understanding of the models they were using to involve learners and how this could be evidenced using the National Occupational Standards. Having said this, it also became apparent that most providers were not aware or familiar with the new National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Practitioners or the Application Guide for Supporting Disabled Learners.

As a result of the project, practitioners now recognise the importance of using approaches and resources to involving learners in directing their own support and how this promotes greater independence and support plans that are person centred. Learners can take ownership of their support plans and how they are implemented to

help them reach their learning goals as independently as possible. Learners can direct their support throughout their learning journey and practitioners can reflect on the effectiveness of approaches and resources to ensure the involvement of learners in supporting their learning journeys.

Recommendations

Providers need further guidance on using the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Practitioners and the Application Guide for Supporting Disabled Learners, and in particular relation to involving learners and evaluating resources and approaches.

Learning support reflective practice needs further development and mapping to the National Occupational Standards and LSAs require contracts that allow them time to evaluate their support practice and to attend external training and practitioner networks.

Further research and support is required for the Work-Based Learning Sector with a view to customising approaches and resources within the limitations of funding and support staff infrastructures - quite often there is only one learning support practitioner in work based learning organisations.

Develop local networks which operate at LSA level in order to enable Learning Support Assistants to belong to a community of practitioners and have access to sharing practice and to resources that will enable them to involve learners in directing their own support.

The developing web based LSIS Enhancement of Learning Support Portal would benefit from giving practitioners the opportunity to upload resources with the opportunity for practitioners to review usefulness and endorse them using the national standards. (Similar to online resource portals e.g. TES, Talent, BBC Skillswise, Skillsworkshop.org).

1.   How do you tell an LSA you want to be more independent?

I tell my LSA. I talk to support staff and my tutor.

2.   How are you involved in planning and managing your support?

One learner said that they were not involved in deciding on the support allocated in her house. She did not have a choice who she worked with in the house. Another learner said that when they went to the fair they could choose which ride to go on. One learner said that because she is Deaf and not everyone can sign it is sometimes difficult to do this. Not all Deaf learners can sign, but can lip read and people sometimes forget to ask you directly what you want and assume you need a signer.

3.   What do you think about the support that you get?

Learners were happy with the support they received.

4.   How can we gather your views about support?

Learners said that they could talk to staff about this in different ways – email, focus groups, 1:1 sessions, student councils, blogs, website, paper format, talking Apple Macs, Canal side radio, Mi Pod (inflatable diary room)

5.   What types of support resources do you like using?

Some learners said they would like to do a buddy system: learners supporting other learners, pair up with Deaf students. One learner said he would like resources to help him be more independent. Another learner said that she needs support when cooking so that she is safe when she has absences – it would be dangerous for her to be on her own when doing this.

Learners also said that support through email would be good as well as posters, equipment, people swimming beside them, hoists to get in and out of the swimming pools, touch screen computers, media suites, internet, books, notes, diagrams, texting, mobile phone, Skype.

6.   How can we gather your feedback for this project?

Learners said that they would like to visit each other in their colleges. We could email but it is better to get together and see each other as well.

7.   How do you feel about being part of this project?

Happy to join in but learners need to know:

You said …………we did…….

You said………….we said sorry we can't do this and this is why

You said …………we can't do this at the moment, but we will think about how we can do this in the future

Learners said that they would find this helpful as they need to understand the reasons why some things can't happen.