LSIS Leadership in Technology (LIT) grant based intervention Impact study

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LIT Project title	*Learners Interactive Views & Evaluation (LIVE)*
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	To improve learner feedback, support access to information and diversify opportunities to hear the Learner's Voice. As an Adult & Community Learning (ACL) provider, it is often difficult to collect learner feedback for a variety of reasons. Literacy and language barriers have been two noticeable factors in previous years, so this was something that needed to be addressed by the Service. The Service relies upon traditional methods of capturing learner views but recognises it can improve quality and accessibility via the implementation of digital technologies. Many learners engage with technology outside the organisation; shopping, conducting business, social networking. Learner consultation needs to be responsive to this cultural change.
Why did you go for a technology-based solution	The Service has traditionally used a paper based approach to gathering learner feedback and it was felt that technology would provide another dimension. It offers a means to increase responses and gain real-time views. It recognises the diversity of learners; some learners are unable to express themselves on paper or in forums. A technological approach presented a novel approach to collecting learner feedback. Can be seen as a more friendly and fun way of responding to questionnaires rather than the sometimes daunting task of completing a written form. Emotional feedback can be expressed more clearly as well as the automated recording of statistical data.
What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your organisation's contribution	System Procurement (inc transportation & delivery) £7,767.00 Internal Staffing Costs £1,000.00 Project Mentor Support (RSC West Midlands) £3,000.00 £11,767.00 **LSIS Contribution** £6,000.00 **WAES Contribution** £5,767.00

Describe what you did and what happened	We investigated the possible solutions for collecting video feedback. In the past we had used a basic camcorder and tripod, however we wanted something that was more robust and could be used with limited setup requirements. This led us to a company called VideoBooth Systems who provided a product that met our requirements and specifications. They offered a choice of a Free Standing, Wall Mounted or Desktop Video Kiosk. Due to the cost of the product we opted for the Desktop solution, however this also presented the opportunity for using the system at different venues due to its portability. The ability to move the equipment between venues increased the scope for its use.
	The equipment was used in a learner consultation exercise promoted as 'The Big Chat' learner survey. The equipment was marketed as 'The Voice Box' and used to film and record learner feedback as an alternative and inclusive method; in particular it was used to obtain feedback from adult learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (ALDD), visually impaired and ESOL learners as an effective way of including and encouraging these learners to participate. The data was then translated and recorded along with feedback gathered from other communication methods in order to collate and analyse the data collected.
	The main trial of the Voice Box took place during Adult Learners Week 14th-18th May 2012 where learner feedback was collected via response slips, 'Inbrief', VLE, posters, and the 'VoiceBox'.

The benefits and impact

What benefits/ impact has the project had on...	a. the work/ effectiveness of your organisation
	There were just over 600 responses to the Big Chat survey, of which approximately 8% were via the Voice Box. This was a significant number of responses for a trial period using a system that was both new to learners and staff alike. The feedback received via the paper-based approach was in single sentence – statement like form, whereas the video recordings captured broader explanations and comments. The videos also made it very clear to see if the learners were particularly happy about a certain aspect of the Service provision. The body language and expressions were two of the vital parts of feedback that would not have been collected if the VoiceBox had not been used.
	The equipment was effective in providing an alternative approach to gathering learner feedback. It provided a verbal communication method which was able to supplement the variety of written communication methods making the survey more inclusive. Traditional paper based systems have provided narrow responses, however with video capture, verbal and body language response to question offer a richer response.
	The VoiceBox also has the potential to be used in classrooms, in particular in teaching British Sign Language (BSL) and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) as an outlet to practise and record verbal communication skills.

	b. the cost/ efficiency of activities
	The cost of carrying out learner consultations with this method far outweighed previous attempts at collecting learner feedback, however it provided more informed responses. The Voice Box gave an efficient way of capturing video feedback, as it was permanently setup (during the given period) and learners could then leave their comments at a time convenient to themselves.
	c. any other aspect of your work
	The project presented the opportunity to explore a piece of technology that had not already been used within the Service. The Big Chat was used to launch the Voice Box, however there are now further plans to use it for other activities rather than just for learner feedback. The full potential of the system will be realised during the coming year.

What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:		a little	some	a lot	essential
	LSIS funding	○	○	○	●
	Your mentor	○	○	●	○
	LSIS Associate	○	○	●	○

Do you have any comments on the funding, mentor or LSIS Associate?	The 50/50 allocation of the project funding between our organisation and that of the mentor was problematic, as the major costs for this project were in relation to the procurement of equipment. In some ways the divided allocation of the funding dictated how the project was to be managed rather than the overall aim and individual objectives being the driving force. It would have been more appropriate for the split of the funding to be negotiated with the mentor in light of the requirements of the project.
What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers?	Background images to be used on the system needed to be in a specific bitmap format (OS/2) otherwise they would not be displayed correctly. Although the Desktop Kiosk is portable (when in trolley case), it can be quite heavy if needs to be moved around a lot or for long distances. We would recommend that 2 people are involved with transporting the equipment both for safety and security. Learner Confidentiality, procedures for using captured video had to be implemented along with standards for storing and controlling the video files. This needed to be an extension on the current procedures used for recording learner details.

Telling others	
What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector?	The Voice Box was taken to a recent RSC West Midlands ACL Network held at Wolverhampton Science Park. Colleagues from various ACL providers in the region were present at the meeting providing an opportunity to share experiences in the use of technology for teaching and learning. There was a demonstration of the Voice Box and how it had been used by WAES for collecting learner feedback.

The project was also disseminated internally, as a means of promoting the Voice Box and the potential it has. A selection of the videos were shown at a full staff meeting and the impact of visual and verbal feedback was a powerful tool in understanding what our learners think about their learning experience with us. Following the meeting there was an increase in interest from a number of tutors who wanted to use the Voice Box within their classes either for recording learner presentations or for gathering learner feedback. The booking out of the Voice Box system is something that we will be exploring in the 2012/2013 academic year. |
| Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project. | The LSIS LIT project meant that we were able to explore a technological solution that would provide a more stimulating approach to collecting learner feedback. It was a valuable experience in terms of 'in-house' technical skills that were gained and the positive response from the learners. WAES has always wanted to explore this type technology for gathering learner feedback and the LIT project made this aspiration possible. |
| Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications? | Yes, we are happy for any information in this report to be shared for marketing and publication purposes. |
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Please email all case studies to eleadership@lsis.org.uk by 31st July 2012