



Enhancement of Learning Support

The training and development needs of learning support assistants

What learners think



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March 2010



**Flexibility and Innovation
funding**

Enhancement of Learning Support

Aim: to find out what learners think about learning support.

Objectives:

- To meet together to talk about learning support
- To use video, audio tape and writing to record learners' views
- To put learners' ideas in a report
- To make a DVD

What we did: we held 6 meetings with 54 learners from different courses in further education, specialist colleges, and adult education. Learners' ages were from 16 to 50+.

There were lots of activities to make sure everyone could take part

- Getting to know each other
- Talking
- Drama
- Making up songs or poems
- Making posters
- Interviews
- Diary room



Outcomes

Here are the things learners said.

Good learning support assistants:

- Have patience to sit down and work things through
- Take time to talk to me
- Are good listeners and listen to what I say
- Help me improve my confidence
- Know what I can and can't do
- Let me do things for myself and allow me to find out about myself
- Care about me and show respect
- Give me freedom to learn and do not restrict me
- Promote opportunities for me to be independent
- Adapt to my feelings and circumstances
- Have a good heart, enjoy the working relationship

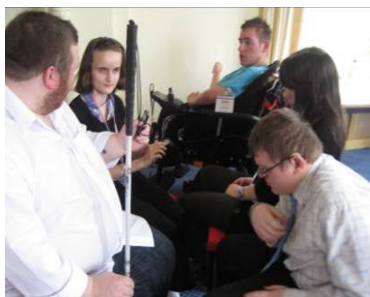
Treat me like an adult!



Learning support works best when Learning Support Assistants:

- Help us to work by ourselves
- Give practical tasks, not too much writing
- Provide help to understand things
- Help us to understand health and safety
- Work together with us and each other as a team
- Know when to help and when to stand back
- Communicate in a way that I can understand
- Give us space to learn independence; explain the task and stand back
- Understand my disability and my medication
- Understand the technology I use

Treat me as an individual!



Learning support is bad when:

- I'm not being challenged
- There is a lack of specialist knowledge
- There is no real interest in my work
- Support worker gives too much help
- I am not given space to do things for myself
- There is poor communication
- They don't give praise
- There is a lack of care
- They don't show respect
- They don't really know what I can and can't do – and don't ask me
- They think they know how I feel
- They make me feel bad about myself
- I am given tasks that are too difficult
- They follow me around all day.



Learning support assistants should learn:

- the impact on learning of different disabilities but remember that 'Everyone is an individual even if they do have the same disability'
- particular skills for different disabilities, such as BSL, mobility training, giving practical tasks or making pictorial resources
- the importance of knowing about the support history of learners they are supporting
- how to involve learners in assessment to agree the type level of support they need
- coaching and mentoring skills
- the need to give learners the right amount of time and space
- how to use equipment and software
- how to work **with** learners to develop skills for independence
- how to develop useful resources to negate the need for physical support and promote independence



- how to ask learners their views, and act on them
- how to change support according to the teacher's style
– particularly when working with deaf learners
- how to help deaf learners to communicate with hearing people, especially in work place settings

Appendix 1 – meeting plan

Getting to know each other (10 minutes)

Warm up ‘speed dating’: say something about yourself in 10 seconds.

What is Learning Support (15 minutes)

Talk together and write key words on the flipchart. Use the words to make a sentence

Focus on support (1 hour)

Spend 20 minutes in each workshop:

- **Workshop 1: Making a drama out of support**

Make up a short story or play about ‘**what learning support means to you**’. It can be serious or funny. It could show good support or bad support. This will be filmed through the flip camera.

- **Workshop 2: Creative support**

Write a poem or a song or draw a poster together, to show the **group’s feelings** about learning support.

- **Workshop 3: Radiohead**

Imagine you have been asked to be on the radio to be interviewed about what learning support means to you. This will be recorded.

The questions are:

- How does learner support help you with your learning?

- What is good about having a support person with you in your classes?
- What could be done better?
- What would your advice be to a support worker?

Expectations (30 minutes)

Split into 3 groups to discuss one topic

1. Attitudes – make a spider gram
2. Approach – make a spider gram
3. How support is delivered – make a spider gram

Share your ideas and agree what is important

Values (25 minutes)

Diary room – plan and record

1. What things you feel are important about teaching support
2. How would you like to give your views in the future



Appendix 3 - Participants

Thank you to the learners from these organisations who took part in the meetings and came up with such brilliant ideas.

- Artshape, Gloucester
- Exeter Deaf Academy, Exeter
- Gloucestershire College, Gloucester
- Gloucestershire County Council (Supernova adult learning class), Gloucester
- National Star College, Cheltenham
- New College Worcester
- Royal National College for the Blind, Hereford