



Technology Advisory Group

Beaumont College: ILT strategy

The Organisation

Beaumont College is run by Scope, and was founded in 1977. The main campus is on the northern edge of Lancaster. Beaumont offers residential and non-residential programmes for young people with Cerebral Palsy and other disabilities and learning difficulties, between the ages of 19-25. In recent years, the college has attracted an increasing number of students with complex needs as well as students on the autistic spectrum.

Beaumont College is currently operating three satellite provisions, one in Carlisle, one in Barrow in Furness and another in Blackpool for a number of students, this provision is forecast to grow significantly and we are actively exploring the creation of other such satellites in the north west area. Beaumont has a large technology team (9 people) consisting of mainstream technology specialists, MIS staff, helpdesk staff and assistive and learning technologists.

The Challenge

To keep our Integrated Learning Technology (ILT) strategy up to date through a consultative process, and ensure it is responsive to changing needs.

Beaumont College created its first ILT Strategy in 2003 with support from Jisc RSC Northwest. The original strategy was written by the head of technology and the principal and we wanted to ensure that the revised strategy was well communicated; that we worked across curriculum areas and that we consulted with staff and students.

The solution

When the strategy was initially developed, it was necessarily rather autocratic - there was no real 'legacy' system to consider and most staff were inexperienced in the use of technology, so leadership was needed to demonstrate the art of the possible.

When the strategy was first renewed in 2006/7, another approach was needed. Significant investment had been made in equipment, infrastructure and staffing, and considerable time and money spent on staff training. The 2006/7 strategy changed emphasis from the renewal of core infrastructure to the classroom use of technology and the use of assistive technology, and so we consulted with teaching staff in particular. In 2007 the college increased from 1 to 3 Assistive Technologists. This made a significant difference to the use of technology in the curriculum, and during the life of this second ILT Strategy Beaumont moved through being e-mature to become a sector leading technology enabled college.

In early 2009, in response to a requirement of TechDis administered BIS funding, we looked again at the strategy and further involved teachers in its development. Alongside this, our MIS and entire senior management teams contributed, ensuring the strategy was mapped to the College's main strategic documents. The head of technology, a member of the senior management team, wrote the strategy so it was possible to drive technology into the curriculum and across the wider college. All departments, including support and facilities teams, were using technology well.

When the strategy was renewed in 2013/14, the process was well understood by the academic staff and managers and leaders of the college. We used new templates (as provided by Jisc TechDis and the TAG) in 2014, so the strategy is now a live document that provides a reference point for technology. The entire technology team owns the document and can suggest improvements at any time.

The review of the ILT Strategy is embedded into the College's quality cycle. The SAR is informed by departmental reporting against the previous year's Quality Improvement Plans (QIP). Each senior manager owns their departmental QIP, and in the case of the technology team this is owned by the head of technology and is reported on bi-monthly to the link governor for technology. The QIP is the basis of a balanced scorecard that is completed alongside a written report to the technology link governor prior to each meeting, and included in the governors' papers.

This review mechanism ensures that the ILT Strategy is properly reviewed and kept up to date. The QIPs are reviewed annually following the SAR process, and it is possible to track themes all the way from the 5 year College wide strategic plan to the technology QIP and from there to the work programmes of individual technology team members.

The outcome

As a result of having a coherent technology strategy that has been regularly reviewed, Beaumont College has become a sector leader in the use of technology.

In 2009 Ofsted graded the college outstanding and commented favourably on the use of technology. *'The use of information, communication and learning technology (ICLT) and adaptive technology is particularly effective in reducing barriers to the curriculum.'* (Ofsted 2009)

This was reflected in subsequent monitoring visits which note the developing use of technology.

'E-portfolios are used very effectively to record learners' achievements and ensure they are fully involved in this process.'

The college works very well with national organisations in the development of communication aids to meet the needs of learners with complex disabilities.

Since the inspection, the college has increased further the priority it gives to the use of technology to support learning. Technology specialists have an allocated number of learners to work with and they spend more time in the classroom to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the equipment.' (Ofsted 2012)

As a result of having the strategy in place, the college has been able to make excellent use of funding opportunities. The technology team has brought in an average of £150+k per year over the last 10 years. This includes grant and project income and direct consultancy.

This additional income has allowed us to sustain the size of the team and continue to develop sector leading practice. An example of this is the leadership of the Jisc funded Dart Project, in which we have worked with 28 colleges in a deep support capacity and over 200 colleagues from around the sector in the workshop series. In addition original research has been completed in collaboration with Natspec.

The impact

- Beaumont has a robust and reliable IT infrastructure
- Beaumont has a sector leading Assistive Technology service

Rohan Slaughter, Beaumont College
October 2015