Pennine Camphill Community College and Wakefield College Case Study

Pennine Camphill Community College

[Pennine Camphill Community](#) (Pennine) is an independent specialist college providing further education and training for learners aged 16 to 25 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staffed by residential co-workers and day staff, many senior co-workers live on site and some take on the role of house guardians and teachers. Trainee co-workers are volunteers from a range of countries and work at Pennine for one year, most as care assistants, with a learning support role.

Pennine is located four miles from Wakefield on a 58 acre site. Within the campus there are practical craft workshops in a new skills centre, as well as estate and rural skills. In addition the campus has community houses, a market garden, a farm and a riding school. There are 37 learners of mixed ability, half of whom attend daily.

Wakefield College

[Wakefield College](#) is a medium-sized general further education college, with curricula covering Entry level to Higher Education.   Approximately 5% of the full-time cohort of learners aged 16-24 receive learning support.

There are 80 Learning support staff in total. They have fractional, term-time only contracts. There is a high level of specialism with regard to disability within the wider team, and the support staff work across three campuses which are some distance from one another, the greatest distance being 12 miles. These factors make creating opportunities for joint meetings and training between Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) a serious challenge.

The LSIS resources used:

The Colleges used the [Organisational Audit Tool](#) and the [Professional Development Profiling](#) (PDP) on-line tool, both mapped to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Learning Support. Both sets of staff were largely unaware of the NOS for Learning Support and this project provided an introduction to them.

The audit tool linked effectively to proposals from Ofsted in the revised Common Inspection Framework. Using the Audit Tool supports the process of self-assessment and acts as a catalyst for change where there is an identified need.

The PDP tool comprised an on-line questionnaire which generated detailed analysis. The report profile itself proved to be an invaluable resource, offering high levels of detail, in graph, text and electronic formats, and covering both individual and group responses.

Teaching staff and college managers welcomed the opportunity to have their opinions heard in relation to learning support.

Planning and dissemination meetings between Pennine and Wakefield College were held on a regular basis.

Our approach

The project ran from September 2011 to March 2012.

ELS Audit Tool

For Wakefield College, the audit questions were turned into questionnaires. Some person-to-person questioning took place and some focus group work. In all cases, an explanation of the purpose was offered to respondents. Where students were asked for their views in a questionnaire format, the questions appeared to be hard for them to access. In person, they could be explained. Wakefield College concentrated on Indicator 2.2: *The expertise, skills and knowledge of LSAs is used flexibly to foster the learning of learners.* The project engaged with 26 learners, 43 learning support staff and 33 teachers.

At Pennine, the audit was completed using all the indicators by the Vice Principal, Human Resources Manager and Education Co-ordinator through a range of meetings including joint focussed discussion and meetings with groups of LSAs.

Professional Development Profile

At Wakefield College, learning support staff members were invited to complete the Professional Development Tool as part of a Staff Development Day. Respondents answered fully and the college was delighted by the number of people who took the time to respond so comprehensively including the provision of individual comments.

At Pennine, the tool was used with all current trainee co-workers and a number of recently qualified teaching staff who volunteered to do so or who had an interest in developing good practice with regard to LSA support. The timing of the use of the online survey tool, in late October, was good and fitted in well with the completion of the induction training phase of their development cycle. It gave quick and detailed information that was easily analysed to support changes in future delivery.

>   "*By analysing the findings of the online tool together with the Audit we have developed a clear understanding of where the in-house training we provide for our LSA's needs to be developed and refocused*" Vera Hillier HR manager.

Examples of the outcome and impact of the work

The two tools proved to be an advantageous pairing. The PDP tool, when used alongside the audit tool, provided a balance and supported the findings of the audit tool in many instances. It can be easily used in a holistic way to identify and promote the professional development of either the department or individuals.

The findings from both colleges were extremely thought-provoking and illustrated clearly positive strengths and areas for improvement. For Pennine, initial analysis of the online survey

showed good confidence in the areas focussed on care standards. Less confidence was shown in teaching and learning areas and support for transitions. This was supported by results from using the Audit Tool. It highlighted areas requiring action that have subsequently been incorporated into the Self Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan, including more specific role descriptions for the college trainee co-workers and a redesign of the induction programme to better address these roles. It provided an opportunity to map the Audit against the Care Quality Standards (CQC) and act as a dual function audit tool. (Appendix A) A recent CQC visit had all areas judged showing full compliance with no actions needed by the college. Evidence from the audit tool was used to validate statements made during the compliance visit.

Pennine has reviewed the information sent out to trainee co-workers. Those currently in post have shown increased confidence in being better able to express what they can and cannot do and know. There is an increase in the knowledge of the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support both within the LSA group and by the College management as a result of using the two tools together.

There are clearer, more robust judgements in the Self Assessment Report based upon a sound assessment process, supported with clear evidence and subsequently, a detailed action plan. This includes re-using the PDP tool at the end of the Autumn Term to measure impact of induction training and inform further staff development and the Audit tool in the early summer to inform the College self assessment process and delivery of training in the next Autumn.

For Wakefield, a detailed action plan regarding professional development needs for both individuals and the wider team has been established. It has provided invaluable data for focussed planning activity in relation to the management of learning support. Performance will be monitored by the appraisal system. Alongside this, some professional development work has been planned to showcase effective practice when learning support staff work alongside teaching staff, indicated by both the outcomes from the PDP and responses from the Audit tool. Part of the planning will involve creating opportunities for better integration of learning support and curriculum. The College is also keen to create opportunities for learning support staff to meet and discuss their work with one another in a focussed way. One important outcome has been to examine further how they can measure the impact of learning support for individual learners and develop ways of capturing how effective learning support has been in raising a learner's level of independence.

The work between the two Colleges allowed for a better understanding of the differently focussed roles carried out in both Colleges and provided opportunities to consider some co-located training.

Next steps and future plans

Wakefield College is planning to use the Audit tool again as it provides tangible evidence of distance travelled. It will be particularly effective following the implementation of the action plan put in place as a result of this survey. The timing of the use of the audit tool would be better placed closer to the end of the year in time for the service area review and to provide planning opportunities for CPD and implementation of new strategies in the following academic year.

> *"The audit tool is simple to use and gathers much data in a short time. Advice for using it would be to ensure that the questions are put across in a short time frame – it is easily possible to cover the whole audit in 2 to 3 weeks of focussed work. This will ensure the*

most effective impact as a piece of action research and responses from one focus group can lead into further group discussions. "Eileen Elchaar, Additional Support Manager.

For Pennine, both tools will be used again to revisit the audit process and to validate the training given. They have found that using both tools has helped development of rigorous externally validated evidence that is able to demonstrate improvement over time and will inform future judgements as well as current priorities for development.

The partnership work between the two colleges has highlighted a number of areas of mutual interest. There may be future training arranged on either site for a mixture of Learning Support Assistants from both Colleges. A meeting of LSAs is also planned during cross college visits. Both colleges are working on plans to jointly feedback from the process to the regional ALS support group in the summer of 2012.

Case Study prepared by William Taylor, Vice Principal (Pennine Camphill Community College) and Eileen Elchaar, Additional Support Manager (Wakefield College)

March 2012