SIX APPROACHES TO POST-16 CITIZENSHIP

1. Citizenship through learner voice and representation

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Different approaches to delivering post-16 citizenship

Six distinct, but related, approaches to post-16 citizenship have been identified.[1]

Examples of each can be found in all the post-16 education and training settings, including the informal sector, although the approaches may be implemented in somewhat different ways in various contexts. Young people led, active learning is a crucial underlying principle of effective practice across the approaches and in all settings.

The approaches are: *Citizenship through*

1. learner voice and representation

2. qualifications and personalised programmes

3. group tutorial and enrichment programmes

4. voluntary and community-based activities

5. single events

6. research projects

Each title in this series of six booklets will examine and illustrate one of the above approaches. However, in practice it is desirable, and indeed common, that organisations combine several different forms of provision to ensure, for as many young people as possible, a range of citizenship learning opportunities. Undertaking a variety of citizenship activities will also help learners to reinforce their citizenship learning and recognise its usefulness in different arenas.

What is post-16 citizenship?

Citizenship enables young people to learn about their rights and responsibilities, to understand how society works, and develop knowledge and understanding of social and political issues. Through citizenship education, young people are encouraged to take action on issues of concern to them and to play an active part in the democratic process, thereby becoming more effective members of society. They are encouraged to express their views, to have a voice and make a difference to the communities in which they operate, and to reflect on what they have learnt.[2]

Whichever approach is used, it is essential that learners experience the key opportunities for post-16 citizenship learning in order to:

1. identify, investigate and think critically about citizenship issues, problems or events of concern to them

2. decide on and take part in follow-up action, where appropriate

3. reflect on, recognise and review their citizenship learning.[3]

Why do citizenship post-16?

There are clear benefits for the young people themselves and the organisations in which they learn. The young people show increased confidence and self-esteem, a greater interest in the world around them, an ability to get things changed, knowledge about 'the system', experience of taking part in challenging and worthwhile activities, and a more positive attitude. The organisation gains constructive involvement of staff and learners in decision-making, and more motivated learners, leading to increased retention and achievement and better relations with the local community. Moreover, citizenship can provide some coherence in an organisation's response to many of the educational initiatives outlined on pages 5–6 and 19–20.

Teaching and learning strategies

Citizenship education can be delivered effectively post-16 in a variety of ways, either as discrete, specially-designed activities, or as part of existing courses and programmes. However it is delivered, the most effective teaching and learning strategies involve active participation by young people, engaging collaboratively with real issues, selected by them. The activities should be led and owned by the young people and should be stimulating and fun. The Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme (see page 18) provided examples of citizenship through, for example art, photography, video making, role play/simulations, websites, music, newsletters, radio stations, discussions and debates, conferences, exhibitions, graffiti walls, banners, dance, comedy, drama, investigations, surveys, and campaigns. Experience of the Development Programme, and indeed the findings of the external evaluation[4] and Ofsted reports[5] all point to the importance of active learning in citizenship education. Active learning involves learning by doing and then learners reflecting on their activities, so that they can develop knowledge and understanding from their own experiences. They identify, review and summarise their learning and then apply it to new situations.

PLAN AND DO

APPLY

What skills and
knowledge will be
needed in a
new situation?
How can I
acquire these?
Who can help?

Active Learning Cycle

REFLECT

What happened?
What went well?
What didn't?
Would I do the
same again?

REVIEW

What skills and knowledge did I already have?
What new skills and knowledge did I learn?
What do I have yet to learn?
How can I learn this?
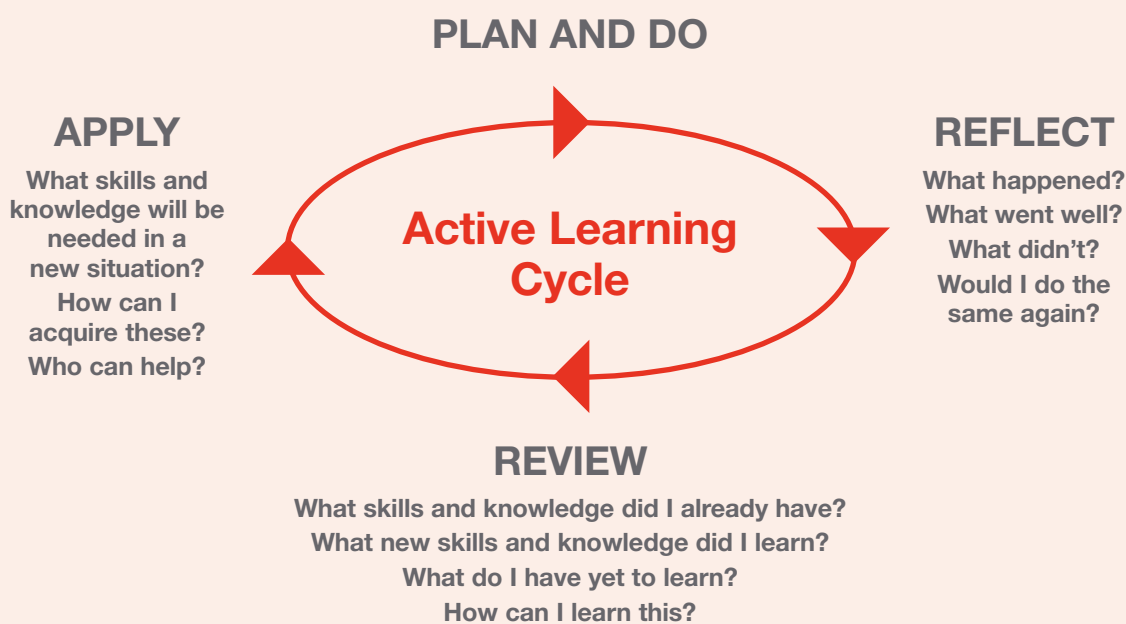
Active learning also involves a dialogue and interaction with others. It is clearly an important learning strategy for active citizenship because it develops many of the skills required, including:

• ability to empathise with others' points of view

• critical thinking to weigh evidence

• ability to form considered opinions and communicate them

• confidence and interpersonal skills to engage with others to effect change.

However, not all active learning is necessarily citizenship learning. Citizenship learning involves knowledge and understanding of social and political issues, so the context of the activity is important.

**Citizenship through learner voice
and representation**

Why listen to learners
and other young people?

Giving young people a voice builds their confidence, self-esteem and motivation and encourages them to develop an interest in current events. It helps them to develop and express their own opinions while listening to others, and to appreciate the importance of researching topics unfamiliar to them. It is an important way of developing their citizenship skills and empowering them to take action on matters that concern them.

Research on work-based learning underlines the value of consulting learners about provision for them.

'Asking trainees for their personal assessment of the education and training being provided and inviting them to come forward with their own suggestions for how it might be improved can be an important part of helping to manage their transition from young person to adult employee. In other words, learner feedback can provide a central focus for post-16 citizenship development, building on what may have been experienced as part of the school curriculum or through other community and out-of-school activities.' [6]

A number of educational policies stress the importance of listening to learners.

• The self-evaluation framework (SEF)[7] for Ofsted/Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspections requires organisations to consider their current practice in gathering views of learners and other stakeholders. The questions ask:

  – *How do you gather the views of learners, how often do you do this, and how do you ensure the impartiality of the information?*

  – *What do the views of learners tell you about the learners' standards, personal development and well-being, and the quality of your provision?*

  – *Can you give examples of action you have taken based on the views of learners, with an evaluation of the effectiveness of what you did?*

• More recent initiatives, such as the FE White Paper[8], aim to increase the opportunities for young people in further education to comment on how they learn and what they learn. The document states that

'Colleges and training providers will be expected to develop and implement strategies for involving learners and parents/carers of younger learners. We expect learners to play a key role in institutional governance, with each governing body including at least two learner governors. Based on the LSC national learner satisfaction survey, there should be regular opportunities for learners to feed back their levels of satisfaction so that colleges and providers can make improvements. And there should be effective mechanisms for engaging with learners collectively, including through student committees. We will work with the LSC and Ofsted to ensure that these mechanisms are reflected in development plans.' [9]

• New national guidance is being published by the LSC, and will be available from April 2007 in order for all providers to put learner involvement strategies in place by September 2007.

- Also arising from the White Paper and the Personalisation initiative, a National Learner Panel for Further Education has been established. The Panel's role is to represent to government ministers views about education and training policies held by diverse groups of learners across further education.

- Young people who have been elected to represent their peers need support and training. The Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) is designing training and toolkits for this purpose to be available from the beginning of the 2007/08 teaching year. The provision will take account of the needs of learners in different settings, including training organisations as well as schools and colleges, and with different backgrounds and levels of experience.

- Every Child Matters and Youth Matters (see page 19) both stress the importance of young people being consulted and having a say about the services provided for them, whether these services are provided through education/training or through social services and the local authority.

However, listening to the views of young people requires an open and receptive ethos in an organisation, one which welcomes the views of all its members – staff at all levels, learners, parents and community stakeholders. Where structures are imposed in an otherwise undemocratic organisation, they are likely to be seen as tokenism or worse. Derry Hannam has suggested that 'learning about democracy in (an undemocratic) school is like reading holiday brochures in prison'[10].

Voice of learners – a view from the National Learner Panel for Further Education

We certainly support many existing mechanisms for learner representation and involvement, such as student or learner unions, learner surveys and elected student governors. We also agree with the FE White Paper's recommendation that there should be at least two student governors on every governing body, and perhaps, depending on the organisation, learner representation on the board. But sometimes these arrangements don't work as well as they could: learner surveys, for example, will remain credible only if we as learners feel that our input is taken seriously and we can track the impact of our contribution. Similarly, student governors can only do their job properly if they are properly trained and supported.

It's important for us to know that provision is being driven by our needs, and not by the requirements of funding. We need to see the evidence that you understand and are responding to our learning needs. We would like to see one-to-one discussions between learners and teachers or trainers that are non-intimidating, that allow us to define a shared set of expectations and objectives, and represent a genuine learning experience for both parties.

Finally, in addition to the suggestions we've made above, there are some simple things you can do to support learner involvement in principle and in practice. You can ensure that there are clear signposts for how learners can get involved (for example, physical signs as we walk through the door, and visible noticeboards). When we enrol on a course, you can provide us with welcome packs that raise our awareness of the involvement opportunities.

You can develop open and honest means of relaying information back to us, for example through a direct address from the principal or chief executive.

All of this would result in better two-way communication, enhanced awareness of the issues that affect us all and a feeling among learners that we are truly part of the organisation.[11]

Giving young people a voice: good practice principles

Whichever method is used to give young people a voice, and whatever the topic of the consultation, there are some important principles that should be followed if the young people are to gain new skills and knowledge and to feel genuinely involved.

• Some training and support may be needed so that the young people have the confidence to take a full part. This could involve training in how to put forward informed opinions supported by argument or evidence[12].

• The purpose of the consultation activity should be clearly explained so that learners know what is going on and why they are there. They will also need to be clearly briefed on the issues under discussion so that they come properly informed and prepared. It may be hard for them to respond immediately to new information.

• Young people want to be involved in decision-making on a wide range of issues, including those relating to policy and strategy. Too often they are restricted to discussion of more trivial topics, such as parties, lockers and toilets.

• It is important to create the right environment if there is to be a meeting or discussion group. The meeting place should be pleasant and welcoming and refreshments should be provided. Timings of meetings should take account of the needs of different learners. In colleges, it might not be a good idea to set consultation activities up at the beginning of the day. In training organisations, trainees have to consider employers' requirements. In schools some activities might be best carried out during lessons.

• The atmosphere during consultations should be relaxed and time given to let people get to know each other. It is important that learners feel confident to express their opinions and views honestly. They should not be excluded from the discussion through the use of jargon.

• It is important that young people receive some explanation of what has happened as a result of the discussions and decisions that were taken, and how their input helped shape the outcome. This feedback should be given as soon as possible.

• The young people involved should have the opportunity to identify and recognise their own learning from the activity and receive some recognition for their contribution particularly if this is over an extended period of time. The recognition could be in the form of certificates or witness statements as part of a record of achievement.

• It is important to ensure fair opportunities for members of all groups of learners to be involved.

• Having a clear policy about student/learner voice can underline the commitments of senior management and can make a public statement about the ethos of the organisation (see examples below and on pages 8–9).

The National Youth Agency (NYA) has produced standards called *Hear by Right*[13]. These standards include critical success factors for the involvement of young people.

• Children and young people's involvement is a visible commitment that is properly resourced

• Children and young people's involvement is valued

• Children and young people have an equal opportunity to get involved

• Policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are in place, evaluated and improved.

Chichester College
Student Voice Policy

Policy Statement

Chichester College is committed to involving the learner in its strategic decision-making and operational management processes.

Aims & Objectives

The college firmly believes that embracing learner views and offering an opportunity for learners to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have a significant and effective impact on developing the college's quality improvement processes and improving student success. The college also believes that learners have key roles to play in self-assessment and policy-making procedures.

All learners, individually and collectively, have an entitlement to participate in the "co-production" of their college experience and in the evaluation of their teaching and learning through the following mechanisms of engagement:

1. Chichester College Student Union / Student Voice. All students automatically become members on enrolment unless they wish to opt out.

2. Student Representatives. Each tutor group from every curriculum area of the college nominates one or two representatives who are commissioned to voice the views of the group at meetings of the Student Councils established at the two main campuses.

3. Student Council. Tutor group representatives comprise the membership of the council, which meets four times each year, twice in the first term and once in each subsequent term on both campuses.

4. Student Executive. Elected by the Student Council, the Executive are the senior partners of the student body, responsible for embracing the views of the learners as voiced at the Student Council or other formal or informal channels and taking them forward to the appropriate college management forums. The Student Executive meets on a weekly basis with the Student Liaison Officer and the Student Activities Coordinator. Both roles are key to facilitating Student Voice activities.

5. Student Governor. One student is elected as Student Governor on an annual basis. Two additional student observers are nominated to attend meetings of the Governing Body and a number of its committees.

6. Student Committee. This is a formal committee of the Governing Body which meets termly. It comprises the Student Executive, Governors, the Senior Management Team and other appropriate managers including the Quality Assurance and Human Resources Managers. The Chairman of the Student Committee is a college governor. The Vice-Chairman is the Student Governor.

7. College Management Forums. At least two student representatives primarily, but not necessarily, from the Executive attend and contribute at a range of management committees. For example, Equality and Diversity Committee, Health and Safety Committee, Quality Forum and Academic Board. These forums provide learners with an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the college's management processes.

8. Student Executive/Senior Management Team liaison. The SMT are formally invited to the Student Union Executive meetings each month. There is a 2-way "open door" policy in existence to allow free liaison between SMT and executive members or other learners at any other time.

9. Sub Committees/Focus Groups: Student representatives make up at least 50% of the membership of the Facilities, Learning Resources and Catering Focus Groups. Outcomes are reported at Student Council, Student Committee and at management committees/forums as appropriate.

10. Student Union/Student Voice Self-Assessment processes. The Student Executive uses the same quality assurance processes as college management to assess its effectiveness. The document includes a forward-thinking action plan with targets, performance indicators and a monitoring procedure. It is derived jointly from Student Council feedback and from the Executive planning process. Its intention is to provide a focus for improvement and advancement of a staff/student co-production culture. It is included in the College's annual self-assessment report.

11. Course Review and Evaluation. Learners are involved in the evaluation of their course with the Curriculum Team Managers, Course Leaders and teaching staff. This process feeds into the college's annual course review and evaluation process.

12. Evaluation of Teaching and Learning – Student-centred input. The college intends to involve appropriately-trained learners in the evaluation of teaching and learning through structured "learning walks" and paired observations with experienced observers.

13. Student Survey. The college-wide Student Survey is distributed to all students twice yearly and the results disseminated to all students. Action plans are devised and monitored through quality processes, which involve student representation.

14. Learner Advocacy at National and Local Level. The Student Voice at Chichester College has an ambassadorial role to play at national and local level. Learners make a positive contribution to supporting community events and activities and work collaboratively with NUS and Government agencies to promote the Student Voice in FE.

Giving young people a voice: how to do it

There are different ways in which young people can be consulted and involved in decision-making, some of which are discussed and illustrated in this section. They include

A. formal structures such as youth councils, representation on formal bodies, and advisory panels

B. activities focusing on specific issues, including focus groups, individual, paired or group discussions, special events and conferences

C. collection of feedback from whole cohorts of learners, including surveys and questionnaires, suggestion boxes, diaries, video-diaries, websites (online surveys, chat rooms and message boards), e-mail and text-messaging.

A *Formal structures such as youth councils, representation on formal bodies, and advisory panels*

Many post-16 organisations have instituted formal structures within which young people can express their views. The most common form is the youth, student, trainee council or committee, where young people elect representatives to sit on the council and express their views on the running of the organisation. These structures often discuss everyday issues such as social activities, lockers, toilets, catering and the immediate environment. However, consultation can go beyond these everyday issues into broader areas of policy. Young people can be represented at leadership meetings, contribute to governors' meetings, or be represented on advisory bodies or academic boards. Sometimes committees of learners are involved in the appointment of staff and management of relationships with contracted companies.

It is important to make sure that where formal structures are used as a way of sustaining active involvement and giving the learner an on-going voice, they are accessible to a wide range of young people. Organisations should make attempts to reach those most often left out and not rely on the more motivated and articulate young people. Elections for representatives should be open and frequent, with arrangements in place for representatives to give feedback to those who elected them. Representatives will need support and training in order to carry out their role effectively. The formal structures need to be flexible, adaptable and regularly reviewed by staff and young people, with discussion about how much power can, in practice, be shared with learners, within the constraints of the organisation.

Student Parliament at Merton College

At Merton College, which is on two sites, two separate Student Parliaments are held, one on the main site and one at the Sixth Form Centre. The full Parliament meets at least four times a year but can meet more often on student request. All tutor groups elect two representatives to sit on the Parliament and the election of representatives is preceded by a minimum of two one-hour tutorials to prepare students. Many tutors allocate more time than this. The groups discuss the importance of democracy and representation, the skills needed to be a good class representative, and ground rules that are needed to be in place for the Parliament. A selection of resources is provided for the tutors to support this work.

The first Parliament is chaired by the Head of Student Support/Assistant Head of Sixth Form, and at this meeting the students are asked to express an interest in sitting on the Student Parliament Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then meets and elects representatives to the College Boards, Course Teams and the Governing Body. They also elect a Chairperson of Parliament, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and members of the Events Committee.

The Executive Committee meets several times between Parliament meetings and actions the concerns raised at the meeting by liaising with senior staff and managers and feeding back to

the Parliament. Youth workers based in the college help organise and oversee these Executive meetings giving advice and guidance to support the students as needed. The role of the youth workers and tutors is to facilitate, guide and support the work of the Parliament and Executive Committee. Some students will need more support than others and the input varies from year to year and student to student. All meetings are minuted by the Secretary or a deputy and minutes are circulated to all staff. They are also either posted or emailed to the student representatives. The office staff provide support to type and distribute the minutes. Before and after each full Parliament meeting, time is programmed into tutorials for class representatives to prepare items to be brought to the next meeting and feedback on progress from the last meeting.

Tapping into the voice of the trainee

Aylesbury Training Group (ATG) is a training provider offering both in-centre and work-based training in a number of vocational areas. It was set up in 1967 by 90 local employers and established as an organisation with charitable status to train young adults for employment. ATG is currently training 100 young adults in their centres and a further 500+ in companies.

The Apprentice Council was set up when the organisation joined the Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme in 2002. The Council meets every month for about an hour and consists of five or six elected apprentices, with an equal number of permanent staff. The Council meetings are regarded as a gathering of equals, with the ATG managers responding to issues presented and giving reasons if any request cannot be met. The agenda includes items such as health and safety, equal opportunities, fundraising ideas (for local, national and international charities), suggestions as to how to reduce absenteeism, improve equipment, and organise social and team-building events.

Apprentice representatives are elected by the apprentice body in a democratic election. In the build up, those apprentices standing for election campaign using discussion forums, and distributing leaflets and posters to promote themselves and their ideas. On the designated Election Day, ATG staff set out the canteen as a polling station, complete with voting slips and a ballot box. Each apprentice can then cast their vote in privacy. When polling closes, the votes are counted and the results are displayed around the building. Those successfully elected are then invited to a preliminary meeting to decide who will be the Chairperson and the Secretary.

Following each meeting, the Secretary types up the minutes and displays them on the apprentice notice boards. When issues require input from all the apprentices, the elected members visit each workshop section and co-ordinate discussions to gain a fully representative opinion. This is then fed back to the entire Council at the next meeting.

ATG finds the Apprentice Council is an excellent way to involve and gain the buy-in of apprentices in relation to the decisions being made about their training programmes, environment and resources. It also encourages them to voice the opinions of others internal to ATG and come up with fundraising ideas in order to support and help those external to ATG. The apprentices find the Council is a useful forum to instigate change, and they value their involvement in the decision-making process.

The young person's voice should also be heard outside of school, college or training organisation in the local community. Some areas have set up youth forums to discuss local, national and international issues, and local government councils have consulted advisory panels to hear views on ways they can improve services for young people.

Youth across a county

Leicestershire Youth and Community Education Service covers the whole of the county of Leicestershire, excluding the city of Leicester. The county service is divided into three areas: north, west and south, and approximately 540,000 young people in the county attend youth centres each year. For some time, the youth service has been supporting the development of youth councils in seven district council areas across the county, and latterly has developed a cross-county youth council – the County Youth Council for Leicestershire (CYCLe). The seven youth councils meet once a month and discuss issues of importance to the young people, for example the operation of dispersal orders. The members have open access to the councils and often represent other young people from, for example, school councils. Their views are put to invited officers or councillors from the district councils.

Members of CYCLe are elected from the district youth councils, three or four from each, and there is representation on the council of young people from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities and those in care. All members of CYCLe have received training at residential meetings. The issues covered have included building confidence and self-esteem, working in a team, leadership, what citizenship is, the structure of the youth council, understanding local democratic bodies and working with councillors. At a second residential meeting, the group were involved in the drafting of a constitution to cover all aspects of the Council's work. Several sub-committees have been set up to work on specific aspects of the work of the Youth Council: publicity, the youth executive and the website.

Training is vital if young representatives are to carry out their role effectively. Young people are particularly well-placed to support and train their peers in setting up forums, to encourage all young people to take part in elections and to communicate their views to local decision-making bodies.

Youth promoting democracy

DAFBY (Democratic Action for B&NES Youth) is the youth democracy project for Bath & North East Somerset. It developed out of the Youth Democracy Project which started in 2000, and is a partnership between the Council and the Youth Service. The project is underpinned by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that young people have the right to be heard and have their opinions taken into account in decisions that affect them. It also supports the key aims of the Every Child Matters and Youth Matters initiatives, which emphasise the need for young people to be consulted in many more ways.

The core group in DAFBY is about 40 young people from across the authority. It acts as a representative body for young people aged 13–19 in Bath & North East Somerset. The council funds minibus transport, which enables all young people, including those with disabilities, to attend. DAFBY helps run the UK Youth Parliament elections held annually to elect the authority Member of Youth Parliament and works with organisations including the Connexions Service, the Local Strategic Partnership and other strategic planning groups. It also supports young people in a number of areas and organisations in setting up youth forums by providing training and advice using peer mentors. Some of the young people have organised and taken part in workshops and conferences on issues of interest to local young people.

'DAFBY has helped me realise I can get my views heard and that they will be valued.'
Mike, aged 17.

B *Activities focusing on specific issues*

It is sometimes more successful to adopt a model that is task-specific to meet a particular need. Young people's views can be collected through focus groups, individual, paired or group discussions, or through specially convened events[14]. For example, young people have been involved in running consultation events for their peers both within an organisation and across whole counties, with the young people themselves taking on the roles of speakers and facilitators. Such activities can prove to be relevant, motivating, engaging and fun.

Youth service consultation event

In Worcestershire, young people from Youthcomm, a local youth service project, regularly run consultation events for young people across the county on themes of particular relevance and interest to them. A recent consultation involved the National Youth Agency (NYA), which wanted to find out how well its 'Hear by Right' Standards were being applied locally. The standards provide organisations with guidelines about involving young people in decision-making at all levels. The event included electronic voting and drama workshops. Young people gave their scores on the extent to which local services were involving children and themselves, and the information was used in a report by a review panel of young people.

College consultation event

Merton College hosted a conference for students on the London Borough of Merton's Community Plan. The event had three aims: to inform students about plans to improve the borough, to enable them to voice their opinions and to help them identify ways in which they could participate in change. A small committee of students studying travel and tourism played a major part in planning and organising the conference, including setting the grounds rules for the event, putting the programme together, trouble-shooting on the day, producing and analysing the evaluation questionnaires and writing up the conference findings. The event included keynote speeches from officers responsible for the community plan and workshops dealing with major local issues, including crime, homelessness, drug misuse, economic regeneration and youth service provision. One student said: 'Before the conference, I didn't know what I could do about my local area. Now I do, and I feel motivated to take up the issue of local facilities with the Youth Forum and find out what can be done.' Students were asked to contribute their own opinions, and the work was followed up during the college tutorial programme. Students took photographs of aspects of different town centres that they would like to see in Merton. They sent these to the town planners and made proposals to be incorporated into the plans for a more environmentally friendly town centre.

Listening to learners about their programmes can sometimes involve a teacher reviewing his/her work with learners over a term to see what worked well and what did not and what could be changed to make lessons more engaging and effective. Some schools, as required by Ofsted, have developed strategies to collect information from pupils and students in order to improve teaching and learning.

Sixth form students' input into programme design

At Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, in Hertfordshire, the provisional citizenship curriculum for Years 12 and 13 is outlined at the beginning of the academic year. Staff and students discuss the aims of the programme, building on approaches to curriculum planning developed pre-16. Students are given the opportunity to clarify the rationale, agree the programme and put forward their own ideas, for example about what else needs to be included. Staff and students also discuss the opportunities available for 'active citizenship' beyond the formal curriculum and consider new ideas and initiatives. At the end of each term the students discuss the units of work they have covered in small groups of about six students, considering issues such as usefulness of units, suitability of materials or issues not covered. Students are used to evaluating the programme since this strategy is used from Year 7 onwards and they know that their feedback will influence the programme and help improve it. Groups give feedback to the whole group of about 20 students and to their link member of staff. The member of staff summarises the main points from the feedback, and this is passed to a senior member of staff responsible for curriculum planning. The staff involved in programme delivery work through the same process, and all of the data generated enables the programme planner to refine and develop the programme in the light of all of the feedback.

Focus groups can be used to gain young people's views on services provided for them by local authorities and others.

Total respect at Warwickshire College

At Warwickshire College, the Total Respect process has been piloted to provide feedback to providers of young people's service outside of the college. Developed by children's rights officers and advocates, Total Respect is a programme using a standardised method of discussion, aimed at enabling organisations to listen to and work with young people. The learners meet for one afternoon a week for four weeks, with a trained facilitator. Warwickshire County Council funded the pilot programme in order to gain feedback on its services for young people. Other themes that have been explored include advice and guidance, one-stop justice, and equality and diversity. During the pilot, the young people involved were users of county council services, some drawn from the E2E programme within the college and some referred from Connexions and Princes Trust groups. At the end of the period, the young people make a presentation at a showcase event to professionals from service-providing organisations, and then gain accreditation from OCN for being involved in the process.

C ***Collection of feedback from whole cohorts of learners***

Depending on the issue to be considered, approaches such as surveys and questionnaires, suggestion boxes, diaries, video-diaries, websites (online surveys, chat rooms and message boards), e-mail and text-messaging can reach a wider group of young people. Use of information and communication technologies is likely to engage young people. Chat rooms on organisational websites, while needing to be moderated, can be used as a way of finding out what learners really think about a whole range of issues. Satisfaction surveys can provide insights for an organisation. Learners in some organisations have themselves been involved as researchers feeding back on the quality and effectiveness of teaching through surveys.[15]

The Jitty website

As a development of the work of the cross-county youth council managed by Leicestershire Youth and Community Education Service, issues for discussion are being identified through questionnaires and the chat forum on the website. A sub-committee of CYCLe was initially allocated funding by the Chief Executive of the County Council to develop and maintain a website for young people in Leicestershire. Now also supported by the Youth Opportunities Fund, The Jitty (meaning a passageway or alley – **www.thejitty.com**) involves young people in the south area providing a service that the young people in Leicestershire can use and contribute to. It includes up-to-date information about the area, but also details of the youth council and national news items.

Using the virtual learning environment, Moodle, for peer mentoring

At Zenith Apprenticeships, in Warwickshire College, learners are given a voice through use of a message board. The E2E programme includes active citizenship projects, and these are carried out on two sites: Leamington and Rugby. Learners exchange views with each other, across the two sites, using a forum on the virtual learning environment, Moodle. Through peer mentoring, the activities are learner-led, and learners are supported with their projects. Staff moderate the forum and gain feedback from the learners on the citizenship programme.

Collecting apprentice feedback

Collecting information and feedback from apprentices has proved to be challenging for employers and the Sector Skills Councils. SEMTA, the Sector Skills Council for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies, has developed an on-line system for collecting trainee feedback across many different types of providers of apprenticeships. With the support of the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the DfES, **www.apprentice-feedback.com** has enabled trainees to complete a simple questionnaire on line at their place of work, following some face-to-face introductions to the facility as part of their normal training programme. Trainees complete the form and then send an email to their training officer requesting a follow-up. Responses are not anonymous since providers need to respond to criticism. However, providers have reported that trainees prefer this facility. One said: 'Trainees are probably more open and honest about their views using the online system. Even though our system has been anonymous in the past, the fact that questionnaires are filled in as a class activity made some trainees feel uneasy about airing their true feelings.'

(From *Listening to the work-based learner: unlocking the potential of apprentice feedback* John Berkeley, DfES 2005.)

Key messages on learner voice

There must be a genuine commitment from the senior managers in the organisation to listening to learners.

Organisations need to consider a range of ways in which young people's views can be heard. Information and communications technology should be considered.

Being listened to, and having a role in changing things in an organisation can be very motivating for young people, and may improve retention.

Young people need training if they are to represent their peers effectively. Other young people can help deliver this training.

Real efforts should be made to enable young people to participate, and not just those who are motivated and articulate.

Young people should be involved in decision-making at all levels. Their participation should not be confined to expressing their views on the more trivial issues.

All staff will need to support the listening ethos, and may benefit from training in how to work collaboratively with young people.

Young people should be encouraged to express their views on local and national issues, as well as on issues internal to the organisation.

Citizenship through learner voice and representation

Action plan for improving our learner/youth voice strategy

Using the 'Hear by Right' Standards[16], consider how you might improve your strategies for listening to young people under each of the headings below.

Critical success factor	Current practice	Action required
Young people's involvement is a visible commitment that is properly resourced • Commitment from senior managers is visible • Participation is built into planning, services, resources and communication • Staff have the opportunity to develop attitudes and skills needed		
Young people's involvement is valued • They are treated honestly and with respect and contributions are taken seriously • Feedback about their involvement is prompt and clear • Participation is rewarded and celebrated		
Young people have an equal opportunity to get involved • Their participation in making decisions that affect them is seen as a right • They all feel included and not discriminated against on any grounds at all • Extra effort is made to include young people facing extra barriers • Training and support are available for young people • Clear, jargon-free information is available for young people		
Policies and standards are in place and evaluated and monitored • The outcomes of participation are clear • Young people help evaluate and monitor the policy • There are agreed quality standards and code of conduct		

Background to post-16 citizenship

Citizenship has been a statutory subject at key stages 3 and 4 in secondary schools since 2002, following the recommendations of the first advisory group on Citizenship[17], chaired by Sir Bernard Crick. The report identified three inter-related components of citizenship:

• social and moral responsibility

• community involvement

• political literacy.

It also stressed that young people should be provided with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to take responsible action and to influence decisions. The Crick report explicitly recommended that young people participate in active citizenship, in which they engage in their communities and also gain knowledge and understanding. Active citizenship is defined by the National Foundation for Educational Research[18] as being when young people are 'given the opportunity to put their citizenship understanding and skills into practice and participate in a community or public context'.

Post-16 citizenship was the focus of a further advisory group chaired by Sir Bernard Crick[19], whose report recommended that:

• *an entitlement to the development of citizenship, of which participation should be a significant component, should be established which would apply to all students and trainees in the first phase of post-compulsory education and training*

• *all such young adults should have effective opportunities to participate in activities relevant to the development of their citizenship skills and to have their achievements recognised.*

The Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme was set up in 2001 at the request of the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment and in response to this report. The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA, now LSN) was given the responsibility for managing the programme on behalf of the DfES and, from April 2006, on behalf of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). The programme set up pilot projects across England to investigate the best ways to establish citizenship activities and to encourage young people to become effective citizens. Following the success of the Development Programme, QIA commissioned LSN from September 2006 to run the Support Programme for post-16 citizenship, accessible to all providers in England. The Support Programme is working with school sixth forms, sixth-form colleges, further education and tertiary colleges, training providers, employers, youth services, voluntary groups and offender educators. Its aim is to encourage providers of education and training, whatever their setting, to enable young learners to develop their citizenship knowledge, skills and understanding, and give them the opportunities to put this learning into practice.

Citizenship and wider policy development

Since 2001, citizenship has become increasingly important on many Government agendas and commands broad political support. It is recognised that giving all members of our society, including young people, a stake in their communities and an opportunity to voice their views, makes for better community relations, more stable neighbourhoods and more engaged citizens.

There are a wide range of current educational initiatives which impact on citizenship:

- The 14–19 White Paper made a renewed commitment to citizenship in the national curriculum and stressed the importance of active citizenship for the whole 14–19 age group: *'We need to be confident that everyone leaving education is equipped to be an informed, responsible, active citizen. In an ever more complex, interdependent world, where an engaged population is crucial to the health of our society, we continue to put citizenship at its heart too.'* (14–19 White Paper, DfES, February 2005).

- The 14–19 Diplomas, of which the first five lines of learning will be available in 2008, provide opportunities for citizenship through the extended projects and the proposed six personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS). These include 'effective participator', which focuses on *'young people actively engaging with issues that affect them and those around them. They play a full part in the life of their school, college, workplace or wider community by taking responsible action to bring improvements for others as well as themselves.'*

- QCA and LSC are working on a strategy to bring coherence to the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT), in order to rationalise the units and qualifications available at Entry and level 1. Provision within the FLT will consist of three strands: subject-based and vocational learning; personal and social development; and skills for life and work. A set of design principles for qualifications will be published which all qualifications aimed at supporting programmes within FLT will have to meet.

- *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19, influences all provision. The Government's aim is for every child and young person, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being. Children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively, and inspectors will listen to their views.

- *Youth Matters*, a Government Green Paper launched in July 2005, set out proposals designed to improve outcomes for 13–19-year-olds. It proposed that young people should have:

  - More things to do and places to go in their local area – and more choice and influence over what is available

  - More opportunities to volunteer and to make a contribution to their local community

  - Better information, advice and guidance about issues that matter to them, delivered in the way they want to receive it

  - Better support when they need extra help to deal with problems.

The aim is to empower young people to shape their local services, involving them in local decision making and providing opportunities for them to give something back to their communities. The Government said: *'We know that when young people participate in decisions affecting their learning and social experience they are more likely to achieve and become active citizens.'* (**www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters**). The Youth Opportunities Fund has been set up to provide resources (£31 million) for young people to become more involved in their communities.

- Personalised learning and learner voice, are central tenets of the FE White Paper, 'Raising Skills, Increasing Life Chances'.[20] This makes proposals for colleges, and other providers of further education and training, to *'put the learner at the heart of the learning experience'* by making improvements in advice, guidance, quality of teaching/training, pastoral support and, crucially, provision for enabling students to have their say in influencing and driving up the quality of provision available. A key recommendation arising from the *Foster Review*[21] is that all providers of further education and training should, by September 2007, have a learner involvement strategy, which is published and monitored. Personalised learning requires providers to listen to young people about how they learn best, what does and does not work for them, and to invite learners to 'co-design' the curriculum. The Gilbert report[22] brings schools into the same arena. The report recommends that Ofsted should provide clearer guidance on the expectation that schools' self-evaluation should draw on pupils' feedback, specifically on learning and teaching. The report suggests ways in which pupils could be actively engaged in shaping teaching and learning:

  - using pupils as learning resources for one another
  - inviting pupils to work with teachers in curriculum teams to review schemes of work
  - asking pupils to provide feedback on particular lessons
  - conducting regular surveys on the quality of the school experience, and
  - involving pupils in the selection process for new staff.

- A curriculum review that is taking place for key stages 3 and 4, to be followed by additional qualifications in Citizenship Studies being available from awarding bodies. Currently there are plans for a full GCSE in Citizenship Studies, in addition to the existing short course, and new A/AS level qualifications in Citizenship Studies (from 2008/9). The importance of education for diversity within the school curriculum has been emphasised by Sir Keith Ajegbo, in his curriculum review, *Diversity and Citizenship*[23]. The vision underpinning the report is *'in five years, for all schools to be actively engaged in nurturing in pupils the skills to participate in an active and inclusive democracy, appreciating and understanding difference.'*

Notes

1 Based closely on the '7 approaches' identified in the Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme, 2001–2006, and cited in *Play your part: post-16 citizenship*, QCA, 2004

2 *Getting started with post-16 citizenship*, LSN, 2006

3 *Play your part: post-16 citizenship*, QCA, 2004

4 *Taking Post-16 Citizenship Forward: Learning from the Post-16 Citizenship Development projects*, NFER, HMSO, 2004

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6 *Listening to the work-based learner: unlocking the potential of apprentice feedback*, John Berkeley, DfES, 2005

7 www.ofsted.gov.uk

8 'Raising Skills, Increasing Life Chances', DfES, March 2006, arising out of the Foster review of FE

9 'Raising Skills, Increasing Life Chances', DfES, March 2006, arising out of the Foster review of FE Chapter 3.12

10 *Research on democratic schools*, Derry Hannam, **www.educationrevolution.org/derhanrep.html**

11 From the Foreword to 'Developing a Learner Involvement Strategy: A Handbook for the Further Education Sector' (for review), LSC, 2007

12 See *For the sake of argument: discussion and debating skills in citizenship*, LSN, 2006, available from **www.post16citizenship.org**

13 *'Hear by Right'* Bill Badham and Harry Wade, NYA/LGA, 2005

14 See *Getting the show on the road: Skills for planning and running citizenship event*, available from LSN on **www.post16citizenship.org**

15 Consulting Young People in Schools, Jean Rudduck and Julia Flutter, ESRC Project, *Consulting Pupils About Teaching and Learning*, **www.consultingpupils.co.uk**

16 Adapted from the standards. See **www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright**

17 *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools*, DfEE/QCA, 1998

18 *Taking Post-16 citizenship Forward: Learning from the Post-16 Citizenship Development Projects*, NFER, Report RR604, 2004 (p.iv)

19 Citizenship for 16–19 year olds in education and training: report of the Advisory Group to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, DfEE/FEFC, 2000

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22 2020 Vision – Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group chaired by Christine Gilbert, DfES, December 2006, PPOAK/D16/1206/53

23 *Diversity and Citizenship*, Sir Keith Ajegbo, Dr. Dina Kiwan and Seema Sharma, DfES, January 2007, PPSLS/D35/0107/14

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