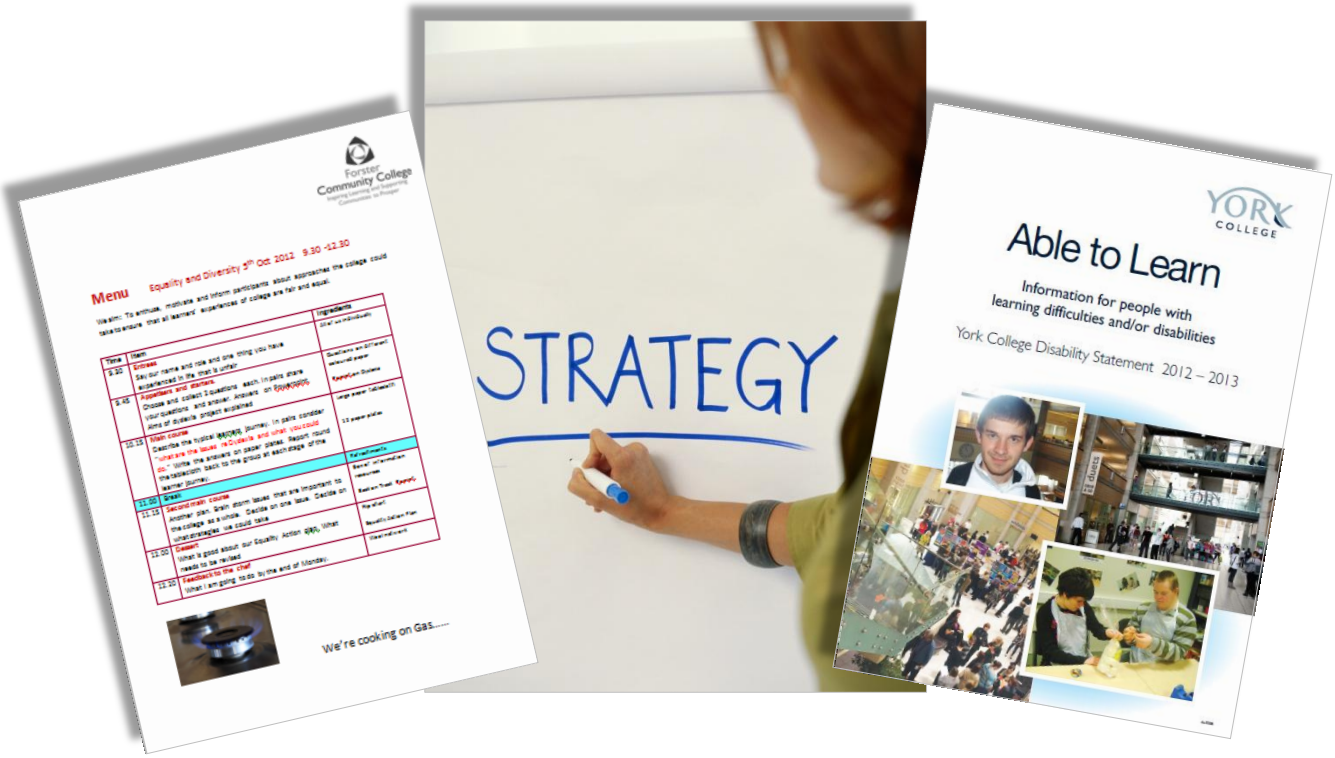
Peer Review Project 2013:

A whole organisation approach to dyslexia



Project outline:	**Develop ways to ensure providing for the needs of learners with dyslexia becomes a whole organisation issue**
Lead partner:	Forster Community College
Other partners:	York College, Harrogate College (part of Hull College Group)
Project category:	Equality and Leadership and Management

Summary of outcomes:

- All staff better informed about dyslexia
- Blockage points pinpointed in the process of implementation of policy to practice
- Audio recordings made by teachers and learning support workers of the views of learners with dyslexia

Forster Community College
Inspiring Learning and Supporting Communities to Prosper

Harrogate College
Part of the Hull College Group

YORK COLLEGE

Email equality@pinnacletrainingsolutions.co.uk Web www.equalitynetwork.co.uk

Outcomes in detail:

1. All staff better informed about dyslexia

All three colleges held internal meetings attended by managers and learning support staff to discuss dyslexia issues. For some colleges this formed a routine part of their annual round of quality improvement meetings. A questionnaire focusing on dyslexia knowledge and the management of processes in the learner journey was designed and distributed to all staff at the three partner colleges. Each college is writing up their own version of the report using these shared figures to inform their own internal quality improvement.

2. Blockage points pinpointed in the process of implementation of policy to practice

'Pinchpoints' identified at some colleges were the points where a learner's dyslexia was identified at a screening test and the point where information about dyslexia and the various learning resources needed was passed to separate departments - this may have been due to a proliferation of different forms in use.

3. Audio recordings made by teachers and learning support workers of the views of learners with dyslexia

Audio recordings of the views of several learners with dyslexia have been made and transcribed and permission given so that these could be used in training teachers and in improving quality.

How will this work improve provider practice in the future?

Carrying out a practical research project like this raises the issue of dyslexia in an effective way. For each person who took part in a project planning meeting, completed a questionnaire or made an audio recording new knowledge was acquired and a new awareness learned.

All three colleges found that the practical task of making audio recordings of evidence was not a regular part of college assessments and so this required extra organisation to achieve effectively. The focus on written assessment may not be always be necessary or useful for learners with dyslexia. Forster Community College, for example, have made a decision to carry out more audio recorded assessment in work-based learning and plans to buy digital audio recorders to enable this to happen more easily. Harrogate College will raise this in their final report.

One college has enabled their specialist dyslexia tutor to participate in their newly formed professional Learning Communities and are promoting strategies to embed good practice into the curriculum delivery.

We identified there was a need to train these teachers and assessors who use audio recorders in the following :-

1. How to use the technical functions on the digital recorders (this was provided by a member of the Learning Support team at one college)

2. How to put learners at their ease before carrying out the recording

3. How to allow and encourage the learners to rehearse their comments before the recording takes place

4. How to transcribe audio recordings for the purpose of carrying out research or to analyse functional skills issues in speaking and listening

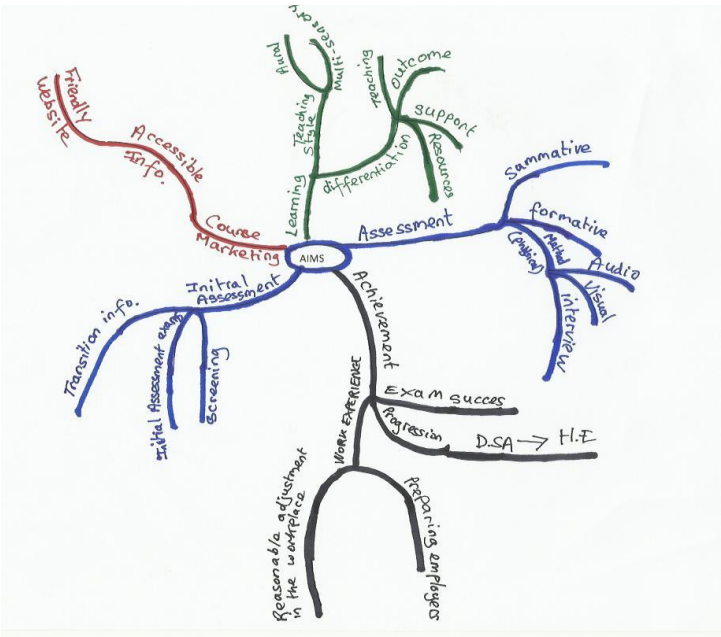
Forster Community College will use more audio assessments

How has partnership working enhanced this project?

At the first partnership meeting we each described pen portraits of our colleges including baseline figures of staff and learner numbers. We then discussed issues encompassed in a whole organisation approach to dyslexia on a mind map (below).

We shared internal college practices when working with learners with dyslexia (e.g. York College shared their information handbook, 'Able to Learn'. Harrogate College shared resources (e.g. details on a paper on working memory) and Forster Community College shared the learning resources used in their first awareness session (download the menu).

It has been an eye-opener for partners to see the widely differing examples of practice and issues in other colleges. For example, identifying and labelling learners with dyslexia causes gates to open for them to access learning resources but can also have an opposite effect. At one college some learners had previously been told or believed they had dyslexia and yet did not disclose this at enrolment because of a lack of confidence. Another college had the opposite experience as they described some learners who declared that they had dyslexia when in fact, after detailed testing, it appeared they just had poor reading skills.



The partnership used a mind-map exercise to good effect

Key learning, tips and messages:

- Do not assume that the more resources you have the better the service you are providing – you have to be sure that these are the right resources, that teachers and other staff know how to use them and that they are easy to access and use
- Look out for information overload for teaching staff as this can be counter-productive. The colleges varied widely in the number and type of documents provided and forms to be completed
- The most effective approach we found for improving practice was face-to-face communication and support in confidence building
- Do not assume dyslexia is just an issue for learners. There will also be staff members that have dyslexia
- There may be hidden resources in cupboards or amongst your human resource that you are unaware of. For example, at one College there was no specialist Level 7 qualified practitioner available in-house. There was, however, a high level of awareness of the particular learning needs as some of the teachers had dyslexia themselves

Other information:

Downloads:

Staff questionnaire Able to learn booklet Menu

All the colleges had examples of good practice to share as well as difficulties they were currently challenging e.g. it was felt good practice that York College holds meetings on a regular basis attended by managers and learning support staff to discuss dyslexia issues and includes dyslexia training in the annual July staff training week. York College also had the advantage of a diagnostic process lead by a specialist Learning Support Tutor which enabled them to provide information about diagnosed dyslexia up to six months before the start of the academic year.

Project contact sandra.rennie@forster.ac.uk
Lead website http://www.forster.ac.uk/

Potential work extension:

- Investigate the kinds of support provided for college staff with dyslexia
- Targeted dyslexia awareness raising with a follow-up survey to compare results with original survey