



## **LEARNER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY**

**South Nottingham College is committed to involving learners in its strategic decision-making and operational management processes**

**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 increasing student success. The College also believes that learners have key roles to play in self-assessment, self-improvement and policy-making procedures.**

**This Learner Involvement Policy and Strategy is enabled by facilitating student input via the decision-making processes of the College.**

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## **1 Aims & Objectives**

- 1.1 South Nottingham College and its Corporation firmly believe that embracing learner views and offering structured opportunities 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, increasing student success and developing our students as effective citizens in the wider community.
- 1.2 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 mechanisms of involvement detailed in this document.
- 1.3 At all levels in the College, there is a commitment to provide the appropriate resources to enable and encourage these mechanisms to work. This takes a number of forms – providing funding for additional curriculum/enrichment activity to be identified and allocated by Student Council, direct staff support, resources in kind in the form of accommodation and office costs, time off for student representative activities, and a wider staff development commitment to support, develop and embed learners in all decision making and evaluation procedures in the College.

## **2 The College imperative to involve learners**

### **2.1 From Self Assessment to Self Improvement**

The Learner Involvement Strategy has a vital role within the Self Improvement Process, validating this institution's commitment to the idea, processes and practices of authentic self regulation.

### **2.2 Triangulation**

This will be at all levels of involvement e.g. student focus groups, student surveys, parent/guardian surveys.

### **2.3 Peer Review**

South Nottingham College will undertake working with other partner colleges e.g. through the peer review group and through the NAMSS network (National Association of Managers of Student Services).

### **2.4 Inspection**

Recent legislation introduced the need for OfSTED to inspect involvement of students within a college, primarily through the Learner Involvement Strategy. *Legal and Procedural Obligations*

The College has a number of legal obligations under the Education Act 1994 and the Children's Act 2002. The Corporation will always consult on major changes in the learning environment and annually on the Learner Involvement Strategy.

The Corporation also has a number of responsibilities regarding any student body representing students under the 1994 Education Act. This process is considerably easier to complete when a college has a well developed organisation of students that it can 'call in' to be involved in consultations. The creation and ongoing maintenance of the organisation is facilitated by this Learner Involvement Strategy.

## **2.5 Importance of students to the institution**

The Learner Involvement Strategy enables students to be more than merely consulted. We will maximise student commitment to the institution at all levels.

# **3 Principles of Involvement**

## **3.1 From Consultation to Initiation**

The need to consult with learners will be the minimum starting point for this policy. At all levels we will work to build a college organisational culture where learners, both individually and collectively, take personal and collective responsibility for their own input and feedback into college decision-making and processes. This will involve the continued development of the Student Council and associated activities. This will be communicated to the students before they enrol at induction and during induction itself.

## **3.2 Democracy and Citizenship**

At induction participation in Learner Involvement will be seen as a key opportunity for students to participate in Active Citizenship and ECM (Every Child Matters) activities. The election process from classroom to College Corporation supports the creation of a student-led community. This will be underpinned by support and encouragement from designated college staff.

## **3.3 Ownership and Autonomy**

Student Services will work towards students contributing to the agenda. We will provide independent support, if necessary, to enable students to participate in these meetings.

## **3.4 Recognising learners are different**

Through the Youth Workers, Student Services will work with students and their representative structures to create an equality of opportunity to participate in college learner involvement processes. This strategy will create a number of different actions designed to ensure the participation of all learners in a college community which will take account of different learners at all levels including students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Both the college and its student organisation will work towards the principle that students will not be financially disadvantaged for their participation in learner involvement.

### **3.5 Appropriate funding and support**

At all levels the College is committed to providing appropriate resources to enable and encourage these mechanisms to work. This will take a number of forms – funding to the Student Council, direct staff support, resources in kind in the form of accommodation and office costs, time off for student representative activities, and a wider staff development commitment to developing and embedding learners in all decision making, evaluation and quality improvement measures in the College. Students will have access to training and support.

### **3.6 Supporting students to succeed**

This College will work with learners to enhance the role of the Student Council and related structures that continue to succeed. This involves developing systems that can keep students accountable through comprehensive course representation and systems that encourage good governance.

## **4 Mechanisms of Involvement**

### **4.1 Students' Council**

We have developed a self-determined and governed community through the incorporation of the Student Council. The Student Council, under the auspices of the 1994 Education Act, will be an enterprise that is enabled to become a learning organisation, transferring the experience gained from generation to generation of those involved. Students can participate in the following ways within this self-determining community.

### **4.2 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 Council. Course Representatives comprise the membership of the Student Council, which meets at least six times each year, twice in the first term and at least once in each subsequent term. The Deputy Principal chairs the meeting and other members of the Senior Management Team (Director of Quality and Director of Finance & Estates) attend. Youth Workers promote the opportunity and if necessary run elections for the positions.

### **4.3 Student Governors**

Elected by the Student Council, these two positions provide the learner voice on the Corporation, the Student Council and other formal or informal channels, taking them into account in their role. They may also be involved in other management forums.

## **5 Supporting Learners to represent themselves**

Some learners will need support to represent themselves and others in the processes outlined above. This support could range from administrative and financial support to enabling learners to represent themselves through training. All Student Council members receive training and support.

### **5.1 Support for students at meetings**

The Youth Workers and the College support students to participate fully in meetings.

### **5.2 Helping students to be involved through training**

We believe that learners participate more effectively, making better contributions, if they receive training in the roles outlined previously. We will therefore:

- Provide training for tutor group representatives so they can fully participate in course reviews and student councils and are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities in and to the College
- For students elected on to the Student Council and the Corporation, provide the training necessary to enable their full participation

### **5.3 Student space**

We will provide an opportunity for students to meet other students about a range of issues relevant to their own education and their educational experience. We could also provide private space for the confidential discussion of complaints and improvement of the learning environment. This space could be used as a resource for course reps trying to improve their learning environment, with access to photocopying, email, advice and IT facilities.

### **5.4 Supporting students with staff**

A culture where all staff recognise the importance of the learner voice will be fostered in the College through leadership, management and learning activity. Lecturing staff in particular will have a core duty to actively engage with learners as co-producers of their education, utilising learner feedback from student satisfaction surveys and responding with action plans which are monitored by the Excellence Team to address any issues raised.

### **5.5 Supporting students to represent themselves outside the College**

Some of the decisions affecting a student's learning experience are made outside the college community by Government, the Learning and Skills Council, Children's Services, public transport operators, the National Union of Students, Connexions and others. The Student Council will, with the collective consent of learners, normally affiliate to the National Union of Students (NUS). All learners will be encouraged to participate in its structure and in those of other bodies that directly represent students. The college will enable students to influence and participate in these through assisting students with the necessary consent, travel and health and safety procedures.

## **5.6 Rewarding and remunerating students for participating**

The College will reward students for participating in a number of ways. These could range from payment of an allowance to a commitment that no student will be financially disadvantaged due to their participation.

## **6 College-led forms of involvement**

The College will continue to engage students in a number of ways through its own processes e.g. Equality & Diversity, Estates Planning and Quality.

### **6.1 Course Review and Evaluation**

Learners are involved in the evaluation of their course through Curriculum Team Managers, Course Leaders and teaching staff. This process feeds into the College's annual course review and evaluation process. There is an agenda item at each of these meetings to gather student input.

### **6.2 Support of Teaching and Learning: Student-centred input**

The College intends to involve learners by involving them in the appointment process.

### **6.3 Student Survey**

The college-wide Student Survey is distributed to all students and the results disseminated. Action plans are devised and monitored through quality processes, which involve student representation. Student representation for course assessment will be reviewed.

### **6.4 College Committees**

The College will work towards committees having a student voice agenda item at the beginning of each meeting. Appropriately elected learners have full positions on relevant committees in the College and are already invited on Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety Committees.

### **6.5 Staff Training**

The College includes our Learner Involvement Strategy as an intrinsic part of staff induction and continuing professional development (CPD).

## **7 Review of the Learner Involvement Strategy**

### **7.1 Through Student Council**

The Learner Involvement Strategy will be introduced and reviewed annually at both Student Council and Student Success Committee.

## **7.2 Impact of Learner Involvement Strategy**

In the preparation, operation or amendment of the Learner Involvement Strategy, the College will also consider its impact on any other College procedures, the Instrument and Articles of College Governance and Corporation Standing Orders. If these require changes, the Clerk will draft alterations for consideration by the College Corporation.