



West Midlands Education Innovation and Notable Practice

**INVOLVING VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN HEALTH CARE EDUCATION:
LESSONS FROM PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

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COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

Overview: A number of different people with learning disabilities and third sector organisations have been engaged in a range of educational activities over the last 5 years at Coventry University. Following consultation with people with learning disabilities, managers and commissioners between January-May 2005, the SHA (West Midlands) decided to commission the most recent Learning Disability Nursing programme at Coventry University. Since this time, the course team have involved individuals with learning disabilities and local advocacy organisations in marketing and recruitment activities, assessment, evaluation and a range of different teaching and learning activities.

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The learning disability nursing course team believe that teaching and learning for all health and social care professionals can be enhanced by the involvement of people with learning disabilities. The following comments reflect this:

I think it is very important that adults with learning disabilities do things like this so that students can get good ideas when they become professionals... they will have a good idea of what it is like to have a learning disability (H Team member).

They (students) do not understand they need to learn about these things... They are not interested... they perhaps don't know what they need to know about team-working... Students can be too busy, they have other commitments. They might think that they have too many other topics to know about (H Team member).



All future health and social care practitioners can learn from the experience of people with learning disabilities, gaining an appreciation of social disadvantage and improving individual communication styles.

The H Team are trainers with learning disabilities who educate different students and mainstream health care staff. They are housed within Grapevine a charitable organisation. New Ideas are a charitable based advocacy organisation. Turning Point is a national charity providing assistance to people with mental health, substance abuse and people with learning disabilities.

We involved people with learning disabilities in designing the programme, marketing and recruitment, teaching and learning via three sequential modular activities, assessment through posters and feedback through simulation and workshops.

Never underestimate the amount of extra preparation time involved in including this group of people in educational activities. The course team have been undertaking these activities for the last 5 years.

Enhanced learning experience for students:

I know in the first year the H Team came in and having come from a background of not a lot of experience of learning disability, to hear you guys and meet you personally was good...listening to you was a good introduction...hearing you on relaxed friendly basis and on a personal level. (3rd year learning disability nursing student)

Raised self esteem for people with learning disabilities

It has been an interesting experience, hearing what students think and talking about team-working...I have enjoyed being part of this, it felt good about sharing and showing my experience of teams (Individual with learning disabilities).

Embeds the voice of a vulnerable user group into an educational curriculum and encourages other professional programmes of practice to learn from vulnerable populations. Important to ensure a clear payment strategy and only involve staff and people willing and able to take part.