The best ways to engage **learners** in the inspection process

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Overview

1. Learners and inspection
2. How to get learners positively involved
3. Benefits
4. Summary

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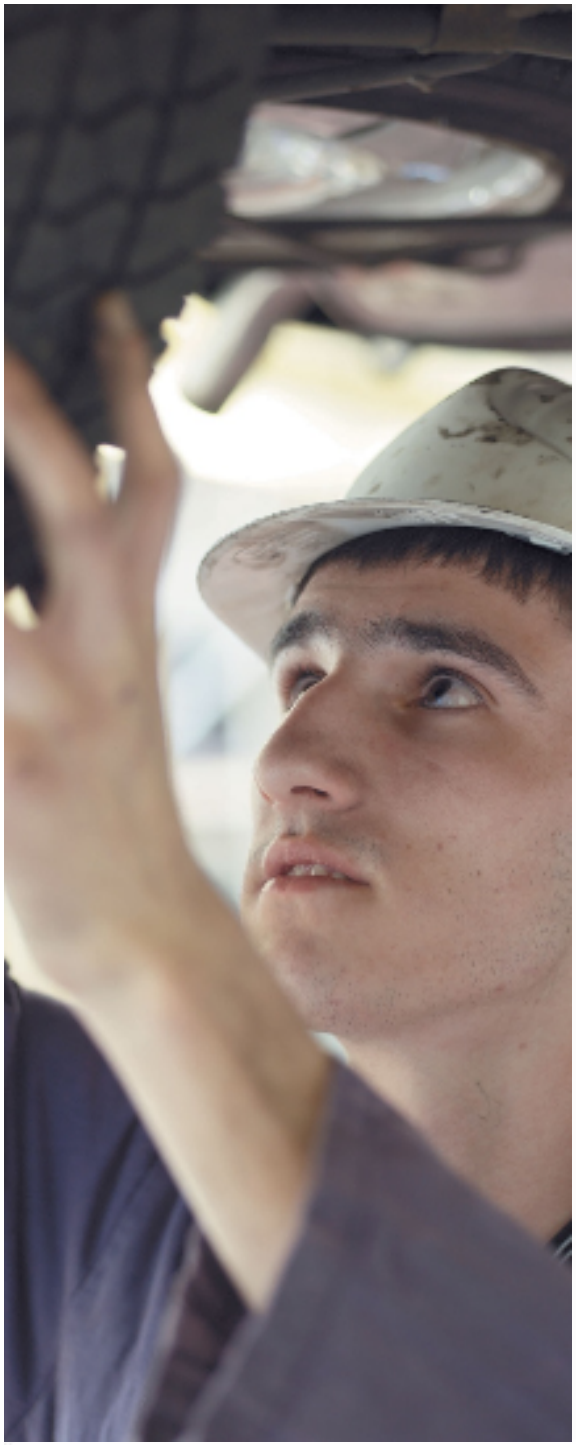

Learner involvement

– What the handbook says

In providers with identified learner representatives, the lead inspector will discuss with them arrangements to :

- Inform learners about the inspection and seek any key issues from their perspective
- Collect learner views using a variety of methods

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Learner involvement

– What the handbook says

Inspectors will evaluate:

- Implementation and monitoring of an effective Learner Involvement strategy
- How effectively learner views are sought and acted upon
- Promotion of external partnerships to meet the needs of learners

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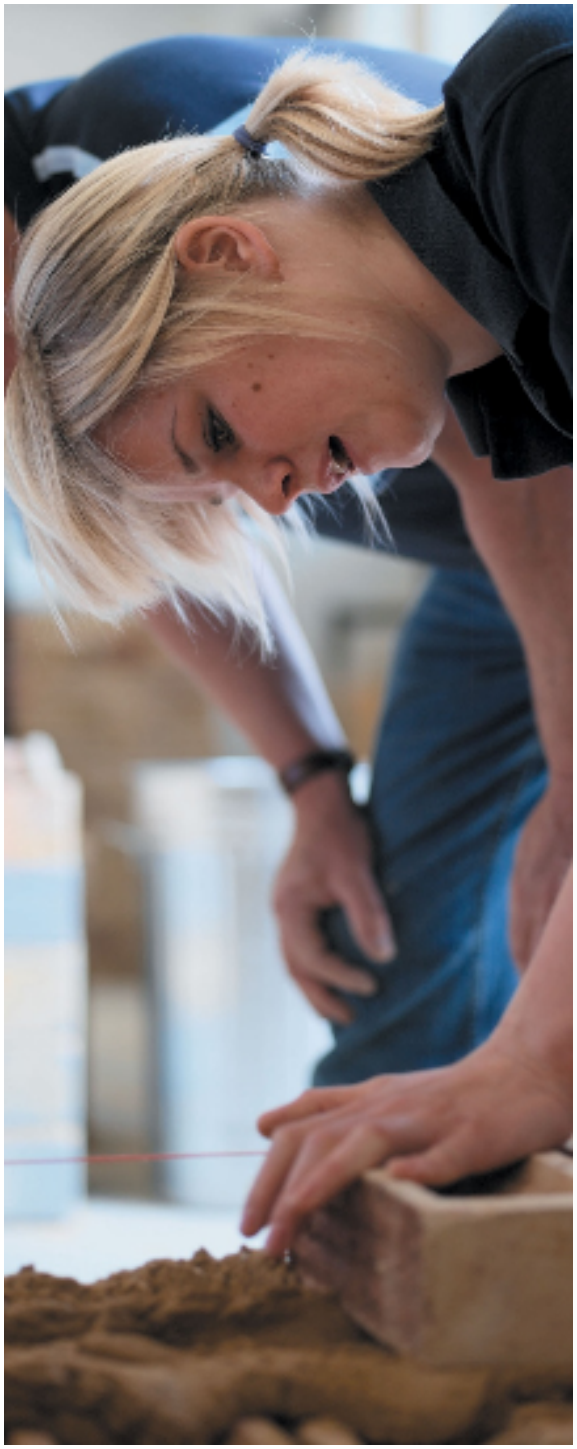

Typical learner involvement

Primary research

Observations

Focus groups

Corridor conversations

Interviews – face to face or over the phone

Ofsted requests for feedback

Secondary research

Surveys

Complaints

OTL records

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Why get students positively involved?

- They are often positive advocates
- It is their college!
- It gives them a sense of pride and ownership
- It provides an opportunity to showcase their work
- It can help direct resources to where they are most needed

It should be a continuation of existing learner involvement activities…

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How to get learners positively involved

1. Get the ground work right (Strategy and Action Plan)
2. Create a sense of ownership and pride
3. Maintain good communication
4. Provide support, reassurance

The majority of the work should be done long before any notice of inspection…..

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1. Get the ground work right

- Student governors
- Voice of the learner forum
- Surveys and focus groups
- Course representation
- Complaints and feedback procedures
- Involvement in observations
- Personal tutors
- Involvement in staff recruitment

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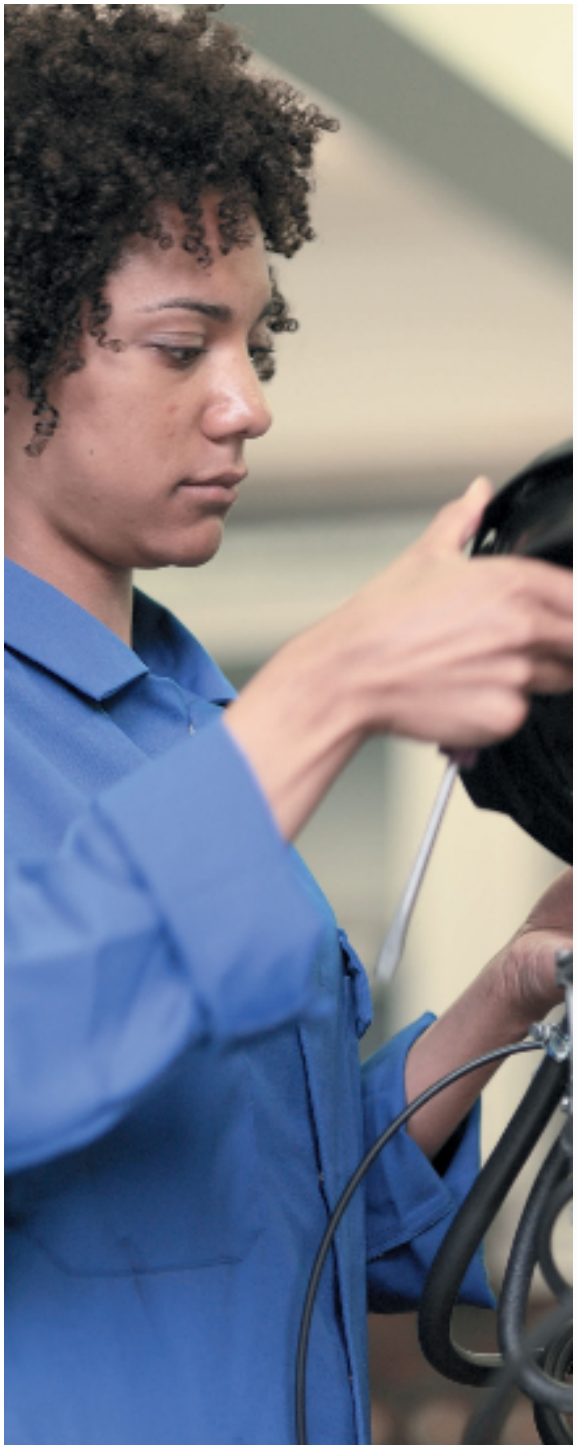

2. Create a sense of ownership and pride

- Raising aspirations
- Being part of something which is successful
- Creating a feeling of belonging – within curriculum areas and in the college
- Pride in the results achieved – need communicating

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3. Maintain good communication

Student newsletters
Principal's blog
Facebook
Twitter
Voice of the Learner Forum
Student Governors
Notice boards
Accessible senior staff
Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
Student email accounts
Text messaging
Web site

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4. Provide support for learners

- Induction and mentoring for student governors
- Advocacy skills training for student representatives
- Support through voluntary organisations
- Briefings
- Ensure students are accustomed to giving feedback

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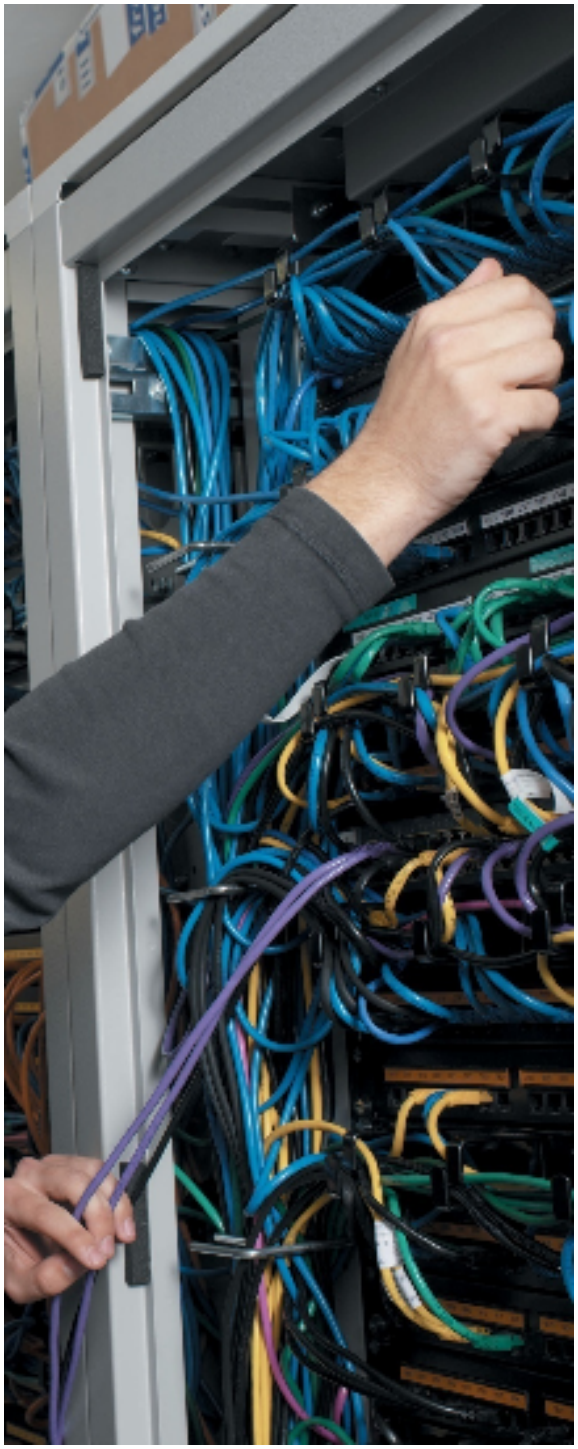

When notice of inspection is received…

- Inform learners of inspection – utilise existing methods
- Explain what happens during an observation – reassure
- Provide background briefings and de-briefings for learners involved in focus groups
- If you have identified learner representatives, they may need specific support
- Maintain a sense of calm!

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Benefits

- Students are your best allies (and critics!)
- Improved outcomes for learners
- Improved inspection results
- Sense of pride and ownership within student body
- Assist with continuous improvement
- They (usually) know best

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Conclusions

1. Students have a right to be heard

2. Student views can have a positive influence – both on organisational development and inspection

3. Self regulation – greater accountability to clients

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A parting thought…

Rather than the
"Big Society"
maybe we should be
thinking about the
"Big College"!

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