LSIS Learner Voice Conference

Drama – Brian Kokoruwe

“A CUT TOO FAR!”

SCENE 1 – PRE-ENROLMENT

At the start of the play, the stage is set to resemble a typical pre-enrolment day at a college. There are various notice boards on display and a desk with college prospectuses and course information/application forms. A couple of students are milling about, chatting to one another as they leaf through the course information.

VOICEOVER: Making informed choices is one of the biggest hurdles facing deaf learners today. After spending most of their school lives in a Partially Hearing Unit or a Deaf School, accessible information on the wider educational community is limited, leaving deaf learners at a loss when it comes to starting Further Education. School Careers advisors will often point deaf learners in the direction of an educational establishment that already has established Deaf Support Unit (team) with full communication support facilities. However these establishments may not offer the course of their choice.

Identifying accessible colleges is not an easy task. Many visits are needed to various colleges, but this may create further confusion to the deaf learner whose first language is BSL as they navigate a minefield of college prospectuses and course literature. Barriers become evident as early as Enrolment day, when deaf students may struggle to access the same level of information and services as their peers.

Charlie’s story is typical of the experience of many deaf students in mainstream educational establishments.

Pre-enrolment

CHARLIE: [Walks onto the stage and picks some leaflets/application form off the desk. Turns it around in his hands a few times, evidently not understanding it. He puts it down and picks another one up, again not understanding it. He slings it back onto the desk in frustration. He looks up, registering the notice boards and runs a finger down the text. Then he turns away looking downcast and sick of the barriers
he is facing He notices a member of staff and hesitantly approaches them]. (In BSL)
Have you got an interpreter?

STAFF MEMBER: [Initially looks alarmed. Then over enunciating his words speaks.]
How can I help you?

CHARLIE: [Furrows his eyes, evidently not understanding]. (In BSL) Interpreter, where?

STAFF MEMBER: [Laughs uncomfortably. Looks around for someone to help him, there is nobody. He hands a form and a prospectus to the student. Speaks again in an over exaggerated manner.] Fill this in and send it back to us when you have chosen a course.

CHARLIE: [Obviously not understanding looks at the form and goes to talk further to the staff member.] (In BSL) I don't understand.

STAFF MEMBER: [Continues to nod and smile patronisingly. Mimes filling in a form to student and turns away to commence a conversation with another person.]

CHARLIE: [Looks at the man in disbelief of his rudeness and then turns to face the audience. He looks at the application form that has been given to him and shrugs, not understanding it. He traces a finger down each side of the form as if looking for something.] (In BSL To Self) There’s no two tick symbol. [He walks very slowly, head facing down with drop-down shoulders toward the Exit Door].

CHARLIE: [Sitting at bus stop outside college looking very fed up]
Enter Deaf Friend.

DEAF FRIEND: [Walking past bus stop when he sees Charlie makes a beeline for him]. (In BSL) Hi. What’s up? What’s that you got with you? [Pointing at the booklets and papers Charlie is holding]. What you got with you? [He repeats.]

CHARLIE: (In BSL) Perfect College brochures. I would like to find out more about Perfect College.

DEAF FRIEND: (In BSL) Which course would you like to do?

CHARLIE: (In BSL) Science. I don’t understand this brochure. I will take to my school tutor tomorrow so that they can translate it for me.

DEAF FRIEND: (In BSL) Let me look at it. [Scans page on Science Courses] Oh god! They want you have GCSE English A to C grade to enrol.
CHARLIE: (In BSL) English??? But my language is BSL and I don’t know if I can achieve this. I am good at Science and I would love to work with computers in the future.

DEAF FRIEND: (In BSL) You text them tomorrow to explain this after you have spoken to your tutor. What is their mobile number?

CHARLIE: [looks quickly through brochure] (In BSL) Oh no! They have no mobile phone number for me to text them…and no minicom number either. I will try email them, but my English not good. I ask tutor ring them. See you later.

[They shake hands and walk away in opposite directions. Deaf student, angry and disappointed, walks away looking at the ground.]

SCENE 2 – IN THE CLASSROOM

The scene is set out as a classroom with a few chairs and desks in place. A group of students stand together chatting at the side of the stage.

VOICEOVER: For many deaf students, the first day in the classroom can be a nightmare. Tutors are often unprepared for a deaf student in their classes, due to a breakdown in communication between admissions and teaching staff. A lack of deaf and disability awareness means that tutors are not always fully prepared to deal with multi disability learners in the classroom. Even more challenging is how to communicate with deaf learners. Deafness is an invisible disability and so the tutor might not realise the learner has hearing difficulties, creating problems initially.

CHARLIE: [Enters stage from the side, hesitantly poking his head in first as if looking around the side of a door, looks at his timetable and goes to the nearest student, tapping them on the shoulder and pointing at the timetable slot on the piece of paper to confirm he in the right place. The student nods affirmatively and returns to their conversation. The deaf student stands alone at the side of the group. Suddenly the tutor walks in and the students walk to their desks, with the deaf student being a bit slower as he hasn’t heard the tutor arrive. He sits in the front corner and looks around expectantly for an interpreter.]

TUTOR: Good morning all. Welcome to Perfect College. This subject is Introduction to Basic Science, Level 2. Now I will do the registration. Raise your hand please when you hear your name so that I know who you are. [Tutor looks up at the learners] Jo?

Jo: [Raises hand up - ]
TUTOR: [Looks up] Ethan? [Raises hand up]

HABIB: [Looks up] Habib [Raises hand up]

TUTOR: [Looks up] John?

JOHN: [Raises hand up]

TUTOR: [Looks up] Lisa?

LISA: [Raises hand up]

TUTOR: [Looks up] Charlie?

CHARLIE: [no response]

TUTOR: [Still looking up and around the classroom] Charlie? [louder] Charlie? [louder now looking at the last boy in the room] Charlie?

CHARLIE: [Looks around the room, everyone looking at him and he focuses on lip-reading the tutor more]

TUTOR: [Raises voices as she at every learner in the room] Charlie?

CHARLIE: [Raises hand]

The tutor and fellow students look puzzled at Charlie’s delay in responding. A couple of the other students look at each other and snigger.

TUTOR: [pacing up and down the front of the classroom] Let us start today’s class. I will give you a quick introduction to the course and the topics that we will cover. [The tutor turns to face the board and begins writing on it whilst talking.]

As the tutor talks, the students take notes, except for Charlie who is obviously unable to lip-read.

CHARLIE: [Looks around in frustration, trying to see if he has missed the interpreter somewhere. He raises his hand but the tutor carries on talking while facing the board. After a minute or so, Charlie puts his hand down and looks at his watch. As the tutor continues to talk to the board, Charlie wrings his pencil in frustration until it finally snaps.]

TUTOR: [Turning to face the class.] And that’s what we will be doing this term. You will also have homework every week. We will leave it there for today.

All students get up and leave the classroom, chatting to each other. Charlie remains seated.
TUTOR: You may leave now Charlie.

CHARLIE: [Gets up out of his chair and walks towards the tutor]. (In BSL) I am deaf. I have problems understanding you.

TUTOR: Oh dear. I didn’t know. Wait. [Tutor looks at Charlie’s application form.] Oh yes. We have it written here.

CHARLIE: [Points at the form.] Yes I said I need an interpreter.

TUTOR: [Looking down at the desk as she gathers her things together]. I will take you to Learning Support for assessment and to arrange support for you. Can you hear me? .

CHARLIE: What?

TUTOR: [Looking up at Charlie]. I will take you to Learning Support for assessment and to arrange support for you. Can you hear me?

CHARLIE: [Nodding] Okay

[Tutor finishes packing up, stands up and gestures to Charlie to follow her.]

SCENE 3 – AT THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM OFFICE

The stage is set with a desk, where the learning support officer sits and an empty chair opposite.

The tutor enters first, followed by Charlie.

TUTOR: [Passes Charlie’s application form to the tutor.] This is Charlie. He was in my lesson today. We have only just found out he is deaf and he had no interpreter support in the class. He requires assessment and in class support otherwise he has no chance of being able to follow his lessons. Can you please arrange support? This is his timetable.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: [Looks puzzled.] Oh dear. I am not sure how this happened. He is supposed to have been assessed before the course started and to have support in place. I will sort out the assessment and try to have someone in place for tomorrow. Charlie, come here [The Learning Support Manager motions for Charlie to sit on the empty seat].

Charlie sits down.
Tutor waves goodbye to Charlie and exits stage.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: Are you profoundly deaf Charlie?

CHARLIE: [Lip reading. Initially misunderstanding what was said] No ... [Realising what the tutor had said]...Yes

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: Are you profoundly deaf Charlie?

CHARLIE: (In BSL) Yes I am profoundly deaf.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: [Trying to sign a bit.] Sorry we didn’t know you are deaf and that your course started today. We will try to get you interpreter support for your next lectures. Is it Thursday? Thursday 9am?

CHARLIE: Yes

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: Do you wear hearing aids? Can you hear at all?

CHARLIE: No hearing aids. I am profoundly deaf.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: [Looks shocked.] Oh! What support did you get at school?

CHARLIE: BSL Interpreter, note taker, 1 to 1 tutorials, extra time exams.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: Did you get BSL Interpreter for exams? Separate room?

CHARLIE: Yes


CHARLIE: No

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: Ok, no problem. I will contact your school. If no report, you must bring medical evidence of your deafness or you will not get support for exams. Finished now. We will write an assessment report and you can come read it. We will try to get support for your next lectures.

CHARLIE: [Getting up to leave.] Okay.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: [Stands up to see Charlie out]. Goodbye for now Charlie. I will go and speak to the finance manager now about getting support for you.
SCENE 4 – IN THE FINANCE OFFICE

The scene is set with a desk where the Finance Manager sits. An empty chair is opposite.

The Learning Support Manager enters the stage and sits in the chair opposite the finance manager.

FINANCE MANAGER: Hello Habib

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: Hello John. We urgently need budget to cover BSL interpreting support for a new deaf student who has started a Basic Science course with us.

FINANCE MANAGER: Oh really? Why didn’t we know about this requirement before? With government funding cuts, we have limited budget for this kind of thing.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: But we have no choice. We have to provide support under The Equality Act. All disabled students must have reasonable adjustments made for them to access academic facilities.

FINANCE MANAGER: I know. I know, but we are struggling with funding. Ok, just one allocation for this learner. No more.

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: His course is 15 hours a week. We need an interpreter and note taker

FINANCE MANAGER: Why note taker as well? Can’t he watch the interpreter and take notes? Or can’t the lecturer provide all the handouts for the course? Are there no books for the learner to use?

LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: It is difficult for deaf learners to watch the signer and take notes at the same time. Even with course handouts, tutors and other learners are going to add new information as the lecture progresses, so we need note taker too.

FINANCE MANAGER: Okay. Okay. Okay...Send me the paperwork and bring back for me to sign before you book the support.
LEARNING SUPPORT MANAGER: I’ll bring the paperwork back before three o’clock this afternoon. See you later.

FINANCE MANAGER: Okay, bye.

Learning support manager exits stage, followed by Finance Manager.

SCENE 5 – RETURN TO THE CLASSROOM

The scene is set as a classroom, with students sitting at their desks. Charlie sits on the end desk and an interpreter sits opposite him. The tutor is again writing on the board while speaking. Charlie is looking at the interpreter with puzzlement. He isn’t understanding everything.

INTERPRETER: [Half talking to self and half talking to Charlie.] What’s the sign for that?

CHARLIE: [Demonstrates the sign ‘Chemical’ to the interpreter]. (In BSL) What level are you qualified to?

INTERPRETER: [Proudly and smiling] BSL Level 2.

CHARLIE: [In disgust]. (In BSL) Level 2?! I need fully qualified interpreter! And where’s my note taker.

INTERPRETER: [Slightly upset]. (In BSL) Funding Issues. Government Cuts. [Shrugs shoulders as if to say “What do you expect!”]

CHARLIE: [Shakes head in dismay. Looks defeated. Folds arms onto desk and rests his head on them.]

---------- THE END -------
FINAL NARRATIVE

Mainstream college are not always aware of the needs of deaf learners.

**Recommendation: All mainstream colleges to incorporate Deaf Awareness Training as core part of its Staff Development**

Application processes do not take into consideration the requirements of deaf learners

**Recommendation: Application forms to give room for deaf learners to specify their needs**

Publicity resources/Brochures etc contain too many jargons, too much text and not enough visual information

**Recommendation: Publicity etc to use plain English and include more visual information than text.**

Deaf learners put off applying for colleges due to Literacy entry requirements

**Recommendation: Either eliminate the need for deaf learners to produce evidence of literacy qualifications or assess them in BSL or ask for BSL qualification**

Deaf learners sometimes start their courses without any support, which discourages them and gives negative pictures of first day at college, which might interfere with their full academic studies

**Recommendation: Mainstream college to ensure that their enrolment, interview, assessment and support systems are linked together so that necessary support are in place at the start of the deaf learners course.**

Deaf learners sometimes do not have interpreters in place for their enrolment interviews, which results in communication breakdown and therefore deaf learners placed on wrong course or wrong level.

**Recommendation: Interpreters should always be present at enrolment interviews to avoid communication breakdown and to stop deaf learners being placed on the wrong course. This could result in the deaf learner withdrawing from the course after a few months**

Whilst mainstream colleges makes attempts to ensure their facilities are accessible to physical disabilities people, then often over look the needs of deaf learners as deafness is known as invisible disability
Recommendation: At least one Deaf professional should be included in college advisory/equality and diversity group. This will ensure that the needs of deaf people are not overlooked.

Many mainstream tutors have no deaf awareness training

Recommendation: Deaf awareness to be incorporated into Staff Induction and regularly as part of Staff Development

Many learners in mainstream education have no deaf awareness training and therefore do not know how to communicate with deaf learners – creating isolation for deaf learners

Recommendation: Whenever possible, all learners should be given basic Disability Awareness Training which should include deaf awareness

Senior managers do not have deaf awareness training, therefore they do not understand the needs of deaf learners.

Recommendation: Senior managers to be regularly updated on Disability Awareness Training which should include deaf awareness

No two tick symbols in general mainstream colleges publicity, therefore discourages deaf/disabled people from showing initial interest in the college.

Recommendation: Colleges should be encourage to have the two tick symbol in all its publicity materials and to clearly show their equality and diversity policies

Government funding cuts impacting on the level of support provided for deaf learners.

Recommendation: Colleges to put pressures on funders to make adequate funding provisions for disabled and deaf learners.

The use of low quality, less suitably qualified interpreters creates more problems for deaf learners than it solves in the classroom

Recommendations: Colleges should ensure that all interpreters are sufficiently qualified to interpret at the right level of the courses they are required to work in.
Drama scenes 15-20 mins total: This section of the Conference aims to demonstrate to the audience the issues facing deaf learners in Mainstream Educational settings – in this scenario, within mainstream college [FE].

Using the drama, it highlights the:

- Problems deaf people have prior to applying for a place in a college
- Experiences of deaf learners at the start of the academic year within the classroom when there is usually either lack of support or inadequate support
- Reactions of the Learning Support Team following [LST] the deaf learner’s tutor [or the deaf learner] highlighting classroom difficulties and the need for support
- Issues facing the LST when they go to the Finance Department for financial support and their lack of funding proving to be a challenge for the LST in convincing the Finance team of the College’s responsibilities under the Equality Duty
- Outcome when budgetary limitation enforces the LST to provide less qualified and insufficient personnel in supporting learners due to costs.

Recommendations: Finally, at the end, either one or all of the ‘Actors’ will provide key Recommendations that Colleges must bear in mind not only to meet their responsibilities under the law, but also to ensure that deaf learners receive equal access to education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenes</th>
<th>Situations</th>
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| 1. Deaf Learner’s Typical Experience “BEFORE COLLEGE” | ▪ Application form  
▪ Interview  
▪ Arrival day at college |
| 2. Deaf Learner’s Typical Experience in the “CLASSROOM” Subject "Science" | ▪ Registration  
▪ Lesson - Icebreaker  
▪ Lesson - Course Summary  
▪ Referral to Learning Support |
| 3. Deaf Learner’s Typical Experience with “LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM” | ▪ Assessment of needs  
▪ Meeting with Finance Manager |
| 4. Learning Support Team Typical Experience with | ▪ Not enough funding |
5. Deaf Learner’s Typical Experience With Initial support “BACK IN THE CLASSROOM”

- Low CSW + learning support
- More problems created
- Deaf student not happy
- Back to learning support

After the Drama event Recommendations: Presented in 5 mins

Drama Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Who</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Student</td>
<td>Charlie Hembrow</td>
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<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Isabella Adamus</td>
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<td>Learning Support</td>
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<td>Finance Manager</td>
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<td>Peers</td>
<td>Habib Anwar, Ethan Spencer, Jo Stuart, John Stewart, Lisa Holden</td>
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<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>Jo Stuart</td>
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Recommendations possible presented by: - Charlie, [plus John, Isabella, Habib, Ethan]
Drama Group Contact Information

<table>
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Next steps:
Complete the table below:
Add your ideas to the table below and email to Brian before 14th Feb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues facing deaf learners in FE</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Example: Tutors/hearing learners lack of deaf awareness</td>
<td>1. Make Deaf Awareness Training Compulsory to all staff/learners?</td>
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• Draft script to be produced by Brian Kokorruwe and emailed to the group by 13th February 2011

• List of possible requirements for the Drama [eg, Large Display Text etc.] to be produced by Brian Kokorruwe....but you can add your requirements to the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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