

## College environment

Some of the issues the students identified in one college concerned very simple, practical sources of frustration in the routine aspects of their college lives. For example, one student felt strongly that he and his fellow students needed better art overalls to protect their clothes. The ones they had were too short and people's clothes got messy. This student thought the situation was unacceptable but told us he did not know who to talk to about this or how to get the overalls changed. Several students told us about difficulties with an inadequate sink in their art room. There was only one for a large teaching group and it was not accessible to students who used wheelchairs. The students told us they had been complaining about this for a long time without 'anyone in charge' listening. They knew their tutors had unsuccessfully tried hard to rectify this too.

Project funding offered staff some flexibility, time and additional resources to support this group of young people. The students involved in the project started to work with their tutor in order to identify the good and not so good aspects of college life – initially by taking photos, sharing the images and discussing their views.

The young people really liked the plants that were dotted around the building, but noticed that these were disappearing or dying, so they asked for them to be replaced. One student felt strongly that the yellow lines on the stairs were very important to his mobility and independence. They noted many practical things they wanted to change. They used their project work to send a clear message to college managers and were successful in getting some things changed.

The students highlighted dirty lifts, which were soon cleaned up. They got confusing lift signs altered (the ground floor was marked as 'G' in one lift and '1' in another). The security gates on the college shop caused access problems for some students with mobility difficulties and these were removed. They also asked for items in the shop to be more clearly priced, because some students were worried that they did not have enough money to buy things and tended to go without rather than asking. The students also got a new, wheelchair accessible sink in their art room and adult-sized overalls.