Liz is a Speech and Language Therapist at Plumpton College, an independent specialist land based College which educates over 3000 students from across the South East per year on full time study programmes, part time courses, apprenticeships and in Higher Education.

This case study focuses on a self-assessment tool introduced last year to increase the students' self-awareness and encourage them to take ownership of their development and learning.

"We introduced our self-assessment last year to help students identify the things they think they're good at and the things they struggle with. The purpose was to increase self-awareness and to get the students to take greater ownership of their development. It has 39 questions covering academic work, speech and language communication skills and employability skills. The students rate themselves using a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) system so they get a visual representation of their improvement and we measure it four or five times over the year to track their progression. It usually takes them about 10-15 minutes to go through each time.

A really important aspect of the assessments is that it helps students identify and take ownership of the areas they need to work on. Our students are generally 16-19 years old and many of them either already working in industry or aiming for progression into industry at the completion of their studies. Although our courses are very practically based and involve a lot of work experience, progression onto higher education is on the increase. We therefore focus very much on helping our students develop those all important employability skills such as communication that they can then take into the wider world. The self-assessment tool enables the students to appreciate the importance of these skills and how they are used in everyday life and their future employment.

Once they've completed the assessment, the aim is for students to choose their own strategies for improving, with guidance from the team where needed. This, in turn, promotes their independence and independent thinking. They'll put things in place like setting alarms on their phone to tell them when to come back, or to taking a short walk when they're feeling stressed. Since introducing the self-assessment tool we've seen a real increase in self-awareness and in ownership of progression among our students; they can now clearly identify what they think they are good at and what they struggle with.

Last year was my first year at the college, and also the first year the college had a Speech and Language Therapist as part of the support team, so I was pleased to be able to introduce this assessment then. The learning support manager and I have since trained the rest of the learning support assistants in how to use the assessments to tailor their work/involvement with the students. The assessments are also shared with personal tutors and inform social skills groups. The plan is to work next with the learning support manager so we can put in place training sessions on the assessment for the academic staff in order for them to inform their teaching, learning and assessments.

One key learning point for me was trying to pull together the three key strands that would form the basis of the assessment; employment, speech and language and education. We've shown that these three stands can be aligned together so you don't need to treat them separately and have different assessments for each.

Crucially, I've found that the students are much more willing to put the strategies in place if they've helped identify and choose them."

Liz, Plumpton College