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Winner - National Training Awards 2005

Cambridge based Speaking Up has just been announced as a National Training Award Winner. The award applies to one of our 'Active Voices' projects - Next Steps and recognises exceptional achievement made through training and development. We were selected from over 2000 public, private and voluntary organisations across the UK.

Next Steps supports people with learning difficulties to become active and valued members of their community. It is a unique project, planned by its learners. It provides an intensive, individualised 1-2 year programme consisting of accredited life skills training, workshops and one to one mentoring.

Sam Hill has run Next Steps since January 2002 she says "from business planning to staff recruitment, our learners set the direction and lead decisions on the project. We started as a pilot project with doubts from some onlookers as to whether a learner led programme would work. Today we have developed into three services with thriving learners who are motivated to develop skills and achieve aspirations, just like anyone else"

Next Steps is special because from the outset they put the learner at the centre of planning and development. They committed to meeting the expressed needs of people with learning difficulties, providing appropriate and relevant skills training for every day living, rather than just occupying their time.

James Fletcher a past member of Next Steps says "Next Steps helped me to go on a bus for the first time so that I can now go and see my friends on my own. We also went on a plane to Prague with the travel training group. I am glad I left my Day Centre because I was fed up watching TV all the time and not being able to go out".

The National Training Awards are universally recognised as the premier training award in the UK given to organisations and individuals who have achieved lasting excellence and success through training.

Craig Dearden-Phillips, CEO of Speaking Up says "To be ranked among the very best organisations in the UK - public, private and voluntary – at training and development is a massive achievement for our people. I hope that national recognition will attract new investment, so that we can help change the lives of far more people in the future".

END

About Speaking Up

Speaking Up is a young, dynamic advocacy charity who started in 1994 driven by a powerful vision of an improved society for all. In the next 3 to 5 years, we aim to become the UK's largest and best charity provider of advocacy services for people who experience learning difficulties, mental ill health and other disabilities. This is our mission:

VOICE

We enable people who experience learning difficulties, mental ill health or other disabilities to find their voice and shape their own lives.

ACTION

We create positive choices for disabled people, by helping organisations to understand their needs and representing their views or supporting them to speak up for themselves.

CHANGE

We lead society towards recognising disabled people as equal and valued citizens with the same choices and opportunities as everyone else.

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For information about the National Training Awards visit
www.nationaltrainingawards.com.