

# Demonstrating Impacts: General Election 2015

## Introduction

The 2015 General Election provided students' unions across the UK with the opportunity to *ENGAGE* their members, *DEVELOP* their activities and demonstrate the *IMPACTS* they could have on their learners, their college and wider society. Below is an example of such activity from East Kent College Students' Union and their *Voter Registration* campaign.

## Activity

East Kent College Students' Union planned a group of activities around the 2015 General Election that would:

- focus on promoting voter registration
- get students thinking about politics and citizenship
- target students from under-represented groups & international students

The Students' Union used a wide variety of creative activities to achieve these aims and these included the following.

- Voting workshops were held in classes across curriculum areas to investigate *non-traditional voters* and how this impacted on election results. Students were encouraged to think about the issues that were important to them and then given the opportunity to complete a voter registration form if they wished.
- The *Don't be a fool – voting is cool* event was filled with music and activities and presented a chance to engage with students across the college and promote voter registration. Displays were made of individual parties and their key policies. The media were in attendance, reporting on the interest and engagement of young people in event – and in politics in general. The event was also used to gain access to historically less-engaged students.
- Students who didn't want to register on the day were directed to the online voter registration pages and were encouraged to visit the Students' Union officers for support with registering at a later date if needed. Students were also given the chance to register online 'on the go'.
- Social media used extensively to promote all aspects of the campaign.

## Impacts

Approximately 300 students attended one of the 30 workshops held across college during the campaign period.

Over 730 students attended the *Don't be a Fool...* event and had face-to-face conversations with student reps regarding registering to vote, the importance of voting, and being supported through the registration process.

Whilst there is no accurate data available on the number of students who registered online during these events, a total of 278 students registered to vote by completing a registration form.

Social media activity reached approximately 1000 people and replies were received from celebrities supporting the campaign as well as the Electoral Commission.

By using a range of creative engagement methods and by collecting data relating to their campaign activity, East Kent College Students' Union have been able to clearly demonstrate the positive impacts of their campaign. Not only did they manage to encourage a large number of students to register to vote in the election, their use of social media and the press demonstrated that young people were interested in the election and that they were engaging in the process and would be going out to vote. This is summed by a quote from one student who got involved:

"I hadn't really thought about voting beforehand but she [Vice President] really enthused us all."

This campaign had further impacts outside of college with many young voters attending the local PPC hustings events who commented that these were the most well attended hustings that had attended.