

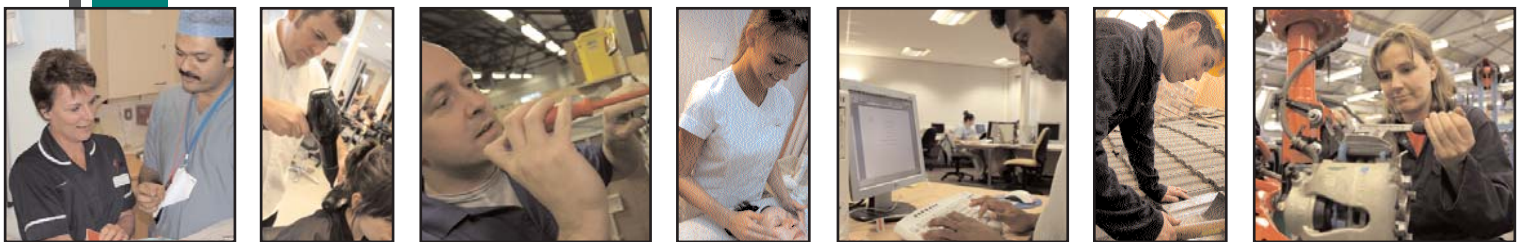


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West Cheshire College

Disability Equality Scheme

4 December 2009



Introduction to revised Disability Equality Scheme 2009-2012

The College strives at all time to be inclusive and puts the needs of each individual learner at the heart of its mission. As part of our mission to move towards a fully inclusive College, WCC has been striving for many years to be proactive in its approach to promoting equality not just for disabled people but for all individuals.

By 2006 a culture where learners with disabilities were encouraged to disclose their support needs and where Equality and Diversity was routinely celebrated was established. However, the College recognised that there was a long way to go to understand the real work needed to bring about lasting change and move us to a College where Equality and Diversity was fully embedded.

Looking back at our action plans drawn up in Dec 2006 and last updated in October 2009 (published on WCC External web page) we have clearly addressed many of the original actions but on the journey the priorities that the College will focus on over the next 3 years have become clearer.

The College has been successful in moving forward on many issues including, embedding good practice in E&D into our Quality Improvement Planning Documents. We have targeted Staff training as the key to driving forward our agenda to eliminate discrimination for all with over 450 staff completing Equality and Diversity Awareness training. We have also used our HR department as integral in developing good policies and practices across College to support staff whatever their needs.

The impact of our action plan can be seen in the change in culture within the College to one where staff feel safe disclosing support needs. Staff statistics show an improvement from 1.3% declaring a disability to 2.3% in 2007/8. Students now routinely disclose support needs on Admission so that arrangements can be made before they start at College for any additional support they may need. Over 1,300 students declared support needs on entry this year. We have been awarded the 'Mindful' employer badge in 2009.

Other changes are the move away from a tokenistic approach to promoting Equal Opportunities with students, to more dynamic actions which has been embraced by the whole College. In 2007/8 we used the Personal Tutor groups with all full time 16-19 year olds to deliver information on several different cultural and religious groups. 850 students gave feedback after the activities and this showed a real impact in extending understanding, promoting social cohesion, and self awareness with particular regard to their responsibility in preventing harassment and bullying. Data from ILPs, attendance records and student feedback in 2008/9 indicated that

Mental Wellbeing was impacting on retention and achievement and so in response we held a Themed week on Mental Well Being. 450 students took part in a Questionnaire during the week and this is currently being analysed for information some of which was used to help develop our Healthy College Policy. It is hoped additional data collated will be used to develop appropriate support services, including Health services in our Health Zones. Following on from this successful week a large number of staff have taken part in Mental Health Awareness training and a Student Union event where Ruby Wax talked about Mental Health issues was attended by over 200 students. Since these events HR have reported more referrals for support for staff under Occupational Health for mental health issues and this will be something that we build on for the future.

Since early 2007 the College has worked tirelessly to remove barriers for our most disadvantaged students and we are now successfully piloting a Leap to Work project aimed at getting disabled students into employment. This project is the culmination of years of partnership work to identify the best way to engage employers in offering effective work placements and to identify the best teaching and learning practice for students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

As a College we are now working towards a Single Equality Scheme and action plan, to refocus the College's priorities and re-energise the message that we are a fully inclusive organisation. Several priorities are being considered. The next stage of staff training will involve best practice in embedding equality and diversity into teaching and learning and the real impact of this. We need to continue to be pro-active in engaging with employers and helping them to improve social cohesion within the local community. We need to gather more qualitative data relating to achievement gaps and act to address these inequalities. This may mean disaggregating data differently and gathering additional data relating to the 6 strands of equality.

We have secured Bid monies to kick start initiatives and over the next months we should have identified the most important areas for work. We have already begun to look at how we move staff training on to the next stage and are designing suitable resources for use in curriculum areas. We have also agreed the Principles under which our new Single Equality Scheme will be written. An Equal Opportunities Action Group has been formed with key members taken from HR, Quality, CIS, Property and Operations, Learner Service and the Governors and Senior Management team to develop priority actions for our Single Equality Action Plan.

Values and Principles

The College's Equal Opportunities strategy builds on a wide range of cross college policies and schemes. The College will work towards a whole College approach to Equal Opportunities which will bring together existing policy documents under one scheme.

The College will continue to implement the Equality Impact Assessment reporting and monitoring procedure which can identify policies or practices across College which may directly or indirectly discriminate on improper grounds. Equal Opportunities are embedded into the curriculum through teaching and learning practice. There will be training and development activities for all members of staff which promote equal opportunities.

The College will continue to actively pursue equal opportunities by introducing policies which address the needs and rights of all College stakeholders to be treated with respect and dignity, in an environment in which a diversity of backgrounds and experiences is valued.

The College will continue to work closely with external agencies as well as consulting a number of Focus Groups to help its continuing commitment to improving services to all of its key stakeholders. In addition learners will be consulted in order to work towards compliance with the Equality Act 2006 and to inform our three year action plan for equal opportunities.

The main activities that will contribute to the achievement of the equality and diversity strategy are:

- Working towards a whole College approach to Equal Opportunities, bringing together existing policy documents under one scheme
- Implementing the Equality Impact Assessment process and working closely with external agencies
- Continuous review of Admission procedures
- Monitoring the impact of the new Quality paperwork designed to identify achievement gaps
- Review cross college Celebratory Events and Respect campaigns
- Continue to use a wide variety of consultation methods and extend the consultation procedures
- Continue to investigate the implications for disabled students in the New Build
- Continue to monitor Marketing activities to maintain a clarity of message about inclusive practice at WCC
- Extend monitoring of complaints to also include harassment and bullying issues by disability
- Continue to monitor disabled staff through workforce development
- Extend staff training to include bespoke resources to meet diverse needs within the organisation

In addition the College has agreed the following principles as a step towards our Single Equality Scheme:

All learners and staff are of equal value

Whether or not they are disabled.

Relevant differences should be recognised

Treating people equally can mean treating them differently. Policies, practices and programmes must not discriminate, but may be differentiated to take account of differences of life experience, outlook and background and in the kind of barriers and disadvantages which people face in relation to :

Whether or not they are disabled, so that reasonable adjustments are made.

Workforce Development

Policies and programmes should benefit all members of the workforce, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.

Whether or not they are disabled.

Positive attitudes and relationships should be fostered

Policies and programmes should promote:
Positive attitudes towards disabled people and good relations between disabled and non-disabled people.

Society as a whole should benefit

Policies and programmes should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally by fostering greater cohesion and greater participation in public life of;

Disabled and non-disabled people.

Current inequalities and barriers should be addressed and reduced

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts, policies and programmes should take opportunities to maximise impacts by addressing, reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that already exist between:

Disabled and non-disabled people

Carrying out impact assessments

The specific duty to carry out Impact Assessments on all policies, provision and practices is designed to provide a mechanism for ensuring that due regard is given to disability equality in carrying out functions, making decisions and to assist institutions in meeting the general duty under the DDA 2005/DED 2006.

Any changes in policies or practices are identified during the management meeting process and a judgement is made as to whether an Equality Impact Assessment is appropriate. All EIA's are then brought to the Equal Opportunities Action Group and discussed. If further consultation is needed discrete focus groups will be approached to help make judgements. Any actions agreed are reported back to CMT and SMT through the meeting process.

What we have learnt since we introduced the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2010

The West Cheshire College Equal Opportunities Action Group has widened its membership to include representatives from all key areas of the College including disabled persons in order to ensure that consultation with disabled learners and staff is central to our policies and practices. The group also monitors the actions of Equality Impact Assessments and reports to CMT on a regular basis to ensure that senior management approach Equality Impact Assessments in a systematic and effective manner. Consultations with interested groups including disabled people is critical to the success of the Disability Equality Action Plan and we intend to extend and continue the process of gathering information so that all target groups are part of the decision making process and that issues which concern them are appropriately addressed.

The Disability Equality Action Plan was updated and published in October 2009 and an audit of the College's progress has taken place to identify our next steps.

The DED has been in place for three years and has been fundamental to improving services for disabled people.

In order to measure the impact of our Disability Equality Scheme of 2006-2009 the following questions have been posed:

1. How far have we moved in providing better services for disabled people?

The College has worked hard to achieve the key actions as outlined in its plan. It has introduced Leap2Work an ESF funded project aimed at supporting young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities age 16-25 into work experience placements and real jobs. A key feature of this is the use of the supported employment model whereby individual learners are able to access work

opportunities supported by Job Coaches. Individual learners are trained in the skills required to fulfil their role in the workplace and have appropriate support which fades as students become more confident.

The curriculum offer at Entry Level has been completely reviewed in line with the requirements of the Foundation Learning Tier enabling students to experience a more personalised approach to learning. This will be extended across all Entry Level and Level 1 provision by 2010/2011.

Partnership working has been key to the successful implementation of Leap2Work and the Foundation Learning Tier developments working with local Special Schools and mainstream schools on joint curriculum planning to facilitate a seamless learning experience.

Transition planning arrangements for Statement students have been reviewed and a new process is being piloted in 2009/10 based on the LSC's Learning for Living and Work Assessment Framework. Connexions are a key facilitator in this process.

Learning Disability Partnership Boards have been the key consultation group and from this the College has changed aspects of provision to better match learner need. This includes the introduction of a Skills for Life Self Advocacy course for adults with learning disabilities, called Living and Working in Your Community. Learners and carers work jointly to a common aim and whilst acquiring literacy and numeracy skills and qualifications. Further consultation has taken place with Visually Impaired learners and provision has been extended and changed to become more fully inclusive. The College has a Service Level Agreement with Action for Blind and used the skills and expertise of their staff to both assess and support individual learners. This partnership will further develop as the new buildings become completed. Much work has been done across College in relation to changing the curriculum to enable learners with both additional needs and low literacy and numeracy levels to feel better supported within their vocational context. Skills for Life staff work alongside Construction Teachers to ensure learners improve their key skills. In 2008/09 there has been significant improvement as a direct result of these changes. This curriculum model is being extended across other curriculum.

The College continues to audit all College premises to ensure the needs of disabled people are met including parking facilities. Signage across College has been improved and student support statements and information leaflets are updated annually. Risk Assessments are now available in the following areas, sporting activities, daily job roles, noise at work stations, curriculum activities and driving. During the New Build stage, some disabled learners and staff have been accommodated in ground floor rooms according to individual needs.

All Adult and Community off site venues are audited for accessibility prior to use. This is a well established practice.

Accessibility to ICT resources has been improved. Large screen monitors, CCTV's and software are available for students with visual impairments. There is a Vision

Resource Room equipped with suitable hardware and software. In 2007-2008 the College received an LSC grant of £30,000 to improve IT resources for disabled learners.

Areas for further improvement are the Learning Resource services and the College intranet.

2. How far has Disability Equality issues been embedded with core business of the College?

Disability Equality Data is now embedded in all critical Quality Assurance Processes, including new course reviews, self assessment and quality improvement processes.

Admission practice was reviewed in 2008/09 and all students including those who may or may not declare a disability now attend the same events as all other students. All students are routinely asked at Admissions events to declare any support needs they may have and this is followed up by the Learning Support team to ensure that affective support is available as soon as students start on their College courses. New applicants who have declared a disability who still attend local special schools are able to form links with the College in their last year at school to ease the transitional period.

A new process for monitoring failing courses was implemented in 2008/09 and an equality analysis will now be made through the quality process to ensure there is no achievement gap between students with a disability and students without a disability. Analysis of disabled students' feedback on their experiences at College is carried out annually and informs part of the Equal Opportunities annual report.

The Learning Resources guide for students is available in audio and large print.

New Teaching and Learning practices, training and observations will further improve the practices of staff and help to fully embed equal opportunities for disabled learners at the heart of the learner experience.

A more robust Impact Assessment process and a greater focus on monitoring and analysing data should help us to identify key areas for improvement in this area.

3. How far have we improved the perceptions of an increased respect for disabled colleagues and improved understanding of disabled people's support requirements?

All members of the Senior Management Team and the College wider management team have attended training in Equality and Diversity and act as champions in the College promoting and quality assuring equal opportunities in their areas. Over 450 staff have also attended training to raise awareness of their roles and responsibilities in meeting the needs of disabled learners and colleagues. HR have extended the services they offer to support staff through flexible working practices, OHU referrals, counselling services and reasonable adjustments to working practices or specialist

equipment. There is an ongoing rolling programme for staff to raise awareness for staff in relation to how to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is a well established practice.

The needs of Deaf Studies teaching staff are reviewed annually in line with DED and DDA.

All teaching staff are now aware of the importance of offering disabled students equal opportunities within the curriculum and effective support can be evidenced against the success rates of disabled students across College. Cross college Equality themed weeks are carried out each year. In 2006/07 awareness training in Religion and Beliefs took place and over 800 students took part in a questionnaire which measured the impact of the training in terms of increased knowledge.

In 2008/09 over 400 students took part in a Mental Wellbeing week and received training to raise awareness on this issue. The Student Union supported this initiative by inviting Ruby Wax to address the students. This was well attended with over 200 students taking part in the awareness raising event.

More work on helping staff to fully embed Equality and Diversity into their practice is now needed. Training should now focus more specifically on their job role to assist them in moving their practice forward.

4. How far have we moved towards consulting people with different types of impairment and increased the rate of declaration of disability by employees?

The College continues to maintain a close working relationship with a number of external groups which also form part of the consultation process.

Externally evaluated focus groups took place in September 2009. A Visually Impaired focus group was held in 2009 in conjunction with Action for Blind. This is an annual consultation.

West Cheshire College is a member of the CWAC Learning Disability Partnership Boards. In response to requests from Service Users the College has specifically delivered courses to meet individual needs for example, Self Advocacy Courses, Learning for Living and Work SFL Courses and making minutes accessible for service users.

The College recognises that this consultation work needs to be extended. In our action plan we intend to ensure that the learner voice for disabled students and staff is clearly heard by forming discrete groups of disabled staff and disabled learners to help us review our services and improve them for all learners and staff.

5. How far have we moved in tackling inequality and discrimination and harassment for disabled students?

Whilst we monitor and review data on grievances and formal complaints by disability the College recognises that incidents of bullying and harassment are not recorded centrally. All incidents of bullying and harassment are tackled and dealt with, normally through informal means or through the student/staff disciplinary procedures.

This will be addressed with the introduction of a new Bullying and Harassment policy and new guidelines on how to record incidents. This will then be monitored centrally and actioned as appropriate through the College's Quality department.

6. How successful have we been in mainstreaming disability equality in policy making?

Disability equality is central to the College's strategic aims and values. The process of monitoring our EIA's is now embedded into the College Management cycle and reported regularly to senior managers.

Quality paperwork has been reviewed and changed to collect evidence that West Cheshire College is meeting its disability equality duties.

Areas for improvement are the Equality Impact Assessment process which has moved onto the second stage and is now being monitored through our Equal Opportunities Action Group. This group has been extended to include a wider representation of people including a disabled member of staff to assist the College with widening their consultation platform.

Information

The following data on current and potential staff will be collected by the College's Human Resource team and reported to the Area Manager for Care and Education who will collate and report findings to the Equal Opportunities Action Group, and the Governors. The report will be published on the College's intranet site for all staff to read and further paper copies will be available at the College's main receptions and learning centres at all sites.

- Numbers of staff in post with and without disabilities by impairment type
- Application rates by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type
- Short-listing data by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type
- Offers and acceptance rates by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type
- Promotions by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type
- Numbers of staff involved in grievance and or disciplinary procedures by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type
- Numbers of staff leaving employment by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type

- Exit information with reasons by gender, age, ethnicity and disability by impairment type

The following data on current students will be collected by the College's CIS team and the College's Quality team and reported to the Area Manager for Care and Education who will collate and report findings to the Equal Opportunities Action Group, and the Governors. The report will be published on the College's intranet site for all staff to read and further paper copies will be available at the College's main receptions and learning centres at all sites.

- Numbers of students by gender, age, ethnicity and disability
- Achievement and retention rates of students by gender, age, ethnicity and disability
- Progression and withdrawal rates of students by gender, age, ethnicity and disability
- Destination of students by gender, age, ethnicity and disability
- Student satisfaction survey
- Complaints and other procedure monitoring of students by gender, age, ethnicity and disability.
- Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms
- Number of disabled learners on higher level courses
- Data of students by gender, age, ethnicity and disability involved in bullying and harassment incidents

In addition the Area Manager for Care and Education will monitor actions/policies designed to close attainment gaps for effectiveness.

Putting the scheme into practice

West Cheshire College's Disability Equality Scheme will be published on our Intranet site and web pages. It will be available in a variety of other formats including large print, Braille and an audio version. Paper copies will be available at all of the College's main reception areas and Learning Centres.

The Annual Report of progress and performance against the DED Action Plan will be published and shared with the Governors, Staff and learners and other interested stakeholders such as the LSC and OFSTED the same way.

The result of Impact Assessments will be reviewed by the Equal Opportunities Action Group and any outcomes identified will be implemented and supported by the senior management team of the College.

There will be a yearly review of the Action Plan to ensure that the information gathered informs and improves the outcome for disabled people using or working at West Cheshire College.