



Disability Equality Scheme 2006 - 2009

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1. Introduction

This document is written in response to the new Disability Equality Duty, set out in the Disability Discrimination Bill 2005, which requires all public bodies to actively look at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally within their organisation.

It aims to:

- Set out the College's continuing commitment to disabled people; in removing any barriers that prevent access to education, as well as encouraging participation by identifying and responding to community need
- Provide the national, local and college context that the scheme will be working within
- Draw on existing information, policy and plans regarding disability from across the College in order to formulate an action plan
- Add to existing information through consultation with disabled people
- Set out a three year action plan which includes timescales for work
- Set out how the College will monitor, evaluate and review progress towards disability equality

1.2 General duties associated with the new Act

The new Act has general duties that apply to all public bodies. The basic requirement is that the organisation, when carrying out functions, has due regard to do the following:

- To promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- To eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
- To eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment

'Due regard' means that authorities should give weight to the need to promote disability equality in proportion to its relevance.

The new legislation also has specific duties that apply to most public authorities in order to help them meet their overall general duty. The specific duty within the legislation requires that the College draws up and publishes a scheme which sets out what it intends to do to plan, deliver and evaluate action to eliminate discrimination and promote equality across the whole organisation, and, in following years, to report on the activities undertaken.

2. Background / National and local context

2.1 Definition of disability

A person has a disability if he or she has a 'physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities ' (DRC 2005)

2.2 National context

It is estimated that there are over 10 million disabled people in our society; one in five adults within the United Kingdom are disabled. (DRC 2006) This includes those with physical and mobility difficulties, those with sensory impairments, sight and hearing difficulties as well as those with disabilities that are less visible, people with mental health difficulties, dyslexia, learning difficulties with autism or Aspergers syndrome. People with long term health difficulties including HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis are also covered by the Act and will be included within this scheme.

2.3 Local context

The population statistics in Powys reflect the national figures. Powys County Council, in their Disability Equality Scheme, use the census figures relating to 'long term illness' when comparing the local situation with the national figures. They recognise that although a limiting long-term illness does not necessarily mean that someone is registered disabled, the likelihood is that they would be recognised under the legislation as being disabled. They identify that 24,754 people in Powys were recorded in the 2001 census as having a 'limiting long term illness'. Using this interpretation of census data, 19.84% of the population of Powys would be recognised as disabled.

2.4 College context

Within the College the numbers of learners who disclose disability is slightly lower than the national average. In total 6705 learners enrolled on courses at Coleg Powys in 2005/2006; this includes fulltime and part time courses. Of these 580 disclosed that they had a disability (9% of the total number). There is also little significant difference between the numbers on full time and part time courses who disclose a disability (9% and 8%) The difference between College and national figures may be due to a slightly younger age profile within the College, or possibility that not all disabled people disclose their disability.

At present the College holds individual records that identify disabled members of staff but does not have this information in a format that enables us to draw down disability statistics easily. An important action identified within this scheme will be to set up a staff database that can provide this information.

Disabled people are a significant minority group within the College. We recognise that in society at present, there are disparities that exist that prevent disabled people from leading an equal life. These are not the inevitable results of impairment but rather result from attitudinal and environmental barriers that exist within society. The disability scheme, together with the College's Equal

Opportunities Policy will help to ensure that the College continues to address inequalities that occur within the organisation and to actively promote equality for all throughout the organisation.

2.5 Vision and Values

In its report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled people' (Strategy Unit 2005), the Government sets out its vision of disability equality as follows;

'By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society.'

The new legislation is designed to help shift the focus away from the requirements of individuals and onto the policies, procedures plans and practice of an organisation. By embedding disability equality into all decisions, it becomes central to all that an organisation does.

This whole organisational approach is the way that the College has successfully worked both the equal opportunities and disability agenda. Many of the actions identified within this scheme have already been set within the current institutional plan and other College action plans. This scheme seeks to build on the current work ensuring that further actions identified are similarly embedded throughout both divisions and all subject areas.

2.6 College Mission and strategic aims

The College mission statement sets the context for all work;

'Coleg Powys serves the community by providing and promoting learning opportunities throughout life'

The six strategic aims provide the College with the framework for its work:

1. To equip individuals with skills and qualifications that enable them to contribute effectively to social, economic and cultural activity to fulfil their personal aspirations
2. To maintain, develop and innovate change within the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals in the labour market
3. To create a learner centred culture that makes effective use of developments in technology and pedagogy so as to widen access to appropriate learning opportunities
4. To improve continuously the quality and consistency of all College services
5. To foster links and partnerships with employers and other private, public and voluntary sector organisations so as to increase participation on learning, to contribute to economic growth and to increase social inclusion
6. To optimise the use of all available resources. In particular to ensure that human, physical and financial resources remain appropriate to fulfil the objectives of the College

Although these aims are not specifically about disability and disabled people, the strong focus on the individual learner and the development of a learner centred culture, the commitment to widening access and increasing participation provide the basis for an inclusive approach to disability and disability issues.

2.7 Current Position

'Coleg Powys welcomes all members of the Community and provides equality of opportunity for all.'

The College statement of equal opportunities has been in place for several years and has set the standard of work with all learners, irrespective of age, gender, language, nationality, religion or disability. The College has a good record in ensuring equality of opportunity for disabled people. Work to improve access and services has progressed over many years. This includes:

- Development of a college culture of equality and inclusiveness, promoted and led by Senior management team
- Appointment of Inclusive Learning Manager in 1998
- Cross college staff development in inclusive learning and disability awareness
- Communication to staff and learners providing information on college disability issues/services
- Access audits
- Substantial sums of money to improve access on all sites
- A flexible, learner centred approach to all work
- Development of specific provision for learners with learning difficulties including those with severe and profound learning difficulties over last 15 years
- Development in learning support for disabled learners on all sites over the last 10 years
- Partnership work with other agencies to provide expertise in specific support e.g. LEA services for hearing impaired

Indicators of the success of this work in promoting equality of opportunity include:

- Case studies that show successful attainment of a range of disabled learners
- The number and range of learners that the College has successfully provided for throughout all vocational areas. This includes deaf and hearing impaired learners, learners with sight impairments, with autism and Aspergers syndrome, with mobility and other physical difficulties, with dyslexia, with mental health difficulties and with learning difficulties
- Indication of a working embedded approach. This is identified in the subject area self assessment reports which both identify internal success and areas needing further development
- Positive learner feedback
- Acknowledgement of good practice in external reports from Estyn
- Numbers supported through supplementary and exceptional funding

- Requests for Coleg Powys staff to provide expertise to external bodies; conferences and training

The College recognises the need for continuous improvement in all equal opportunity work. Improvements to access and in promoting positive attitudes to disabled people are an ongoing process and this scheme will help to ensure consistent planning, monitoring and reviewing throughout the organisation.

3 Involving Disabled People

The College recognises that involving disabled people in planning and carrying out work within the scheme is crucial to the success of the scheme. Involvement includes staff and learners from all areas and at all levels within the organisation as well as links with outside organisations such as Disability Powys.

3.1 Initial involvement

Consultation meetings were held at each of the three main sites in November in order to involve disabled people in developing the scheme. The events, timetabled during the lunch hour, aimed to give those who attended the opportunity to find out about the scheme, give views about provision, discuss disability issues and suggest improvements. Leaflets advertising the events, were sent to all members of staff and circulated to learners by their course tutors. The events were also advertised on the College intranet. Consultation forms were made available so that those who were unable to attend the meetings were still able to be involved.

34 people in total attended the meetings. Each meeting was attended by the Division Assistant Principal and included disabled and non-disabled learners and members of staff. One of the College Governors attended the meeting on the Llandrinod site. Notes from the meeting were recorded on flipcharts under 3 headings; what does the College do well, issues and suggestions.

3.2 Results of initial consultation events

A number of issues were highlighted at the meetings and on the feedback forms with similar areas of good practice and further issues identified on all three sites. In all the meetings the positive attitudes of both staff and learners and the flexible approach to supporting disabled people were identified and acknowledged as areas of good practice. General access around the buildings was perceived to be good and it was acknowledged that considerable improvements had been made with equipment suitable for disabled people available in many areas.

The majority of issues raised were to do with access to certain parts of the buildings, particularly within the refectory areas on all sites and in using the computer rooms. Those at the meeting also identified actions that could be taken to address some of the issues, many of which have been included in the action plan. Specific issues will also be fed back to those responsible for the various areas so that they can be considered and addressed as part of the self assessment process.

3.3 Further involvement

Many of those attending the meetings expressed interest in continuing to have an involvement in further disability equality scheme work in consultation, monitoring and evaluating work carried out. The College will continue to involve disabled people, including learners, staff and local disability organisations, in order to inform future decisions and actions. This has been included within the action plan. The consultation meetings also provided an excellent means for gathering qualitative information to inform both the scheme and College practice.

4. Information gathering

The College recognises that gathering the necessary information, qualitative and quantitative, in order to assess the impact of college policies and practices on disabled people is an essential part of the process of promoting equality. Information used effectively will allow the College to identify issues, highlight barriers and gaps in provision. The College already collects a large amount of information both in its role as an employer and as an education provider and has effectively used this in order to prepare this scheme. The emphasis for extending this, where necessary, will be in order to measure and evaluate progress. All data is stored and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

4.1 Key principles in collecting information and monitoring data

- All involved will be aware of the reasons for the collection of data and how it will be used
- The right to confidentiality will be paramount
- Information will be gathered for use at all levels; organisational, divisional and school/subject/course
- Monitoring activities will be embedded into the current quality systems and processes
- When gathering the views of disabled people, an important part of the process will include reporting back to them any action taken as a result of the consultation

4.2 Learner data

Currently the College collects quantitative data which can be used to show the number of disabled learners on each site and within each course. Further qualitative and quantitative information will be collected to allow the effective monitoring of the enrolment, completion and achievement of disabled learners.

4.3 Staff data

In order to monitor disability equality for staff, a database that can be used to provide information and statistics to monitor the application, recruitment, retention and career development of disabled staff is also required.

5. Equality Impact assessments:

The College will carry out equality impact assessments in order to help ensure that our services meet everyone's needs and to identify any adverse effects that will have an impact on equality for different groups of people.

5.1 Procedures for carrying out Impact assessments

An equality impact assessment is a detailed, systematic analysis of the effects of a current or proposed policy, procedure, plan or practice. Equality Impact assessments will be carried out on all relevant new policies and procedures and service or curriculum developments and will ensure that equality of opportunity for disabled people and other minority groups is taken into account.

The College has developed a tool for carrying out equality impact assessments and will embed the process throughout the organisation. Relevance for impact assessment will be decided using the following criteria;

1. Whether the policy is major or minor in terms of scale or significance for the College activities.
2. Whether the policy is likely to have a major or minor impact on disabled people.

5.2 Responsibility for impact assessments

Impact assessments, for any new policies or policies that are undergoing review, will be carried out by those responsible for the policy. Training will be provided for staff to enable them to carry out impact assessments confidently and competently. Records of the results of impact assessments will be forwarded to the Equal Opportunities working group and will be published on the College intranet.

The College has a large number of policies already in place. These policies are being considered by the Equal Opportunities working group and a timetable will be produced for those identified as a high priority for impact assessment. The timetable will give details of those responsible for carrying out the assessment and completion dates. Impact assessment for policies and practices that are identified as having a lower priority will be carried out as part of the normal policy review process.

6. Scheme responsibility

All employees and members of the College have a role to play in the delivery of this scheme as well as ensuring equality of opportunity throughout the organisation.

6.1 Governing body

The Governors of the College acknowledge their responsibility for approving this scheme and for ensuring that the scheme and action plan are integral to the College's strategic planning.

6.2 Senior Management

The Principal is accountable for the delivery of this scheme and, with the Senior Management Team, is responsible for ensuring that the scheme is put into action across the College. Senior Management Team responsibilities will include:

- Taking the lead in challenging discriminatory behaviour from any member of the College community
- Being aware of the College's statutory duties
- Ensuring all aspects of College policy and activity are sensitive to disability issues
- Ensuring data for monitoring is collected and analysed and that targets to improve disability equality are based on this information
- Ensuring that recruitment and promotion of staff follows equality best practice
- Ensuring appropriate training and development to support the promotion of equality

6.3 Middle Management

Heads of Schools, Subject and Functional area managers will have responsibility within their schools and areas for;

- Promoting disability equality and challenging discrimination
- Using data to monitor, report progress and set targets on disability equality as part of the self assessment process
- Carrying out impact assessments on any relevant policies/procedures within their area of responsibility
- Ensuring that staff within their line management are aware of and attend equality training

6.4 All staff

All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of disability legislation and the duties placed on them and the College. In particular they must;

- Respond positively to the needs of disabled people that they have contact with in the course of their work
- Challenge any prejudice and discriminatory behaviour that they may witness at College

6.5 Inclusive Learning Manager and Equal Opportunities working group

The Equal Opportunities Group, which is made up of staff from throughout the organisation and chaired by the Assistant Principal for Learner Services, will be responsible for driving forward and monitoring work on the scheme. The Inclusive Learning manager, who is a member of this group, will lead the co-ordination of monitoring and reviewing of the disability scheme and will produce a monitoring report of progress on work within the scheme.

7. Themes and action plan

Seven key themes emerged from the research and consultation in preparing this scheme. These will form the basis of the actions that the College will take in order to make progress in promoting disability equality across the whole organisation.

1. **Promote positive attitudes to disabled people:** Addresses training and awareness raising as well as policies that address harassment and discrimination
2. **Carry out impact assessments:** Sets out the steps that the College needs to take to introduce impact assessment
3. **Improve equality of opportunity for disabled learners:** Addresses curriculum development, the application and interview process and on-course data monitoring
4. **Improve equality of opportunity for disabled staff:** Shows how the College will review the application and interview process and the development of a data collection process that will enhance the monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities practice
5. **Improve access to estates and equipment:** Details the steps that the college will take to improve premises and equipment to enable access.
6. **Improve access to information/communication:** Describes how the College will develop its good practice in information provision
7. **Promote participation/involvement by disabled people:** Covers the College commitment to continuing to involve disabled people in carrying out the scheme

A general action plan (appendix 1) provides further details of the steps that the College will take and target dates for completion of the work.

8. Annual reporting

The scheme's progress will be reported on an annual basis. The report will include information on;

- Progress on the action plan
- Collated feedback from self assessment reports on disability issues
- Summary of the results of Equality Impact assessments and access audits

9. References

Disability Rights Commission (2005) *The Duty to Promote Disability Equality: Statutory Code of Practice*: DRC website <http://www.drc-gb.org>

Disability Rights Commission (2006) *Code of Practice - Post-16 Education (revised)*
DRC website http://www.drc-gb.org/PDF/Post_16_Code_of_Practice.pdf

Equality Challenge Unit, 2005 *Shaping your disability Scheme*; <http://www.ecu.ac.uk>

Learning and Skills Network (2006); *Responding to the duty to promote disability equality in the post-school sector*, London, Learning and Skills Development Agency

Powys County Council (2006) *Disability Equality Scheme 2006 -2009*

Appendix 1: Action Plan		
Theme	Action that the College will take to promote disability equality across the organisation	Target Date
Promote positive attitudes to disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an audit of training to identify training needs • Instigate a comprehensive coverage of disability training for staff and systems that address disability awareness raising for learners • Review policies that address harassment and discrimination 	Yr 1 Yr 2/3 Yr2
Carry out impact assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a procedure and format for carrying out impact assessments on new and existing policies • Identify and prioritise policies in scope • Carry out impact assessments on policies that fall into scope 	Yr 1 Yr 1 End Yr 3
Improve equality of opportunity for disabled learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum: Ensure optimum accessibility to learning is developed and maintained within the curriculum (see institutional plan 3.2 and 1.8) • Application/interview: Review and amend transition arrangements, application and interview process in order to promote disability equality • On-course: Improve data monitoring of disabled learners relating to enrolment, retention, attainment and support 	Year 3 Yr 2 Yr2/3
Improve equality of opportunity for disabled staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve ability of staff data base to provide necessary information required to monitor and evaluate equal opportunities practice • Review application process to ensure any barriers are removed 	Yr 1 /2 Yr 2
Improve access to estates and equipment	<p>Improve premises and equipment to comply with DDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use money allocated by WAG to continue identified on DDA survey still considered a priority • Carry out yearly access audits • Ensure feedback from disabled people is considered in determining priorities for further work 	Yr 1 Yr 1,2,3 Yr 1
Improve access to information/communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop disability information in existing areas of communication eg intranet/newsletter • Develop checklist and disability good practice guide for all college communication to include ability to audit documents for accessibility and promotion of positive attitudes 	Yr2 Yr2
Promote participation/involvement by disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop variety of methods to encourage and promote further involvement of disabled staff and learners at all levels • Improve links with disability groups and other agencies to enable identification of community need 	Yr 1 Yr 1/2

