

## Disability Equality Scheme

### Part 1 – Introduction

The Sixth Form College Farnborough seeks to promote equality and celebrate diversity. The College is committed to creating an environment in which everyone is welcomed and respected, given equal opportunity and afforded full access to all activities wherever possible.

The College's Equality and Diversity Policy states:

*'Discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, nationality/citizenship, religion/belief, sexuality, transgender or social background will not be tolerated. Staff and students are expected to behave in a way which makes other people feel accepted, comfortable and safe.'*

The Disability Equality Scheme therefore seeks to remove barriers which may prevent disabled people, whether they are students, staff or visitors, from participating in the full life of the College.

The Scheme outlines the College's response to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which requires all public bodies, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take account of disabled people's disabilities, even when that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others

These six general duties are known as the 'Disability Equality Duty' ('DED').

## **The context of the new Disability Equality Duty:**

In 1995 the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) established new rights for disabled people. The major requirements of the Act are:

- Disabled people must not be treated less favourably for a reason related to their disability.
- Service providers must make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people. This includes physical adjustments with regard to premises as well as in matters of policy, procedure and practice.
- Colleges must take 'reasonable steps' to encourage students to disclose disability, but also to respect the student's right to confidentiality.
- Colleges must anticipate, not merely react, to the likely requirements of all learners.

In addition, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) was implemented as an amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act and strengthened the requirement for student services in education to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

The College has sought to implement the Disability Discrimination Act by:

- Reviewing the student diary, College Charter and Enrolment Briefing pack. In particular, encouraging the early disclosure of an additional need in a confidential and supportive environment.
- Reviewing admissions practices and procedures, including alerting applicants to their rights in addition to anticipating and assessing student additional needs prior to enrolment.
- Relevant staff have been trained in supporting students with specific disabilities and support needs.
- The fabric of the building has been adapted to meet the needs of the disabled and all future building plans are considered in the light of the requirements of disabled users.

The Disability Equality Scheme (DES) is therefore an extension of the College's existing commitment to ensure that all members of the College community are treated with the utmost respect and have genuine opportunity to fulfil their potential.

## **Part 2 - Disability equality vision, values and principles:**

The College Mission Statement:

*The mission of the College is to develop as a distinguished major provider of the highest quality academic and vocational education, leading to higher education and employment, and contributing to the government targets for education and training **and** to develop the lively and caring atmosphere of the College, enriching the lives of all students and equipping them with the qualifications and skills to meet the demands of a changing world with confidence and assurance.*

The College adopts the 'social model' of disability in that it regards the attitudinal and environmental barriers experienced by disabled people as the most important factors in promoting equality; inequality is not a natural consequence of an impairment or medical condition.

The College, therefore, will seek to integrate the spirit of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) into all its Policies, Plans, Procedures and Practices and thus maintain its proud status as a Beacon College which treats all its members as individuals with a unique and valuable contribution to make.

### **Part 3 - actively engaging with disabled people:**

The College realises that true collaboration with disabled people is central to the success of the Disability Equality Scheme and therefore a variety of different steps has been, and will be taken, to ensure that wherever possible, disabled people are an integral part of review and decision making processes.

Previously, attempts to involve disabled students in a forum have been limited in their success; information has therefore largely been gathered by monitoring application forms, course forums and by individual contact. This approach has thus, largely, fallen short of the requirement of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) to engage disabled students in 'genuine and active' involvement. Information regarding staff needs has also largely been obtained by the monitoring of application forms and individual discussion.

The College already has very effective links with many external agencies and is building upon existing relationships. For example, the expertise of the Hampshire County Council Sensory Impairment Unit is regularly sought and its recommendations implemented. In addition, the College has a long-standing partnership with a local Special School and students from both institutions share experiences and learn together; much has been learned regarding physical access and needs by welcoming disabled young people on to College premises.

To collaborate further with disabled staff, students and service users, the college is participating in the following activities:

- A joint project with Rushmoor Borough Council to consult with as many disabled people as possible and to share information with service providers in the Borough. To date, the Rushmoor Borough Diversity Steering Group has made the following progress:
  1. A meeting with disabled students at Farnborough College of Technology provided information regarding specific issues which were not applicable to the Sixth Form College Farnborough.
  2. A general advertisement in a local paper asked for disabled residents to participate in a collaborative assessment of access for disabled people within the Borough. The results had wide ranging implications for Rushmoor Borough Council, but no issues were raised for the Sixth Form College Farnborough to address.
  3. A consultation was held with Hampshire Association for the Care of the Blind, and again the results, although very pertinent for Rushmoor Borough council, did not raise any issues for the College.

- The College Human Resources Administrator circulated a questionnaire to all staff, asking them to consider disclosing disability and inviting volunteers (disabled and able-bodied) to participate in the Equality and Diversity group, which is responsible for carrying out impact assessments throughout the College. Fifteen members of staff disclosed a disability, of whom seven, wished to participate in the Equality and Diversity group. Thirteen non-disabled staff members also indicated that they wished to participate in the Equality and Diversity group.
- Membership of the Equality and Diversity group includes two officers from the Student Association - those with responsibility for 1) Personalised Learning and 2) Equal Opportunities
- The Equality and Diversity Group has now been convened and Terms of Reference agreed. The group has met half-termly since the Spring Term and carried out impact assessments on the following policies, procedures, practices and plans since May 2009:

1. College Charter
2. Health and Safety Policy
3. Disability Equality Scheme
4. Off-Site Activities
5. ILT Procurement Policy
6. Lesson Observation Policy
7. Study Support – Students with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities
8. Fire and Emergency Procedures
9. Acceptable use of E-mail and the Internet
10. Notes on Guidance on Mental and Physical Fitness for Entry to Employment in the College
11. Disability Statement
12. Use of facilities out of hours/by outside users

The impact assessment recommendations have been passed to Principalship and accepted amendments have been incorporated into the new documentation and procedures. The Principalship responses have been fed back to the Equality and Diversity Group.

- A survey of all students who have declared a disability was carried out in June 2007. The aim was to gather information regarding the student experience pre-application, at interview and whilst at College. In addition, it was hoped that students would volunteer to join a focus group to facilitate collaboration and active engagement.

| Question/statement  | Response         | %  |
|---|------------------|----|
| How did you find out about the College?   | Through school   | 50 |
|   | Newspaper advert | 2  |
|   | From parents     | 19 |
|   | From friends     | 20 |
|   | Radio advert     | 1  |
|   | Other            | 8  |
| It was easy to find out what I wanted to know about College.<br>Strongly agree (1)<br>Strongly disagree (5) | 1                | 27 |
|   | 2                | 50 |
|   | 3                | 16 |
|   | 4                | 7  |
|   | 5                | 0  |
| It was easy to understand the information I was given.<br>Strongly agree (1)<br>Strongly disagree (5)       | 1                | 22 |
|   | 2                | 57 |
|   | 3                | 14 |
|   | 4                | 5  |
|   | 5                | 2  |
| Did you put on your application form that you had an additional need or difficulty?                         | Yes              | 55 |
|   | No               | 45 |
| I was worried about having an interview.<br>Strongly agree (1)<br>Strongly disagree (5)                     | 1                | 7  |
|   | 2                | 17 |
|   | 3                | 30 |
|   | 4                | 27 |
|   | 5                | 19 |
| Did you discuss your additional need or difficulty during the interview?                                    | Yes              | 46 |
|   | No               | 54 |
| If you answered 'yes' to the above, was it an easy thing to do?   | Yes              | 84 |
|   | No               | 16 |
| Did you talk to staff about your additional need or difficulty before you enrolled?                         | Yes              | 54 |
|   | No               | 46 |
| If you answered 'yes' to the above, did you sort out the help you needed?                                   | Yes              | 87 |
|   | No               | 13 |
| Do you have any support now you are at College?   | Yes              | 54 |
|   | No               | 46 |
| If you answered 'yes' to the question above, please explain what support you have.                          | Structured Study | 43 |
|   | One to one       | 12 |
|   | Literacy class   | 5  |
|   | Drop-in help     | 25 |
|   | Other            | 15 |

Additional free response questions were asked:

1. If you responded that you 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that it was easy to find out information about College, please explain why.  
**The major concern was regarding clarity of explanation of courses and enrichment options.**
2. If you responded that you 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that it was easy to understand the information I was given, please explain why.  
**The only response here was that the prospectus was a little confusing in places.**
3. If you did not put on your application form that you have a disability or learning need, please explain why.  
**Most of the responses here concerned students not realising that they had a need - several were diagnosed at enrolment or in the first few weeks of the autumn term. One student said that they were worried that disclosure would jeopardise their chances of being offered a place at College.**
4. If you responded that you 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that you were worried about having an interview, please explain why.  
**All responses here indicate that worry was due to general fear of the possibility of poor performance at interview, rather than an issue related to disability.**
5. Please write a few sentences about the support you receive (if you do) e.g. does it help, what could be better, is there enough?  
**Responses to this were very varied and ranged from a perception that College is only interested in the 'clever people' to an appreciation of their Access Arrangement for examinations. All students commented that their support in Structured Study was useful but more emphasis on individual needs within the class would be helpful.**

Finally, respondents were asked if they would be willing to attend a focus group (with the incentive of a free lunch!) to discuss their needs. Only 5 students were willing to do this and 4 of those were Year 13 students who left straight after completing the survey. The one student who is still in the College has been individually interviewed.

#### **Part 4 - Leadership and Management**

The College Governors and Senior Management team are committed to the ethos of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) and enthusiastically support the measures to comply with it. The Principal has therefore charged a small Steering Group with the task of overseeing the development of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and Action Plan. The Steering Group comprises:

Simon Jarvis: Vice Principal

Catherine Cole: Deputy Principal, Student Services

Simon Reigh: Faculty Director, Humanities and Social Sciences

Ann Horsley: Assistant Director, Personalised Learning (inc. study support)

Sheila Davine: Director of Resources

Jenny Pearson: Human Resources Administrator

Rebecca Sharp: Equality and Diversity Co-Ordinator

Members of the Steering Group (plus appropriate volunteers and co-opted persons) have responsibility for impact assessing the Policies, Procedures, Plans and Practices of a particular area:

- Human Resources: Simon Jarvis, Jenny Pearson
- Estates: Sheila Davine, Gordon Dodds
- Curriculum Planning: Simon Reigh, Vince Scannella
- Quality: Simon Jarvis
- Marketing and Admissions: Catherine Cole, John Guy
- Student Services: Catherine Cole, Ann Horsley

The Steering Group is mindful of the fact that all staff and students must be made aware of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) and of the positive and far reaching impact it will have on the College. The Action Plan therefore, has a detailed timetable for the dissemination of information and the promotion of disability equality.

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) was introduced to teaching staff at one of the regular Faculty meetings and to non-teaching staff at a specially convened meeting. A session on Equality and Diversity has been written into the tutorial programme so that all students will be made aware of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) during tutorial lessons and will be encouraged to be involved in Impact assessments as appropriate.

With regards to curriculum planning, all teachers and curriculum managers have been provided with training on the legal requirements of the Disability Equality Duty. Many curriculum area policies have been impact assessed and, where appropriate, changes have been made to close gaps between disabled and non-disabled peoples' experiences and opportunities. Curriculum teams at the beginning of the new academic year focused on induction procedures with students to ensure that they promote disability equality. Any new curriculum area policies, procedures, practices and plans are planned with the requirements of the DED in mind. The lesson observation 'aide-memoire' was impact assessed by the Equality & Diversity Group, and some changes made to ensure that due regard is given to disability equality.

## **Part 5 - Carrying out Impact Assessments:**

The specific duty requirement of the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to carry out impact assessments provides an important mechanism for ensuring that due regard is given to disability equality in all policy development and decision-making activities. The College is committed to ensuring that equality becomes a central and integral activity to all services and functions.

Impact assessments are a means by which the college will narrow the gap between the expectations, experiences, education, qualifications and employment of disabled and non-disabled people; they provide the starting point for organisational change.

The College has adopted the Learning and Skills Council Development Agency's suggested format for conducting impact assessments:

- all Policies, Plans, Procedures and Practices have been mapped;
- screening to determine priority has been completed;
- evidence has been considered for some Policies, Plans, Procedures and Practices and the likely impact assessed;
- actions required have been passed to Principalship for its response and subsequent implementation;
- measures are in place to monitor and evaluate the outcome of any changes made.

The College Steering Group has compiled a comprehensive list of all Policies, Procedures, Plans and Practices and each has been designated 'priority 1' or 'priority 2' (see Appendix A). The Equality and Diversity group determines the exact order in which the impact assessments will take place. The appropriate member of the Steering Group is then responsible, in collaboration with members of the College Equality and Diversity Group, for conducting impact assessments and suggesting changes and amendments. Such amendments are then subject to the usual College approval procedure i.e. approval by the Senior Management Teams and Governors.

Details of the cross-College impact assessments, and resulting changes, are freely available from the Equality and Diversity Group; they are held by the Deputy Principal, Student Services.

Details of Curriculum Area impact assessments are available from the appropriate Curriculum Managers; copies are held centrally by the Deputy Principal, Student Services.

## Part 6 - Gathering Information:

Gathering statistical information is vital to the process of achieving greater equality for disabled staff and students; it will enable the College to:

- Assess its performance
- Carry out appropriate and effective impact assessments
- Identify barriers to good practice and inform action for improvement
- Review progress and adjust action as appropriate
- Monitor progress in relation to available national benchmarks

The Human Resources Administrator has encouraged all staff to disclose disabilities to ascertain the disability profile; this information, in conjunction with impact assessments on relevant Policies, Plans, Procedures and Practices, will inform future decision making and action. Disabled staff are encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of this process and it is anticipated that further need for information gathering and statistical analysis will emerge.

### The staff disability profile for the academic year 2008-9 is as follows:

| <b>Nature of Disability</b>   | <b>Count</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Arthritis                     | 1            |
| Breast Cancer                 | 1            |
| Depression                    | 1            |
| Diabetes                      | 2            |
| Dyslexia                      | 1            |
| Heart Disease                 | 1            |
| Partial Deafness & Depression | 1            |
| Poor Hearing                  | 1            |
| Spina Bifida                  | 1            |
| Undisclosed                   | 4            |
| Visual Impairment             | 1            |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>15</b>    |

The College has encouraged all students to disclose disabilities to ascertain the disability profile; this information, in conjunction with impact assessments on relevant Policies, Plans, Procedures and Practices, will inform future decision making and action. In particular, the results of the student survey will be used to inform pre-admission procedures and plans.

**The student disability profile for the academic year 2009-10 is as follows:**

| <b>Nature of disability</b>                            | <b>Count</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Aspergers Syndrome                                     | 2            |
| Disability affecting mobility                          | 3            |
| Emotional/behavioural difficulties                     | 11           |
| Hearing Impairment                                     | 12           |
| Medical condition (e.g. Epilepsy, Asthma, Diabetes)    | 385          |
| Mental health difficulty                               | 5            |
| Other  | 2            |
| Other physical disability                              | 33           |
| Visual impairment                                      | 32           |
| <b>Total no. of students with disclosed disability</b> | <b>485</b>   |

### **Part 7 - Putting the scheme into practice:**

The Disability Equality Scheme is published on the College website. It is thoroughly revised on a yearly basis and minor adjustments will be made in the intervening period.

The DED is a standing item on all Faculty meeting agendas within the Equality and Diversity standing item.

In addition, the College Action Plan accompanies the Disability Equality Scheme (DES), and details all activity focused upon improving equality of opportunity for disabled members of the College Community. The Action Plan sets SMART targets:

- Specific – targets will detail exactly what is to happen and who will be accountable
- Measurable – it will be possible measure whether a target has been achieved
- Achievable – targets will be achievable in the timescale
- Realistic – targets will be challenging but possible
- Time-related – all action will have deadlines

The College Action Plan is published on the College website and updated at least annually.

### **Part 8 - Monitoring and evaluation:**

The Steering Group is responsible for amending the Disability Equality Scheme (DES), and Action Plan. All information gathered, impact assessments completed and action agreed is recorded as an on-going process. At the end of each academic year, the necessary revision of the Action Plan and Disability Equality Scheme (DES) is undertaken.

The appropriate member of the Steering Group is responsible, in collaboration with members of the College Equality and Diversity Group, for conducting impact assessments and suggesting changes and amendments. Such amendments are then subject to the usual college approval procedure i.e. approval by Principalship and Governors.

During the first year of the College Action Plan, the major focus has been on firstly mapping and prioritising and then beginning to impact assess cross-college Policies, Procedures, Plans and Practices. In addition, all Curriculum Managers have been trained in the carrying out of Impact Assessments and have begun to disseminate this information to colleagues. Some curriculum areas have already begun carrying out Impact assessments on their Policies, Procedures, Plans and Practices. It is anticipated that disability equality will increasingly become an integral part of subsequent plans and action.

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