

Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme - 1st Annual Report December 2007

Context

Yeovil College is pleased to proactively respond to its legal and moral duty and responsibilities towards anti-discriminatory practice.

As part of the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) the College produced its first Disability Equality Scheme in December 2006. This document includes an action plan that clearly demonstrates our commitment to the Disability Equality Duty and its purpose to create a positive, whole college, non-discriminatory ethos and practice .

This 1st annual report (2007) reviews our progress so far and identifies the steps we have taken to fulfil our disability equality duty, (i.e. the action plan); what we have done throughout the first year to meet our initial targets, eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

It is the responsibility of Yeovil College Equality and Diversity Group to monitor and review our DES and corresponding Action Plan. The overall action plan comprises of eight sub sections, with individual points for action and identified responsibilities across the *whole* of the organisation. The following salient points offer an overview of progress for each area for the year ended December 2007.

Action Plan Review

1.) Staff Training

- 'Disability Equality' training is now part of the College staff induction programme and is also offered within the whole College continual professional development programme.
- Staff awareness of disability issues has been raised through regular updates/reminders within internal 'News in 90' and 'Team Brief' documents. This will remain as ongoing.
- 'Disability Discrimination' and 'Impact Assessment' training by outside trainers, has been delivered for all College Managers. (Impact assessment of policies to begin Jan 08)
- Training and Support for embedding equality & diversity issues (including disability) within all curriculum areas across College has begun and is on-going.

- A mandatory training programme raising child/learner protection issues, (particularly disability related,) has begun and is on-going across College.
- A new tutorial programme (to include disability issues and awareness raising) is currently being considered for implementation 2008/09.

2.) Resources & Data

- Improved data collection to identify opportunities, achievement and progression for students with disabilities is on-going.
- Improving systems to offer information re support and access for disabled students/users of the College is taken seriously and is on-going. (The creation of a new website (Jan 2008) will greatly aid accessible information.)
- Improved internal monitoring system to track support for students with additional needs was fully implemented in July 2007. It is currently being monitored and reviewed to ensure quality.

3.) Physical Resources

- Feasibility study to implement improvements (including full disabled access) to the main College reception area is ongoing. Appropriate access to all Learner Journey Services personnel also being considered.
- Some improvements achieved during 2007 to make 'Megabite' area a more accessible and inclusive environment. Menus now reflecting more diverse needs. This remains ongoing.
- New Leonardo Building and improvements to UCY have offered stimulating learning environments which are fully accessible for disabled students.
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4.) Marketing

- Review of College website has taken place and new web site with greatly improved disabled access to be implemented Jan 2008.
- Marketing Team has heightened awareness of disability issues and subsequent College responsibilities. They are committed to offering equality of opportunity and positive

images within all College marketing materials (e.g. new YC prospectus).

- New College logo and advertising materials launched with a 'fresher', more modern and accessible feel that ensures a welcoming image of Yeovil College is offered to the community.
- A diary of events to promote national/international days are now embedded within College calendar and are being proactively celebrated in a variety of ways (e.g. World Aids Day, World Mental Health Day etc.)
- A current list of local and national contacts available to assist College with information, help and advice re disability, health, etc is now available to staff on College intranet

5.) Personnel

- Clear reference to DDA4 and relevant disability disclosure opportunities now prominent within all job application forms.
- Staff induction includes relevant session on Learning Support and disability awareness. (Follow up CPD sessions offered within annual programme for all staff.)
- Staff appraisal paperwork now includes a section regarding specific support for individuals (e.g. on-going disabilities, health issues etc.) Further improvement review of paperwork on-going

6.) Policies and Procedures

- YC Equality Diversity Group - Disability Sub- Group, meets monthly. It leads on the production and monitoring of current Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan. The Sub-Group reports progress and issues for discussion and agreement, back to full E&D Group bi-monthly meetings.
- A preliminary evaluation of the extent of impact assessment on policies and practices is currently taking place (Principal leading.) A subsequent priority list and timetable (over next two years) will be issued shortly. The College impact assessment tools have been agreed and will be implemented (Jan 08). Learners with disabilities will be asked to take part in the proceedings. However, we are aware that this exercise will take some considerable time to complete for all policies and procedures.

- The College admissions process is being continuously reviewed to ensure prospective learners are offered confidential disclosure opportunities and relevant advice, guidance and support for *a//* learners is made available wherever appropriate.
- 'Equality and Diversity' has been introduced on all cross College meeting agendas

7.) Leadership/Management

- Equality of opportunity (including disability issues) is now embedded within College SAR, QIP and Quality Review paperwork/procedures.
- A link Governor has been appointed this year to review the work of the Equality & Diversity Group, attend group meetings wherever possible and liaise with appropriate staff. The link Governor will be able to further advise the Governing body of relevant E&D issues.
- The College has continued this year with its 'Commitment to a Better College' campaign, particularly highlighting disability issues within the 'Respect' section.
- A positive, national recruitment process was undertaken by the College to appoint a new Equality & Diversity Co-ordinator. An appointment was made, but unfortunately the post was eventually not taken up. This is now currently being reviewed.
- Identification of any gaps and barriers in provision for disabled people, is now being identified within curriculum maps as part of College Strategic Plan.

8.) Student/Staff/User Participation

- Two representatives of the Student Union have been appointed to the College Equality & Diversity Group and a procedure is in place to ensure continuity of student membership of the group for the future.
- The Disability Sub-Group has extended its membership to include appropriate members of the College community i.e. a student union representative, the UCY Disability Tutor, the Mental Health Co-ordinator, a member of the marketing team and a disabled student.

- Student Union now has a higher profile within the College and is able to promote events and issues to do with equality and diversity, directly with its members across the College.

Conclusion

We at Yeovil College feel that within this first year, we have made good progress with our Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan. There are many issues and action points that we are currently working on and towards to further improve our understanding and practice across the College. We are aware that some action points will take considerable time to complete and these will now be taken forward to our 2nd year Action Plan. However we believe that there is definite greater awareness of disability issues and a willingness to offer the very best opportunities we can, for *all* our learners, prospective learners, staff and users of the College.