

Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme 2nd Annual Report December 2008

Context

As part of the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) the College produced its first Disability Equality Scheme (DES) in December 2006. This document included an action plan that clearly demonstrates our commitment to the Disability Equality Duty and its purpose to create positive, non-discriminatory ethos and practice across the whole College. This 2nd Annual Report (2008) reviews our progress so far and identifies the steps we have taken to fulfil our Disability Equality Duty, (i.e. the action plan), during the second year, in order 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 the 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 2008.

Action Plan Review

1.) Staff Training

- Equality and Diversity training (including disability awareness) is now delivered to all staff as an on-going programme. It is delivered during new staff induction and a specific mandatory module, for managers, is part of the Management Training 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.
- All Managers received training on Equality and Diversity Impact Measures in January 2008 and all policies are now routinely screened.
- An Equality and Diversity file is now held in each Department with fact sheets on key legislation and issues.
- Sessions are delivered within the New Teachers Forum on embedding equality and diversity within the curriculum.

- A new tutorial programme (to include Equality and Diversity disability issues and awareness raising) was introduced for students for the 2008/09 academic year.
- A new training programme was set up for tutors including information on disability issues.
- A mandatory training programme on child/learner protection issues, (particularly disability related) continues to be on-going across College.

2.) Resources & Data

- Data collection on retention, achievement and progression for students with disabilities, or in receipt of additional support, is now in place and information is discussed at appropriate College meetings.
- Information regarding support and access for disabled students/users of the College is available on the new website (Jan 2008) and incorporates accessibility features. It is also available to staff on an internal drive.
- An annual HR report is now produced with equality and diversity statistics relating to staff.
- The HR Department now collect statistical data, from exit interviews, related to the effect of policies and practices on disabled staff.

3.) Physical Resources

- The main College Reception and Enrolment Area was completely re-furnished in Summer 2008. This included improved wheel-chair access and facilities for confidential disclosure during the enrolment process.
- A sub-group of the Equality and Diversity Group carried out an access audit of all buildings. Improvements have been made to signage, including visibility signage on steps and footpaths. The College is about to embark on a new accommodation strategy with a major building programme and members of the Equality and Diversity Group will be on the working parties forming part of the consultation process.
- The Megabite now offers a Healthy Option Menu.
- New signage has been introduced across the College.

4.) Marketing

- The new web site, with greatly improved accessibility features, was launched in Jan 2008. This has an Equality and Diversity Section with all relevant reports and policies available for view.
- Photographs showing the diverse nature of the student population and the courses on offer are displayed across the College.
- Success stories are regularly featured in the local press.
- 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, Anti-bullying Week etc.)
- The new prospectuses include positive Equality and Diversity images and include detailed information about disability access and support.

5.) Personnel

- All new job descriptions include expectations regarding Equality and Diversity.
- Staff induction includes training on Equality and Diversity and Learner Protection.
- New staff, who have disclosed a disability, are now offered the opportunity to meet with the Head of Occupational Health at the start of their employment.
- Return-to-work paperwork now includes a section regarding specific support for on-going disabilities, health issues etc.

6.) Policies and Procedures

- The College impact assessment tools were introduced in January 2008. The Senior Leadership Team have overall responsibility for the process. The Equality and Diversity Audit in October 2008 highlighted that improvements still need to be made to the system.
- On-going review of College documentation and literature ensures that reference to Equality and Diversity is included where appropriate.
- Reviews and reports of the Disability equality Scheme and Action Plan are being completed according to schedule.

7.) Leadership/Management

- An Equality and Diversity Link Governor has been appointed and she attends the Equality and Diversity Group meetings.
- Equality and Diversity is now the responsibility of the Head of Learner Support Services.
- The College has introduced a new campaign based around Every Child Matters as part of the 'Commitment to a Better College' campaign.
- All managers have been trained in how to undertake Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments.

8.) Student/Staff/User Participation

- Two representatives of the Student Union are appointed to the College Equality & Diversity Group on an annual basis to ensure continuity of student membership of the group.
- The Student Union was consulted about the production of posters for the new campaign based around Every Child Matters as part of the 'Commitment to a Better College' campaign.
- The Student Union is proactive in promoting events and issues to do with equality and diversity.

Conclusion

The College feels that, during the second year of the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan, good progress has been made in achieving the actions set. We shall continue to working towards completing outstanding actions and further improving our understanding and practice across the College. However, we believe that, within the College, there is now 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.