



Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme

December 2009

2nd Edition

# Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme

## General Duty

The Disability Equality Duty (2005) was a new legislative requirement placed on public authorities (including FE colleges) to deliver better disability equality outcomes. The DED required colleges to act proactively on disability equality issues, across the whole institution and to have an anticipatory, social model approach towards disability equality.

As part of the Duty, Yeovil College published its first Disability Equality Scheme and related Action Plan in December 2006. During the last three years it has been proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly, has built upon identified current good practice and worked towards improving participation, satisfaction, achievement and opportunities for all.

This Scheme replaces the 2006 Scheme and takes into account progress made, as identified in the Annual Reports published during the last three years.

Reference to 'disabled people' includes disabled students, staff, users of the College and other visitors. The definition of a disabled person under the Disability Discrimination Act (Appendix 1) covers people with a wide range of impairments, including 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. A physical or mental impairment includes:

- sensory impairment
  - impairment relating to mental functioning, including learning difficulties/disabilities
  - long-term health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, HIV, Cancer or Multiple Sclerosis
- (reference [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org))

## Requirements of the Duty

The duty requires Yeovil College to have due regard to:

- *Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people*

Yeovil College will aim to ensure that disabled people have full opportunities and choices to improve the quality of their lives and be respected and included as equal members of our community.

- *Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995)*

Yeovil College will build upon its existing duty to ensure that unlawful discrimination is eliminated by making anticipatory and reasonable

adjustments in relation to its educational provision and access to goods and services.

- *Eliminate disability related harassment*

Yeovil College will review its current anti-harassment policies to ensure that they are effective and relevant to disabled people

- *Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people*

Yeovil College will ensure that positive images of and attitudes in relation to disabled people and disability equality, are central to the whole institution's ethos.

- *Encourage participation by disabled people in public life*

Yeovil College will seek to overcome the significant under-representation of disabled people within our community. It will also encourage disabled people to participate fully in College and local events, particularly within roles of responsibility.

- *Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment*

Yeovil College will recognise that equality of opportunity for disabled people cannot be achieved by simply treating disabled and non-disabled people alike. It will therefore endeavour to make reasonable adjustment and positively discriminate wherever appropriate.

NB. The above statements apply to all sites and functions of the College, not just education provision, employment and service delivery but, for example, budget setting, course validation, procurement and strategic planning.

## **Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme**

### **Context**

Yeovil College is a tertiary college working towards full inclusiveness for its learners, staff and service users. The College serves communities in South Somerset and North and West Dorset and works closely with Yeovil Federation, Bournemouth University, University of Gloucester, University of the West of England and Yeovil Vision. The College has a turnover of approximately £15m and provides learning opportunities for over eight thousand learners.

We have qualified, specialist staff who are experienced in working with a range of disabilities. These may include specific, profound and moderate learning difficulties; sensory impairment such as hearing and visual disabilities; physical and mobility related disabilities and mental health difficulties.

## **Aims of the Scheme**

Yeovil College's Disability Equality Scheme seeks to create a positive whole college ethos towards disability equality. This will be achieved through direct links to the self-assessment reports, quality improvement and development plans, strategic plan, staff development plan and relevant policies.

The Scheme has been created from on-going qualitative and quantitative action research that focuses upon disability equality perceptions. The following questions have been considered:-

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in three years?
- How will we get there?

This research enables us to produce:-

- A statement of the key outcomes
- An on-going, cross-College action plan
- On-going evidence for an annual report
- A tri-annual review process

## **Action Research Process**

In October 2005 the College Equality and Diversity Group\*, chaired by the Principal, agreed to create a Disability Sub-Group. The remit was for them to undertake the necessary research programme to inform the new College Disability Equality Scheme. The Group continued its work throughout the three years and was responsible for ensuring that the Action Plan was updated and available for review by the Equality and Diversity Group. In 2009, new working Groups were set up within the Equality and Diversity Group. These include a Monitoring Group (to review policies, action plans and staff training), a Staff Development Group (to develop E and D embedding in the curriculum and review recruitment), a Curriculum Group (to develop learning materials, tutorial sessions etc) and an Accessibility Group (to review access to written materials, virtual materials and properties).

## **Opportunities for Disabled People**

Yeovil College promotes inclusiveness regarding curriculum offer, applications for courses, employment opportunities and general access to College properties. We actively and sensitively encourage people with disabilities and specific learning difficulties to disclose their individual needs in order that appropriate support can be offered where necessary. In addition, specialist courses are also available to meet the needs of students with profound or moderate learning difficulties, mental ill health and basic skills needs. Prior to enrolment, we work closely with our partner schools, Connexions

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\* Terms of reference – Appendix 2

and other agencies to identify students with potential individual support needs. Systems are in place to monitor, track and review a variety of support options for students on course. In order to ensure that anti-discriminatory practice is followed, the review process seeks to discuss and act upon the views of disabled people. Reviews also enable opportunities for effective support to be further discussed and altered if appropriate, to help ensure success on individual programmes.

Student and staff satisfaction surveys, including information from people with disabilities, are carried out regularly.

The College now has access to statistics regarding disability equality, as a result of the first Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan. These are reviewed as part of the college's Key Performance Indicators on a regular basis.

Yeovil College considers liaison with specialist outside agencies and service users to be vital in exchanging and gathering information regarding the provision for disabled people. Agencies include NHS Trust Mental Health Team, Care & Residential Homes, Local Housing Projects, Women's Refuge, Headway, MIND, local employers, Social Services, Connexions, etc.

### **Impact Assessments**

All policies and procedures are reviewed as part of Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme and impact assessed for Equality and Diversity.

### **Progress since the First Scheme**

The Action Plan for the period 2006 – 2009 set the college a wide range of actions within eight different categories. The majority of the actions have been achieved and these are detailed in Appendix 3.

### **Action Plan Review 2006 - 2009**

The key achievements within the sections of the Action Plan are listed below:

#### **1.) Staff Training**

- Learning plans/schemes of work have been revised to improve the E and D focus. Related cross college training was delivered to teaching staff.
- Mandatory Equality and Diversity training (including disability awareness) is now delivered to all staff at induction and as an on-going 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.
- 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. Some tutorial sessions have included delivery by members of the Learner Support Team and Faith Adviser on E and D issues and ethics. A more comprehensive and integrated programme is needed and this will be taken forward by the Faculties, formed as part of the new college structure.
- A new training programme was set up for tutors including information on disability issues.
- A mandatory training programme on child/learner protection issues, (including disability issues) 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. Trend data is reviewed on an on-going basis.
- An annual HR report is now produced with more comprehensive equality and diversity statistics relating to staff.
- The HR Department continue to collect statistical data, from exit interviews, related to the effect of policies and practices on disabled staff. Trend information will soon be available.
- 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 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

- New signage, which incorporates a modern logo, has been installed across the campuses at Mudford Road, Lufton, North Dorset Skills Centre and the University Centre (UCY).
- In order to assist people with visual impairment high visibility yellow strips have been installed on all steps and raised pavements on college campuses.
- All disabled toilets have now been re-signed as accessibility toilets so that people with medical conditions or those going through gender re-assignment are able to access the facilities more easily.
- Parking for people with disabilities has also been improved at the University Centre and a hand-rail installed on the steps from the car park.
- The front entrance at UCY now has an automatic door which provides easy access for disabled users.

- Accommodation at the University Centre has been improved with a lift to the first floor and hearing loops in four classrooms, as well as the lecture theatre.
- The main College Reception and Enrolment Area was completely refurbished in the 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 new phased building programme and members of the Equality and Diversity Group will be on the working parties forming part of the consultation process.
- Some improvements were achieved during 2007 to make 'Megabite' area a more accessible and inclusive environment. Menus now reflect more diverse needs and there is a Healthy Option Menu.
- The new Leonardo Building has offered a stimulating learning environment which is fully accessible for disabled students.

#### 4.) Marketing

- The new web site, with greatly improved accessibility features, was launched in January 2008. This has an Equality and Diversity Section with all relevant reports and policies available for view.
- The web-site includes on-line access to prospectuses for full-time and part-time courses and university level programmes. It also includes current news items, student success stories, details of college facilities and advice about courses and support.
- A twice-yearly Equality and Diversity news letter is under production. This will be available on the on the Website.
- Students, including those with disabilities are invited to be part of the working group which reviews, on an annual basis, the prospectus/ enrolment, paperwork etc.
- An updated version of the current local and national contact list for disability, health information and advice has been added to the college Intranet and Moodle, to ensure it is easily accessible.
- 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 the 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 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. The new prospectuses include positive Equality and Diversity images and include detailed information about disability access and support.

- A new college logo and advertising materials were launched with a 'fresher', more modern and accessible feel that ensures a welcoming image of Yeovil College is offered to the community.

#### 5.) Personnel

- Appraisal systems have been reviewed and up-dated to include the opportunity for disclosure of disability and provision of subsequent support
- 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.
- Clear reference to DDA4 and relevant disability disclosure opportunities are now prominent within all job application forms.

#### 6.) Policies and Procedures

- A monitoring sub group of the full E & D group was set up in March 09 in order to produce a definitive list of policies requiring review and/or equality and diversity impact assessments. Priority policies were identified for immediate review and impact assessment.
- The College impact assessment tools were introduced in January 2008. The Senior Leadership Team has overall responsibility for the process. The Equality and Diversity Audit in October 2008 highlighted that improvements still need to be made to the system.
- A College Mental Health Policy has been produced, approved by the Corporation and disseminated to staff.
- Risk assessment paperwork for college trips, including those overseas, has been revised to ensure that it includes awareness of all disability issues.
- Disability equality is now included within the assessment procedure for WBL placement providers.
- 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 the schedule.
- The College admissions process is being continuously reviewed to ensure prospective learners are offered confidential disclosure opportunities and relevant advice, guidance and support for all learners is made available wherever appropriate.
- 'Equality and Diversity' is a standing item on cross College meeting agendas.

## 7.) Leadership/Management

- Equality of opportunity (including disability issues) is now embedded within the College SAR, QIP and Quality Review paperwork/procedures.
- A link Governor has been appointed 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.
- 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 has been reviewed and Equality and Diversity is now the responsibility of the Head of Learner Support Services.
- Identification of any gaps and barriers in provision for disabled people, is now being identified within curriculum maps as part of College Strategic Plan.
- E&D is now an agenda item at most college meetings.
- The College has introduced a new campaign based around Every Child Matters as part of the 'Commitment to a Better College' campaign.
- Managers have been trained in how to undertake Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments.
- Limited progress has been made so far in the recruitment of disabled people to elected posts, although actions have been put in place to actively address the situation.

## 8.) Student/Staff/User Participation

- E&D questions have been included in cross college surveys, the results of which inform the Self Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan.
- A UCY Forum site has been developed for all students.
- For the first time students at the University Centre have a Student Voice. Elected course representatives meet with the Director of UCY to discuss non-course issues. They requested changes to the disabled parking, with hatched areas to give more space, and this has been put in place. Access for students with disabilities will be reviewed at the Student Voice meetings.
- Representatives of the student body are invited to join the Equality & Diversity 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 related to equality and diversity.

## **Disability Scheme Action Plan 2009 -10**

The Action Plan for 2009 -10 is shown at Appendix 5. It will be up-dated on an annual basis and takes forward any outstanding actions from the previous plan.

### **Management of the Scheme**

The Senior Leadership Team and members of the Corporation support the continuing work required for the second Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme and relevant Action Plan. The Equality and Diversity Group will continue to monitor the development of the Scheme and to promote it across the College, including the wider community.

Yeovil College will adopt a positive social model of disability, (Appendix 4). It recognises that it is the responsibility of all staff to eliminate discrimination and to promote disability equality. A mandatory training programme is in place to enable staff to acquire the knowledge and skills required to promote disability equality.

Yeovil College will continue to ensure that disability equality is a key consideration in course reviews, self assessment and quality improvement processes. It will be the responsibility of all managers to embed disability equality across the whole organisation.

### **Putting the Scheme into Practice**

The second Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan will be published and available to all staff, students and service users via the College Website and Intranet. Alternative formats including Braille, taped and large font etc, will be available on request.

The mechanisms used to report progress will include feedback to the Corporation, Senior Leadership Team, the Equality & Diversity Group, Student Executive, Employers' Forum and Parent Liaison Group. Team Brief will be used as the means of disseminating information to all staff. Tutorial Bulletin will inform all sixth form students and the college website will offer wider access for all other students, service users and other interested parties. If students/staff are unable to access these forms of information, it is expected that relevant managers/ lecturers/ tutors, will disseminate key points where appropriate.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In accordance with statutory requirements, the Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan will be reviewed and revised every three years. An annual report will be produced which assesses the progress made in meeting targets within the Action Plan. The Disability Equality Scheme will be monitored and updated within the monthly Equality & Diversity Group meetings.

## **Conclusion**

The Disability Equality Duty provides the opportunity for continued organisational change within Yeovil College, building upon the existing core values of increasing inclusion and celebrating diversity. It is anticipated this will lead to improved choices and opportunities which will help to close the gap between the expectations, experiences, education, qualifications and employment of disabled and non-disabled people.

The Yeovil College Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan enables us to further improve the experiences of ALL our staff, learners and service users by continually reflecting upon our practice, facilities and achievements. It offers genuine opportunities for positive action, allowing us to proactively break down barriers and prevent discrimination within our institution.