

Bedford College

Disability Equality Duty and Scheme



Introduction

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) is a new legislative requirement placed on public authorities, including colleges, to deliver better disability equality outcomes. The DED requires us to act proactively on disability equality issues across the College, rather than on an individual basis. The duty is aimed at tackling institutional disability-related discrimination, and compliments the individual rights focus of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

Definitions for the purpose of this document

Reference to 'disabled people' in this document includes disabled students, staff, and other disabled users of the College's services such as visitors, parents at open days and achievements ceremonies, and users of our sports and arts facilities. A disabled person is someone who 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.

A physical or mental impairment includes:

- sensory impairments
- impairments relating to mental functioning, including learning difficulties/disabilities
- long term health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for making sure our duty is met lies with senior College staff. Teaching and support staff, students, and members of the wider community using the College facilities also need to play a part in fulfilling the duty.

The duty comprises a general duty to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- eliminate disability related harassment

- 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.

The duty comprises a specific duty to produce a disability equality scheme, and the College's scheme is set out below.

Our Disability Equality Scheme

This scheme is specifically designed for the College, to help us meet effectively and fully our general duty as outlined above.

The scheme is published on our website; reviewed and revised as necessary every three years (first review December 2009), and we will report progress on an annual basis.

The scheme has been produced with the active involvement, help and support of disabled people (as detailed later).

There are five parts to our scheme:

- a statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the Scheme
- arrangements for gathering information on the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees, and the educational opportunities available to and achievements of disabled students
- details of how information gathered will be used, in particular to review the effectiveness of Action Plans and prepare subsequent Schemes
- a method / methods for assessing the impact of policies and practices on disability equality and where improvements can be made
- an Action Plan detailing the steps that are going to be taken to meet the general duty.

Part 1: Involving disabled people

The College recognises that those best placed to identify and help resolve barriers are disabled people themselves. We wanted to ensure as many students and staff as possible were involved. For the purposes of this scheme the College ensured that:

- all recent staff and student surveys allowed for the identification of those describing themselves as having a disability and survey results were analysed so that results from those with disabilities could easily be compared with the whole survey population. This

allowed us to find out differences in opinion on issues such as perceptions of teaching, teaching support, information provision, rooming, staff management etc from a large number of disabled staff and students

- students and staff with a range of disabilities were canvassed for their more detailed views on these matters and also asked to comment on the adequacy of earlier drafts of this scheme. This included a session between the Principal and a specific group of students with a range of physical disabilities
- the views of the wider community including our LSC, the LEA and the voluntary sector were also invited on a draft scheme

Part 2: Gathering information

The College has extensive data gathering mechanisms as part of its work to achieve the EFQM Quality standard. Data is routinely collected through our:

- student records systems (EBS and PICS)
- financial system
- human resources system
- staff and student surveys
- attendance monitoring system
- timetabling system
- Have Your Say complaints and suggestions system
- IT helpdesk system
- Estates and Maintenance requests system

In addition the College collects data on other activity such as teaching observations, student disciplinary matters and student support.

Collectively this provides a comprehensive set of data capable of analysis for equality purposes. In particular it enables us to analyse the effect of our policies and practices on the:

- recruitment, development and retention of disabled staff
- educational opportunities available to, and achievements of, disabled students
- overall experience provided to disabled staff and students

Part 3: Using information

The College is committed to action rather than simply analysis! We intend to examine all our key sub-processes over the life of this scheme and develop clear and effective actions that demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity in practical terms and enrich the college experience of staff and students with disabilities.

The key way in which information is used is through the impact assessment programme detailed in the next part of this scheme. They will drive actions that will be included in our annual action plan. However, we recognise the impact assessments focus on actions to address identified shortcomings. In addition we will also analyse data with a view to identifying other ways in which we can promote equality of opportunity; promote positive attitudes, and encourage participation in public and college life.

Given the extensive nature of our data systems the College will seek to evaluate the effectiveness of actions in our action plan using that data.

Part 4: Impact assessment

The College has identified six key processes through its work on the EFQM Quality model. They are:

- learner success process
- financial control process
- staff improvement process
- environmental process
- quality improvement process
- planning process

This allows the College to identify key sub-processes which need to be impact assessed. The sub-processes have been assessed for scale and relevance to the duty. The key sub-processes will be assessed annually, others undertaken over a 3 year cycle.

The assessments will be made by relevant senior managers and reported to either the Human Resources Committee or Quality Standards and Achievement Committee. They will usually take the following form:

- a description of current procedures or actions to achieve our equality objectives
- an analysis of data to identify any potential equality issues

- an assessment of the effectiveness of current action
- where the assessment indicates current action is insufficient, the identification of new action that should be undertaken (following consultation) with clear assignment of responsibility for this

The intention is that assessments will be concise, action-oriented reports. Progress against actions will be summarised in our annual report.

The impact assessment timetable is as follows:

Process	Sub-process	Timing	Responsibility
Learner Success	Admissions process and recruitment v local population	2007 and every year	Centre Directors
	Attendance	2007 and every year	Centre Directors
	Retention	2007 and every year	Centre Directors
	Achievement	2007 and every year	Centre Directors
	Progression	2008	Centre Directors
	Disciplinary	2007 and every year	Centre Directors
	Surveys and access to enrichment, work placement, trips and visits etc	2007 and every year	Centre Directors
Financial Control	Procurement	2009	Finance Director
	Student Support payments	2009	Student Services Director
Staff Improvement	Recruitment process and recruitment v local population	2007 and every year	Organisational Development Director
	Rewards and Development	2007 and every year	Organisational Development Director
	Sickness absence	2007 and every year	Organisational Development Director
	Turnover and redundancy	2007 and every year	Organisational Development Director
	Disciplinary and Grievance	2007 and every year	Organisational Development Director
	Surveys	2007 and every year	Organisational Development Director

Environmental	Security, Access, IT, Signage etc	2008	Estates Director
Quality	Teaching Observation	2008	Quality & Marketing Director
	Complaints	2008	Quality & Marketing Director
Planning	Planning data – external data	2009	Quality & Marketing Director

Part 5: The Action Plan

The Action Plan is designed to ensure we meet our general and specific duties. However, the College has already identified that it specifically wishes to improve its accommodation so that it can be more accessible and comfortable for those with particular disabilities, and we are committed to extending our curriculum offer so that we can offer more local provision for students with more severe learning difficulties and disabilities. This action plan is based on addressing all the above objectives.

This plan covers a period of one year only to reflect the one-off actions we need to undertake in the first year. Subsequent plans will cover a longer period but still be revised annually to reflect impact assessments and other changes.

Objective	Action	Who?	When?	Outcome expected
Improved access to college accommodation	Ensure all new college accommodation is DDA compliant wherever possible	Estates Director	July 2007	Higher proportion of fully accessible accommodation
	Expand the volume of ground floor teaching space in the College	Estates Director	July 2007	Higher volume of ground floor teaching space
Extended curriculum for SLDD	Implement the curriculum plans for Foundation and Community Learning in line with their operational plan	Centre Director	September 2007	Wider range of college programmes for those with learning difficulties and disabilities
DES: improved involvement of disabled people	Improve our data capture in relation to disabled staff and students	Organisational Development Director (staff) and Student Services Director (students)	September 2007	Higher, more accurate, volume of disabled staff and students
DES: improved data gathering	Ensure the HR system can provide data to compare the performance and experience of	Organisational Development Director	March 2007	Effective analysis of data within impact assessments

	those with and without disability Ensure data on student disciplinary matters can be analysed by disability	Student Services Director	March 2007	See above
DES: more effective impact assessments	Undertake the assessments in line with part 4 of this document Build any action identified into the Action Plan Identify best practice in assessment and use this to help improve our own practice	As set out in part 4 Chief Executive Deputy Principal Student Services Director Organisational Development Director	As Part 4 Annually July 2007	New actions for inclusion in the Action Plan Actions happen Improved practices
promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people	Increase the number of disabled staff within the College Review any gap in student success rates between different groups of disabled students and address those gaps Interview all those who apply for staff positions who meet the criteria and are disabled Make disability equality training mandatory for all those involved in recruiting staff	Organisational development Director Centre Directors Organisational Development Director Organisational Development Director	July 2007 September 2007 Ongoing July 2007	Greater number and proportion of disabled staff Gap to close by at least 2% p.a. More disabled staff overall Better customer service outcomes
eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995	Provide disability equality training to front-line and Reception staff Review admissions criteria for	Organisational Development Director Student Services Director	July 2007 July 2007	Better customer service outcomes Higher success rates and

	<p>courses to ensure no unnecessary barriers to disabled people</p> <p>Review recruitment process for staff and students to ensure opportunities to disclose information about a disability</p> <p>Make the prospectus, website, and other materials available in different formats, and publicise the fact</p>	<p>Organisational Development Director and Student Services Director</p> <p>Quality & Marketing Director</p>	<p>July 2007</p> <p>July 2007</p>	<p>higher numbers of disabled students</p> <p>Better services to those groups</p> <p>More enquiries from disabled people</p>
eliminate disability related harassment	Continue to ensure we use our harassment procedures for staff and students and take any appropriate action	Organisational Development Director and Student Services Director	Ongoing	Harassment issues dealt with swiftly
promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	<p>Ensure our in-house staff development days include appropriate development in this area</p> <p>Review the use of pictures and images around the College and increase the number of positive images of disabled people in key buildings</p> <p>Actively seek disabled speakers for key College events</p>	<p>Organisational Development Director</p> <p>Estates Director</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>July 2007</p> <p>March 2007</p> <p>July 2007</p>	<p>Better customer service outcomes</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p>
encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Actively encourage disabled students to take up course representation, student representation and similar roles	Student Services Director	July 2007	Better survey outcomes

	Review the involvement of disabled staff in cross-college activity and seek to increase such involvement	Chief Executive	July 2007	Better survey outcomes from both staff and students
take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment	Audit our provision of disabled parking spaces to ensure we are making adequate provision at relevant College sites	Estates Director	January 2007	Better customer service outcomes
	Review our tutorial arrangements to determine whether guidance is needed on offering extra personal tutorial time to disabled students who require it	Student Services Director	July 2007	Higher success rates for those groups affected