

Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan



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CONTENTS

Part 1 - Introduction and foreword	2
Part 2 – Vision, Values and Principles	4
Part 3 – Actively Engaging with Disabled People	6
Part 4 – Leadership and Management	8
Part 5 – Carrying out Impact Assessments	10
Part 6 – Gathering Information	13
Part 7 – Putting the Scheme into Practice.....	15
 Appendix 1 – Action Plan	
 Appendix 2 – Impact Assessment proforma	

Part 1 - Introduction and foreword

The College values this opportunity to assess its current position in relation to the way disabled people are able to access all aspects of College life and to develop new ways of ensuring that disabled people have the best possible opportunities to join in with the culture of Kendal College.

The overriding purpose of our response to the Disability Equality Duty as described within this scheme is to:

1. To promote equality of opportunity
2. To eliminate unlawful discrimination
3. To eliminate equality-related harassment
4. To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
5. To encourage participation in public life
6. To take account of people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others

We believe we are already some way along the road to enabling equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled people but also recognise that there are elements of College life that are not as enlightened as they should be to the specific needs of the diverse range of disabled people who currently use or would seek to use the college.

The scope of this scheme will include the following groups of people:

- Disabled learners who currently are enrolled on Kendal College courses delivered on the College campus or delivered in the College name in the workplace or through one of our partner providers
- Disabled learners who do not currently access our courses and for whom there are significant barriers to coming to College
- Staff who have declared a disability or who are disabled but have not made the College aware of their support needs
- Visitors to the College, in particular those who access our services including the College restaurant, salons or conference facilities
- The wider community who currently do not use the College

This disability equality scheme will become a key document and a framework for how we intend to take the key objectives of disability equality forward. It will show how the College intends to declare and promote its responsibilities as outlined in the Disability Equality Duty with the main aim of:

“closing the gap between expectations, experience, education, qualifications and employment of disabled and non-disabled people”.

Through this, we will have as our main objectives the following key themes:

- Creating a positive atmosphere of shared commitment to value diversity and respect difference

- Delivering a first class service with an inclusive ethos where teaching and learning responds to the needs of individual learners
- Achieving a more representative workforce recruiting from a wider pool of applicants
- Better meeting the requirements of funding, audit and inspection bodies in relation to disability equality
- Promoting greater understanding of disability among learners which will benefit society at large.

It will be the intention of the College to ensure these key themes are integrated into every facet of College life and will be monitored as part of the College quality cycle of self-assessment and included within the College strategic plan.

We will build on the progress that has already been made to improving disability equality in education as required by the amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005.

Graham Wilkinson
Principal

Part 2 – Vision, Values and Principles

Embedding disability equality into the College necessitates a whole-College approach and it will be our responsibility to ensure we become agents of change and set an example within our local community.

To do this we have considered the following factors:

Involving staff at a senior level – Disability Equality is an agenda item for the Senior Leadership & Management team weekly meeting with a formal report on equality and diversity presented at the monthly reporting week meeting. Strategic responsibility for equality and diversity lies with a senior manager and there are clear links into other key agenda such as Every Child Matters and Skills for Life.

Identifying and sharing a clear vision – staff development, inclusion within self assessment and lesson observation are all ways in which the vision of disability equality is being cascaded around the College and its staff. Within the timescale of the scheme, there will be an emphasis on ensuring that disability equality is fully embedded within all College activities.

Selling the benefits of disability equality – when College staff start to see the benefits to all of disability equality, then we will have taken clear steps towards the ethos of an inclusive College. Presentations are being given to curriculum and support staff through team meetings, a staff briefing sheet has been prepared and distributed widely to show them easy ways in which they can be involved and to try to de-mystify the changes that they need to include within their teaching and service delivery. Regular articles appear in a newsletter that is available for all full and part time staff. Disability equality has always been included as part of the Equality and Diversity module of the new staff induction programme and will be extended to include more assistance to new staff on how to prepare for closing the gap in relation to disability equality.

Comment [b1]: Action plan

Communicating progress and celebrating success – we celebrate the successes of all our students and staff without specific reference to disability and this is an area we intend to develop further through our action plan. Staff will be encouraged to put forward progress made with their own teaching or service that can be used as best practice for staff who may find it difficult to make changes to support disability equality.

Comment [b2]: Action plan

Involving staff in the change process – more staff need to be prepared to volunteer to discuss their fears and concerns at every stage of the change process through discussion groups, team meetings and staff briefings. By getting more staff involved, disability equality will be more easily embedded into everything we do and will not be seen as solely the responsibility of our Study Services department.

Comment [b3]: Action plan

Staff development – in addition to ways of cascading of information as described above, disability equality is included within the overall College staff development programme. The programme has in the past included outside expertise and specific training sessions on dyslexia and deafness awareness and dealing with mental health. Individual training has also been given to staff on use of specialist equipment such as loop systems. Further staff development activities will be included within the timeframe of the scheme and there are number of DVDs available to staff to support small group work and curriculum tutorial. Additional training is also provided by experienced staff within the Study Services team to support tutors of disabled learners in the use of specialist equipment and strategies for dealing with different disabilities such as mental health or learning difficulties.

We have already started making some key changes in what we do, the first of these being the move towards the adoption of the social model of disability rather than our reliance on a medical model. The social model has moved the focus away from what is wrong with our service users and staff to examining more closely what is wrong with our attitudes. It promotes the rights of the disabled person to belong and to be valued and put the responsibility on the College to identify organisational and attitudinal barriers and then develop solutions, make adjustments and provide support.

Examples of this include the removal of the requirement to tick a box on the enrolment form to state what the learner's disability is so that the data relating to the numbers of people with specific disabilities is collected at the time of enrolment. Whilst this data is still needed, the emphasis at the time of enrolment is to seek to put assistance in place at the earliest opportunity where it is requested and not to put an instant barrier in place.

Further opportunities to embed disability equality into quality assurance will be included with the actions within the scheme to ensure that there is considered and sufficient reference to disability equality in curriculum and service self assessment reports, at curriculum performance review, staff appraisal and monthly team meetings.

Comment [b4]: Action plan

Part 3 – Actively Engaging with Disabled People

Engaging with disabled people is a legal requirement of the duty and as such we will ensure that we comply with this requirement. However, the true benefit of involving disabled people is the level of expertise that can be applied to what we do. Barriers to learning, employment and access can only be truly dismantled through a clear understanding of what they are, why they are there and the best way of removing them that can only come from talking to the very people who face them.

Active engagement will also benefit the disabled people who are involved by giving them increased confidence and self-esteem through their involvement in breaking down the barriers.

An action of high priority for the College will be to develop the genuine and active involvement of disabled people rather than the information sharing and consultation stages that we currently have. Through our action plan, we will seek to find partners who can share decision-making with us to shape our actions and outcomes towards our shared vision. This will include the involvement of disabled people in:

Comment [b5]:

- Carrying out impact assessments
- Identifying the barriers faced by people using Kendal College
- Monitoring of the action plan

The College has taken a number of steps already towards engaging with disabled people and will continue to seek new involvement and partnerships with representatives of disabled groups to break down the barriers and widen participation and access to the College.

Equality and Diversity Forum – this group meets termly and includes disabled students, staff and representatives from a number of local disability support groups including WorkBase, Oaklea Trust, Holehird, Cumbria Deaf Association, South Lakes Society for the Blind. Wider membership continues to be sought so that different disabilities are represented.

Posters have been displayed around the College and a notice put in the staff newsletter inviting anyone who is disabled or who has an interest in disability issues to join the forum. This will be repeated prior to meetings to enable us to increase membership with new students.

Comment [b6]: Action plan

Disability consultancy – the College will develop its relationship with a disability consultant who has wide-ranging experience of disability and of the needs of disabled learners and staff.

Current students – Our Study Services team works closely with all students who disclose a disability to ensure appropriate support is put in place. One-to-one

interviews give them the chance to explore issues with learners and review service requirements in light of what they discuss.

College staff – the procedure for annual appraisal and target setting includes discussion with the staff member of changes to their personal/physical well being and barriers they might be facing. This will hopefully lead to a higher rate of disclosure of disability and an action will be needed to develop the skills of line managers to encourage disclosure.

Comment [b7]: Action plan

Actions to develop a wider network of involvement include:

- involving groups that are unrepresented in the organisation
- survey of disabled staff, learners and visitors
- Student Voices with specific involvement of disabled learners
- Setting up focus groups to look at specific issues that affect staff, students and/or visitors
- Involving disabled students in the induction of new learners
- Involving disabled staff in the recruitment of new staff
- Develop a mechanism for feedback from disabled learners and visitors eg chat room, comments box etc
- Encouraging more disabled staff and students to participate on College committees and governing body

In all our plans to involve more disabled people in our decision-making processes. However, we will be aware of “involvement fatigue” and ensure that their involvement is focussed and worthwhile with clear outcomes that benefit the participants.

Visitors

The College welcomes a lot of visitors into the College, to attend meetings and training events as well as making use of College services such as the restaurant and public salons. We will ensure that we do consult with these users of our facilities during the cycle of our scheme to ensure we are aware of their needs in relation to access and provision of services to support access.

Comment [b8]: Action plan

Part 4 – Leadership and Management

Senior Leadership & Management Team

There is serious and committed support from the College Senior Leadership and Management team to the ethos of providing a first class service for disabled people and to breaking down the barriers that continue to exist.

The Head of Business Development and Client Services, Carole Drury, leads on the development of the Disability Equality Scheme and is supported on the DED Working Group by:

- Val Martin - Head of Curriculum and Quality
- Louise Shrapnel - Head of Finance, Personnel and Resources
- Brenda Brew – Head of School and Quality Manager
- Maggie Cawthorn – Head of School and Tutorial
- Paul Goodwin – Marketing Manager
- Dot Chamley – Study Services Manager

This working group has been set up to support the development of the Disability Equality Scheme and will exist until such time as it feels its remit is over, probably within one year of set up. Its terms of reference are:

- To agree the procedures and format of the College scheme
- To provide expertise in the identification of policies, procedures, plans and practices that will be prioritised for impact assessment
- To identify ways of involving disabled people
- To consider successes to date
- To promote the vision for disability equality across the College
- To identify training needs
- To link the DES in with other College initiatives such as quality, Every Child Matters and Skills for Life

The group will meet for half a day every 10 weeks during student review week to carry out impact assessments on prioritised policies, procedures, plans and practices linked into the Learner Journey (see Part 5 Impact Assessments). The group will be joined by Mark Tennant, Disability Consultant, who will provide a link with disabled people to provide advice on where barriers can be removed and progress made.

Every four weeks is SLMT Reporting Week and a regular agenda item is Equality and Diversity where a report is produced and discussed on progress of the College towards its Disability Equality Duty and will, once the scheme is published, report on progress of the action plan.

This also includes monitoring of the equality and diversity impact measures (EDIMS) that are included with the College strategic plan.

Governance

It is the governing body that will have responsibility for approving the Colleges Disability Equality Scheme. This will be through the Education, Personnel and Quality committee, chaired by Cath Dutton. This group have already received a presentation on the College's commitment to disability equality and its responsibilities under the Disability Equality Duty. A further overview presentation has been given to other members of the main board.

Part 5 – Carrying out Impact Assessments

The College holds a large number of policies and procedures relating to staff, the building, collection of data, personnel, student support services, financial regulations. It would be impossible to carry out impact assessment on each and every one for the benefit of disabled learners, staff and visitors. In addition to this, there are an infinite number of practices that are not documented in this way.

The working group has therefore taken the decision to sub-divide all College policies, practices, plans and procedures into families linked to the learner journey followed by other families relating to the premises and to personnel. The identified stages of the Learner Journey are as follows:

Stage 1 – Pre-entry

This stage starts with marketing and promotion of the College to its wider community. It includes, for example, the following:

- Prospectus
- Course information sheets including availability on the College web site
- Open days
- Schools liaison
- Admissions policy
- Guidance meetings and one-to-one interviews
- Range of learning styles and curriculum needs

Examples of changes we have already made at this stage include:

- Specific information in the prospectus about disability support including an invitation to visit the College at quieter times or to have a guidance interview at a location away from the main College site
- Closer links with school SENCOs over the individual learner needs of students progressing directly from school
- Web site development including disabled access

Stage 2 – Enrolment

At this stage, we have been very focussed on moving away from the medical to the social model by concentrating on the needs of learners rather than trying to establish what their disability is. A booklet on support for students, including reference to support for disability, has been produced to reinforce the information available in the Student Handbook. Areas for further consideration include:

- Enrolment paperwork and questions
- Disclosure
- Speed of setting up support
- Enrolment days
- Induction programmes
- Initial assessment and learning styles
- Being on the right programme

Stage 3 – On programme

Classroom delivery, monitoring progress, classroom facilities, student facilities and services and many others come into this section. Suggestions for prioritisation include:

- Lesson planning and schemes of work (to include differentiation)
- Key and basic skills
- Additional support and specialist equipment
- Welfare support including learner support fund, Educational Maintenance Allowance
- Bullying and harassment policies and support
- Marking policy
- Learning Centre and IT User Policy
- Attendance monitoring and withdrawal procedures
- Learner review and reporting
- Tutorial programme and careers guidance
- Educational visits and residential trips
- Work experience

Stage 4 – Moving On

Once the programme is complete, it is essential that students are provided with the skills to enable them to progress to the next stage be it into employment, onto Higher Education or progressing to the next level at College. Consideration will be given to these areas:

- UCAS application and personal statements
- Job references and help with application
- Exit interview

Personnel Procedures and Practices

Areas for prioritisation will include:

- Recruitment strategies
- Staff induction
- Appraisal and target setting
- Staff development
- Staff wellbeing

Premises and Resources

- Access for disabled people
- Contractors
- Maintenance
- Equipment to support specific disabilities eg loop system

Carrying out impact assessment

The process for this has been described in the previous section. One important aspect will be consideration of the impact on different types of disabled people. In addition to considering disability impact, the proforma (see appendix 1) will also look at race, gender and age. The assessment will look at the following 6 impact

criteria when making a judgement on the effect and will make suggestions for change in order:

1. To promote equality of opportunity
2. To eliminate unlawful discrimination
3. To eliminate equality-related harassment
4. To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
5. To encourage participation in public life
6. To take account of people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others

It is a requirement that new policies and procedures presented to SLMT for approval have an impact assessment proforma attached to them, completed by the manager presenting the paper.

Comment [b9]: Action plan

Part 6 – Gathering Information

Disabled Learners

Information relating to disabled learners has been collected to fit in with the needs of the Learning and Skills Council individual learner record requirements. As previously mentioned, we have changed our collection methods to reflect a more social model. Data is now captured during the one-to-one assessment interviews with Study Services Staff following discussions on support needed. This information is then entered into a software package (Midas Spirals) that can then be used to populate the ILR requirements. From this data, an analysis can be produced by the Head of Information Services on the number of disabled learners accessing College courses by type of disability and by course. For the purposes of the scheme, disability is differentiated as follows:

- Mobility
- Visual
- Sensory
- Learning difficulty
- Mental health
- Medical condition

There are many other ways the College can capture data relating to disability many of which are informal through the different opportunities for disclosure. The personal tutor has an important role to play here in ensuring the information relating to disability support needs is disclosed to appropriate and agreed members of staff for follow up and action.

There is currently insufficient scrutiny of the data that can lead to improvement targets for the whole College and then disaggregated into curriculum schools and teams.

We have no data relating to why learners with disabilities apply and do not convert into students or who leave during their programme. There is insufficient follow up of this type of learner and yet a lot of information relating to disability support can be gained from this exercise. This will be included within the action plan.

Disabled Staff

There is currently no data held on the disability of staff. Disability of applicants for posts at the College can be declared on the equal opportunities section of the application form and this information is withheld from the interviewing panel to ensure disabled candidates are equally considered alongside non-disabled applicants. However, no records are held on staff disabilities although the Personnel Department is aware of the disability needs of individual staff who declare their disability through informal channels.

A recent inclusion in the staff appraisal and target setting documentation is a question relating to changes in the staff members medical or physical condition since their last appraisal.

Another action plan priority will be to become more aware of disabled staff through an improved disclosure procedure, if necessary, offering a confidential opportunity to declare their disability. Once we have more specific data and a greater level of awareness of the differentiated disability levels of our current staff, then further analysis on progression, staff development and other opportunities can be completed.

Part 7 – Putting the Scheme into Practice

This scheme will be published in line with the deadline of 4th December 2006. The duration of the scheme is three years from that date and there will be an annual review in November of each year including a report to governors.

The scheme will be available on the College website at

www.kendal.ac.uk

Printed copies of the scheme will also be available from Student Services at Kendal College and can be obtained in person, by calling


01539 814700

Or emailing

enquiries@kendal.ac.uk

The scheme can be made available in different formats on request to Student Services.

The action plan that supports our three year scheme will be reviewed by the Equality and Diversity Forum three times per year following updates on the achievement of milestone targets by the DES working party.



This publication is also available in alternative formats on request,
such as braille, large print and pdf and is available
on the college's website at www.kendal.ac.uk