



## **Disability Equality Scheme (DES)**

This scheme is written in response to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. Public Services including Education have a duty (Disability Equality Duty) that requires them to be proactive in addressing barriers to successful participation for people with disabilities. These measures are identified in this document and are supported with action included in the action Plan associated with our Single Equality Scheme.

### **The Disability Equality Duty (DED) requires the College to:**

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation of people with disabilities in public life
- Anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and adapt the environment and provision wherever possible to meet these needs

### **The College is also required to**

- Carry out impact assessments
- Gather information for monitoring purposes
- Embed disability equality across the whole organisation
- Actively involve people with disabilities
- Work in partnership with other organisations
- Tackle institutional barriers.

### **Definition of Disability according to the DDA 1995**

Disability is defined as: a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Disability does not just mean physical or sensory impairment but includes chronic illnesses e.g. cancer, diabetes and conditions relating to mental health, learning difficulties and disabilities including hidden disabilities. Long term means lasting longer than 12 months or life if this is expected to be shorter than 12 months.

## **Disability equality vision, values and principles**

Whilst the College has a good record of attracting and supporting learners with a disability it has been based on addressing the specific limitations which the disability presents (a medical model). The DED offers another perspective (a social model) where attitudes, systems and practices which create barriers to participation are examined and challenged. Adopting this model will assist in the College's commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination and create an inclusive environment for all who learn and work in the organisation

## **Actively engaging with disabled people**

The active involvement of disabled people is fundamental to the DES. Strategies to involve people with disabilities have been established e.g. invitations to the Equality and Diversity Committee, Student Committee and various focus groups and relationships with relevant external agencies are maintained.

## **Leadership and Management**

The implementation and monitoring of the DES is led by the Deputy Principal and managed through the Equality and Diversity Committee who agree the roles and responsibilities of key staff in the organisation and monitor the action plan.

## **Carrying out impact assessments**

The College undertakes a 2 stage programme that is implemented over a three year cycle. All policies and procedures are screened by the staff responsible for their initiation. Those policies and procedures that are identified as at risk of discriminating in any way are then subject to a full impact assessment which involves consultation with appropriate groups. Schedules related to this activity are agreed in the Action Plan associated with the Single Equality Scheme.

## **Gathering information**

The first priority for the scheme is to establish reliable data and encourage disclosure. Currently action is planned to support both staff and students to disclose their disabilities. This information is used to inform planning, develop support mechanisms and establish reasonable adjustments. It is also used to compare how well the college relates to the community it serves.

The second priority of the scheme is to systematically examine all data collected in the course of business planning, monitoring and evaluation to identify any gaps in performance between different groups of people. This is then used to develop action to 'narrow' these gaps.

## **Putting the scheme into practice**

The implementation strategy and action associated with the DES has been integrated into Action Plan associated with the Single Equality Scheme. This is a working document which is reviewed on an annual basis.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

The Action Plan associated with the Single Equality Scheme forms a standing item on the agenda of the Equality and Diversity Committee. This committee reports on an annual basis to SMT and to the Corporation. Actions and targets are devolved, where appropriate to Curriculum areas and are reviewed and evaluated through the business review meeting and the area SARs. Other quality processes also include specific reference to disability issues e.g. lesson observation, and EV reports. Learner involvement strategies also ensure that there are regular opportunities for feedback from students.

**Please note that from Academic year 09/10 the DES and associated Action Plan will be integrated in the Single Equality Scheme.**