

## Disability Equality Scheme

### 1. Introduction

Barnfield College is the largest provider of FE in Bedfordshire with 4 Campuses in Luton (*New Bedford Road, Enterprise Way, Rotheram Avenue and Charles Street*) and 1 in Bedford (*Westbourne Road*) and provides for learning within a large network of community based centres. It is a DfES Beacon College, an Investor In People (IiP) Champion and holds 6 Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVES). It plays a leading role in the education and training of individuals and employers in Luton, South and Mid- Bedfordshire although the largest proportion of its students are residents of Luton. Barnfield offers a broad Curriculum across 16 Departments and in 2005-6 trained / educated 4,036 full-time students along with 11,706 studying part-time.

Luton is one of the UK's most diverse towns with over 140 nationalities. Over 40% of the 185,000 population is below the age of 25 with 28% coming from a Black or Multi-ethnic (BME) group. The proportion of students in the College from ethnic minority groups is therefore high and matches or exceeds the Luton community profile and is significantly higher than the profile for the whole college catchment area across Bedfordshire. Barnfield therefore recognises the wide diversity represented by its students and staff covering ethnicity, gender and the full range of abilities.

Although all Campuses, except Enterprise Way, were built some time ago (*Charles Street and Westbourne Road* in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *Rotheram Avenue and New Bedford Road* in the 1960's) all Campuses have satisfactory access for people with mobility difficulties. Mobility access continues to be monitored at all the college campuses including the outreach community venues. A new building to replace Charles Street has been built in York Street and will be operational in January 2007.

The College commissioned a significant survey in response to its responsibilities under DDA part 4 on accessibility and identified improvements to be made. The key issues and modifications identified in the survey have been addressed and a revised assessment has been conducted to reassess the level of accessibility. Currently the college accommodation has been assessed for compliance in three areas, Mobility, Sight and Hearing. It was found to be 84% Mobility Compliant and 95% Sight Compliant. The Hearing Compliance is dealt with through the use of mobile induction loops and interpreters

The College recorded 2,159 of its 15,742 students as declaring a disability on the Enrolment Form whilst Additional Learner Funds to a value of £1,739,412 were drawn down to support 1,180 individual students. Although disclosure at Enrolment represents 14% of the whole student body, any free text disclosures are not recorded centrally. It is also recognised that subsequent disclosures made whilst On Programme are only recorded at the local (departmental) level and not collated to any central point. Both these issues will need to be addressed over the 3 year period of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES)

Staff disability disclosures were recorded during a Staff Data Verification exercise and all staff recruited since then have been given an opportunity to declare any disability. However, the figure of 5 from an establishment of 992 indicates the serious likelihood that this is an under-disclosure. The College acknowledges this and other shortcomings and has consequently made the commitment to adopt the Association of Colleges (AoC) Joint Agreement for Disability in Employment in FE Colleges.

Disability Awareness has been the subject of much relevant staff development and training. From April 2004 to until October 2006 the following was conducted :-

Course / Training Session	Number of Staff Participating
SENDA Training	118
Teaching Adults with Dyslexia	14
Working with a Deaf Colleague / Student	36
Visual Impairments Awareness	3
Autism Awareness	19
EDIMS Training	111
Hidden Disability	161
Makaton / Intensive British sign language	13
Deaf Awareness	5
Evac Chair Training	4

Despite these figures the College will continue to improve the increase awareness of disability issues and particularly facilitate an increase in the numbers attending general in-house programmes such Working with a Deaf Colleague / Student and Hidden Disabilities

The College has examples of particular good practice existing within those departments (**Learning Support** Department at Rotheram Campus and **ACES North** at the Westbourne Centre Campus) whose student profile has a large proportion of students with physical and/or learning disabilities. In 2005-06 Learning Support recorded 86% of its students disclosing a disability and Aces North had 23 %.

In particular the **Learning Support Department** has a very positive approach to access to learning, for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Students with profound disabilities including Cerebral Palsy, elected mute, blind, profoundly deaf, head injuries, Bipolar disorders, Downs Syndrome, for example are able to study at a level appropriate to their need. Courses on offer to learners with Learning Difficulties, (profound to Moderate) are from Milestone 4 up to Entry Level 3 and for student recovering from Mental Health problems, the levels of study at are from Milestone 7 to level 1. All courses are delivered as part of the Skills for Life agenda and aim to enable students to raise both their basics skills levels, their self confidence and their independence.

In 2005-06 the Learning Support staff delivered a comprehensive and innovative portfolio of courses that comprised

- Discrete FT &PT provision for those 19+ students with severe learning difficulties/disabilities both on site and off site
- Discrete FT &PT provision for those students 16-18 with moderate learning difficulties on site
- Discrete FT &PT provision off site for students with Mental Health problems and the Elderly
- In –class and discreet study support for mainstream students with learning difficulties e.g. Dyslexia

The staff have used increased levels of multimedia technology, made possible by access to the Audio and Visual room and increased numbers of Smart boards in teaching rooms. All adult courses were delivered as Skills for Life. 16-18 year old students took OCNW Life skills awards and in addition the OCNW Certificate in Adult Literacy. In most cases Part Time courses were delivered through the vehicle of Speaking and Listening mapped to the core curriculum.

- Such work is not just confined to those students attending its learning offer:- KarZouche software purchased by the Department has been made available across the college for students to use to express personal issues non-verbally.
- A Health Record Form developed by the Department has been distributed for use by other departments.

- Close cooperation with the Child, Health and Social Care (CHSC) staff has resulted in initiatives to enable students to work jointly, collaboratively and alongside their disabled colleagues. Work is in hand to facilitate these opportunities being incorporated into the delivery of some courses within the CHSC curriculum.
- Both Departments have also strong links with relevant agencies concerned for the Disabled within the wider Community.

**However, the College also recognises that a great deal more can, and will, be done to extend good practice in these particular departments to have a more general and comprehensive prevalence across the entire College provision and activities.**

## 2. Our Commitments and Statutory Duties

This Disability Equality Scheme (DES) sets out the College's commitment to disability equality within the context of embracing and recognising the strengths inherent in the wide diversity of people represented within its community of stakeholders (Employees, students and other users of its services and facilities).

It recognises its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Disability Act 2005. This duty comprises General and Specific Duties.

Under the General Duties the College must take all necessary and anticipatory action with regard to :-

- Eliminating disability discrimination
- Eliminating harassment of disabled persons
- Promoting equality of opportunity for disabled persons
- Taking steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encouraging participation by disabled persons in public life.

Under the Specific Duties the College must also:-

- Publish a Disability Equality Scheme
- Implement the DES
- Publish annual reports summarising progress to date under the DES

Barnfield College also fully recognises that this duty is not necessarily about physical access to buildings or adjustments for individuals but is also about including equality for disabled people into the culture and fabric of the College community in practical and demonstrable ways.

### 3. Disability Equality Vision, Values and Principles

The College mission for Disability Equality is encompassed within its general duty to provide Equal Opportunity for all. To this end it seeks to provide easily accessible, responsive, supportive and high quality education and training, employment opportunities and services for all its students, staff and customers. It is committed to serving the whole community fairly and equally. It values and respects everyone within and outside the college community. It will pursue an inclusive and proactive Policy in the provision of:

- Education
- Recruitment, development and promotion of staff
- Services and the use of its facilities
- Positive links with Partners in the wider community.

Barnfield embraces and values diversity including the full range of (dis)abilities and will take positive steps to support all relevant legislative measures in ensuring that policies operate equally and fairly so that no student, staff member, customer, or visitor is treated less favourably because of their ability, age disability, ethnic or racial origin, marital or social status, nationality religion or sexual orientation.

Barnfield College is also committed to ensuring for everyone a healthy and safe environment which is free from any form of harassment, bullying, stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination. It will continue to work towards the development and implementation of policies, procedures practices and structures designed to support all its stakeholders during their involvement with the College.

### 4. Actively Engaging with Disabled People

Disability Issues have been identified through the existing College mechanisms for consulting students as well as the specific links with outside agencies and institutions through the Learner Support and Aces (North) Departments.

The Head of Learning Support is part of the Luton Disability Partnership Board chaired by the Learning Disability Commissioning Manager for Luton Borough Council. The attendees at these meetings comprise representatives from a complete range of social services and agencies e.g. Mencap , LBC housing/supported living. In addition the Head of Department attends the Mental Health Forum whose attendees comprise those agencies and NHS services providing support for people with mental health issues in and around Luton.

Groups with whom the LS is in contact include:-

- ADLT
- The Disabilities Resource Centre
- Luton Social Services Disability Team
- ACE Enterprises
- Ashanti House
- Befrienders
- Milan Centre
- Five Springs and Woodlands Schools
- The Oaks and the Willows

Examples of disability issues raised through disabled Course Representatives Network (over 200) and Student Focus groups (organised by the Head of Quality and Planning) include:-

- The inappropriate height of Smart Boards with regard to use by wheelchair using students, was pointed out.
- A Hearing Impaired student, for whom travelling on loud, noisy and crowded buses was particularly difficult, asked for an alternative to a bus pass. The Learner Support Fund was used to allow the student to claim petrol money and pay the Insurance Premiums needed to enable the use of her brothers car even though this constituted a more positive response than would have been given if the student had been without the disability.

Despite these examples the College recognises that it needs to do significantly more to formalise the involvement of disabled staff, students and other users outside the departments for whom disability issues are of particular significance and mainstream the mechanisms.

**The College especially and specifically recognises the inadequacy of the formal consultation or targeted involvement of disabled people in the production of this DES. As a consequence the Action Plan will identify, as an urgent priority, the need to rectify this by the end of February 2007. Examples of intended mechanisms include:-**

- Joining with other Colleges in the Bedfordshire FE/HE Federation (Bedford College, Dunstable College, Luton 6<sup>th</sup> Form College and the University of Bedfordshire) in a joint venture to consult and engage with those agencies within the community who have a special interest in the needs of disable people.
- Following an example of good practice from other Colleges, invite all staff to join the Disability Consultation and Involvement Panel if they:-
  - Consider themselves to have a disability
  - Are related to, or know, someone who has a disability
  - Have an particular interest in disability issues.
- Using the same mechanism, establish a Student membership for a Focus Group specifically required to consider Disability Equality issues.
- Immediately survey the existing Student Course Representatives membership not only to ensure appropriate and adequate inclusion of Disabled students but that the whole range of diversity is covered.
- Analyse the composition of all recipients of the Learner Support Fund to identify any student who has disclosed a disability and conduct 1-to-1 Interviews in order to establish their experience of the provision from the point of view of their disability.
- The current Board of Governors Search Committee Process has no formal opportunity for prospective or new governors to disclose any disability. This will be corrected. As an immediate step the current Board of Governors will therefore be offered an opportunity to document and make a Disability Disclosure. Any who subsequently do so will be invited to participate in the staff consultancy processes – the Disability Consultation and Involvement Panel.

## 5. Leadership and Management

In September 2005 the College experienced the relatively unique experience of a complete change of personnel at the Senior Post Holder level, with the Principal/Chief Executive and Vice Principal/Deputy Executive retiring and the second Vice Principal moving on to a post of Principal at another College. This meant that the implementation of the College Disability Strategy has experienced some delay in being progressed.

However the SLT and wider Senior Management Team (SMT) has approved the re-structuring of the former **Equality and Diversity Committee**. This has now been replaced by an **Equality and Diversity Strategy Group**, chaired by the Principal / Chief Executive which will be supported by Equality Steering Groups representing:-

- Race, Ethnicity and Faiths
- Gender / Sexuality
- Age
- Disability
- Impact Measurement and Assessment for Equality and Diversity.

The DES and Action Plan will be incorporated into a new Equality and Diversity Strategy which will itself be included in the College Strategic Plan. The DES and its Impact Assessment will form essential features of both individual Departmental Self Assessment Review (SAR) and the over-all College SAR. In this way issues of Disability Equality impact will be integrated into the College Quality Improvement Plan.

***“There will be no Quality without Equality”***

## 6. Carrying Out impact Assessments

Although two Senior Management Team members have been trained in EDIMS along with over 100 other members of staff (see **Introduction** above) the College recognises the need for a review of the current processes and systems for gathering information and conducting EDIMS.

This will be the initial primary task of the Impact Measurement and Assessment for Equality and Diversity Steering Group. This Group will also oversee the Commissioning of Consultants who will undertake the training and awareness raising of all senior and middle managers on Impact Assessments.

## 7. Gathering Information

As indicated in the **Introduction**, the College views its current mechanisms and processes for the collection and collating of data on disability disclosure to be as one of its priority actions.

The collection of disclosures from students at the Enrolment Stage is based on the “medical model” and will need to be re-considered. Although it had a disclosure rate in 2005-06 of 14% this ranged across departments from 86% in the Learner Support Department to 6% in 4 of the other departments. The college needs to consider the nature of the invitation to disclose and consider making such an invitation earlier in the Admissions Process (at Application and Pre-Entry Interview Stages).

This will be given a high profile within the present Review of the College admissions procedures which has been charged with the creation and establishment and setting up of a centrally controlled and managed process.

On programme disclosures are recorded on the Learner Record Card which therefore provides additional qualitative data to that recorded centrally from the Enrolment Form. That this is therefore only held locally and not centrally is an issue which needs addressing in order to enable more accurate monitoring and direction across College provision so that there can be confidence in the equitable treatment of learners across the whole learner experience.

Steps will be taken by the various Equality Steering groups to identify the qualitative and quantitative data which will need to be collated in order to monitor recruitment, retention and achievement of disabled students.

The low level of self disclosure by staff will need to be addressed. Quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered to monitor the effect of College policies and practices on disabled staff and whether the action plan is delivering greater equality for disabled employees. Statistical data will be collected on recruitment, retention and Training/development of disabled staff

The consumers of the College public services will also be surveyed to establish how the College is addressing any issues or difficulties that may be experienced by those with a disability.

## 8. Putting the Scheme into Practice

Concerning the employees of the College, the college undertakes as a minimum to recognise as disabled all those who fall within the definition given in the Disability Discrimination Act i.e. “*A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities*”.

The College celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce by individuals. It believes that the College will benefit from employing both disabled and non-disabled people at all levels of responsibility, and across all areas of work. This will also provide role models for a variety of students in whatever area of the curriculum they are interested in. The College is committed to equality of treatment for all employees regardless of whether they have a physical or mental impairment. This will apply to the operation and implementation of all its employment policies. The College will treat all employees with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive working environment free from disability discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The College will seek not only to eliminate disability discrimination, but also to create a working environment based on good relations between disabled people and non-disabled people. To this end, the College undertakes to provide diverse images in any marketing or promotional or recruitment material which it produces, including positive images of people with a range of disabilities. The aim is to create a positive inclusive ethos with a shared commitment to challenging and preventing stereotyping, prejudice and disability discrimination, to respecting diversity and difference, and to encouraging good relations between disabled people and non-disabled people.

Underpinning the mechanisms and organisational structure identified in **Leadership and Management**, the over-all managerial responsibility for implementing the DES and its action plan shall be held by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

### Annual Reporting

Annually a report will be communicated to staff and students and made available to the general public, containing a summary of:-

- progress against the action plan
- the monitoring information gathered
- actions taken as a result of gathering information

### Publishing the Scheme

#### To the public

- Barnfield’s commitment to disability equality will be highlighted in its prospectus, annual report, annual financial statement and the Disability Equality Scheme will be published on the College web site

#### To students

- Copies of the policy will be on display in the College and on the web site and the student e-mail accounts will be used to inform them of the DES.
- The induction programme for students will highlight the College’s commitment to disability equality, the action to be taken by students who suffer discrimination and the action to be taken against such perpetrators of discrimination
- Tutors will reinforce this information during tutorials or work-based monitoring visits

#### To staff

- All staff will be made aware of and have access to a full copy of the scheme.
- A summary will be included within the Learner Provider Handbook.
- The staff induction programme will highlight the College’s commitment to disability equality, action to be taken by staff who suffer discrimination and the action to be taken against any perpetrators of such discrimination
- Monitoring data and action plans will be available on the college staff intranet- Columbus.

## 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

At the end of the Summer term, the Equality and Diversity Strategy Group will receive an annual report from the Steering Groups, including the Group for Disability Equality, reviewing the relevant issues, outlining the outcomes, monitoring and evaluating the activities. The Steering Group for Disability Equality will also report on progress against the 3 Year Action Plan.

The Equality and Diversity Strategy Group will produce an Integrated Annual Report incorporating all the Equality Groups to be presented to the SLT/SMT and Governors **within which Disability Equality will be a clearly identifiable and discrete section.**

A summary of the Disability Equality Report will be presented to the Academic Board and made available to the public, students and staff.

The **3 Year Disability Equality Action Plan (2006 -2009)** shall be a rolling one. Actions for 2010 will therefore be added at the end of the academic year 2006 – 7.