



Disability and Equality Policy

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Disability and Equality Scheme

1. Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 was extended to include additional needs for educational institutions through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001). The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) introduced a new Disability Equality Duty (DED) which applies to all public authorities and came into force on 4th December 2006. The DED is fundamentally different from the other parts of the DDA in that it moves away from individual cultural change of incorporating disability equality into all the functions and activities of the public authority.

The DED includes both general and specific duties. The general duty, applying to all public authorities, has six principles which require a public authority to carry out its functions having due regard to the need to:

- i. Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons.
- ii. Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act.
- iii. Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their impairment.
- iv. Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons.
- v. Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.
- vi. Take steps to take account for disabled persons' disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other persons.

In addition, the specific duty applies to certain listed bodies including all education institutions to enable them to achieve the outcomes required by the general duty. This specific duty requires the Academy to have in place a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and to review this scheme on a three yearly basis. The DED also requires that disabled people are actively involved (not only consulted) from the outset in producing the DES and associated action plan.

2. Position Statement

2.1 Students

The Academy actively encourages applications from disabled people by communicating its commitment to fair treatment of disabled people and developing information specifically for disabled people applying to be educated at the Academy. Where the Academy receives applications from disabled people, it provides additional support to such applicants through the admissions process so that any adjustments required can be identified in good time. As a result, the Academy successfully recruits disabled students to the institution. The Academy recognises the need to keep all disability services under review and to develop these further to meet the requirements of the increasing number of students who disclose mental health difficulties.

2.2 Staff

As an employer, the Academy is in a position to recruit and retain disabled staff. The recruitment process is to be reviewed to encourage disabled people to apply to work at the Academy, when placing future advertisements for staff. The Academy has existing procedures to identify disabilities amongst job applicants so as to be in a position to consider adaptations to the work place if required.

The Academy aims to retain staff who become disabled or who may need additional support through working with access to work and ensuring training is in place to equip managers with improved knowledge of how to support and facilitate workplace adjustments.

It is recognised nationally that many staff choose not to disclose a disability to their employer. The Academy will nevertheless take steps to encourage and support staff in disclosing any disability.

3. How Ashcroft Technology Academy Will Work to the DED – Meeting the Duties and Beyond Through Best Practice.

The main principle of the general duty for Ashcroft Technology Academy is to:

promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people. For example, the provision of training in understanding people's needs is provided.

The Academy's aim is to be :

committed to developing the Academy in order to make it an organisation that is disability aware. Whilst the Academy must meet legal requirements, we are committed to go beyond that, developing our policies and culture according to models of best practice.

In developing policy and implementation plans, our Disability Equality Scheme uses the principle of the social model of disability.

"the DDA uses the medical model (i.e. people with disabilities are defined as individuals with certain conditions and limitations). However, the requirement to make reasonable adjustments to policies, practices or physical access follows the social model. By making such adjustments society is removing the disabling barriers. It is for this reason that the Academy recognises the social model of disability".

As stated in the code of Practice for the DED, it is important to ensure the DED demonstrates commitment at the very highest level. For Ashcroft Technology Academy, the Trustees, the Executive Board, Principal and other senior staff are committed to employing and educating a diverse mix of people who reflect all communities. This positive approach to valuing and promoting diversity is a key element of the Academy's strategy for success as an inclusive educational institution.

The Director of Resources has responsibility for ensuring best practice in relation to recruitment and employment of disabled people.

Academic staff have particular responsibilities for ensuring teaching materials and curriculum content supports the delivery of the DES.

All individuals - staff and students have a personal responsibility to support the implementation of this scheme.

Training underpins the very essence of embedding the DED in the understanding of disabled people's needs. The Academy has delivered specific training across the Academy, most recently with particular reference to the forthcoming introduction of the resource base for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and for those with speech and learning difficulties, but more needs to be done to make sure that all staff are disability aware and understand the duties they are working too. Specialist deliverers have been and will continue to be used.

Steps are being taken to promote disability equality through the Academy's marketing and communication activities, for example by work to improve the accessibility of websites, mainstreaming disability information into the prospectus, and making information available in alternative formats.

The Academy seeks to remove physical barriers in its built environment by upgrading its existing site. On the whole the Academy has excellent access for disabled people around its site but recognises that more work can be done to enhance accessibility and that the involvement of disabled people in identifying existing barriers will benefit future development. The Academy provides full access for disabled users with lifts and ramps providing accessibility to all areas. Aside from these facilities, the Academy has EvacChairs in the stairwells, a hoist to assist students out of wheelchairs, specific washroom facilities for the disabled and designated parking spaces. The Academy plans to introduce disabled access to the stage area within the main hall from September 2008.

4. Information/data on Disabled Staff and Students

The Academy collects data on our current profile of staff and students and will continue to look at ways in which detailed analysis of such data can inform both current and future representation of staff and student numbers in terms of disabled people's representation.

5. Impact Assessments

Another area of the DED duty is to impact assess our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that public authorities policies, procedures and practices do not disadvantage disabled people either explicitly or implicitly and to ensure that all aspects of the general duty, such as eliminating discrimination and promoting positive attitudes are built in from the outset.

The Academy reviews all its policies on a regular basis and impact assessment of these policies to ensure they are not disadvantaging disabled people will occur as part of this process.

6. Annual Reporting

The Academy has a statutory duty to publish reports on the progress of their DES. This will be incorporated within the Academy's reporting to the Executive Board. It will contain a summary of actions taken to fulfil the DED, results of monitoring and impact assessments in addition to the progress of the implementation plan. It will be posted on the Academy's website and made available in hard copy and in a variety of formats on request. It will also be promoted to all staff and students.