

# Disability Staff Group Meeting

ED 10/11 : M1

## Minutes of the Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010

**In Attendance:** Sharron Sturgess, Tim Burton, Cathie Taylor, Caroline Pepper, Abida Akram, (Liz Quimby-Fountain – notetaker)

### 1. Introduction

The group introduced themselves. Abida Akram the newly appointed Staff Development Adviser (Equality and Diversity) gave a brief introduction of her background in the equality and diversity field (over 23 years experience) and within the public sector (last 10 years as a manager of the E&D function) delivering on employment, service delivery and community involvement issues.

Abida commenced employment at the university on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 and is new to the HE sector.

Abida outlined her role at Loughborough University, which predominantly is to mainstream and integrate Equality and Diversity, through all our processes. Part of that will be through training, briefing sessions, mentoring and coaching. Abida has/is/will be:-

- completely redesigned the Respecting Diversity course which is fully interactive and Abida encouraged the group to book on for a refresher.
- also supporting the staff groups, Equality and Diversity coordinators and the EDSC.
- involved in various surveys and in providing advice.
- managing the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, offering training and has revised the existing form. (Abida advised the group that incorporating an EIA or equality implications into the project approval and decision making stage had been approved by the EDSC and was awaiting final approval from Council.)
- running training courses on mental health and disability awareness next year depending on the levels of interest expressed and she is hoping to work in partnership with officers in DANS in order to design and deliver these.
- over the next few years- will be looking at ED issues with the students and the local community. (Her first priorities are HR issues/policies and integrating E&D into the University structures/processes. )

## **2. Staff Groups – the way forward**

Abida confirmed to the group that a budget of £100 pa budget had been agreed with the HR Director (Rob Allan). Abida confirmed that it was up to the group to decide how they wanted to spend this, but needed Rob Allan's/Abida's approval.

Abida confirmed that she would not be attending all the meetings and would only participate if there was information/updates to pass on or if the group required her to attend for a particular reason/item. She confirmed that the group needs to decide their agenda and how often they wanted to meet.

The group agreed that all were happy for Sharron Sturgess to remain the chair of the group. The group discussed how they could attract new members. Sharron will draft a letter to all disabled staff outlining the remit of the group to try and encourage new members. It was discussed that a notice also go onto the website promoting the group.

**Action** – Sharron to send letter to Liz who will mail to all self certified disabled staff on Trent.

## **3. Briefing on the Equality Act 2010**

The group were given the briefing paper prepared by Abida. There are 9 protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

**Action:** Liz to send out electronically to all members the briefing document, SES and slides.

## **4. Briefing on the Single Equality Scheme**

The group were provided with a copy of the draft single equality scheme. Abida requested that comments on the document and feedback on an action plan were sent to her by the end of October / mid November and the following questions be considered:

**Q1. What action(s) would you like the University to deliver on in 2011?**

**Q2 What would make a difference to you personally?**

**Q3. What actions do you think are needed in 2012 & 2013?**

#### **Q4. Is there anything you would like us to add or delete in the draft SES?**

Abida confirmed with the group that this document has been drafted in line with new legislation but recognises it does need updating and what is missing is an Action Plan. Abida confirmed that she was in the process of consulting the staff groups, ED coordinators, and all staff/students via a web based survey.

**Action:** The group to email Abida with feedback by end of November.

#### **5. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

Abida updated the group with the new form which has been revised in light of the new Equality Act. Abida hopes that by February 2011 there will be an online tool available, which should streamline the process, be much easier to complete and monitor. This is currently awaiting feedback from EDSC.

Abida commented that the EIA should be seen as a project management /service management /risk assessment tool to promote good practice. A way of measuring and evidencing any changes made and ensuring we are adhering to the law. It should highlight the positives and negatives.

Abida mentioned to the group that she is in the process of running several briefing sessions on EIAs and invited the group to arrange one to one sessions/a group session for a briefing lasting one hour & 30 minutes.

Abida outlined the best way to put an EIA into practice and commented that the best time is at the onset of a new project/change in policy /new procedure. An EIA should help you plan more successfully for present and future needs.

One member of the group identified the need for an EIA particularly at the early stages of the his department's move to Hazelrigg, he has experienced difficulties in ensuring that he had a suitable workplace as he has hearing problems which would not allow him to work in an open plan office. He felt that although his manager was very understanding and accommodating, there was a general lack of consultation in the move.

Sharron commented that EIAs should be perceived as positive, especially due to the changes at the University at this time i.e. moves/new schools. The group agreed that this was an ideal time to implement and embed EIAs at this time of change and uncertainty. Staff should feel secure in the knowledge that their needs are being met wherever possible.

Abida thanked everyone for listening and for attending the meeting.