

## **Disability Equality Scheme Update Report 2007**

### **Executive Summary**

This report reviews the actions undertaken by Loughborough University as set out in its Disability Equality Action Plan 2006 - 2009. Findings from this report have been taken into account to produce a set of future actions.

### **Improvements Over The Last Twelve Months**

This report describes how the University has made improvements for disabled people over the last year. A considerable amount of work has been carried out in departments and sections. Examples of these activities are set out in the report.

Key actions carried out for staff include:

- Work on accessible formats and on the Two Ticks Positive About Disabled People, which has been reviewed in conjunction with Job Centre plus.
- Information about the Disabled Staff Group is regularly advertised. Good Practice is disseminated through disability awareness events and training.

Key actions carried out for students include:

- Additional equipment and support provided through DANS.
- Reviewing the accessibility of module programme design and web-based materials with the Library and IT Services.
- Accessibility of enrolment has been increased by Academic Registry who have been developing strategies to deliver materials in alternative formats, reviewing provision for students with accessibility requirements. programme
- Information for disabled and dyslexic students has been updated and a review of the regulations for Impaired Performance carried out.

### **Challenges to Delivering the Action Plan**

There have been a number of issues that the university has dealt with over the last year, which have detracted from the focus of the disability agenda.

For example, the National Research Assessment Exercise, (RAE), was carried out this year and much of the focus from academic departments was on this. This also required extra capacity from some support services.

Focus groups and a survey were carried out when the scheme was being formulated. However, more needs to be done to consult with staff, students and other stakeholders.

## **Findings**

While it can be demonstrated that Loughborough University has taken considerable positive steps to deliver the disability agenda more could be done to measure the impact of this work.

Resources need to be found to collect and analyse the data.

More consultation work needs to be carried out to ascertain the impact of the actions being carried out with all stakeholders.

The Disability Impact Assessment process needs to be established and co-ordinated, paralleling the Race Equality Impact Assessment, to ensure that disability issues and concerns are being addressed. Consideration needs to be given as to whether it is timely to produce an Equality Scheme which encompasses at least the three main strands, Race, Disability and Gender.

Many departments have been working on actions from the corporate DES but few have produced their own plans. More work needs to be done to raise awareness of what is required from departments, with regard to drawing up action plans, sharing good practice and the need to put monitoring processes into place.

## **Recommendations for Action**

In considering the outcomes of this report a number other actions are to be considered. It is important that overall responsibility for co-ordinating and delivering the DES action plan is established and the plan is reprioritised in early 2008. Consultation needs to be extended to include all stakeholders. Resources need to be allocated to ensure that the objectives are achievable.

## **1. Introduction**

### **Professor Shirley Pearce, Vice Chancellor**

Diversity and equality of opportunity are important principles for the University. The Disability Equality Scheme is part of embedding these principles in reality, and we have committed to supporting the scheme across the Institution.

The Disability Equality Scheme (DES) outlines the issues and priorities faced by disabled people – whether staff, students or visitors – and how we will ensure equality for them. This enacts our University strategy in which equality and diversity feature strongly. The DES will help ensure that we continue to provide a fair, supportive and cohesive environment that promotes equality of opportunity.

There is a lot of very good work going on across the University, and I congratulate Departments and Sections on their achievements in meeting our commitment to staff and students with a disability. Using the DES as a resource, we can continue to extend our work to ensure that we are an organisation that promotes diversity and equality at every level and that enables people with a disability to fully participate in the life of the University.

## **2. Loughborough University Disability Equality Vision**

All University staff, students, visitors and contractors are expected to treat disabled people with respect.

The University encourages the development of an environment in which diversity is valued. This includes a commitment to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability in all employment matters, to increase employment opportunities for people who have a disability and to ensure that its recruitment and selection processes are fully accessible.

The principle of accessibility underpins the University's policy and includes independent access, or, at least, access with minimal assistance to the built environment, information and services.

## **3. Background**

The Disability Duty – The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 was amended to include the Disability Equality Duty (DED) which into force in December 2006,. The DED is made up of two parts. The first part, or general duty requires all public sector bodies to promote disability equality by:

- Eliminating unlawful disability discrimination and disability related harassment
- Promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people, taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life

The second part or specific duty says when carrying out day-to-day work, the University should:

- Publish a Disability Equality Scheme (including within it an Action Plan)
- Involve disabled people in producing the Scheme and Action Plan
- Demonstrate that actions in the Scheme have been taken and appropriate outcomes have been achieved
- Report on progress
- Review and revise the Scheme

The Disability Equality Scheme was published in December 2006. Much of the work to meet the objectives has been carried out by the Disability Additional Needs Service, (DANS which is provided for students) and Personnel Services,(for staff) with many departments also delivering specific action points.

Once published the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) was distributed to the Equality and Diversity Co-ordinators. The DES was also broken down into component parts for different departments with their particular items being highlighted.

The Equality and Diversity Adviser has met with a number of Heads of Department and Services and explained that it is a requirement to draw up their own action plans. Some have done this, for example imago, (residential services), Media Service. There are large numbers of departments who have not compiled their own action plans, which makes it difficult to assess the overall impact of the work being done. Work is being carried out on disability issues but this appears to not be in a systematic way

#### **4. Improvements Over The Last Twelve Months**

Work carried out on the key corporate actions can be found at Appendix A. Actions not completed this year can be found at Appendix B.

##### **Key actions carried out for staff include:**

- **Accessible Formats** – Work has been undertaken to ensure that heads of department and sections are aware of the need for clear and accessible documents. Information has been distributed to them directly and appears on the Personnel Services website explaining what accessible formats are. Personnel Services advise on how to provide an accessible format e.g. Braille, large font and so on.
- Application forms clearly state that alternative formats are available on request and requirements are met where possible. Information is available on the Personnel Services website which sets out what accessible formats are.
- **Two Ticks Positive About Disabled People Symbol** – This has been reviewed in conjunction with Job Centre plus. Heads of Department and Sections, the Disabled Staff Group and Equality Co-ordinators have been given the information about Two Ticks and Access to work.

A process is in place for disabled members of staff to have a Personnel Development Plan.

- The Two Ticks symbol is displayed on the Personnel Services website and the new recruitment web page, letterheads and compliment slips.
- Job applicants and interviewers are asked if they have any requirement as at the interview stage and steps are taken to ensure this is accessible.
- **Promotion Work** –regular adverts are placed on the electronic notice board about the Disabled Staff Group, in the staff newsletter, (news@lboro) and the Equality and Diversity Newsletter.
- **Disseminating Good Practice** - The Respecting Diversity and the Recruitment and Retention training contain elements on disability.
- Training has been offered on the Disability Equality Scheme. Focus groups and a survey were conducted to shape the DES. Training offered to 32 Equality and Diversity Co-ordinators included disability issues.
- **Awareness Raising Event** - Seminar with Professor Colin Barnes of Leeds University, organised for staff, students and community and presented to link with the International Day of Disabled people.

#### **Key Actions Carried Out For Students Include:**

- Additional funding for HE students, who do not receive a Disabled Student Allowance, (DSA), for equipment and support provided through DANS, as part of annual budget request. Additionally, departments have contributed to the cost of support for students with high cost complex needs who cannot be fully supported directly from the DSA.
- Information about access to DSA's and other means of financial support for disability is clear and up to date. New information leaflets and web based resources have been drafted and disseminated through DANS, for example a comprehensive guide to the Disabled Students Allowance process.
- Reviewed accessibility of module and programme design, recording decisions made about accessibility, procedures for validation and review processes which include SENDA and DDA compliance.
- Job role of Braille and Accessible materials officer updated and implemented.
- DANS and library exploring new ways of increasing formal collaboration to maximise resources available to students and increase efficiency of working.

- **Review of accessibility of web-based materials** - Head of DANS and Web Accessibility Group/Library Services collaborating on increasing accessibility of new web design and existing information on the web. A series of formal meetings were held to discuss the development for the Learnserver and University web pages, including the development of a standardised accessibility option and setting.
- Disability information page to be part of essential stage 2 developments of the Loughborough University Student Information, (LUSI), system. This will incorporate a transfer of all information currently held by DANS on their departmental databases to be become available to nominated contacts within other sections, including academic departments. This will increase the efficiency, accuracy and detail of information available to departments about accessibility requirements for exam and coursework.
- **Accessible enrolment** - Increased collaboration between Academic Registry services and DANS for open days in 2007. Developments included provisions on communication support workers, confidential accessible rooms for private consultation with disabilities services staff, and a number of individual appointments offered to disabled prospective students.
- **Strategies to deliver materials in alternative formats** - Development of Braille and Accessible Material Officer role in DANS.
- **Review provision for students with accessibility requirements** - Various developments discussed with individual departments relating to case specific and general issues. For example, alternative forms of assessment policy for LUSAD, collaborative working with Ergonomics course over supporting students with physical disabilities.
- **Update programme information for disabled and dyslexic students** - Updates requested as part of annual review of programme handbooks. However, information held on departmental websites need to be reviewed as some of this is out of date.
- Review of the regulations for Impaired Performance - IP procedure currently under review, with suggestion for amendments and changes to be submitted on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2007. The aim is to streamline system to standardise methodology of decision making and also provide formal guidance on “retrospective” IP claims.

## 5. Examples of Actions Undertaken in Departments/Sections

The following gives examples of some of the work being carried out in departments and section.

### i) Estates Services

- **Recruitment** - Shortlisted candidates, invited for interview are asked to state any requirements they have. Reasonable adjustments are then made at the interview location

- All written forms of communication are provided in an easy to read format – Arial font and text size 12; text is aligned to the left.
- **Disability in employment** - Adjustments are made or work is restructured to allow disabled people to continue their present role where possible.
- **Induction Scheme** - This is being reviewed, (completion March 2008); This includes new ways of drawing new employee's attention to equality and diversity policies prior to them attending University induction/courses.

## ii) **Geography**

- Provision has been made for specialist equipment, e.g. chairs, IT equipment, etc. for staff, following consultation with individual members of staff and the Occupational Health Advisor.
- The Departmental Disability Co-ordinator has met with DANS staff to discuss individual student support needs as part of the continued close liaison with DANS re: support of students registered with them who have declared a disability. Action taken has included making reasonable adjustments via the setting of alternative assessments.
- The Department has been concerned about the apparent increase in the number of students experiencing mental health problems (evident in claims for impaired performance, (IP). Various action is being taken, e.g. early identification of issues through meetings with Personal Tutors and a very comprehensive Personnel Development Programme monitoring process; moves to work more closely with DANS in the context of developing departmental policy and taking a more proactive support role at departmental level. The Department will be working with DANS to provide a more integral role in the IP process, ensuring departments are provided with appropriate supporting documentation.
- A review of module specifications has been carried out and identified as having potential difficulties regarding SENDA compliance, e.g. field course modules.

## iii) **Information Science**

- Installed door stops to improve accessibility
- Purchased a large monitor to help with visual impairments
- Installed signage in Braille around the Department
- Lift has been converted for improved access
- Students - reasonable adjustments are made e.g. allowing extra time for exams/coursework in line with the recommendations of DANS.

#### iv) **IT Services**

- Continue to provide advice, training and diagnostic tools for Web authors to help produce accessible Web pages. Actively maintain awareness and expertise in this area as technology advances.
- Review of 24 hour computer lab provision is underway. This may reduce the number of labs open across campus, but will include consideration of security and accessibility arrangements for students with physical disabilities, including nearby disabled parking spaces and lighting, wheelchair access, disabled toilet provision, lifts etc.

#### v) **Library**

- A loop system is available at the Enquiry Desks for people with hearing difficulties
- Various ICT based applications are available to enhance access to information for people with sight limitations
- The Library Facilities Manager:
  - is the Library's Co-ordinator for disabled users
  - is a member of the University's Sub-Committee for disabled students
  - liaises with the Disabilities and Additional Needs Service
  - delivers or arranges relevant training for Library staff
  - assists disabled users and seeks their views on the Library service
- Disabilities Additional Needs Service (DANS) staff deliver training on relevant aspects of disabilities to Library staff
- The Library fire manual includes guidelines on dealing with disabled students
- Various specific photocopying services are offered to students with sight problems (including different coloured paper for dyslexic students)
- The lending period for books is longer for some students with specific learning challenges
- Access is provided to all floors for disabled students
- The development of digital Library services enhances access through the ability to alter the font size, colour etc of information on pc screens

#### vi) **Media Services**

- **Design of online and printed materials** - Work has been carried out to improve awareness of the need to use these. Online formats have

been made available for use with assistive technologies for corporate publications.

- **Improve accessibility of staff recruitment adverts and information and the two-ticks logo** – Designed new recruitment advertising style to better position the two-ticks logo and to increase promotion of online information, which may be more accessible. Linked to this making information relating to all recruitment adverts (and not just those of Grade 6 and above) available online.
- **Two-Ticks** - Check at shortlisting stage for any declaration by disabled applicants. Reasonable adjustments have been made to ensure that candidates have access to the process.

#### **vii) Professional Development**

- Inclusion of disability and diversity issues within the programme for new lecturers (e.g. workshop on Equality in the Curriculum and inclusion of discussion of dyslexia and other disability-related topics within other workshops).
- Ongoing support for the Disabilities: Academic Resource Tool, (DART) offers online support for staff working with disabled students
- Leadership and Management courses are being run regularly
- Continued engagement with national Higher Education issues through membership of the Leadership Foundation's Diversity Advisory Group which includes representatives of key stakeholders such as the Equality Challenge Unit, (ECU), the Higher Education Funding Council for England, (HEFCE), Higher Education Academy, (HEA).
- Established procedures for supporting disabled participants, including
- induction loop facility within main training room.

#### **viii) Widening Participation**

- Schools are asked to notify if young people have specific requirements, when attending events, such as University Experience Days. . Information is requested before they arrive at events so that we can make sure all activities are accessible to everyone. We have made adjustments for young wheel chair users
- DANS is consulted where relevant and everyone involved in events are informed in advance if there are specific needs.

## **6. Monitoring Data**

### **i) Staff Monitoring Figures**

Data for statistical purposes is collected once a year in relation to disability under the following headings.

- Staff Head Count by disability
- Applicant Data disability
- Contract Type by disability
- Full/Part-time Status
- Reward Review by disability Job Evaluation
- Academic Staff
- Reasons for Leaving
- Length of Service

A report is published on the Personnel Services website. Figures have been published since 2003 therefore it is possible to identify trends.

The figures are very small and show Loughborough University employs 1.69% of staff who have disclosed a disability (1.61% 2006, 1.64% 2005 and 1.58% 2004). This shows a slight increase over the last year.

This may be an increase in staff declaring a disability. An exercise was carried out in early 2007 to encourage members of staff to provide this information where it was missing and this increased the information we had. A definition of disability was set out to ensure an understanding of what was required. Staff are asked to declare whether they are disabled or not and this resulted in more declarations of disability.

Data for applicants show that the disclosure of a disability has increased since 2005. Over the last year, (1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007), all applicants notified whether they were disabled or not.

### **ii) Student Monitoring Figures**

The figures of disabled students at Loughborough University has been around 1.5%. Previously work on these has not shown any causes for concern, they are reviewed annually.

These are not yet available for this year from UCAS for applicants and admissions.

### **iii) Disability Additional Needs Service**

Over the past year the figures show that the service experienced an increasingly high level of demand and in the complexity of cases, continuing the trend of previous years. Service use has seen an almost 72% increase between 2003 and 2006. (Appendix C.)

There is a continued rise in dyslexia, (up 12.3%), a significant rise in people with multiple disabilities, (77.6%), generally either dyslexia and another disability or mental health and a different disability. Looking at the statistics for this year, these continue to rise, and the increase in dyslexia shows no signs of abating in terms of numbers of students wishing to be supported.

A survey to determine satisfaction with the service has been carried out but the figures are not available at the time of this report. These will be included in the DANS annual report by the end of year.

DANS has been given extra resources by the university over the last couple of years, including some new office spaces for the mental health team. Further office space has also been allocated.

DANS has produced an annual report.

## **7. Impact Assessments**

These are planned for disability but have not been carried out so far. Long term it is planned to devise an Equality Impact Assessment process to deal with at least Race, Disability and Gender. The latter needs to be included in the long term DES actions.

## **8. Conclusions From Information Gathering**

Overall figures are collected on staff and students. DANS have found that among students there is a continued rise in service use. There is a genuine commitment from the university to provide resources, which match the level of need, and the gap between the two is closing now.

Two Tick Disability symbol is implemented, which is intended to improve our best practice in recruitment and this is felt to have increased the numbers of applicants, who declare a disability.

Otherwise the numbers are small therefore, trends are difficult to be identified from these. More information needs to be gathered on the effectiveness of services and what is provided for students. Processes need to be established to ascertain the outcomes of the work being carried out otherwise it is difficult to ascertain how positive the working environment is.

## **9. Challenges to Delivering the Action Plan**

There have been a number of issues that the university has had to deal with over the last year which have detracted from the focus of the disability agenda, which need to be taken into account.

- 1 The need for a Disability Champion to drive the Scheme forward.
- 2 The National Research Assessment Exercise, (RAE), was carried out this year and much of the focus from academic departments was on this. This also required extra capacity from some support services.

- 3 There is a general issue about the need for appropriate resources and funding to drive the scheme forward.
- 4 Focus groups and a survey were carried out when the scheme was being formulated. However, lack of resources leaves more that needs to be done to consult with staff, students and other stakeholders.

## **10. Conclusions**

The University has been engaging with disability issues for some time, there is a considerable amount of effort being put into delivering this agenda across the organisation. Departments and sections have been making considerable effort to meet the specific needs of disabled staff and students.

While it can be demonstrated that Loughborough University has taken considerable positive steps to deliver the disability agenda more could be done to measure the impact of this work. Resources need to be found for the collection and analysis of the data.

The Disability Impact Assessment process needs to be established and co-ordinated, paralleling the Race Equality Impact Assessment, as a matter of priority to ensure that disability issues and concerns are being taken account of. This needs to include increased consultation with all stakeholders work.

Consideration needs to be given as to whether it is timely to produce an Equality Scheme, which encompasses at least the three main strands, Race, Disability and Gender.

Many departments have been working on actions from the corporate DES but few have produced their own plans. More work needs to be done to raise awareness of what is required from departments, with regard to drawing up action plans, sharing good practice and the need to put monitoring processes into place.

## **11. Recommendations for Action**

In considering the outcomes of this report a number other actions are to be considered. This will start with reprioritising the action plan in early 2008.

1. A senior manager to be identified to take overall responsibility for co-ordinating and delivering the DES action plan.
2. Revise the Disability Equality Scheme to include an introductory statement from a senior manager and set out the university commitment as set out in Appendix D as this was not included in n the original scheme.
3. A key requirement is to ensure every department/section has its own plan or is mainstreaming disability actions in existing plans.

4. The Disability Equality Scheme action plan needs to be revised to include actions not carried out in year one and re prioritise projected actions for year two.
5. Resources, including costings to be linked to the actions.
6. Appropriate resources and funding to be found to deliver these.
7. Set up Action Planning Workshops to ensure HODs and HOSs are fully aware of their role and responsibilities, to share good practice and measure progress.
8. Focus groups need to be set up to consult with staff, students and other stakeholders to ascertain the impact and effectiveness of the scheme. Other methods of determining impact need to be considered e.g. customer surveys.

## **Appendices**

- [Appendix A](#) Disability Equality Action Plan Actions Completed 2006 – 2007
- [Appendix B](#) Disability Equality Action Plan Outstanding Items 2007
- [Appendix C](#) Disability Additional Needs Service - Use of Service
- [Appendix D](#) Draft introductory statement