

Ruskin Mill Educational Trust
Disability Equality Scheme
2006-2009

Making Disability Equality Happen!

This Disability Equality Scheme sets out the framework within which Ruskin Mill Educational Trust promotes equality and strives to eliminate all forms of disability discrimination against disabled students, staff, visitors and contractors. In developing the Scheme the Trust is aware that individuals can be included in more than one diversity category and thus face more potential intentional and unintentional discrimination. The Trust recognises that the diversity of our students and staff is one of our greatest strengths.

This Disability Equality Scheme is published on our website at www.ruskin-mill.org.uk

This document can be made available in large print or in alternative formats that meet individual needs. Please contact the Department of Human Resources at Ruskin Mill College 01453 837520.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Principles of the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust Disability Equality Scheme
3. Involving Disabled People
4. Impact Assessment
5. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust's Action Plan 2006 - 2009
6. Gathering Information
7. Using Information
8. Reviewing and Implementing the Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan
9. Annual Reporting
10. Producing the Disability Equality Scheme 2010 - 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Mill Educational Trust (RMET) wishes to ensure that it is able to meet both the general and specific duties of the Disability Equality Duty, which came into force on 4 December 2006.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 (and subsequent amendments) makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the disposal or management of premises.

Meaning of “Disability”

The DDA defines a disabled person as someone with “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”

The Social Model of Disability

RMET adopts the Social Model of Disability, which was developed in the 1970s by disabled people who use their personal experiences to show that the disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people are not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions but stem from attitudinal and environmental barriers. The Social Model recognises that while some people may have impairments which affect how they function physically or mentally, they are actually disabled by the barriers in society that prevent proper account being taken of their needs. Our policy and practice in relation to disabled people and the development of this Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan is based upon the removal of these barriers.

RMET’s approach to the Disability Equality Scheme

RMET’s Disability Equality Scheme provides a way to tackle disability discrimination in a practical way by developing and maintaining policies, procedures and practices that actively promote opportunities and thus strives to minimise discrimination. By taking a Trust-wide approach and with personal commitment from everyone within our organization, the Trust can achieve tangible outcomes and improvements for disabled people. In this way the Trust will seek to make real, positive changes to the benefit of all. The Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan covers the three years from 2006 to 2009. The subsequent Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan will cover the period from 2010 to 2012.

The Council of Management is responsible to the Trustees for ensuring that the Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan are continuously promoted and comprehensively implemented in all aspects of the Trust’s operation.

General Duty

The General Duty requires the Trust to have due regard to the issues listed below. “Due regard” means more than just “consider.” The Trust will need to decide how relevant an issue could be to a person with a disability when developing a facility or a procedure. It also needs to decide how important the development could be for people with a disability. The views of people potentially affected will be important in making these decisions.

The issues to which we need to give due regard are to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life;
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons’ disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

Specific Duties

The Trust must also perform specific duties in order to achieve the general duties. These specific duties are:

- To publish a Disability Equality Scheme outlining how the Trust intends to fulfill its General and Specific Duties;
- To involve disabled persons in the development of the Disability Equality Scheme.

To include the following in the Disability Equality Scheme:

- The Trust’s methods for impact assessment;
- Steps which the Trust will take toward fulfilling the General Duty, i.e. the Action Plan;
- Arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment, and the delivery of education and support services;
- Arrangements for putting the information gathered to use, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of the Action Plan and in preparing subsequent Disability Equality Schemes;
- Within three years of the Disability Equality Scheme being published to take the steps set out in the Action Plan and put into effect arrangements for gathering and making use of information;

- Publish a report containing a summary of steps taken under the Action Plan, the results of the information gathering and the use to which the information has been put.

2. PRINCIPLES OF THE TRUST'S DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

RMET's Disability Equality Scheme sets out the framework within which it promotes equality and strives to eliminate all forms of disability discrimination against our disabled students, staff, visitors and contractors. In developing the Disability Equality Scheme the Trust is aware that individuals can be included in more than one diversity category and thus face more potential intentional and unintentional discrimination. The Trust recognises that the diversity of its students and staff is one of its greatest strengths.

The commitment to delivering the Trust's Disability Equality Scheme is embodied in the following principles:

- The mainstreaming of exemplar practice in disability equality across all areas of the Trust's work will be a key element in all of its activities;
- Staff and students are entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace and learning environment. The Trust recognises that discrimination, direct or indirect, based on a person's disability is unjust and it will not be tolerated;
- Disabled staff and students know best what their own requirements are, and should be enabled to make informed employment choices, and study choice where appropriate;
- The creation of an integrated and mainstream culture that promotes disability equality will enable all students and staff to participate as fully as is realistic in all aspects of Trust life;
- The establishment of an inclusive learning environment and the provision of an accessible curriculum will be at the centre of our high quality, planned delivery of student services and curriculum design.
- The creation of a diverse workforce that more accurately reflects the population and community our Colleges are located in. Applicants, appointees and staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits.
- The maintenance of a high standard of access to the built environment, with respect to the Trust's estate and working towards a more disabled friendly property leased, rented or otherwise hired for the purposes of student accommodation and staff where appropriate.
- Recognition that the successful implementation of our Disability Equality Scheme requires the commitment, involvement and active support of the entire Trust community, including its partners and contractors.

3. INVOLVING DISABLED PEOPLE

The position as at December 2006

The Council of Management has established a Trust Equality and Diversity Working Forum (TEDWF) to advise on the experiences of disabled students within the colleges and to report to the Trustees of Ruskin Mill Educational Trust relevant issues from the TEDWF and College Equality and Diversity Working Groups (CEDWG).

Students are members of the Trust's Equality and Diversity Forum and the College Equality and Diversity Working Groups. Ruskin Mill College Equality and Diversity Working Group will take a lead role on disability issues and disseminate and inform the other CEDWG's on good practice.

Making Adjustments

The College Student Focus Management meetings discuss the procedures for managing appropriate arrangements to support students, and they are encouraged to seek support from external agencies, bodies and stakeholders, e.g. parents, school staff, educational psychologists or other advocates, to help the Trust understand how best to meet their needs.

The adjustments can apply to scribe support, one to one support, learning and teaching approaches and materials.

Buildings

Following a survey of College buildings in 2004, considerable financial investment and improvements to physical access to buildings and mobility within the buildings have been made. Lifts are now installed at Ruskin Mill College and lifts are planned for installation at the other Colleges.

Equipment and Software

A two year funded post has been established between the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Glasshouse College, and William Morris House and Ruskin Mill College to develop IT technology which assists students to improve their learning outcomes.

Recent Developments

Funding has been secured to carry out a dyslexia audit within the Trust to establish a more dyslexia friendly environment with the aim and vision of RMET becoming an exemplar of good practice.

Benchmark Data for Disabled Staff

A disability audit is underway which will provide benchmark data for disabled staff. Baseline data will be used annually to produce more detailed trend data and graphs.

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The position as at December 2006. RMET will undertake a comprehensive impact assessment on all of its existing policies, procedures and processes which may inadvertently have an adverse impact on disabled people. The Social Model of disability will be applied as the test on all of the Trust's policies, procedures and processes. Staff expertise will be developed to carry this through and the findings will be presented to the Council of Management with recommendations for change as appropriate.

Process

The Equality Impact Assessment framework and analytical tools will be used by the College Equality and Diversity Working Groups and applied on all Policies, procedures and practices to identify issues and concerns relating to the equalities agenda. The Council of Management and the Trust Equality and Diversity Working Forum are accountable for the completion of impact assessments over a 3 year period relating to equality and diversity issues, specifically gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religious belief; setting and monitoring performance Indicators and targets against which performance will be measured, including obtaining feedback from users of the service, and for reporting on performance against targets.

The present plans for a rolling review of policies and procedures will be reviewed and re-prioritised to reflect advice on their relevance and importance ("proportionality") for people with a disability.

5. ACTION PLAN, 2006 -2009

RMET will meet the general duty placed upon it by the Disability Equality Duty by undertaking to:

Produce a comprehensive Action Plan which clearly commits the Trust to a time-scale for activities to take place.

The Action plan will include:

- Clear time-scales for activities
- The person/persons responsible for the activities
- Agreed improvement targets

The Council of Management will be responsible for ensuring the Action Plan is reviewed at regular intervals and that it is amended in light of new activities identified/or activities that need changing as the result of new information. This will include:

- The tasks and priorities agreed for the Action Plan will be arrived at through the involvement of relevant individuals and groups. Each task identifies the responsible member(s) of Trust personnel and the timescale for completion.
- Progress against the tasks in the Action Plan will be monitored in Spring and Autumn each year and reported to the TEDWF/CEDWG.
- The observations of TEDWF will be reported to the Council of Management and from there to the RMET Trustees where the Annual Report and the subsequent Action Plan will be considered by them.

(For ease of distribution and up-dating the Action Plan is produced as a separate document)

6 GATHERING INFORMATION

Students

The Trust will undertake to collect information prior to the point of admission and will monitor the data to establish whether the nature of the disability stated precludes the person from being offered a place.

All student achievement records will be monitored at frequent intervals to ensure that the disabilities of the learner are fully taken into account when setting and reviewing achievement targets.

Regular reviews of the curriculum will be undertaken to ensure that the Social Model of disability is actively promoted and positive role models of disabled people are emphasised.

Review of the curriculum will include ensuring all learning opportunities are open to those with physical and learning /emotional difficulties and that any identified barriers are overcome.

Extra curricular activities taking place within residential settings and outside of the college day will be reviewed to ensure all learners have equal access to leisure time activities and their disability does not adversely affect their experiences during their leisure time.

Learners with physical disabilities will be monitored to ensure that the environment in Colleges and within the residential settings is appropriate for their needs. Necessary adaptations to meet their needs will be anticipated and arrangements will be in place prior to their admission.

Employment

The Trust will undertake to collect information from both existing and prospective employees, which will indicate the number of staff with disabilities the kind of disability. College Equality and Diversity Working Groups will be involved in designing sensitive and confidential mechanisms for collecting such information.

The information gathered will be used for monitoring the following:

- Recruitment is open to all and prospective staff with disabilities are as likely to be appointed as those without existing disability;
- Annual appraisal information will be monitored to ensure that all staff whether disabled or not are treated fairly;
- Promotion is open to all and all staff whether disabled or not are able to have access to suitable promotion opportunities as they arise;
- Access to training/development opportunities will be monitored to ensure there are no barriers evident for staff with disabilities to engage in suitable opportunities.

Retention of staff will be monitored to ensure that there is not a disproportionate number of staff leaving with declared disabilities.

All staff will be offered an exit interview and the opportunity to state whether they hold a perception that reasonable adjustments had not been made to meet their needs.

Monitoring

Student Monitoring

The application and enrolment processes generate statistical information about the number of students who declare that they have one or more declared/hidden disabilities.

Students are then given the opportunity to discuss appropriate measures to support them, and, with their permission, this gathered information is shared with relevant staff.

For students, monitoring data is produced for consideration by the TEDWF. For example:

- Applications for courses/modules/subjects
- Conversion rates
- Retention rates

Development Plans Relating to Gathering Information

Students

Monitoring data will be produced covering the following aspects:

- Course transfers
- Students' achievements
- Work placements
- Harassment relating to disability

Staff Monitoring

For staff, monitoring data is produced for the TEDWF, Council of Management, and RMET Trustees about the following aspects:

- Applications and appointments
- Participation in training and development
- Staff Appraisals
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- Promotions
- Harassment and Bullying
- Number of Leavers
- Selection methods
- Types of contracts
- Grade
- Position
- Length of service

The Colleges will strengthen links with its preferred local Further Education and Specialist Colleges and other agencies to improve the passing of relevant information at transition points

Feedback

In addition to the quantitative information described above it will be important to generate qualitative information. Some of this could arise from existing arrangements, for example: the Staff Appraisal Process.

Consideration should also be given to specific surveys amongst people with a disability and/or setting up existing feedback mechanisms to be able to dis-aggregate the responses of those with a disability. In both cases there would be the need to protect individuals from accidental identification where small numbers are involved.

7. USING INFORMATION

The Trust will analyse any differentials in the areas monitored between disabled and non-disabled staff; investigate the reasons for them; and take action to remedy them.

Recommended actions for change will be presented to the Council of Management who will exercise leadership over the Action Plan and review all recommendations for inclusion within the plan.

8. REVIEWING AND IMPLEMENTING THE DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME AND ACTION PLAN

The Council of Management will undertake to provide leadership in taking the Action Plan forward within the Trust and will be responsible for providing the necessary resources to be released which are identified as needed to expedite the plan.

The Council of Management will undertake to formally oversee progress against the plan on an annual basis.

The Council of Management will endorse an annual report which is produced and published on the RMET web-site showing progress against the plan and how RMET is meeting its obligations under the Disability Equality Duty.

The Council of Management will review the Disability Equality Scheme within three years of its inception and oversee the changes and amendments which need to be made.

9. ANNUAL REPORTING

The Trust will prepare an Annual Report in December 2007, which will include:

- An up-dated Action Plan to illustrate the progress made against targets and timescales;
- Summary information gathered relating to people with a disability, conclusions drawn and actions taken or planned in the light of the information and conclusions;
- A list of individuals and organisations involved in agreeing the Annual Report.
- The Annual Report will be made available on the Trust Website and printed copies will be made available;
- The report will be made available in alternative formats for those who require it.

10 PRODUCING THE DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME 2010 - 2012

It is anticipated that the Disability Equality Scheme covering the period 2010 - 2012 will be different in several respects from the present (first) Scheme.

By 2009 methods of gathering disability information that can be disaggregated should be established, and summary reports should be readily available for consideration.

It is likely that there will be better-developed and on-going relationships with people with a disability which will re-shape priorities.

It is hoped that other local and national agencies will have contributed to the development of products and services to benefit people with a disability thereby creating a different landscape for disability issues.

Staff training and development will have contributed to a Trust/College culture in which many of the activities currently taken as special arrangements will be integrated into the design of learning and support services.

As national reports become available they will inform future developments of the Trust's Disability Equality Scheme.

The Annual Reports in 2007, 2008 and particularly 2009 will point the way to the content and priorities for the period 2010 - 2012.

The Trust Equality and Diversity Working Forum will have an important role to play in determining the best methods of involving relevant people in the development of the next 2010 - 2012 Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan.