



**Newbattle Abbey College
Disability Equality Duty
Annual Report December 2008**

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Introduction

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of the Newbattle Abbey College Mission, Vision and Statement of Purpose.

We are 'Scotland's Life Changing College' and aim to provide an inclusive and transformative learning experience for adults within a learning environment that promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

Newbattle Abbey College is committed to actively promoting equality of opportunity and experience for all learners and staff beyond mere legislative compliance. We welcome the public duty to promote disability equality under the Disability Equality Duty.

This is evidenced by the College Strategic Plan 2008-2012 which states as Strategic Aim 4:

'To ensure an ethos of inclusiveness that promotes equality and challenges discrimination.'

Progress Towards Improving Disability Equality during 2007-2008

Using the College Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan as a tool to further develop our commitment to disabled learners and staff, the College Equalities Committee regularly monitored progress towards achieving actions for improvement during 2007-2008. The Equalities Committee then reported progress and impact of actions to the Board of Directors, the Audit Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee. In addition, all members of staff, committee members, and members of college groups and teams carried out annual self evaluation activities as individuals and in groups, in order to reflect on the impact on disability equality of their particular job role and responsibilities. This reflective activity resulted in action planning for improvement with SMART objectives being set and

systematic monitoring in place in order to judge progress towards achieving these objectives.

Newbattle Abbey College has published its Disability Equality Scheme and updated Action Plan for 2008-2009 on the College website. In addition, we have an Inclusiveness Action Plan the actions from which inform the annual scrutiny of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and Disability Action Plan. Annual scrutiny of the DES is carried out by partners from local disability action groups joined by relevant student and staff representatives and representatives from the College Equalities Committee.

College Context

Newbattle Abbey College 3 year DES Action Plan is designed to ensure an inclusive high quality learning experience for all learners. The DES Action Plan specifically addresses the need to involve disabled learners, staff and disability organisations in consultations to inform and influence the learning environment. A 3 year plan for carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment on all College policies and procedures is well under way and 'critical friends' have assisted in carrying out an access audit of College facilities. In addition, a full access audit has been done by consultants from whom a Disability Access Report was compiled and submitted to Senior Management and the College Board of Directors. Both documents will inform the Single Equality Scheme which is due for completion in March 2009.

The Consultation Process

During 2007-2008, student representation was in place on most College Committees including the Board of directors, the Equalities Committee, the Marketing Group and the Health and Safety Committee. Student representatives meet with Senior Management at least 3 times per year and are invited to attend most other groups and committees on an ad hoc basis. Feedback from disabled learners and disabled staff was obtained following 'inclusiveness' workshops and was generated in a way that guaranteed confidentiality and encouraged transparency of response and a high level of participation. There are 'Equalities' questionnaires on the College website so that both stakeholders and the general public are consulted and have the opportunity to inform practice and procedure. Staff and students are

encouraged to submit questions anonymously to Senior Management and these are then discussed at monthly focus group meetings.

Staff Development

The College has provided a range of CPD/Staff Development opportunities to support the targets identified in the DES Action Plan. During Quality Week staff development workshops focused on Disability Equalities and did much to raise the awareness of staff and to promote positive attitudes to disabled learners. The Learning Support Tutor is now 'Brite' trained and has actively disseminated good practice. This has resulted in a change to recruitment and interview procedures so that learner needs are identified early and assistive technology is in place prior to enrolment. In addition, all academic staff are informed of individual learner needs regarding the style and format of learning and teaching material.

Impact Assessment

Newbattle Abbey College recognises the importance of examining our activities and services to ensure that there are no disproportionately adverse effects on particular groups and the College further recognises the value of involving disabled people in the equality impact assessment process. However achieving meaningful involvement of disabled learners has been a challenge which we are continuing to address. The College has adopted, reviewed and simplified a pilot toolkit to carry out Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on all policies and procedures and a calendar of EIA activities has been set out to cover a 3 year period. Staff responsible for carrying out the EIA will attend training in the use of an improved toolkit during 2009. The DES Action Plan for 2008-2009 includes a target to develop strategies for more effective and better involvement of disabled learners and staff in the EIA process.

Quality and Equality of Learning and Teaching Materials (QELTM)

The QELTM Guidelines provide information to ensure the accessibility of learning and teaching materials for disabled learners. All learning and teaching material currently in use has been audited using the QUELTMS toolkit. In addition, the College is in the process of diversifying the

curriculum and updating the ICT infrastructure which includes a commitment by the College to provide most learning and teaching materials in electronic format by September 2009. Staff development plans for 2008-2009 include staff training to ensure that the use of images and the content of learning and teaching materials promote positive attitudes to disabled people.

Monitoring and Review

Newbattle Abbey College disability equalities monitoring for 2005-2008

Learner Status	2005-2006 Enrolled Learners	2006-2007 Enrolled Learners	2007-2008 Enrolled Learners	2008-2009 Enrolled Learners
Disability not listed	3%	0%	5%	4%
Dyslexia	6%	4%	9%	10%
Deaf/Hearing impairment	0%	4%	0%	3%
Mental health difficulties	0%	6%	4%	1%
Unseen disability e.g. diabetes, asthma, epilepsy	3%	10%	10%	3%
Multiple disabilities	6%	0%	0%	0%
No disability stated	82%	72%	72%	77%
Information refused	0%	0%	0%	1%
Wheelchair restricted user/mobility	0%	4%	0%	0%
Blind/partially sighted	0%	0%	0%	1%
Total enrolled learners	33	51	61	78

We have established a data monitoring form to allow us to compare year on year statistics for enquiries, applications, and enrolments. This will enable us to measure our progress and analyse our student profile in a more rigorous way, so that we can make plan for improvements to recruitment, interview and enrolment of disabled people.

Future Actions for Improvement of Disability Equalities

The Newbattle Abbey College DES Action Plan for 2008-2009 is available on the College website www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk

The DES Action Plan is approved by the Senior Management Team and the Equalities Committee and indicates how we will implement the Scheme, what people have prioritised as key actions, relevant objectives, targets and priorities of the Strategic and Operational Plan of the College and the requirement to promote Disability Equality.

Moving Forward

2007-2008 has seen significant progress in both the College environment and internal systems and processes that have resulted in a very active and busy year for the College with regard to equality. The Senior Management Team (SMT) and Equalities Committee are reviewing our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Procedures to reflect the changes to legislation which now include the other strands of equality - sexual orientation, age and religion and belief. This we feel emphasises holistic inclusiveness and we are therefore looking at the possibility of adopting a Single Equality Scheme during 2009.

A robust system has been set up to ensure impact assessment is carried out on all College policies and procedures and improvements to these have been made as a result. There is training and support to all staff involved in the EIA process. We wish to further refine the College induction programme for all new staff to ensure that staff from the outset are aware of the importance of disability equality at Newbattle Abbey College.

It is our intention to hold a number of equality and diversity events in February 2009 to further promote and raise awareness of all six strands.

These will be led by the Depute Principal, Administration Manager and the Learning Support Tutor.

We will continue to implement and monitor our Disability, Gender and Race Equality Action Plans and intend to move to a Single Equality Scheme during 2009. The Single Equality Scheme will still identify actions specific to particular equality strands where this is deemed appropriate.

Appendix I

External Links Promoting Disability Equality

BRITE

Careers Scotland

JISC

E Learning Alliance

Equality Forward Scotland

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Forward Mid - Midlothian Disability Equality Forum

Midlothian Council Learning Disability Services

MALANI - Midlothian Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative

SFEU - Strategic Advisory Group of Access and Inclusion

SKILL Scotland