The University Of Sheffield.

Department Of Human Resources.

Progress on strategy and action relating to Disability, 2009-2010

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request. Please contact:

Martin Ford, Department of Human Resources, telephone 0114 222 2480

email: m.j.ford@sheffield.ac.uk

Summary of key progress

- Development of Equality and Diversity Action Plans by Faculties and Professional Services Departments.

- Review of 5 key business areas/major committees during 2009/10 by the Equality & Diversity Board (Research Services, Accommodation Campus Services, Finance Committee (Procurement), CICs and Human Resources).

- Applied for and awarded the disability Two Ticks symbol in 2009 and successfully retained in 2010.

- Implementation of a framework for supporting accessible assessment for students with dyslexia.

- A range of assistive software purchased and Dolphin EasyConverter installed at both Information Commons and St Georges Library.

- Disability and Dyslexia Support Service review and action plan leading to increased support for students with disabilities through operational development resulting in a more proactive service.

- Continued investment in the University Estate with accessible high calibre facilities for disabled students and staff:

  - Library refurbishment completed with greatly improved accessibility
  - Provision of accommodation for disabled people including personal evacuation plans

- Accommodation and Campus Service review of existing marketing strategy with disability focus.

- Successful installation of Maximiser CRM system for storing confidential student and support worker data. This system manages student and staff relationships as well as improving service delivery to enable efficient management of disability related information.

- Equality impact assessment of key University policies / processes.

- Continued embedding of the Inclusive Learning and Teaching project.

1. Our Approach – a Single Equality and Diversity Strategy "Excellence through Inclusion"

This report provides an update of action in key areas during 2009/2010, and outlines future plans.

The University's equality and diversity strategy – Excellence Through Inclusion – has been reviewed. Disability equality remains a key focus of the strategy, which includes new action plans for Faculties and updated Professional Services action plans.

2. Staff

2.1 HR

- The University of Sheffield is committed to equal opportunities and were awarded the disability Two Ticks symbol in 2009, and successfully retained it in 2010.

- The disability symbol is a recognition given by Jobcentre Plus to employers based in Great Britain who have agreed to take action to meet five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees. We are proud to have been accepted as a symbol user and continue to meet the five commitments.

- During 09/10 Recruitment and Selection co-ordinators were trained on the Two Ticks commitments, and this training also formed part of the central e-recruitment training, enabling recruiters to identify applicants that applied through Two Ticks and respond appropriately. Two Ticks is now embedded in the application process.

- The Two Ticks scheme has associated webpages (http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/equality/support/twoticks/) and is linked to from the HR Equality pages and the Recruitment and Selection Pages. We continue to review the scheme internally and the Disability Employment Advisor for Jobcentre Plus will review our progress against the symbol commitments annually, and discuss / advise on future plans.

- The University is working with New Deal for Disabled People. NDDP is a voluntary programme of advice and practical support specifically designed to help people move from disability and health-related benefits into paid employment, and provides tailored, specialist advice, practical training and support as well as financial assistance. NDDP receive emails about our jobs, to enable them to point the opportunities out to select people on their books who they feel match the skills. They would still have to go through the recruitment process.

2.2 Library

- In response to external drivers, including the current economic situation and the changing nature of library work, the Library is working actively

towards a Workforce Development Plan which re-shapes processes and structures whilst maintaining and developing high quality services to customers. The Library's central concept of getting the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion, and Equality Impact Assessments will continue to be carried out as an integral part of the Library's work.

- As one of the pilot departments for the University's e-recruitment process, the Library has taken a leading role in working with HR to embed equality and diversity into day-to-day practices. The Two Ticks scheme has been integrated into Library recruitment procedures, who have worked with both HR and JobCentre Plus to investigate ways in which to try to address under-representation of particular groups of people.

- All potential Chairs of interview panels attended relevant recruitment training run by HR during 2009, and the Library plan to hold similar sessions for Library recruiters who are new or less experienced. This will form part of ongoing awareness training for all staff, where equality and diversity, in all contexts, form an underlying part of the central message.

2.3   Accommodation Campus Services

- Regular training and development continues to make ACS staff aware of equality and diversity, and how specific needs can be addressed.

- ACS made considerable progress with an initiative to review the opportunities for staff to gain workplace support in line with their specific needs, over the last 12 months, including the use of Return to Work interviews. Positive examples include:

  - a number of staff returning to work on light duties or engaged in alternative roles whilst waiting for surgical operations
  - a member of staff with rapidly failing eye sight continuing to be employed following a number of adjustments to their job

- Progress within ACS linked to Equality and Diversity is communicated to all staff through various forums and a six monthly staff conference.

2.4   Student Services

- The Disability and Dyslexia Support Service have continued to develop the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) network and arrange 3 network lunches per academic year. These have been informative and provided valuable peer support as well as excellent networking opportunities.
- Specific training events on the Role of the Mental Health Adviser, and Supporting Students with Asperger's Syndrome, have been held. Planned review of the role of the DLO, resulting in an updated job description to reflect how the role has evolved over the last 3 years.

- A particular area of growth is the Support Workers Service (SWS) that is responsible for recruiting a pool of skilled workers to enable students to access their learning whilst studying at the University. The SWS continues to rapidly grow in terms of the numbers of students recommended support, the range of support made available and the number of support workers recruited. This academic year the SWS provided support for 247 disabled and dyslexic students, (185 students in 2008-9) a 34% increase on last academic year.

3.   Students

3.1   Accessible assessment for students

- A framework for supporting accessible assessment for students with dyslexia has been developed with disabled students, resulting in guidance on accessible assessment and feedback for use by all staff involved in learning, teaching and assessment.

- A 'sticker system' was introduced for the start of academic session 2009-10. Students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), for example, dyslexia, as well as hearing impaired/deaf students or those with Asperger's Syndrome, now have the option of affixing a sticker to any assessed work. This system is intended to raise staff awareness about the occurrence of dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties in the student cohort and to provide a link to the accessible assessment guidance. Staff can then adapt any formative feedback as appropriate. (http://www.shef.ac.uk/disability/staff/support/spld.html)

- Following a great deal of liaison regarding the best methods to obtain alternative formats of required reading from Publishers, the Library now has a web page for academic staff offering advice regarding requests for alternative formats (http://www.shef.ac.uk.eresources.shef.ac.uk/library/services/acadstaff.html)

- The Library has made contact with and contributed to a meeting with the Students' Union Disability Forum.
- Students who have incurred Library fines during a period of illness now have the option of completing a Special Circumstances Form, following which fines will normally be waived.

- The Library has an Additional Support Manager who provides assistance for students with additional support requirements with reclaiming photocopying / printing expenses from their Local Authority.

- A range of Assistive Software has been purchased and Dolphin EasyConverter has been installed at two different Library sites across the University (the Information Commons and St George's Library). CiCS

(Corporate Information and Computing Services) will install the other software once licensing and networking issues have been resolved. One member of Library staff has been seconded to a new role of Additional Support Assistant to support students in using the Assistive Software.

- The Library has contributed to a University project on supporting students with complex mental health difficulties and will be producing recommendations by December 2010.

3.2   Operational Development

- The University's Disability and Dyslexia Support Service undertook a major review of its capacity to manage student demand, as part of the Student Service Department's service improvement process. The review reached into every area of the service and led to the production of a challenging action plan. Though the workload associated with the review proved arduous, the action plan is resulting in a service more able to proactively manage the effects of growing student demand.

3.3   Student Mental Health Strategy

- The Student Mental Health Strategy is well established and in parts fully implemented. Particular gains have been made in clarifying crisis response protocols, in staff training, in supporting students with mental health disabilities, in improving access to counselling services and to developing more closely integrated clinical services.

3.4   Student Welcome Event

- The Disability and Dyslexia Support Service held its first Welcome Event for new disabled students at the start of the academic year to inform them about the support available at the University and how to apply for disabled students' allowances. This event was a great success and will be repeated before the start of each academic year, taking into consideration the optimum times and format for such an event.

4. Accessibility of University Buildings

4.1 The University Estate

- The University has continued to invest in the estate mostly through refurbishment of existing buildings. All schemes are carefully assessed in terms of access and disability and, as far as practicable, we aim to meet the spirit as well as the letter of relevant legislation.

- Recent projects of particular note are:

  - Works to Firth Court to improve access for disabled people, new fire escapes and toilets (complete).
  - Major scheme in the Student's Union which will significantly improve access for all (completion September 2010)
  - Major refurbishment to the Arts Tower (completion October 2010) - including lift refurbishments and improved facilities.
  - In addition to the above, investment in teaching facilities give opportunities to improve access, hearing loop and AV facilities generally.
  - Work with the architects during the Western Bank Library refurbishment to incorporate best practice into the design has greatly improved accessibility to the building. Better unisex accessible toilet and wash facilities have been installed.

4.2   Provision of Accommodation to suit disabled people

- A review of the existing Accommodation and Campus Service plans has taken place over the last 12 months in order to address disability issues at each level. All residents with disabilities have a personal evacuation plan should emergency situations arise.

- A review of the existing Accommodation and Campus Service marketing strategy has taken place over the last 12 months and accommodation is now clearly marketed to take account of disabilities. Students and Conference Guests are made aware that ACS can provide accommodation to suit specific needs e.g. students/guests with a hearing impairment can be provided with special equipment to alert them if the building needs to be evacuated. Services linked to disabilities are included in the Home from Home Booklet (http://www.shef.ac.uk.eresources.shef.ac.uk/ssd/publications/home-from-home.html).

5.   University level support

5.1 Equality & Diversity Board (EDB)

- As a University, we believe that we can only achieve real long-term success by including – not excluding – all the people who contribute to the organisation, whether students, staff, suppliers or business partners. The Equality and Diversity Board´s role is to ensure that this value of excellence through inclusion is embedded throughout the University´s activities.

- The role of the Board, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor for the Faculty of Science, is to develop strategy, monitor equality and diversity matters in the University, evaluate action and progress made in key areas of business activity across the organisation, and provide support and guidance to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unfair

discrimination. The Board comprises members from across the University, with an interest in or experience of equality and diversity issues.

- During 2009/10 the Equality and Diversity Board reviewed 5 major committees / key areas of University business: Research Services, Accommodation Campus Services, Finance Committee (Procurement), CICs and Human Resources. These exercises resulted in a considerable amount of information regarding disability matters being considered by the Board.

5.2   Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

- Equality Impact Assessments enable the University to assess the impact of proposed and existing policies and services and give due consideration to their impact on different groups of people including disabled staff and students, to promote positive equality outcomes and eliminate discrimination.   Work during 2009 and 2010 focussed on providing the University with a standard, outcome-focussed approach to assessing equality impact.

- A set of dedicated University web pages are now available, containing: guidance, an online training toolkit tailored for the University of Sheffield, and a checklist template for download. These web pages can be viewed at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/eia

- Bespoke Equalities Impact training sessions are also available through HR (Staff Development), and sessions have been run for three University departments since November 2009.

- The Library Equality and Diversity Group has trialled the Marshall Toolkit for Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and is currently working with the Department of Human Resources to create a usable screening document as an initial step to carrying out EIAs in the Library. Team Leaders have been briefed and are creating lists of policies and procedures in their areas of responsibility.

- The Disability and Dyslexia Support Service has completed two waves of equality impact assessments focusing on the student journey during the admissions cycle and the Disabled Students Allowance process. In addition, the Service continues to include identified action/s on equality and diversity in its annual development plans.

5.3   Inclusive Learning

Over a two year period the Inclusive Learning and Teaching project has provided a focus for understanding, developing and embedding inclusive practices. Key activities have included:

- Inclusive Learning and Teaching projects within eleven academic departments from across all faculties.

- The development and distribution of an Inclusive Learning and Teaching calendar, sent to 1,500 members of academic staff, teaching related and hourly paid teachers, and to external stakeholders, for example, the Higher Education Academy.

- Production of a series of 'Hints and Tips' sheets, which outline 'quick-win' suggestions for staff; i.e. easy to incorporate practices that can improve the learning and teaching experience for *all* students, but particularly for those with disabilities.

- Student-led Facebook group (more than 100 members).

- Awareness raising and dissemination of outcomes through the range of available forums including: University and faculty committees, LeTs workshops, Student Support Service workshops, Good Practice Week, Inclusive L & T events, L&T Conference, the L&T Advocates Away day and a HEA funded workshop aimed at both University of Sheffield and external attendees.

5.4   Wider Support

The University has a number of support mechanisms available to help all staff, including:

- Personal Harassment Network Contacts
- Staff networks to bring together people from across the University who identify with a particular equality group
- Wellbeing Portal - bringing together resources and information about how the University promotes staff wellbeing
- Chaplains and Religious Advisers who offer care and support to people of all faiths and none, working with communities with a strong sense of belonging, and offering opportunities for worship, prayer and spiritual exploration.
- Work Life Balance Policy including flexible working, Harassment Policy and EO Policy
- Counselling Service, which provides a free and confidential service to all members of University staff
- A new 24 Hour free Support Line for University Staff, which is an independent and completely confidential 24 counselling service for all University staff and their immediate families

6   Management Information

6.1 Staff

- The disability profile of our staff is contained within our Annual Staffing Report 09/10. The University's workforce diversity is benchmarked annually through the DLA Piper HR Benchmarker - Workforce

Performance Indicators Report. This includes benchmarks for the percentage of staff with a declared disability within the HE sector and for all sectors. The disability status of individual members of staff continues to be recorded as part of our institution's HESA return.

- The information analysed showed that the percentage of current staff with a declared disability has remained stable at 3.8%[1]. This percentage is higher than the HE Average (2.6%) and Large Public Sector organisations (2.7%).

- Recruitment Success Rates by Disability (2009): from all applicants with a declared disability, 9.9% were shortlisted and 18.9% of those were appointed. Of all the applicants without a declared disability, 11.2% were shortlisted and of these 30.8% were appointed. Ideally the success rates between the groups compared should be equal at each stage of the recruitment process.

- Also in 2010 The University will be extending our monitoring data to include further Equality fields and as part of this exercise communications will be going out to all staff to update the employee self service portal (myJob) to update their personal equality monitoring data. We hope this will have a widespread positive impact

6.2 Students

- The Disability and Dyslexia Support Service has seen an 11.5%[2] increase in the numbers of students declaring a disability this academic year. There is a marked increase of 59% of student declaring a mental health difficulty compared with 2008-09. The increase is largely due to improved communications and referrals between the University Health Service and the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS), thus resulting in a seamless service for this group of students. We have also increased the number of Support and Guidance Mentors offering one-to-one support.

- A major step forward for the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service has been the successful installation of the Maximizer CRM System for storing confidential student and support worker data. This system manages student and staff relationships as well as improving service delivery. It is also capable of producing management reports and data analysis. It should enable the service to be much more efficient in managing disability related information and statistical data.

---

[1] Workforce Information Report 1 August 2008 – 31 July 2009
* Data source – external benchmarks: HR Benchmarker 2007 – Workforce Performance Indicators (DLA Piper)

[2] Statistical data snapshot taken on 8 July 2010

7. Headline future activities

- Mental Health focussed work for staff, including tackling stigma via awareness raising activities, disabled staff network; raising awareness including by the use of positive stories and the development of web guidance for managers; and training of key staff (managers, HR staff).

- Review of the Two Ticks scheme to review our progress against the symbol commitments, assess the impact and focus future plans. Analysis of quantitative data re: Two Ticks applicants, and collect qualitative data about the scheme.

- Develop a suite of Equal Opportunities Reports (dashboard) to enable faculty monitoring and reporting on our workforce.

- Development of management guidance on Disability and the Duty to make Reasonable Adjustments

- Training for a number of staff in the Estates Department, to ensure disability related advice will be readily available, for example regarding reasonable adjustment assessments.

8. Further Information

For further information regarding any aspect of this report please contact:
Gill Tait, Assistant Director of HRM, Tel: 0114 222 1604 / g.tait@sheffield.ac.uk
or Julie Campbell, Senior HR Advisor, Tel: 0114 222 1499 /
j.l.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk