

The New Duty to Promote Disability Equality



Final report from: Sandra Lee Palmer

Name of project: Raising Awareness

Organisation: Working Men's College for Women and Men

March 2006

The main criterion for including projects on this website is that they are all developmental or action research projects undertaken as part of DDA: taking the work forward. The overall aim of this project was to support organisations within the post school education sector to respond to the DDA 2005 new duty to promote disability equality in a way which does not merely seek compliance but actively promotes opportunities for disabled people. They do not necessarily reflect good or best practice.

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Duty to Promote Disability Equality

Final Report

03/03/2006

SECTION 1

NAME

Working Men's College for Women and Men
Sandra Lee Palmer, Student Services Manager
Interim Report (IR)
Final Report (FP)

SECTION 2

MAJOR FOCUS

Outline briefly the major focus of your project and why you have decided to focus on this particular aspect.

- To review our current procedures for all courses initial assessment and enrolment to determine if we could identify best practice to implement across the college
- To promote a pro-active approach to initial detection of disabled learners and their needs
- To develop an effective cross-college policies and systems for early identification of disabled learners
- To improve the awareness of support available for learners through the use of champions.
- To improve the staff disability disclosure process and the way the procedure is monitored.
- To ensure that the college allocate adequate resources for disabled individuals both staff and learners

The **rationale** behind focusing on these particulars is because the college has not yet established and/or mastered a concrete framework of means to identify, actively involve and listen to the voices of, disseminating relevant information to, and monitoring procedures and systems regarding these individual learners and staff members. The embedment of disability equality throughout the whole organisation is essential in order to be in compliance with the new duty to promote. Being proactive is essential in everything we do to ensure disability equality in built into and taking into account disabled individuals when making decision, reviewing, developing and implementing policies and programmes.

SECTION 3

PROGRESS SO FAR

This is your opportunity to let us know what you have done and achieved so far. Tell us the story or what you have done, how you started off, who you involved, the steps you have taken, what has happened along the way, for example. Please attach a copy of your updated action plan at the end of this report, which should indicate what has been achieved and what is outstanding

Key Milestones accomplished through 09 December 2005

Interim Report

- 1. Brief senior managers** On Tuesday 16th August Sandra Palmer presented a briefing paper to the curriculum team during its regular meeting. She gave a comprehensive summary of the project and solicited support from the managers. On Monday 22nd August she presented the briefing paper to the senior management team during their meeting and explained the project. Both management teams committed to supporting the project.
- 2. Establish committee, identify disabled learners and staff, members from curriculum areas, Skills for Life and the Centre for Student Affairs** On 22 September the Duty to Promote Disability Equality committee was formed consisting of the following membership: *Committee Chairs:* Dee and Irina, *Committee Staff members,* Patricia (Deputy Programme Manager for Skills for Life, Sandra (CSA Manager), Elizabeth (Information, Advice & Guidance), Filippo (admission & enrolment) and Victoria (Additional Learning Support Coordinator) , *Student Committee members,* Drew Jensen, Terry Lydon and Patricia Hickey
- 3. Briefing of Governors** On Wednesday 27th August Sandra Palmer briefed the Quality and Standards Committee consisting of governors on the DDA project. Further briefing took place during the Strategy Day for Governors on Saturday 19th November.
- 4. Hold first meeting, briefing on project, background on DDA, brainstorm and agree project aims and focus.** On 10 October the first meeting was convened. Follows are the **minutes** from the meeting: *Overview of project and our aim at WMC was presented by Dee. Key is to focus on initial assessment and enrolment in Skills for Life and ESOL courses. Goal is to develop a proactive approach to early identification of a student's disability and needs.*

Irina summarized our current procedures in initial assessment; the following gaps in our procedures were identified:

- *At initial ESOL assessments there are no interpreters, impossible to identify a disability unless it is obvious, there is not system in place to ask a student about a disability*
- *At initial interview for Skills for Life courses students are asked if they have a disability, but information might not be passed along to CSA*
- *Discussion regarding current enrolment form and enrolment procedures*
- *During actual enrolment Filippo noted there are a number of weaknesses in our current procedures, many students tick they would like additional learning support not realizing it is for a disability.*

- *As Filippo is actually enrolling students will ask what the disability is to input. This raises questions on privacy and consistency.*
- *Actual layout of our enrolment form is difficult for students with a disability. Sandra stated the disability form must be general to protect student's privacy.*
- *Committee discussed ways to improve actual enrolment form, make it more users friendly.*
- *Follow up to students who claim a disability is carried out by Victoria who sends a letter, she notes she has received a number of responses from her initial letters: discussion on referral routes, student, tutor etc.*

Action plans for next briefing:

- *Review enrolment forms of Mary Ward and City Lit*
- *Propose suggestions to improve ESOL initial assessment procedures – interpreter?*
- *Compare retention rates of students receiving support to those who claim a disability and do not receive support, do we have a system in place to do so?*
- *Identify best/worst case procedures – student with disability input*
- *Propose system for Skills for Life tutors to communicate student disability need to CSA – email, create standardized format*
- *Consider disability awareness training for staff enrolling students?*

1. **Research current practice of disability identification/awareness in pre-course advice and guidance, in Skills for Life. Identify case studies that promote best practice. Review admissions procedures for identifying disabilities, including all printed and electronic materials. Report findings to committee.** Irina reviewed not just the current practices in Skills for life but college-wide practices for identifying students with disabilities. She worked with Elizabeth who is part of the pre-course advice and guidance team and examined the practices and procedures. She also worked with Filippo who is part of the admission and enrolment team in reviewing admission and enrolment procedures. As a result, the manager agreed to review the enrolment application process to identify ways of early detection.

The results of the review were as follows:

- a. The enrolment form layout is not learner friendly especially for students with disabilities. For example, for a person with a visual impairment, the font is too small since we do not have an enlarged version in print.
- b. More clarification is needed under the additional learning support section
- c. There is no instruction on how to fill out the form
- d. An enrolment process flow chart would be helpful for disabled students. The to do, what if you have and where to go including special needs to be an essential part of the flow chart.
- e. The tick boxes on the enrolment is white and not very visible
- f. During the pre course Advice and Guidance session, the tutor will include encourage the learner to disclose a disability however respecting privacy and confidentiality
- g. A leaflet for disabled students should be designed and given to all students during the peak enrolment period in order to encourage disclosure.

2. **Meetings/consultants with disabled learners and staff to identify ways to best promote early identification and greater awareness of disabled learners needs.** Currently, the college has only one declared disabled staff member. She happens to be the career advisor with a hearing impairment. She is willing to set on the committee

and identify ways of early detection. Irina and Dee met with disabled learners several times for suggestions of ways to identify and promote best practices.

The findings were as follows:

- a. Additional Learning Support is good and they got the support needed.
- b. The additional learning support coordinator was very helpful
- c. They were not too embarrassed to reveal their disability
- d. Teachers need more training on how to identify, assess and teach students with disabilities
- e. One teacher did not like the ALS assistant giving in class support and ask the assistant to be removed from class
- f. When teachers do inductions and the learning agreement, they do not cover disabilities
- g. They would like disabled student champions setting on the equality committee
- h. More funding should be made available for students with disabilities since our funding is limited for additional learning support
- i. The college should invest in more resources for students with disabilities especially for students with visual and/or hearing impairment

3. **Report back to committee on meetings/consultation findings.** The above findings were reported to the committee.
4. Disability Equality Committee identify changes to make to current procedures and systems, develop a new pre-course advice and guidance, admissions and follow up plan to implement during January enrolment. Several procedural changes have been recommended to the student services manager for January enrolment. For example, if the disability box is not ticked, the person enrolling the learner will politely asked if that person has a disability and if so, would they like support or has special needs. Another procedural change recommended was to devise a form for support accommodation if one of the advice and guidance, admission, and/or enrolment staff member notices for example, a wheelchair user, they could fill out and submits the accommodation request form. Even though our building is 90% or higher wheelchair accessible, there are still a few classrooms that cannot accommodate wheelchairs.
5. Attendance at seminar Dee and Irina attended the seminar on 3rd November.
6. Draft interim report presented for committee approval. The interim report was drafted the week of 05 December and submitted to the committee via email for approval.
7. Final interim report sent to Christine Rose, LSDA. The interim report was submitted to Chris on 9th December.

Final Report

Key Milestones accomplished from 09 December 2005 to Current

8. **Continue planning and preparation for January enrolment, review new materials and procedures.** The Disability Equality Committee met (Sandra Palmer, Irina Staneva, Victoria John-Wawa, Doris Otomewo, Patricia Binfoh, Lavern Buchanan-Sy, Deidre McKechnie, Filippo Baj, Elizabeth Rutale, & two learners), during the week of the 12th of December for continuous planning and preparation for January enrolment.

We mainly brainstormed and discussed the items implemented below in number 13. The committee charged the ALS Coordinator with the task of going to team meetings the start of each term to talk about the services available as well as disability awareness. She is also to solicit their ideas on how to best actively involve disabled learners and staff members. We also talked about the challenges of this project mainly human resources, and other funding to implement recommended changes such as enlarging the enrolment form font for the visual impaired, project being time consuming, how to best engage part time learners and staff, how to best explain and understand impact assessment and the accusation that I had isolated key staff who should have been involved in the project.

9. Implement changes in January enrolment, use case studies to evaluate best practice.

CASE STUDIES

- Claudine Goodluck
Claudine is a student in her mid thirties. She has had emotional and behavioural difficulties. She referred herself for additional learning support in January 2006 as a result of seeing the services flashing on the Electronic Display Board that was purchased as part of this project. Her support continues till July 2006. During this period, she will receive counselling, in-class support and one on one support out of class.

As a result of the support she receives, Claudine has been able to undertake and will successfully complete a number of courses despite her disability. Within the period she received support she is completing New CLAIT, English Pre GCSE, Computing Stage 3, Spanish Beginners stage 1 and keyboarding for all.

- Golden Jacob
Golden is a student with multiple disabilities. He has a medical condition, physical disability as well as a learning difficulty. Although he has been in the college since 2003, he was never aware of the services available or declared his disability until he enrolled this past January as result of one of the changes implemented. He was not sure how this confidential information was be used and whether of not he would face discrimination if disclosed so he was struggling with his classes. He noticed that on his advice and guidance appointment slip it asked him if he had a disability and if so see the ALS Coordinator for available disability services. Golden has received in-class support and one on one support throughout this period.

According to his teacher, Golden has been able to successfully complete his full ECDL ICT qualification, having passed all 8 exams. He is now progressing to study the ECDL Advanced level. 'His success was greatly helped by having his (support worker) Teaching Assistant... with him throughout the programme. She was very useful in explaining various aspects on the coursework to him, she looked after him whenever he had epileptic fits, and she was helpful in keeping him calm and focused when he was sitting his exams'.

CHANGES IMPLEMENTING/ED

a. Termly staff newsletter

Getting the message out to staff members has been a challenge since most of them are taxed with so many emails and correspondence in their pigeonhole. As a result, many informational leaflets and etc are simply torn up and trashed. I therefore decided to speak with the Principal's personal assistant to see if the principal would be willing to include a small paragraph about the new duty to promote, the project and the disability equality scheme in his termly staff newsletter that go to their home addresses. Most staff members thoroughly read this newsletter from the principal since it attained important updates and changes including funding. He approved the small paragraph. I also informed them about the disability committee and invited them to join. The letter will go out toward the end of the term.

b. Learner Support Fund application

Previously, our procedures only required for us to ask an applicant whether or not that person had a disability by simply ticking a box. We collected that data but did absolutely nothing with it. We now report that data to the ALS Coordinator. She, in return, sends a letter to those learners who ticked yes. What I have discovered through reviewing the applications, many disabled students will disclose for financial purposes quicker than for any other purpose including special needs. Our revised learner support fund application not only ask if there is a disability, it encourage disclosure by informing the applicant that not only are they entitled to financial support as a resource of the disability but may be entitled to additional learning support among other various services available to disabled learners. On the letter that ALS Coordinator sends, I invite them to come in for further information including an assessment and I also ask the question whether or not they would be interested in being a voice as advocate for disabled learners.

c. Revised the enrolment form-larger font

In the past, we revised out enrolment application to not only be more customers friendly but to consist those with various disabilities including the visual impaired. We increased the size of some fonts that mainly dealt with disabled learners. The committee made a proposal that we print the whole enrolment form in large print. We revise out enrolment form annually during the same time we put together our prospectus that is usually due in June unless some unforeseen difficulties arrive. I have already instructed the Principal's PA who is mainly responsible for the printing to have large font copies printed as well.

d. Skills for Life Introduction to Learning Sessions

The ESOL provision (the largest in the college) and students who make up the majority of our learners were mostly excluded from many services since English is not their first language that causes barriers in getting and understanding simply information unless they were enrolled in the advanced English course. Many of those students come to the UK with various disabilities coming from countries where they have been tortures causing emotional and physical impairments. Others have severe learning difficulties as well. However, there were no procedures in place for them to disclose their disability given that many did not understand what was disability meant. Others, due to cultural barriers

considered those types of problems as private confidential matters. The committee met and worked with the Skills for Life lead tutor to implement changes to give ESOL students an opportunity to disclose their disability. During the initial interview, which consists of assessment, the learner is given a short disability awareness statement in that person language. Since we only print key documents such as the disability statement in our six community languages, an interpreter is used for those needing it. We have a list of all staff members who speak various languages from French, Spanish, Portuguese and etc.

e. Advice and Guidance Appointment slips

When a prospective learner comes into the college for information to enrol, they are given an advice and guidance appointment slip for an interview that, include sometimes an assessment depending upon the course. This change in enrolment procedure is only for those needing an interview. Some of our courses do not require an interview. They can simply go to enrol. There is now a question asking if there is a disability. The advice and guidance team verbally ask the question and tick the box. If the learner replies yes, a disability disclosure form is given to the learner right there. They are also given an ALS referral form as well. When they see the specialist tutor who does the interview, that person talk more in details about the learners needs and requirements.

f. ALS Coordinator mobile phone

During the peak enrolment weeks that is the first tow weeks of each term, the ALS coordinator carries a mobile phone along with the managers. This direct communication allows a manager to call her for immediate assistance in case she is not in her office. Also, a learner after disclosure or being given information about special services can call her just in case immediate action is warranty. Many students do not feel at ease to enrol unless they know they can get special services if available. The ALS coordinator does not interview any students or schedule appointments for interviews and assessments during these two weeks but instead on call for students enrolling only and explaining potential help.

g. Ticketing machine

Confidentiality was a problem given queuing and the limited space available to learners enrolling. Most did not feel comfortable revealing their disability in front of others listening. As a result of the committee's recommendation, the college invested in a ticketing machine. Learners now take a ticket and wait either in the canteen or hall or foyer to wait for their number to be called. Further plans include putting a monitor in the library and computer room in case they would like to use a computer until their number flashes on the monitor. This process has eliminated queuing and allows each learner privacy and reveals any confidential problems such as a disability.

h. Customer care peer mentoring scheme

Customer case is an essential element especially for learners with disabilities. After conducting a student satisfaction survey that revealed some dissatisfaction with customer care, the committee brainstormed and recommended a customer care peering mentoring process for front line staff. The emphasis was be specifically geared through disabled learners given the sensitivity of their

problem. Thus far, we had a member of the advice and guidance team observe a member of the enrolment team for one day. The feedback from the team member was constructive. She suggested that the member of the enrolment team made contact with the learner who was not always there. She suggested that when the phone rung while she was dealing with a customer, she finished with the customer before answering the phone. She further suggested that she was on the phone when a learner approached her desk, that she would acknowledge the learners presence and let that person know he/she would be available shortly. Several more peer observations will be now that the workload has lightened.

i. Electronic Display Board

The electronic display board has been installed and used effectively during the peak enrolment period in January. The board is located in a strategic place directly in front of the stairways when the students enter the college in a foyer. The board is large itself and the font is sizeable and colourful. We used this board to inform students of the services available including financial for learners with disabilities and to encourage disclosure

j. Enrolment process leaflet

In order to simplify the enrolment process and make it more understandable and easier for learners specifically those with disabilities, we do a flow informational chart of the enrolment process, which included an area for disabled learners. For example, it stated, "DISABILITY", "If you have a disability, please let me know."

k. Risk assessment

Before the peak enrolment stated in January, Irina, Victoria, John who is in charged of health & safety and I did a risk assessment with disability learners in mind. We visited classrooms, the hall where the peak enrolment took place, the Centre for Student Affairs where students come for information and advice, the library and computer-learning centre to assess whether or not the layout was suitable and accessible to disability learners especially those in wheelchair. As a result, we rearranged furniture and made room changes to benefit disabled learners. As disabled learners in either wheelchairs or had difficulties walking or being mobile, we compiled a list and circulated it for use in case of emergencies such as a fire or fire drill. The listing is kept at the reception desk stating where the wheelchair users are located. Arrangements are made using this list to assist wheelchair learners entering the building and accessing their classes.

l. Student Behaviour/Code of conduct

The college revised the student code of conduct. As a result of the impact assessment done on policies and procedures, it was discovered that the code of conduct did not make reference to or address disabled learners who might have emotional and/or behavioural problems. It was decided that these learners should be sent for either an internal or external assessment before invoking a harsh punishment on them if an incident occurred either in the classroom or on college premises. Given that if that person having necessary support might be able to function and behave properly in a classroom setting.

- m. Telephone enrolment lines
For January peak enrolment period, we implement the suggestions to separate face-to-face enrolment from telephone enrolment. We hired three temporary personnel trained to handle telephone inquiries, advice and enrolments only. They were given special instructions to ensure that they asked every customer phoning whether or not they had a disability and if so, informed them of the services available. They also mailed them a learner referral form with information about the ALS coordinator.
- n. Technology computerized
The data and quality manager who is a member of the disability equality committee recommended and implemented a technology change that benefited learners with disabilities. Not only do we have the capability to produce a disability report on learners enrolled, we can now produce a report on them when they disclose when making an inquiry and asking for an advice and guidance appointment. That report is produced and printed and given to the ALS Coordinator for her to contact the students.
- o. Audits
A disability sample audit is now done Termly as other equal opportunity audits to ensure the accuracy of data. The data and quality manager conducts the audit along with the enrolment team. A sample of 200-300 student applications is reviewed to ensure that the disability box is ticked. The audit revealed 100% compliance.
- p. Revised policies
The assistant director of quality and myself reviewed and either updated or revised the equal opportunity policy, race relation policy and disability statement.
- q. Impact assessment
A thorough impact assessment was conducted on various procedures and processes. The results began part of the Centre for Student Affairs development plan and will eventually be included in and assessed during the Self Assessment process (SAR). Consequently, recommendations were recorded, one was given to the deputy programme manager who represents the curriculum programmes on the disability equality committee and she ensured that changes were completed after consultation with the assistant director of quality before the state of the peak January enrolment. For example, the Individual Learning Plan (ILPs) form was revised to ensure yet another opportunity for disability disclosure after enrolment. Each student has a right to individual tutorials for pastoral support and etc. During the first two weeks of class, each student is given a 1:1 where the tutor and student complete the ILP. Now that this ILP is revised to address potential learners with disabilities, the tutor for additional learning support services has referred many learners. The individual learner or tutor can now make referrals during tutorial sessions and the completion of the ILP.
- r. Job Placement Disabled Staff
A job placement staff member was appointed during last term. She will complete her job placement the end of March. It was initially scheduled to end in December however extended on her request. Even though she is artistic, she

can do simple tasks such as letters and typing basic reports on the computer. This appointment has really been instrumented in getting not just learners involved but staff members as well. The challenge has been that she repeats herself constantly and likes interrupting others working but behavioural is manageable. Her placement has been both successful and productive.

s. Disability Disclosure and Confidentiality

The committee recommended the production of a quality disclosure and confidentiality form. The ALS Coordinator along with input from the previous one designed and produced the form. The form was presented to the committee for comments and approval. During peak enrolment, the form was used very effectively during the learners' interview.

t. Networking & Partnership (external organisations)

The ALS Coordinator and Welfare adviser contacted various external organisations and solicited their help and advice on engaging disabled learners. One member of two of the organisations has agreed to be part of the disability equality committee stating in March. Their role mainly will be on a consultant basic to attain advice when writing the disability equality scheme. Phone calls were made and letters sent about the disability project. Victoria and Apu even made appointments and went to the organisations. These two people will also inform the committee on how best to serve the students they recommend to the college. Many of their clients are have some form of mental illness.

u. Champions' role change

The champions' role has been revised to include tasks to assist with this project and the help produce the final disability equality scheme. They have been charged with duties inclusive dealing with ways disabled people can be involved in the development of the scheme and further methods for assessing the impact of practices on equality for disabled learners. For example, their first task is to do classroom lesson observations for disabled learners to project how the support services have impacted upon their learning abilities for success and achievement.

v. ALS lesson observation scheme

The ALS Coordinator along with help from the assistant director of quality developed an ALS lesson observation scheme. It was mailed to the committee member for comments and approval. The champions as stated above are now charged with carrying out the first set of in-class observations. The aim of the scheme is to identify ways of improving the quality of support given to learners with disabilities.

w. Disability Awareness Training

I have proposed to the Curriculum Team and they have accepted the suggestion that I roll out a seminar session during the professional development staff day in September. During the third term, I will develop the training packages. The session will be for informational purposes only. The pack will include a take home assessment and various information including the new duty to promote. They must fill out the assessment and submit it to me within a week. The assessment will also include a scenario on disabled learners that can only be understood and completed if the information is read.

10. Attend third seminar Attended the third seminar

11. Present recommendations for improved identification and greater awareness of disabled learners to senior management as to support the development of a Disability Equality Scheme Future Work

12. Convene a committee meeting to present draft report, feedback and approval
Committee met on 02/03/2006 and approval draft version of report

13. Send report to Christine Rose, LSDA Report sent on 03/06/2006

14. Senior management to meet and develop action plan to meet requirements of disability equality scheme Future Work

SECTION 4

SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

Let us know about up to three main successes and up to three main difficulties. Don't forget to illustrate these with concrete examples.

Interim Report Successes

- Thus far, we have been successful in identifying strengths and weaknesses in our current procedures for initial assessment and enrolment. For example, during the one on one interview, tutors do not ask potential learner if they have either a disability or learning support needs. Furthermore, they rely strictly on the data disclosed on the enrolment form. As a result, many students with specialized needs are allowed on courses they (due to support needs), could not complete which set them up for failure, no success or achievement.
- Proposal for EO/Disability awareness training have been supported and approved.
- We have successful worked with our MIS Manager to ensure an easy readable reporting data system for learners with disabilities and additional support needs. The report compares the retention, achievement and success rates of those students receiving additional learning support to those who do not. In other words, we can now carry out impact assessment on our students with disabilities and monitor their progress.
- The student newsletter featured an article on a success story of a disabled learner.

Good Practices

Success Story

Featuring a Student with learning difficulties

Basic Skills Student

Dyslexia Support

Additional Learning Support for learning difficulties

Rationale for Success:

- Began program totally illiterate
- Acquired skills for parenting
- Receives double the support time than regular students

- Working with two learning support specialists
- Feedback from student “Yesterday, I received this letter from my son’s school. I was able to read it all by myself. This is the first time I read a letter and I am very happy. Now I can read well and am very proud of myself. If they did not help me people will still bully me. All my family is proud of me.”
- Feedback from tutor ‘improvement is magnificent!’

Ethnicity-White British

Gender-Female

Age-23 years old

2 children

Single parent

Background

This student enrolled with us 2004 September. She left school without any qualifications or having obtained basic literacy skills. Bullying from family, who tormented her over not being able to read, marred her early education. When we first assessed her we could barely measure her literacy levels. Over the past year and half, Corina has become literate. Although she has disabilities, she has made tremendous progress developing basic reading and spelling skills. She is developing a sound letter to sound correspondence and a strong sight vocabulary. These skills have improved her ability to communicate effectively with her children’s school.

- I have employed a staff member (job placement) with a disability to work in the Centre for Student Affairs. This is the first time in college history a disabled job placement employee has been hired.

Final Report Successes

1. Greater Disability Awareness

The college promoted disability equality somewhat as stipulated in the DDA (1995), as amended by SENDA (2001). However, the challenge to build and sustain a positive cultural change did not exist. The new duties to promote, make reasonable adjustments and take a proactive approach toward the embitterment of disabled individuals through this project have put our college in the forth front of compliance. The committee members and I have achieved quite a bit given that the first couple of months were extremely difficult and discouraging when the key chair of the project resigned due to the project being too time consuming. Since that time several of the members mostly myself have spent countless hours to put event back on track. We have been successful thus far as we have created an ethos and admiration for disability equality. As a result of hard work and time given to this project, both learners and staff members feel more confident to disclose their disability without fear of discrimination and an awareness of services available to them. It has moved us closer to understanding exactly what we envision, plan to cover, publish and monitor in the first Disability Equality Scheme. The project has generated individual enthusiasm and empowered the college as a whole to improve disability disclosure. For example, previous years the amount of staff members who disclosed their disability was zero. Due to this project, we now have at least two staff members who have disclosed in which one has now become a staff disability advocate on the committee. She has a severe hearing impairment. All of the mechanisms identified and implemented, as part

of this project will ensure greater awareness to actively involve learners and staff with disabilities, which is the underpinning principle, applied.

2. Impact Assessment

An impact assessment of policies, documents, processes and procedures were conducted to evaluate effects (negative & positive) on disabled learners in such areas as information, advice and guidance, enrolment, marketing, initial course assessment. As a result, the processes were changed and new ones implemented and reflected in the Centre for Student Affairs self assessment report and development plan. The utmost change recommended and implemented as a result of the impact assessment has been separating the telephone enrolment process from the face-to-face walk in one. This issue has been a problem since my appointment. The lack of privacy, confidentiality not to mention the interruptions and lack of customer care many learners complained. Many would not take the time to discuss or reveal any sensitive data such as a disability. This has been one of the greatest accomplishments of the project.

3. Additional Learning Support (ALS) Guidelines for disabled learners

The ALS Coordinator wrote and implemented specific guidelines for disabled learners. Those guidelines have been put on the WMC quality webpage. These formalised procedures have increased the credibility of the type and quality of support given to disabled learners. In fact, these ALS procedures have put the effectiveness of teaching and learning at par with regular teaching. For example, one of the objectives of the new guidelines is to ensure the implementation of equal opportunity including disability equality in the administration of additional learning support for learners with disabilities. For in-class support, the ALS assistant in the class will work with specific needy students to achieve the teachers' objective for the lessons given to students with disabilities. These policies help disabled learners make progress that is appropriate to their capacity. Another important aspect of the policy is to ensure that disabled students with mental health issues are not disruptive in class and to monitor closely with medical condition such as epilepsy or asthma. Another brief component of the policy is the impact of support on learning such as learner engagement and learner progress is measured and asks for examples.

Interim Report Challenges

1. The workload of this project is more than anticipated. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges is continuous support from not just the chairs but also the committee members. For example, trying to maintain a balance in the allocation of tasks.
2. Agreeing on systems to ensure that an applicant disclose their learning support needs either during the initial interview or on the enrolment form. For example, our target is to ensure that at least 90% of learners disclose their learning needs.
3. Identifying, simplifying and implementing an audit system to ensure that all learners with disabilities ticked on the enrolment form are recorded in the data system. For example, we currently do not have a system whereby we can audit the enrolment form to ensure the disability box is ticked.
4. Ensuring that all systems recommended is adopted college wide rather than in specific areas. For example, our admission and enrolment processes for Skills for Life is different from all other areas.

5. Identifying more students to become involved in the process. Additionally, we needed reassure students that their privacy would be maintained if they felt they had criticisms of the initial assessment and enrolment procedures. This developed when students, expressed concern that they felt uncomfortable being critical as they still were in regular contact with staff members they felt had not initially helped them at the College.

Final Report Difficulties

1. Staffing

Engaging staff members to assist in getting disabled learners involved still remain a difficulty. For example, during a Curriculum Team meeting after thoroughly advertising and soliciting support and involvement on the meeting, a manager informed me that she knew about the project but did not realise the intend of it. She also indicated that more key people should on be on the committee. I welcomed her suggestion and until this day although I remind her, still none of her key people are involved in the work. It appears to me that some want recognition if the project is successful but only a few are willing to contribute and get actively involved in it. They are too busy and make various excuses not just why they cannot attend meetings but actual to take on a simple task to produce results. For example, I had sent an email asking managers to assist with the impact assessment looking at various documents, policies and procedures in their areas to submit suggestions for improvements and change. I received one email back from the facility manager with a report on health and safety risk assessment. He had conducted classroom interviews with students to address any health and safety issues. He also did a briefing sheet on health and safety addressing disabled learners and made them part of induction process for learners. Those same managers tired to pretend they knew nothing of the project actual numerous briefing including the ones they attend addressing the governors. All briefings are recorded in the minutes. I have ended up during 90% of the work that has affected my regular duties but my line manager understands. Her and the principal are clearly committed to the project and understand the benefit especially when writing the scheme.

2. Part time student involvement

It has continuously been a challenge to get learners not just to join but also to hold their interest given that most of them are part timers attending sometimes only one term. For example, the student members were not contactable to inform about the December meeting. However, I still try to email them and ask for feedback and comments on different concerns and proposals.

3. Scheduling meetings appropriate time

Being a wizard on predicting convenient times for meetings have not emerged given that many of our staff members are part timers as our students. Others are teaching during the day without appropriate time allocated for meetings. I have had to send and disseminate many of the documents and information through email to get feedback that has been productive.

SECTION 5

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

Please describe the main outcomes and benefits to date, including any unexpected outcomes.

Interim Report Outcomes & Benefits

- The main outcome thus far is the awareness from both staff and students that a committee is devoted to engaging disabilities issues, which in return has the commitment from senior managers and governors to invest further into ensuring disabled individual rights' are protected and supported.
- The major benefit thus far is that one of our disabled learners who receives additional learning support is part of the decision making process. She is now a student governor who sits on the Quality and Standard Committee.
- Another benefit is the consciousness and strategy planning through the college's development plan, which now includes learners and staff with disabilities.
- A further benefit is that the disciplinary and complaint procedure will be revised to consider learners with disabilities especially those with mental illnesses.
- During the college-wide professional development day on 5th January 2006, the equality and diversity champions will do a presentation, which will include a briefing on the duty to promote disability equality.
- Both student and staff inductions will not only cover a briefing on equality and diversity but on our disability statement and the duty to promote disability equality.

Final Report Outcomes & Benefits

The greatest benefit thus far is the knowledge gained on the new duty to promote and preparation achieved before attempting to write the disability equality scheme.

One of the main outcomes has been changing processes through impact assessment those changes are reflected in my development plan. For example, disabled learners have a variety of ways to disclose their disability whereas in the past, the disclosure opportunities were limited and restricted.

SECTION 6

EMERGING THEMES

Reflecting on what you have done so far, are there any emerging themes? What strikes you about your findings? Think about any patterns you have noticed, or key messages you would like to draw attention to.

Interim Report

- The emerging theme for WMC is that we are not just committed to equality and diversity, which has a wider definition, but have narrowed it down to articulating the vision of learners with disabilities.
- Inconsistencies and weak systems in all aspects of the college in order to embed awareness of learners with disabilities are being identified and changed. The culture of fear to disclose and seek assistance is being removed and replaced with assurance and understanding.
- Although initial experiences of many students with disabilities was not always positive, student felt once they had been identified as having needs staff were far more supportive, this is positive but highlights the need for better staff training to ensure better initial experiences

Final Report

Firstly, one of the emerging theme is that even though many best practices for disability equality exist under the umbrella of equality of opportunities but a more formalise system is needed for sharing of those practices in order to embed disability equality throughout the whole organisation.

Secondly, another emerging theme is that there existed many institutionalised barriers for disabled learners and staff members especially during the initial journey of the learner. Communicating our disability equality commitment both internally and externally was a message coming out of this project.

Thirdly, the college should invest in college wide customer care initiatives including one for disabled learners given that the lack of disclosure if mostly due to historical cultural fears

Fourthly, instead of a top down approach being essential for the success of this project, I argue a down up approach was work more effectively. Even though I had the necessary support from senior level management, I did not have the managers or staff necessary to help implement the project.

SECTION 7

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHERS

In thinking about the key messages in the previous section of the report, what key recommendations can you make? Think about different groups of people, such as senior managers, governors, ProVice Chancellors, equality and diversity coordinators, learning support managers, practitioners, Ofsted, DRC, LSC, and HEFCE.

Firstly, a key recommendation is not to just focus on equality of opportunities in general but narrow it down to disability equality.

Secondly, another key recommendation is be extremely assertive to the point of aggressive from the beginning in order to get support from key members of staff including management. In addition, solicit loyalists who will assist you and be actively involved in the delivery of the work and the performance of the tasks.

Thirdly, ensure the allocation of financial resources in order to support the implementation of the project.

SECTION 8

USEFUL RESOURCES OR SOURCES OF ADVICE

Are there any particular resources of sources of advice that you have found useful? Consider support from other sites, briefing days, materials that have been helpful, for example.

London Language Literacy Unit – Guide to Best Practice for Students with Dyslexia. This manual outline clear best practice policies that can be applied to all types of student disabilities.

Our students proved to be our most useful resource – they were able not only to give us their views on the current disability identification process, but have made some useful suggestions on improving this as well. Team meetings were helpful too. On the other hand, the briefings days we attended and conversations with colleagues from other participating colleges, gave us clear ideas for the project.

SECTION 9

FURTHER WORK

Please let us know what your immediate actions will be after the project finishes (i.e. after March).

Interim Report-Before March

- Since the management of the project has changed in middle of the project, future work will consist of re-examining the project plan and focusing on getting more committee members involved in the actual work and processes.
- During the next few weeks, the committee will develop new standardised and revise current procedures including the collection of data on the enrolment form to be implemented during January peak enrolment starting 9th January.
- Identify and suggest procedures during the initial assessments for ESOL students in order for them to disclose any learning needs or disabilities since English is not their first language.
- Seek assistance from tutors and specialists in order to identify more students for best and worst practice case studies.
- Perfecting the auditing enrolment and advice and guidance systems to ensure 90% and above disclosure of learners with both disabilities and learning support needs.
- Conduct Disability professional development awareness training with at least 90% of staff participating.
- Review enrolment forms from Mary Ward and City lit to compare the layout and wording for disabled learners.
- Identify and suggest changes to the enrolment form to make it more students friendly.
- Propose changes to Skills for Life initial assessment forms that do not have a category or tick box to disclose a disability.
- Determine the best way to assess student needs, when and by whom.
- Track retention and achievement rates of students have disclosed disability and receiving additional learning support to assist with their special needs.
- Devise a college wide student satisfaction survey tailored for learners with disabilities to get feedback and suggestions on support needs accessibility.
- Identifying more staff members and students to assist with the project.

Final Report-After March

The below future work will be determined and based mostly on funding and staff involvement.

- a. Disability Library Section
 - I have instructed the librarian who is directly under my supervision to establish a disability section within the library. This section will consist of resources such as materials, books, tapes and CD related to the disabled learner. This section will

also have material related to career paths and external agencies and help available to learners with disabilities.

- b. Learner Support Form Disability Clause
 - This form has already been revised to include a tick asking a learner if she/he is disabled. In addition, a disability clause will be added to make the learner aware that if she/he does have a disability, that person may be entitled to additional funds and to seek other means of support such as ALS.
- c. Student Advocate for disabled learners
 - Although we have two students on the disability equality forum, I envision identifying and having a student advocate from preferably a full time programme such as the access to art course given that the majority of our learners are part time. If the learner is from a full time course, this will ensure that that person can be student advocate for 1-2 years.
- d. Disability Forum
 - Although our EO forum is very active, I would prefer having a disability forum composing of mainly students instead of staff members. The disability equality staff advocate could be advisor to these students. Termly, the forum could meet and discuss emerging disability issues such as how to engage and keep disabled learners involved for non disabled as well as disabled learners.
- e. Disability Awareness Day (Fair)
 - Annually, I would like to organise a disability awareness day whereby it involve external agencies coming in, setting up booths and giving out information such as careers for the disabled learner and etc.
- f. Staff Advocate for disabled staff expanded role
 - I would like to write a job description for the staff advocate and support pay for that person for at least 2 hours a week like our champions. That person would be responsible for setting on committees and representing disabled learners and staff college-wide to ensure no discrimination exist and to promote continuous cultural change.
- g. Disabled learners and staff marketing
 - I would like to product quality leaflets and materials for marketing purposes for disabled learners and staff members.
- h. Recommendations to Senior Management Team for feedback and suggestions
 - After I have pulled all the tasks and information together, I would like to seek suggestions from the SMT along with funding to support the disability equality scheme.

SECTION 10

FUTHER COMMENTS

If you would like to add any other comments or concluding marks about your work on this project, please do so here.

CASE STUDIES

Interim Report

1. **Deka Ali**¹

Deka Ali is 67-year old ESOL learner in a pre entry-level class, who doesn't speak any English. The college data system doesn't show this student as disabled but the teacher is aware of the student's visual difficulties and makes the necessary arrangements to meet the student's learning need – text and images enlarged, etc. As ALS staff are not aware of the student's disability, if she were to begin another course at college, her future teachers may not take her disability needs into account which will have an impact on the student's success on the chosen course.

2. **Rahma Mohammed**

Rahma Mohamed is a 28-year old student from Somalia in a pre entry level ESOL course. Rahma's teacher knows that the student has hearing difficulties and is pregnant so the teacher has made necessary changes to meet the student's needs. The student has not disclosed a disability at interview, consequently the college data system doesn't show this, and so nobody else in college is aware of this.

3. **Weeny Malik**

Weeny is an Entry 1 level student and has an apparent mobility difficulty. This has been reflected on the college data system, so the organisation has been able to provide the necessary support for the student.

4. **Richard Pauly**

Richard is a dyslexic student on a literacy course. He disclosed his learning difficulty at the initial interview, so the interviewer was able to refer him to the ALS department for assessment and support.

5. **Alan Parker**

A numeracy student with epilepsy, who has frequent but mild fits. The medication the student takes affects his memory and he needs one-to-one support in the classroom. Alan self identified his disability at interview. Immediate steps were taken to refer him for ALS support. The student was able to enrol on other courses at the college, his teachers were informed about his condition, and so the student could continue on his courses successfully.

Final Report

In conclusion, the overall project even though it took a lot of time and energy (mostly solo) was very necessary and productive. In fact, without participating in this project, it would have been almost impossible for me to write on behalf of the college a quality disability equality scheme due 4th December. Most of our college's resources including funding mainly focused on equal opportunities and race relations. Although we had a disability statement, disability awareness and how disabled people and been involved in the decision making process was limited.

¹ The names of students are changed for confidentiality reasons.

SECTION 11

UPDATED ACTION PLAN

Project Plan

Implementing the Duty to Promote Disability Equality

Organisation name: Working Men's College	Name: Sandra Palmer	Date: 03 March 2006
Overall aims/goal/focus: <p>The overall goal is to promote a pro-active approach to initial detection of disabled learners and their needs by developing effective cross-college policies and systems for early identification of disabled learners and establishes a framework for disseminating relevant information regarding the needs of these individuals.</p> <p>To establish a disability equality committee to concentrate on the pre-course advice and guidance, the admissions process and follow up procedures for disabled learners. The committee will focus on one curriculum area, Skills for Life and the service area, Centre for Student Affairs. The committee will include, disabled learners and staff, representatives from the curriculum area, Skills for Life, staff from the Centre for Student Affairs and from the Learning Support Area.</p> <p>The committee will explore the identification process of a disability during pre-course advice and guidance, the admissions and follow up procedures. The committee will use case studies and identify best practice to recommend changes to improve the current system. Revised procedures and systems will be developed based on the results and evaluation of the committee's recommendations after the January enrolment period.</p>		Success criteria: <p>Case studies from January enrolment, which shows improved procedures and greater awareness promoting disability equality.</p>

Action required:	Responsible person	By when	Progress	Resources required	Evidence and Evaluation
Brief senior managers	Sandra Palmer, Victoria John-Wawa,	26 August	COMPLETED	Briefing paper	Extract from the minutes of this meeting.
Establish committee, identify disabled learners and staff, members from curriculum area, Skills for Life and the Centre of Student Affairs	Skills for Life manager, Manager of CSA, course and learning support tutors	8 Sept.	COMPLETED	Disability reports, disabled learners and staff disclosure forms, management time	List of committee members
Briefing of Governors	Deputy Principal	10 Sept	COMPLETED	Management time, materials.	Extract from the minutes of this meeting.
Hold first meeting, briefing on project, background on DDA, brainstorm and agree project aims and focus	Sandra Palmer, Irina Staneva, Deirdre McKechnie, Victoria John-Wawa	15 Sept	COMPLETED	Rooming, materials, 2 hours, refreshments	Notes from meeting and minutes
Research current practice of disability identification/ awareness in pre-course advice and guidance, in Skills for Life. Identify case studies that promote best practice. Review admissions procedures for identifying disabilities, including all printed and electronic materials. Report findings to committee	Disability Equality Committee	29 Sept	COMPLETED	Rooming, materials, 2 hours, refreshments, staff time	Extract from minutes of meetings.

Meetings/consultations with disabled learners and staff to identify ways to best promote early identification and greater awareness of disabled learners needs.	Sandra Palmer, Deirdre McKechnie, Irina Staneva, Victoria John-Wawa	6 Oct	COMPLETED	Rooms for interviews, staff time	Case studies, identify key points to focus on
Report back to committee on meetings/consultation findings.	Disability Equality Committee	13 Oct	COMPLETED	Rooming, staff time	Notes from meetings, minutes
Disability Equality Committee identify changes to make to current procedures and systems, develop a new pre-course advice and guidance, admissions and follow up plan to implement during January enrolment for one curriculum area as a test pilot.	Disability Equality Committee	20 Oct	COMPLETED	Staff time, rooming, refreshments	Notes from meeting on specific ways to promote awareness
Attendance at seminar	DM, IS	3 Nov	COMPLETED	Time, travel expenses	Notes from seminar meeting
Draft interim report presented for committee approval	SP, DM, IS	10 Nov	COMPLETED	Staff time, rooming	Rough draft of report, minutes of meeting
Final interim report sent to Christine Rose, LSDA	SP, DM, IS	22 Nov	COMPLETED	Staff time	Final report incorporating changes
Continue planning and preparation for January enrolment, review new materials and procedures	Disability Equality Committee	1 Dec	COMPLETED	Staff time, rooming	New materials
Implement changes in January enrolment, use case studies to evaluate best practice	Disability Equality Committee	19 Jan	COMPLETED	Staff time, rooming	Examples of case studies
Attend third seminar	DM, IS	2 Feb	COMPLETED	Staff time, travel expenses	Notes from seminar

Present recommendations for improved identification and greater awareness of disabled learners to senior management as to support the development of a Disability Equality Scheme	DM, IS, VJW, Sandra Palmer, John Bishop	9 Feb	FUTURE WORK	Staff time, rooming	Minutes from evaluation meeting and new recommendations
Write draft report based on recommendations for committee approval	DM, IS, VJW, Sandra Palmer	23 Feb	COMPLETED	Staff time	Draft report with amended suggestions
Send report to Christine Rose, LSDA	DM, IS	3 March	COMPLETED	Staff time	Final draft report
Senior management to meet and develop action plan to meet requirements of disability equality duty	DM, VJW, IS, Sandra Palmer, John Bishop	24 May	FUTURE WORK	Management time	Minutes from meeting