



Royal National College for the Blind

Single Equality Scheme 2009-2011

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Foreword by the Principal

The work of the Royal National College for the Blind touches many people's lives: students, staff, the local community, regional, national and international partners, and many more.

We are committed to ensuring that our College's services and employment opportunities are available to everyone. We are also committed to promoting equality. We will ensure that the philosophy of equality runs through all aspects of our provision and employment, and forms part of the operation of the College.

We need to take simple and practical measures as well as taking more creative steps to find ways to help people who wish to have access to our services and employment opportunities, and to provide a positive environment for those already with us.

To support us in achieving this, we have developed our first Single Equality Scheme, which is the beginning of a positive process to ensure equality is at the heart of all we do. It builds on our existing work and brings together our gender, race and disability duties, as well as our responsibilities in respect of age, sexual orientation, carers, religion and belief, and socio-economic status.

This document sets out our commitment to equality and our determination to ensure that our policies and practices meet the needs of all of our students and staff, as well as those who use our services.

Everyone within the College has a responsibility to behave in a way that promotes equality, values diversity and respects human rights. Equality and diversity must be integral to all structures and functions of the organisation, and leadership and commitment at all levels of the College are key to its success.

We strive to provide a fair, safe and respectful environment, where everyone accepts the differences between individuals and values the benefits that diversity brings and how it enriches the College.

We will comply with equality legislation, in letter and in spirit.

I am proud of all that our staff and students have achieved in ensuring and promoting equality and diversity, and I am confident in our future developments. We welcome you on this exciting journey with us to a more equal, diverse and inclusive community.

Geoff Draper
Principal/CEO

About our Single Equality Scheme

RNCB is committed to eliminating or avoiding the unlawful direct or indirect discrimination of our students, staff or any other stakeholders in our provision and delivery of services, contracts and any other formal or informal relationships, because of any of the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation) or any other irrelevant factor.

The principles underlying our Single Equality Scheme and action plan are to:

- Ensure that equality issues are embedded at the mainstream of policy and day to day practice
- Recognise and address the issues, particularly in relation to race, disability, gender, and people that have had, or are undergoing gender reassignment
- Meet the current legal duties concerning race, disability and gender (including transgender)
- Provide a framework for a co-ordinated approach to meeting our legal requirements on age, belief and sexual orientation legislation
- Integrate our College values into the Scheme
- Identify and address our policies that might be discriminatory
- Challenge discrimination against people who work for us or who use our services
- Ensure equal access to services and, through effective review, deliver better, more appropriate services for our students, staff and external stakeholders.

The Single Equality Scheme will be monitored and managed by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, which report in to the Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors.

The College is committed to upholding the values that underpin current equality and diversity legislation and to reviewing regularly its policies and processes as legislation is updated.

The College's Single Equality Scheme is written in recognition that equality and diversity needs to be an integral part of our work. The scheme sets out a framework for embedding equality and diversity practice across the work of the College. We aim to raise awareness amongst our students, staff and those working with the College of our commitment to ensure that equality and diversity is recognised as part of our everyday ethos and approach.

This scheme covers all aspects of equality and diversity, to promote equality and prevent unlawful direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation arising on grounds of:

- Age

- Disability
- Gender
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Or for reasons of:
- Socio-economic status
- or any other reason of difference.

We believe we can achieve our aims through a diverse and respected student and staff body who are treated fairly and who do not discriminate against others.

This is an evolving document and we would welcome your comments and feedback to support us in promoting and achieving equality and diversity. If you do have any comments or requests on the scheme please contact Mark Fisher (Assistant Principal Residential Support) or Cathi Shovlin (Head of HR & Organisational Development).

Leadership and Management of Equality & Diversity

Every student and staff member shares responsibility with us for the implementation of this Single Equality Scheme, and for promoting diversity and eradicating inequality.

The Board of Governors and the Principal have ultimate responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the College's equality and diversity policies and will receive a regular update.

Strategic responsibility for the scheme is shared by the Head of Residential Support and the Head of HR & Organisational Development. They form the Steering Group from their respective roles of overarching responsibility for students and staff, along with a qualified Equality & Diversity practitioner. This Steering Group oversees the leadership and management of the College's equality schemes, and implementation of the equality and diversity action plan.

The Steering Group is underpinned by an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group made up of staff from across the College who take the lead on driving through key priorities, supported by students and staff in their work. This Group provides a focused forum to support the implementation of the College's Single Equality Scheme, raises staff & student awareness of the equality strands, and through promotion of the scheme gains commitment from the whole College community.

The College believes that each individual, whether staff or student, should take responsibility for, and ownership of the equality and diversity agenda; all are expected, encouraged and developed to contribute to policy development and implementation, to promote good practice and to bring about change.

Leadership and commitment at all levels of the organisation are central to the success of the scheme to ensure we eliminate discrimination and seek to promote equality and diversity wherever we can. We look to everyone – staff and students – to act as a role model, to develop in themselves and in their work continued commitment to equality and diversity, and to challenge the inappropriate behaviour and attitudes of others. We will provide them with the skills, opportunities and framework for them to do so.

The legislative context

The core commitment of RNCB is to provide fair, accessible services for all and equality of opportunity for staff, underpinned by the Equality Act 2010.

In accordance with this Act and all associated guidelines, we will adhere to our duties, and will have due regard of the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation, and third party harassment;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Promote good relations between all groups, and specifically with all groups with a protected characteristic.

We will address any issues of associative discrimination, where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

We will address any issues of perceptive discrimination, where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he or she has a particular protected characteristic when he or she does not have that protected characteristic.

Third party harassment will be deemed to have occurred where a student or staff member is harassed by third parties and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic.

Victimisation will be deemed to have occurred where an individual is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or an employment promotion because he or she made or supported a complaint or grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so, or being about to do so.

We will comply with legislative duties, and all other legal, moral and ethical guidelines. We will take seriously any breach of these duties and will robustly respond to such breaches, recording the issue and our responses to inform future action.

How the Single Equality Scheme was developed

We recognise that the success of our Scheme is based upon true involvement of all groups of people. We invited contributions from all staff and students to this Scheme, and used members of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and our Students' Union to engage with all areas of the College.

Right from the outset of the Scheme we made sure that we sustained meaningful involvement and engagement with our staff and students who have helped develop, review, identify gaps, challenges and opportunities, and who will continue to help us prioritise the actions.

This Scheme built on the work undertaken by the earlier Strategic and Operational groups for Equality and Diversity, which had drawn membership from staff at all levels and students.

We will continue to use a variety of formal and informal consultation methods to maximise participation in our work in promoting equality and diversity and eliminating discrimination. We will seek advice and feedback when needed from organisations, groups or individuals with relevant expertise.

Equality & Diversity Monitoring

Equality monitoring enables us to gather information on students, employment and people who use our services and how communities view them, which is essential when planning and reviewing services.

On the basis of information gathered, we can begin to plan steps necessary to improve provision, delivery and levels of satisfaction.

For diversity monitoring to be effective, we will go beyond data collection to ensure we analyse this data to assess accessibility across all groups and then commit to act upon any findings.

We monitor equality to:

- Ensure optimum service delivery. Unless we know who our customers are, who is and who is not using our services and what people think of them, we do not know if everyone is using our services equally. We will not be able to identify missed opportunities.

- Aid service planning. Monitoring is vital for planning, targeting and measuring development in service provision. It can show gaps in services and can indicate new opportunities in terms of needs and markets. Monitoring also enables informed decisions to be made about priorities and resource allocation.
- Improve service quality. Challenging inequality will improve the overall quality of our services. It ensures we are delivering services in the most appropriate way to meet the needs of all our communities.
- Improve confidence and trust. By monitoring our service delivery and employment and being able to demonstrate that we are acting on this information, students, staff and stakeholders will have increased confidence that RNCB is a fair and equal service provider and employer.
- Value cultural and ethnic diversity. RNCB has a clear commitment to promoting equality, diversity and cohesion in all its work. By establishing clear and transparent mechanisms that help shape service delivery on the basis of need and involvement, our College is reinforcing and acting upon this commitment.
- Meet legislative requirements to take account of equality issues when planning and delivering services.

Equality Impact Assessments

We are required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on all new and proposed policies. An EIA is a way of systematically and thoroughly assessing and consulting on the effects that a policy is likely to have on people. For example, it can assess the effects on gender, racial group or disability.

The assessment process will consider:

- Whether or not the policy is 'relevant' to the equality duty;
- What is the likely impact upon the equality strands;
- Whether the policy is likely to discriminate in any way;
- The results of any service reviews;
- The results of staff consultations;
- Monitoring and other profiling data; and,
- Other relevant considerations.

An EIA will be carried out when reviewing and developing any relevant new or existing policy, initiative or procedure. If a policy is 'relevant' to the equality duty it will need to be assessed fully, to see if it could have any adverse effects on people from different groups, and to make changes or consider supplementary measures to mitigate any negative effects.

The EIA process may involve consultation with people who are likely to be affected by any proposed policy, or who have an interest in it. In order to assist with this, members of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group will be consulted. An EIA will consider any potential conflict with other legislation affecting staff or student safety.

Equality & Diversity Training

We provide a range of equality and diversity training. All members of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group have undertaken specific training, as have our Board of Governors. All senior managers who act as chairs of recruitment panels have received recruitment and selection training. Our senior managers have also received training in Equality Impact Assessments, and subsequently worked together to develop a toolkit and timeline for use at RNCB.

All staff receive awareness-raising of equality and diversity during their induction, and it is featured in our Staff Handbook. All staff will receive a regular rolling programme of equality and diversity training, and all managers will receive training on managing diversity. Bullying and harassment training will also be delivered on a rolling programme.

We will continue to raise awareness of equality issues through training plans for equality and through individual development.

Procurement and Partnerships

We acknowledge that our 'General' Duty to promote disability, race and gender equality extends into those situations where any of our functions or services are contracted, or sub-contracted, to other companies, organisations, groups or individuals, as well as direct works such as building works and repairs.

We will impact assess our procurement, tendering and contract management processes as an early measure to ensure that meeting the equality duty is built into the procurement process. This will ensure that services are provided in ways which promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and harassment, and promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability. We will monitor any outsourced service providers to ensure they are fully aware of this Scheme and comply with our organisational requirements when acting on our behalf.

To ensure any contractors conduct their duties in a manner that assists us to meet our obligations under the equality duty, we will take the following steps:

- To be accepted on our tender lists, and to be awarded a contract or to have one renewed, organisations will be required to provide information about any findings of disability discrimination or harassment relating to them, and will be required to adopt the Disability Rights Commission statutory Codes of Practice on Employment and Occupation, and on Rights of Access to Goods, Services, Facilities and Premises
- We will review the way in which we procure services to ensure that it does not have an adverse impact on organisations and firms owned or run by people with a disability, Black and Minority Ethnic groups and men and women

- We will support all of this by providing training to staff involved in procurement.

In addition to our role in procurement, we recognise that if we work in partnership with other organisations, our responsibility to promote equality in our work continues to apply.

We will ensure that all our partners support us in meeting the 'General' and, where relevant, the 'Specific' elements of the equality duty, as appropriate to the precise form of partnership. We will also ensure that our partners receive a copy of this Scheme and that equality is considered at an early stage in our entering into partnership agreements. We will also review our current list of partners to ensure inclusion of organisations representing the interests of all diversity groups.

Implementing the Single Equality Scheme

The Single Equality Scheme is supported by a comprehensive action plan that directs our work to promote equality and diversity and eliminate discrimination covering five key areas:

- Legal Duties
- Promotion
- Training
- Embedding in the Curriculum
- Data collation and analysis.

The action plan is updated annually, with a reprioritisation of actions in response to existing or emerging needs. It is developed through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, drawing on input from across the staff and student body.