

LEWISHAM COLLEGE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME



2009-2012

Lewisham College's Single Equality Scheme for 2009-12 has been agreed through a process of consultation with students, staff, governors and other stakeholders.

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1) Vision for Equality and Diversity

Lewisham College

Our vision for equality and diversity

'Equalities are the lifeblood of Lewisham College'
(Ofsted inspection report, 2006)

Our commitment

We promise that equality and diversity will remain the lifeblood of Lewisham College. There is no aspect of the College's mission and purpose more important or more fully achieved in practice than our commitment to provide excellent learning and employment opportunities for all in our region.

In the midst of so much social change, we will redouble our efforts to break down barriers and combat unfairness wherever we find it. We will continue to tackle discrimination directly and to sustain a culture that does not tolerate it in any form.

Our approach

We will build on our outstanding track record with a new Single Equality Scheme, supported by detailed Quality Improvement and Equalities Action Plans.

We will address unequal experiences for people across all the equality strands, namely:

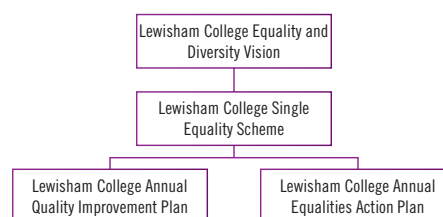
- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Values, beliefs and faith
- Class

We have included class in our equalities work and will also consider the experiences of other groups of people whose life chances may be affected by their social identity, in particular those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. We will take action to improve the prospects of people whose expectations of advantage are low.

In delivering a more equal and diverse College to the community of south-east London, we will focus on three key dimensions:

- We will secure **opportunity** through excellent teaching and learning in order to promote success and prosperity among our learners and their families, extending our work to meet the needs of all people from our community
- We will make **outcomes** for learners more equal so that all benefit from the excellence of the College's provision
- We will improve our **organisation** to make it increasingly equal, always compliant and ready to combat unfair and unlawful discrimination wherever it arises

Our suite of equalities documents will be simple and will drive performance and development. We will publish these documents and report annually on our progress against them.



Our context

The College has an exemplary track record in its delivery of equalities practice and its use of the curriculum to promote respect and mutual understanding. The College has been graded 'outstanding' for its work on equality and diversity at two consecutive inspections and won an LSC Beacon Award in 2008 for Equality and Diversity.

The College's profile of staff and students set against the composition of the local community shows in practice its profound commitment to widening participation and enhancing the prospects of the most disadvantaged in the region. We will measure the make-up of the College's population and the quality of experiences across different groups and report on these in an annual equalities scorecard.

The College's success rates for its different equalities groups are also exceptional in many categories, with performance above benchmark for BME and disabled learners. Where the greatest improvement is needed is for young people, who are less likely to succeed and less likely to be satisfied with our services than their older counterparts. We will work to address these gaps in our performance through robust action-planning and quality improvement.

We will also sustain strong networks with community partners, involving them in our forums on a regular basis to help inform our self-assessment and build on our existing good practice. We will provide an example to our community of high standards of equalities practice and will address discrimination directly and decisively where it arises, drawing on the support of expert partners around us.

2) Process of Scheme Development

This Single Equality Scheme was developed through an extended process of consultation and debate. The over-riding purpose was to ensure that a progressive, community-driven conversation took place and that a full sweep of expectations from staff, students, governors and other stakeholders was collected over several months in 2009.

Equalities champions were identified for each strand in 2008 and underwent training early in 2009 in order to strengthen the College's capacity to lead our consultation through to a successful conclusion. This training built on the national work for the sector delivered by NIACE on behalf of the LSC. With the introduction of a 'Class' strand during the consultation process, a seventh Champion for this area has been appointed and further planning to strengthen this area will be set in place during Autumn 2009.

For each strand, forums involving staff, students and external partners were set up and views captured from a variety of perspectives. A group comprising the original six champions and other key contributors worked through the different opinions and voices heard through the process to finalise a practical and visionary scheme for the future of equalities at the College.

3) Compliance and legislation

At Lewisham College, we do not see equality and diversity as merely a matter of compliance, but as a set of values and related practices fundamental to our core purpose. Nonetheless, we are mindful of our obligations under law and will discharge these, reporting publicly where necessary, auditing and reviewing our work and openly tackling discrimination wherever it arises through well-developed internal procedures. We will challenge unacceptable behaviour and use disciplinary procedures as well as our policies on bullying and harassment to protect our staff and students from any disadvantage.

The development of our Single Equality Scheme takes account of provisions within the law as it stands in October 2009, in particular:

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Equality Act 2006

Equal Pay Act 1970

Human Rights Act 1998

Race Relations Act 1976

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

The requirements of these laws are embedded in College practices either through curriculum delivery or Human Resources policy and procedure and the College remains committed to the highest standards of conformity and accountability within this framework. We welcome the development of the new Single Equalities legislation and the opportunity to strengthen the commonality of expectation across different strands. This Single Equality Scheme takes account of impending changes to the law and anticipates as many of these as possible.

4) Governance

The College's governance arrangements pay close attention not only to the duties of the College to act fairly and tackle discrimination at all times, but also seek to promote better practice in support of success for all College students and employees. College governors recognise fully the good work in place to promote an ethic of diversity and management practice that confronts unfairness.

Governors will:

- Approve and monitor the annual Equality Action Plan through Quality and HR Committees
- Self-assess their practice in respect of equality and diversity each year
- Monitor the overall improvement of the College's equality and diversity practice in terms of compliance and culture
- Be responsible for any safeguarding and similar duties especially where vulnerable people are affected

5) Executive management and delivery responsibilities

The College's Principal is the chief officer for equality and diversity and will lead on all aspects of this work across the organisation. She will delegate specific responsibility for particular areas as follows:

Area of equality and diversity practice	Lead officer
Equality and diversity operations and development	Vice-Principal, Learner Development
Student success across equality strands	Executive Director, Student Success
Legislative requirements in respect of employment	Director of Human Resources
Quality of student experience across equality strands	Vice-Principal, Learner Development
Investigation and satisfactory resolution of complaints	Vice-Principal, Learner Development
Development of staff and management capability	Head of Learning and Development

The College's executive team will monitor progress through the Equality and Diversity Steering Group which meets every half-term, totalling six meetings a year. This group is chaired by the Vice-Principal, Learner Development. Reports will also be brought to College management and governance groups as necessary in order to scrutinise the work of College officers in respect of equality and diversity.

This work is also fundamental to the measurement of the College's improvement. We will analyse success rates by Equality group and plan changes in response to patterns of inequality that emerge in our data. Equality and diversity will continue to form a key dimension of the self-assessment process and every College manager will be set a measurable performance target in respect of equality through the appraisal process.

The College will also continue to use Equality Champions to help co-ordinate action and raise the profile of the different strands. Introduced in 2008, the Champions were drawn from the Senior Management Team and help us to provide equal

emphasis on our range of duties. At October 2009, the Champions group is made up as follows:

Equality Strand	Champion
Age	Tim Potter
Race	Jayne Morgan
Class	Kevin Cleaver
Gender	Simone Davies
Disability	Mark Cook
Sexual Orientation	Dith Banbury
Values, Beliefs and Faith	Stephen Lawes

Forums for each strand will continue to be convened and these forums will draw representation from students, staff and partners and meet at least twice in each academic year.

We believe that the curriculum is our principal instrument in tackling discrimination and inequality; an explicit duty will remain with curriculum managers to deliver an inclusive and progressive programme of learning. Resources will be devoted to the development of classroom, tutoring and enrichment practices and materials that equip our learners well for life in a diverse and often unequal society. We will continue

to promote very high standards of behaviour and uncompromising attitudes to equalities issues among our learners and will measure our success in doing this through internal inspection and self-assessment. Curriculum managers will have clear duties to cultivate successful equalities practices in their areas of responsibility and will be expected to tackle discrimination in any form should it arise or be alleged.

6) Partnership and stakeholders

The College is aware that it cannot succeed in these aims alone. We will continue to draw on a supportive community with high expectations of us as a source of good practice, ideas for improvement, partnership in development work and positive challenges. The current set of partners assisting the College is:

- REAL** – Race Equality Action for Lewisham
- EHRC** – Equality and Human Rights Commission
- NIACE** – National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
- SKILL** – National Bureau for Students with Disabilities Treloars College
- LSIS** – Learning and Skills Improvement Service
- CAE** – Centre for Accessible Environments

They will be involved formally through a number of College structures and processes:

- Membership of the Governing Body
- Participation in equalities forums
- Direct involvement in specific development activities and projects

7)

Complaints and compliments

The College will continue to welcome challenges to its equalities practice and will operate an open and accountable approach to its responsibilities. Our student charter and staff codes of practice assert high standards of behaviour in respect of equalities and all acts of discrimination will be investigated with rigour; unacceptable behaviour will be addressed directly, explicitly and, where justified, disciplinary action will be taken.

Management capability: College managers take responsibility for the development of best practice as well as ensuring behaviour is compliant with legislation and College policy and procedure. Our separate bullying and harassment procedures will be used to tackle behaviour among staff and students where justified.

The Head of Learning and Development will strengthen the capability and confidence of College managers in tackling discrimination and promoting best practice.

Staff grievances and disciplinary: the Director of Human Resources takes responsibility for upholding our standards among our staff and will ensure that all incidents that may involve discrimination are investigated thoroughly and dealt with firmly.

Student behaviour: the Vice-Principal for Learner Development takes responsibility for upholding our standards among our students and will ensure that all incidents that may involve discrimination are investigated thoroughly.

Where the College is given credit for good practice and effective work, this will be recognised through the College's training and quality improvement procedures. Examples of successful operations will be gathered for internal dissemination and reporting to governors and external agencies such as inspectorates.

8)

Reporting

The Vice-Principal, Learner Development will report regularly on the progress made against our equalities plans. We will do this through the Governing Body committees as outlined above and also through a direct publication scheme on the College's website.

We will make the following information available to the public:

- Our equalities action plan, annually
- A progress report on our equalities action plan, termly
- A self-assessment report that identifies equalities performance issues and plans improvements against them, annually
- Our equalities schemes and related procedures, annually
- An equalities scorecard (see below), annually
- Equalities Impact Assessments of key changes and developments as they arise

9) Equalities scorecard

We will introduce an annual equalities scorecard that shows key metrics and trend data for the College in terms of equalities performance. This will incorporate but exceed the publication duties required under the Single Equalities Act. An illustration of the structure of the scorecard follows:

Strand	Students	Staff
Overall	Key performance gaps taken from all strands	Key performance gaps taken from all strands
Age	Recruitment profile Success rates 14-19 and 19+ Satisfaction rates 14-19 and 19+	Staff age profile, to include pay and seniority
Race	Recruitment profile Success rates for all strands of ethnicity Satisfaction rates for all strands of ethnicity	Staff ethnicity profile, to include pay and seniority
Disability	Recruitment profile Success rates for disabled and non-disabled students Satisfaction rates for disabled students	Staff disability profile
Gender	Recruitment profile Success rates for male and female learners Satisfaction rates for male and female students	Staff gender profile, to include pay and seniority
Sexual Orientation	Recruitment profile Success rates for LGBT and non-LGBT students Satisfaction rates for LGBT and non-LGBT students	Staff sexual orientation profile
Values, Beliefs and Faith	Student recruitment profile in terms of declared religion	Staff profile in terms of declared religion
Class	Recruitment profile Success rates for high widening participation factor students	

10) Key priorities for 2009-12

The priority actions for the College over the lifespan of our Single Equality Scheme will be:

- The identification and progressive elimination of all equalities gaps in learner recruitment, success and satisfaction rates
- Improved curriculum practice to strengthen teaching and learning, course content and classroom practice
- The development of a staff strategy to promote more proportionate representation of all equalities groups across the College and especially in our management structures
- Strengthened College procedures and practices to tackle all aspects of discrimination and address barriers to opportunity
- The development of robust equalities forums to feed practice and promote debate and accountability

Equalities strands

11) Class

Our commitment

Lewisham College is based in a disadvantaged community and has made plain its purpose in serving the needs of this community.

We are committed to understanding the nature and impact of economic disadvantage and will work to reduce the barriers faced by people in south east London through high quality and

equally accessible learning linked to meaningful progression pathways. We will continue to emphasise the development of provision designed to attract those with lower expectations of success and prosperity and, with our partners, will explore new ways of working that make our provision more accessible to those who are disadvantaged.

Our context

The Single Equalities legislation as drafted does not currently cover class.

However, Lewisham College believes that class is a factor in people's life chances and affects the equality with which they are treated by service providers. The College is heavily used by people whose residential postcode attracts funding uplifts to help address their level of economic disadvantage. We know that many of our learners live in or on the edge of poverty and experience higher than average levels of ill-health and poor educational attainment. We believe that the College has a duty to its community to address issues relating to class and social mobility if it is to deliver its mission fully.

This strand is less well-developed in the College's equalities practice, but forms an essential part of our work as we deliver a comprehensive, user-facing Single Equality Scheme. Our priorities reflect this as a starting point for the College.

Our aims

In working to improve the prospects of people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups, we aim to achieve:

- The establishment of a forum to support the development of this strand
- A secure definition of class that allows us to define it for the purposes of policy, procedure and practice improvement

- A fully developed plan for addressing deprivation among our learners, agreed with key partners and based on an understanding of the barriers faced by people with direct experience of deprivation
- Ongoing curriculum development activity that targets the recruitment and success of people from deprived backgrounds

12)

Age

Our commitment

Lewisham College is committed to equality of opportunity for both our students and our staff. We recognise that learners and staff can face discrimination because of their age.

All students should be able to access learning, succeed at their studies and progress in their lives without discrimination on account of their age. We will work to close any equality gaps in success. We also recognise that for our students the next steps beyond college are critical to improving their life chances and therefore we will continue to ensure that we work to break down barriers that may prevent our students from moving into employment.

We recognise that we have responsibilities as a major employer in the area and therefore will ensure that our recruitment and working methods reflect best practice. Our staff should be able to contribute fully to the development of the College and their own careers irrespective of their age. We will promote best practice in age equality and we will act firmly to eliminate any unfair behaviour arising from differences in age.

Our context

Lewisham College welcomes students of all ages. We have 700 learners aged under 16; the average age of our students is 29 and we have students who have reached retirement age and beyond. However, government funding agendas clearly differentiate between the needs of young people and those over the age of 19 and this does lead to different levels of provision and support for different age groups. It has meant that over the last few years the College has had to reduce the provision of some adult courses while expanding those for younger students. We have conducted impact assessments of this policy trend and have made efforts to mitigate its impact and explain our interpretation of policy to learners.

In terms of outcomes for our students there has been a differential over the last few years based on age with older students tending to have higher rates of success than younger students.

The effects of the recent recession have impacted on young people particularly heavily and there is likely to be a significant reduction in employment opportunities for young people over the next few years. Concern has been expressed by major employers in the local area that young people can find it difficult to access the labour market.

We also have responsibilities as one of the largest employers in the local area. Our staff range from teenagers to those over the age of sixty-five. However, our staff age profile shows that we have relatively few employees under the age of twenty-five. The College has a duty under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 to ensure that staff are treated fairly irrespective of age.

Our intended impact

Within the context of legislation, government funding and priorities, we aim to break down barriers associated with age both as a provider of education and as an employer.

As a provider of education and training, we aim to ensure

- That our curriculum offer, facilities and support services cater for the different needs of our students
- That achievement gaps between different age groups are addressed and closed
- That all students are given the support they need to progress into and at work

We will achieve these aims by undertaking a major review of the experience of our students that will address the differential in success rates between younger and older students. We will review support to younger students including transition arrangements between school and college, the curriculum they study, the extra help they may require to complete their courses, the social facilities available to them which may help them to belong to college and the help they need to access Higher Education or employment. This review will lead to conclusions that will enable managers to target resources to raise success rates for younger students.

As an employer, we aim to ensure

- That younger entrants to the workforce are given the support they need to succeed and progress
- That older employees do not face discrimination on account of their age
- That our HR policies become more flexible so that staff are more able to balance work with family requirements.

We will do this by reviewing our recruitment arrangements especially for entry level posts to ensure that young people and, especially, our students are informed about vacancies, encouraged to apply for them and be successful within them. We will also review our flexible working arrangements to ensure that our employment policies are as flexible as possible to reflect the changing needs of the service and our staff at the different stages of their working lives.

We will use these to amend our employment policies where the reviews support the need for amendment and where they do not cut across other equalities concerns.

13) Race

Our commitment

Lewisham College recognises that learners and staff are often discriminated against because of their colour, race, ethnicity and religion. Racism is in our society and requires decisive and specific action to eradicate it.

Our core values include an explicit commitment to valuing people's differences. This commitment is central to all that we do and how we go about it. We will promote best practice in race equality and we will identify and combat discrimination and disadvantage. We will take positive action to eliminate racism and its effects. Racial harassment will not be tolerated in any area of College life.

We will continue to take positive action to encourage the recruitment

and increased success of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups of learners on all courses. We will continue to implement active anti-racist strategies which challenge racial stereotyping and promote high levels of achievement. We will continue to ensure that the curriculum addresses anti-racism and that curriculum models are personalised and focused on the social outcomes of programmes, not just the qualification. We will continue to pay particular attention to learners' needs and aspirations, to ensure that subsequent success is sustainable.

We will seek to increase the number of staff, particularly senior staff, from BME groups. We recognise the contribution they can make to learners' success. We will work to secure the fullest participation of BME learners and staff in College life, including the College's planning and decision-making processes.

We will listen carefully to what learners and staff from different racial groups and backgrounds tell us and act upon those views to shape our work.

Our context

Lewisham College serves a diverse community characterised by disadvantage and underachievement. Over half our students and a third of our staff are from BME communities and around forty-four languages are spoken.

The College recognises the need to challenge racial discrimination and to promote race equality as central to its mission and to the achievement of its educational goals. Over the last decade Lewisham College has systematically dismantled barriers to participation and success and sought to ensure that race equality objectives inform everything we do.

Lewisham College has main-streamed its race equalities commitments and our Ofsted inspection outcomes and Learning and Skills Council Award for Equality and Diversity in 2008 confirm the success of this strategy.

The learner profile and performance show that, in broad terms, this has been very effective with success rates that have exceeded national benchmarks in fourteen out of seventeen areas. A personalised approach and widening the range of ways learners experience learning in exciting and inventive ways have been key to this success. The College has also significantly increased the diversity of its staff but the over-representation of white managers shows we have some way to go.

Our intended impact

In further developing and strengthening our work around race equality so that we can maximise the positive impact we have on learners and staff from different racial groups, we aim to achieve the following:

- Close the gap in success rates for all BME learners
- Improve the levels of learner satisfaction and college experience to a Framework for Excellence 'Outstanding' rating
- Increase the profile of Black and minority ethnic staff to achieve a workforce that is representative of the local community at every level of the organisation

14) Gender

Our commitment

Lewisham College welcomes people of all genders at all levels in all College

departments and curriculum areas. We will remove barriers and actively encourage inclusive participation in traditionally gender specific job roles, job levels and curriculum areas and levels.

Lewisham College will be a place where people will be encouraged to follow their chosen career or learning pathway regardless of gender. We will not tolerate gender based harassment and seek to build an environment where respect is practised and valued by all.

We will operate a zero tolerance policy against all forms of transphobic behaviour and promote the needs and profile of transgender staff and students.

We will further consult with staff and students to ensure that gender barriers are removed and develop a culture of respect for self and others regardless of gender.

Our context

Lewisham College has a strong track record of equality and diversity and has taken significant steps to address gender issues in our workforce. We have robust data concerning the gender of our staff, both established and temporary and will analyse our data to ascertain the impact of our actions to date.

In addition, legislation and impending legislation means that we must revisit our current practices and ensure that we address any remaining issues and promote a culture of gender equality in all areas and levels of the workforce.

Legislation and impending legislation include:

- Equal Pay Act
- Equal Pay for temporary workers (legislation expected in 2010)

- Equal employment rights of part-time workers
- Maternity leave, parental leave, right to request part-time work after maternity leave.

Lewisham College has regularly measured curriculum specific gender imbalance but has more to do in implementing vigorous action plans to address issues at all stages of the learner pathway from recruitment to progression. We have robustly addressed sexual harassment wherever it occurs but feedback from staff and learners indicates that this needs to be strengthened both as a general objective and in gender specific curriculum areas.

We have more to do to promote the interests of transgender staff and students and to raise awareness about transgender issues.

Our intended impact

- Learner recruitment that actively encourages student to access careers of their choice regardless of traditional gender under representation.
- A well-developed curriculum that positively reflects different gender contributions in the workplace and promotes them equally and effectively.
- Facilities that enhance and support the experience of men and women equally in using the College's services or as college employees.
- A robust approach to gender-based discrimination and harassment that tackles unwanted attention and unfair behaviours directly and decisively at all levels and promotes a culture of respect.

- A fully developed approach to equality in employment and career progression based on secure evidence relating to pay, opportunities, role and position across all genders and with due regard to physiological differences.
- An approach to transgender issues that promotes understanding and welcome for those involved in any kind of change to their gender

Our community

We have consulted on gender equality with a range of staff and students within the college. This has not been exhaustive and we are committed to extending this to ensure fullest possible participation over the coming three years. The Trade Union Studies school has promoted good practice via a number of trade union initiatives including courses for Equality Reps and Equality and Diversity Employment Rights. We will share this good practice across the college.

We held a female student forum at our Deptford site to ascertain the impact of the gender imbalance on that site in order to develop an action plan.

Key issues identified at the forum were:

- Need for more and better female specific resources including changing rooms
- Need for the sports curriculum to include more female specific sporting activities such as step and pilates
- Need to consistently address intimidating behaviour such as congregation of male students at entrances and wolf whistling

15) Disability

Our commitment

We expect to see learners with impairments enabled and thriving at Lewisham College. We are committed to the development of new and better opportunities for disabled people and aim to develop both practice and delivery options in order to promote success for those with an impairment studying at the College. We wish to see a marked transition from a medical model of disability, where the need is located with the individual, to a social model, where the College is proactive in removing barriers to participation and success for learners and employees with impairments.

We will assist disabled staff and establish programmes that allow staff with support needs to succeed in their employment here.

Our Context

The legislative framework is given to organisations in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the new DDA of 2005. We recognise that it covers a broad spectrum of requirements, including:

- Sensory impairment
- Restrictions to mobility
- Mental ill-health
- Long-term debilitating illnesses

The College has maintained comprehensive data on the disabilities of learners collected through the enrolment process and has had a planned response to their needs. However, the volume and quality of data maintained on employees is much less robust, as

there appears to be an unwillingness to disclose this information on the equal opportunities form used in recruitment. This leaves us reacting to the requests for support from individual employees who enter the College with a disability or develop a disability during their employment and hinders us in meeting their needs and planning and budgeting.

From more complete data we may be able to plan more strategically, improve levels of understanding around disability within the College community and work to dismantle any barriers to career progression and self fulfilment.

Our intended impact

We will implement a four-stage plan

1. **Investigate** the profile of our staff and students to achieve a clear understanding of their needs, and uncover – where appropriate – ‘hidden’ disability issues, such as mental health and developmental disorders.
 - Describe existing identified needs from staff and students.
 - This will involve a campaign to raise awareness and build confidence that the College is a safe place to declare an impairment and discuss challenges faced by disabled learners and staff.
 - Collect data, perhaps through a Census of the College, to acquire information on the physical or learning disabilities of employees.
 - Celebrate successes more readily of those students who have overcome disadvantage to succeed in the learning of their choice.
2. **Prioritise** interventions, focusing on those that will deliver specific outcomes for these groups (such as increased satisfaction, retention and success)

- Invite views from a mixed advisory group of students and staff on physical and practical improvements that could be made in the College.
- 3. Deliver** programmes/interventions that will impact on these objectives.
 - Based on intelligence from staff and learners deliver a 12-month action plan
 - 4. Monitor** our success in improving the conditions and success of disabled staff and students within the college.
 - Ensure that the cross-college SAR reflects desired improvements
 - Monitor, through focus groups, data and other feedback.

16) Sexual orientation

Our commitment

Lewisham College celebrates the diversity of its staff and students and welcomes people of any sexual orientation. We will adopt a zero tolerance stance to homophobia and will actively challenge these when they arise.

Lewisham College will be a place where the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community is visible, valued and its contribution to the college and wider world is recognised.

We will consult our staff, students and partners to ensure that the services and support we provide meet the needs of LGB staff and learners.

Our context

The college has a strong track record on equality and diversity but the equality strand relating to sexual

orientation is the least developed and, like many other organisations, is not very visible within the College. Research undertaken by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership for the sector in 2006 indicated that in addition to bullying and harassment of LGB students and staff, the invisibility of LGB issues in colleges was a major concern.

The data we have relating to the sexual orientation is currently scarce. We invite applicants for jobs at Lewisham College to disclose their sexual orientation but the data collected is not included in any reports. To date, no data on the sexual orientation of students has been collected and, therefore, we have not been able to monitor the satisfaction levels and success rates for LGB learners. We have no data relating to transgender staff and students. From 2009/10 students are being invited to disclose their sexual orientation on the enrolment form.

Feedback from staff and learners tells us that we need to make significant progress to achieve best practice in relation to sexual orientation equality within the College.

Legislation (Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003, the Equality Act (sexual orientation) Regulations 2007) requires us to ensure that staff and students are not discriminated against on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

Our intended impact

In working to improve sexual orientation equality in the college over the next three years, we aim to achieve:

- A comfortable, welcoming place for all and an environment where LGB staff and students feel confident and free to be open about their sexuality if they choose

- A college where the rights of LGB students and staff are respected and recognised
- A student community where LGB learners feel comfortable, supported, actively involved in college life and whose voice is heard
- A community of staff which is confident and able to respond to the needs of LGB colleagues and learners
- A zero tolerance stance on homophobia with a workforce that is trained and confident to challenge homophobia when it arises
- Recognition of best practice in relation to sexual orientation equality in the FE sector
- Stonewall Diversity Champion status and recognition as a LGB friendly employer
- Success rates for LGB students which are comparable with other learners
- More comprehensive data on the sexual orientation of learners and staff to help us improve and develop our services

These impact measures will form the basis of an annual action plan designed to improve the experiences of people partnering, working at or studying in Lewisham College.

17) Values, beliefs and faith

Our commitment

Lewisham College will always welcome people of all faiths and none and will promote learning and understanding between religions. We will act firmly to eliminate any discriminatory behaviour arising from differences in belief.

Lewisham College is not and never will be a place of one faith. We will work to secure respect for beliefs, faiths and religions and welcome all equally into our community.

We will provide opportunities for the faithful to express their beliefs. We will consult our staff, students and partners fully in organising our arrangements to support religious celebration.

Lewisham College is a place of learning and we will place firm emphasis on the primacy of education as a defining value for our community. We will use our curriculum to strengthen moral and social awareness wherever it is appropriate.

Our context

Lewisham College is sited in a diverse region, rich in different value systems and religions. The evidence we have shows that there is a majority of local people and College students who are declared as Christians of various denominations. An active minority in our immediate community identify themselves as Muslims. Other faiths are represented, but in smaller numbers. A significant proportion of our students declare themselves to be without a religion.

We know that there are instances of religious intolerance on the doorstep of the College. The law (Equality Act, 2006 and Human Rights Act, 1998) require us to protect service-users and employees against unfair treatment on the grounds of their religion.

Our detailed staff and student data is at present limited, although we have collected some information on the mix of those learners who declared a faith or none at enrolment in 2008/09

Our intended impact

In working with people of all faiths and none, we aim to achieve:

- A secure climate of understanding in which religious discrimination is rare, brief and promptly addressed if it ever arises
- Strong College forums involving students staff and partners to recognise the needs of people of all faiths and none
- A clear and equal message of welcome for people of all faiths and none
- Well-managed facilities available to all faiths for religious practice
- A respectful and values-based curriculum that promotes social and moral development
- Improved data on the profile of religious declaration by students and staff to help us develop our services, with a distinction between cultural identity and actual religious practice

These impact measures will form the basis of an annual action plan designed to improve the experiences of people partnering, working at or studying in Lewisham College.

18) Views of stakeholders

The consultation process

Over a hundred staff, students, governors and partners have commented on our work at its various stages.

Selected statements from our different stakeholders are reflected in this general summary, with more specific comments on sexuality and religion at the end of this section.

“The emphasis on class and importance of corporate social responsibility is vitally important and is another welcome addition. Equally important is ensuring the culture at Lewisham College enables both staff and learners to feel safe to speak up and challenge the way in which things are done.”

“I support the strengthened college procedures, the use of forums and the elimination of all inequalities.”

“I’d like to congratulate the College on the development of this robust, forward thinking Scheme, which strongly reflects the centrality of equalities to the College’s mission.”

Our community

We have consulted on sexual orientation equality with a range of people in the College’s community. Consultation has included discussion at the College Student Forum, staff and student surveys and feedback from staff who have undertaken training on sexual orientation. However, we recognise that further involvement of stakeholders is required to improve our practice and we are committed to securing the fullest possible contribution from staff, students and partners throughout the coming three years. We have had many helpful and challenging statements to inform our action plan. These include:

Staff comments

“There is very little understanding of transgender issues. Organisations usually deal with it along with sexuality issues, whereas in the belief of most transgender people it’s an entirely separate issue, and gender is completely different to sex.”

“Heterosexuality is the ONLY visible sexuality at the college and I have absolutely no idea how people will react if I come out at work. I imagine most staff will be OK but I believe many clumsy comments will be made and inappropriate questions asked which I wouldn't feel able to challenge. There is NO WAY I would come out to learners as I would not feel safe at all and don't believe there is enough support around the college to challenge it or protect me - I feel it would all be on my shoulders alone.”

“Increased visibility, data collection, monitoring of experiences and outcomes, zero tolerance of homophobia would improve the situation.”

“I have noticed that some staff or students don't like to discuss the subject as this is very uncomfortable for them, due to their beliefs or culture upbringing. However, I have never come across bullying while I have worked here. A lot of students have personal issues that can get in the way of letting them develop. This can be themselves or other people preventing their development. Whether you are LGBT or not, every student should be made to feel Lewisham College is the place to make the right changes in their lives. I work with a brilliant and creative team that believe in students' development. We all hope that Lewisham College helps them to overcome whatever challenges face them.”

“A more positive campaign with images / overt posters. Working with groups / support for emerging sexualities.”

“Clear emphasis on prejudice/ discrimination being against college rules as in racist comments. Students sometimes do not equate treating someone differently because of their sexuality as a serious problem”

“I think the response of staff varies enormously between schools. Staff are often aware of issues to be faced but don't know how to support learners especially when we are dealing with younger learners.”

On disability, one team focused on disclosure as a potential barrier:

“Perhaps too much emphasis on disclosure which then in many cases becomes the barrier. Talk about 'groups' ... is very much a medical model when we should be focusing on the individual and their Individual Development Plan.”

The addition of Class as a theme also attracted comment and cautions:

“I like the idea of looking at 'class' as a barrier - however, as this an undefined sector of the community, I think it should be called something else, like 'deprived' as it will help us to move away from stereotyping of 'class' etc. Or maybe 'learning-resistant.' As an American and British citizen, I am interested in moving away from ideas of class structure.”

“I think it will be hard to define class and a lot of issues will arise which will have to be examined and added to further revisions of the policy.”

Student Comments

Students were invited to comment on how the College could ensure that it was a safe secure a welcoming environment for LGBT learners:

“It was cool to see the “some people are gay. Get over it!” posters around the College. Because of the wide range of sexuality, age, race, etc at the College I think it makes a very welcoming atmosphere. I have enjoyed my year at the college and would most certainly recommend it. Because of the management of bullying, etc I have been able to cross the bridge to Uni allowing me to further my career. Thank you.”

“I know that some people have difficulty accepting who people are, that's why people who are gay, bi and lesbian will find it hard to be open about their status, they wouldn't want to be judged and feel left out.”

“A proper discussion forum should be set up”

“A safe environment should be created and a leaflet with a helpline”

“Sexual orientation should be discussed with tutors as part of tutorials”

“The policy on discrimination should be strict, with posters similar to those promoting anti-bullying”

We have also opened conversations with the range of people in the College's community who have engaged with this agenda. These have not been exhaustive and we are committed to securing the fullest possible contribution from staff, students and partners throughout the coming three years. We have had many helpful and challenging statements to drive our practice forward. These include:

"It's a validating thing that you can have a place where you can show your religious beliefs"

"If it helps students to succeed, then let's make religious expression open to all. Giving students the space is really important to their success"

"Respect is one of the most important things between religions. Show each other love and don't judge"

"You could improve the induction process and introduce the (prayer) facilities. Introduce a forum to help people know what's here and promote it"

"It's about celebrating diversity and openness and willingness to respect and learn from each other"

"Religion doesn't need to be a faultline"

"People get on here. I really love that about the College"





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