



DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2007

1. Introduction by the Chief Executive

Royal Blind's Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and its associated Action Plan had its first anniversary on 4 December 2007. The action plan is a three-year plan.

The main purpose of the Scheme's Annual Report for 2006/07 is to highlight the progress that Royal Blind has made against its action plan during the first year of its operation, and to further encourage all to continue the progress already made to eliminate disability discrimination by meeting our targets and embedding equality and diversity into all that we do.

I am particularly encouraged by some of the very positive initiatives that have been undertaken during the last twelve months.

It is important that all staff, pupils and stakeholders of Royal Blind play their part in the continuing development and commitment to the DES and equality and diversity in general.

2. Progress to date against the Disability Equality Scheme Action plan

2.1 Accessibility within the Organisation

Following an assessment of our buildings and areas at Canaan Lane Campus and the Gate Lodge, Craigmillar we have made improvements to the main entrance doors at our Canaan Campus which allows more independent access into the building. Access to our Gate Lodge is being improved. A present review of our main school at Craigmillar is expected to bring about improved accessibility to the services on offer.

The layout of equipment and furniture access within our properties is constantly under review through risk management as is our provision of user friendly apparatus for disabled staff and pupils

2.2 Disability related Absence Policy

We are currently reviewing and updating our Absence Policy and our Guidance to Managers documents.

We have in place standardised written procedures for Managers on our Absence Policy, additional help and advice is given by HR on an ongoing basis in each case when they arise.

2.3 Employment

To explore a wider variety of specialist publications in to reach the disabled community and let them be aware of vacancies within the Organisation we are currently consulting with Advertising Agencies regarding potential sources to reach applicants with disabilities.

We are presently looking into an electronic format of producing documents on our website. Requests for documents in large print and Braille are accommodated by our in-house Braille Press.

We are currently reviewing our Website and expect to be able to facilitate electronic applications and readable job advertisements by Spring 2009.

We will commence a review of all our documentation in May 2008 as regards the format and content and its impact on equal opportunities.

We now hold equal opportunities data on all new applicants and a programme for data recording is currently being progressed by our IT Manager

2.4 Communication & Information

Payslips are now available to members of staff in various formats ie. Braille, Large Print as is the option of letters in e-mail form.

Letters and circulars to staff are now available on request in most formats for any individual for example CD, Large Print, Audio and Braille

Discussions are presently in progress about providing free standing computers for staff who do not have access to a computer. Training is offered to all staff in the basic use of computers with more in depth given on request.

2.5 Harassment

Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work Training is ongoing and has to date been carried out on approximately 31% of the Organisations Staff. This has raised the awareness of these policies, their location and their importance.

Our Dignity at Work policy is available to all staff. It is on our intranet and is also available in Braille, Large Print and Audio if requested.

2.6 Procurement

Our practice is to request from all new Contractors a copy of their DES policy.

2.7 Accessibility

The Organisation works with Mobility experts to assess access improvements on an ongoing basis.

2.8 Access to Information & Documentation

Individual integrated education and care plans contain relevant information about accessible formats for individual pupils.

2.9 Low Vision Aids

Services to supply and service Low Vision Aids have been utilised within the school and our new procedure has been successfully implemented.

2.10 Promoting Positive Attitudes

Links with local authorities and opportunities for our Royal Blind School pupils and peers to interact are ongoing and planned, including international links and involvement in the RNIB magazine club with mainstream pupils are up and running.

2.11 Pupil Awareness

A School pupils intranet is in the process of being developed. The utilisation of GLOW, the Scottish Schools' digital highway, within the Royal Blind School is being undertaken.

2.12 Impact Assessment

An Impact Assessment Policy is now in draft and all new policies from Sprung 2008 will be Impact Assessed as they are drawn up and prior to implementation.

2.13 Retention

The Organisation has implemented an exit interview/questionnaire process with a view to better informing the managers on the reasons for staff leaving. This will bring to our notice any discrimination issue which contributed to a member of staff leaving the Organisation.

3. Development of the DES and Action Plan

Following the significant effort in the compilation of the plan in 2006 the Co-ordinating Committee was not reconvened and did not conduct any evaluation processes in 2007, now that a year's progress has been made this Committee will be reconvened early in 2008 to evaluate and progress the Action Points timetable for 2008 and 2009.

The major development of the Scheme over the next 12 months will be to develop our equality impact assessment (EIA) methodology and the training of, and roll out to, managers for implementation. This will include the design of a simple template for completion by managers; the development of criteria to identify high, medium and low priority policies for EIA; identifying any common policies which have been given the aforementioned rating and guidance material and training material to facilitate an understanding of EIA s.

The ongoing work of the Disability Equality Duty Co-ordinating Committee will continue to monitor and progress the DES action plan, flag up any areas that are not meeting their target(s) and to add new actions as they come on stream.

4. Ongoing Commitment

Royal Blind is committed to promoting an ethos that safeguards the dignity and wellbeing of everyone and encourages practices that take into account the rights of individuals to be treated with dignity and respect. We recognise that disability discrimination, harassment and victimisation may be experienced by all in a number of ways, including day to day interaction with colleagues, peers, visitors and staff.

We are wholly committed to the development of the DES and its action plan, and encouraged by the progress that has been made in this first year of the scheme in a year when we have a number of other priorities to address.

Richard Hellewell
Chief Executive
16th January 2008