



## Disability Equality Scheme

### Introduction

The Mary Ward Centre has a reputation for the outstanding promotion of a supportive and inclusive ethos. It has a well-established culture in which students and staff are treated with mutual respect. Managers, tutors, and administrative staff are very effective in maintaining a welcoming learning environment in which differences are respected in order to help students reach their full potential.

The Centre has a comprehensive Equal Opportunities policy and detailed guidelines for its implementation. Policies are available in a range of formats. An Equality Assurance Committee (EAC), made up of staff and students from all areas of the Centre, monitors and promotes equality of opportunity. It ensures that policies are reviewed regularly, and close attention is given to the demographic profile of learners. Targets are set for recruitment by different groups of learners, and retention and achievement rates are analysed to identify trends in performance. The Committee also analyses staff data and has targets for recruitment for different groups. Arrangements for staff development in equality of opportunity are good. All staff receive training on relevant legislation such as the DDA, and other recent staff development events have included training on the promotion of equality in the classroom, on mental health, and on deaf awareness.

The Centre employs a Special Needs Co-ordinator, who is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability or learning difficulty receive physical and practical support according to their individual needs. Each year there are examples of assistance being given which go beyond that which might be expected. For example, the facilities and premises officer transferred a video of an Over-60's class to DVD at home in his own time; members of the Student Services team arrange to meet disabled art students before their class to carry their materials to the art room for them, and another member of staff timed her departure from work to escort a blind student home.

The Centre also provides additional learning support where the need is identified. All students enrolling on accredited courses are assessed for their additional support needs by the subject tutor in partnership with the Skills for Life section. One-to-one and group support is given as appropriate. Adaptive technologies (such as hearing loops) are also used, and the Centre has a thorough system to follow up any disabilities or learning difficulties declared by learners on enrolment forms.

Use is made of the access fund to assist students on low incomes to meet the costs of undertaking a course, and all students may apply for a reduction or nil tuition fee. It is Centre policy not to turn any student away due to inability to pay.

The tables below show the most recent student profile data relating to disabilities and learning difficulties, and the three-year trend.

### Students with a Disability or Learning Difficulty

	05/06		04/05		03/04	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
No disability/ Learning difficulty	5645	87.03	6294	93.90	6770	93.48
Disability/ Learning difficulty	840	12.95	409	6.10	401	5.53
Info not given	1	0.02	0	0	71	0.98
Student body	6486		6703		7242	

### Main type of Disability

	05/06		04/05		03/04	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Visual impairment	67	1.03	28	0.42	28	0.38
Hearing impairment	52	0.80	30	0.45	43	0.59
Disability affecting mobility	103	1.59	66	0.98	90	1.24
Other physical disability	72	1.11	19	0.28	39	0.53
Other medical condition*	151	2.33	66	0.98	71	0.98
Mental ill health	162	2.50	73	1.09	64	0.88
Temporary disability after illness	7	0.11	6	0.09	10	0.13
Profound/complex disabilities	3	0.05	1	0.01	7	0.09
Multiple disabilities	41	0.63	24	0.36	20	0.27
Other*	52	0.80	24	0.36	29	0.40
Total of above	710	10.95	337	5.02	401	5.53
Student body	6486		6703		7242	

\* Other medical condition includes, for example, epilepsy, asthma, diabetes

### Type of Learning Difficulty

	05/06		04/05		03/04	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Moderate learning difficulty	33	0.51	13	0.19	15	0.20
Severe learning difficulty	4	0.06	1	0.01	0	0
Dyslexia	91	1.40	73	1.09	71	0.98
Dyscalculia	1	0.02	2	0.03	2	0.02
Other specific learning difficulty	4	0.06	5	0.07	1	0.01
Multiple learning difficulties	8	0.12	4	0.06	2	0.02
Other	13	0.20	11	0.16	8	0.11
Total of above	154	2.37	108	1.61	99	1.36
Student body	6486		6703		7242	

Of the 210 staff employed by the Centre in 2005/06, ten are registered disabled. Support and equipment are provided for these staff wherever possible, such as moving classrooms to lower levels of the building, provision of a fire alarm/alert for a profoundly deaf member of staff, and providing reams of paper for a tutor with Parkinson's Disease who needs to prepare course materials at home. The Centre aspires to increase the proportion of disabled members of staff, and recognises a need to develop the data collected on staff to include more information on disability.

The Centre reports retention and achievement by disability, and benchmarks its performance against LSC data for external institutions. Performance against benchmarks is good. Full information is given in the Centre's annual report on Retention & Achievement, and in the DES Quality Improvement Grid that accompanies this document.

The Centre occupies two grade II listed Georgian family houses. Signage within the Centre incorporates braille to assist the visually impaired, and a new lift was installed during the summer of 2006, increasing the sq metre of floor space accessible by those with impaired mobility from 22.3% to 67.1%. Some areas of the building remain inaccessible, however, to some mobility-impaired students.

### **Disability equality vision, values and principles**

Our mission is to be highly regarded for the excellence, innovation and range of our Adult Education and Community Services. In this we are guided by:

- The educational needs and aspirations of our students
- Our belief in the power of education for the fulfilling of personal and community potential
- Our responsiveness to the demands of the contemporary world
- The vision and values of our founders
- The priorities of our funders

Central to the vision and values of our founder was that the Mary Ward Centre should promote the concept of equalisation, providing education to all in a way that enables them to fulfil their potential. This concept embeds disability equality within our mission, and the Centre is wholly committed to ensuring that all people with disabilities and learning difficulties are treated fairly. We welcome the DDA, and are committed not only to improving disability equality in all aspects of the Centre's work, but also to pro-actively promoting disability equality by embedding a recognition that the diversity of our members enriches the experience of all users of the Centre. The Centre is committed to providing the same standard of service to all members of the public and undertakes not to treat a person less favourably than it would treat others for a reason related to possessing a disability.

The Mary Ward Centre welcomes applications from all students who have particular needs associated with a disability, a learning difficulty, or who require additional support with basic skills such as literacy. Each applicant's circumstances are considered, and support is provided wherever possible. To ensure the maintenance and further improvement of our whole-Centre approach, we have identified a number of targets for development over the next three years, specified in the Quality Improvement Grid and Action Plan that accompanies this document.

### **Actively engaging with disabled people**

In 2003 an impact assessment of the Centre's student-facing policies was carried out by an external agency, incorporating surveys and input from students with disabilities who met in the form of focus groups. The Centre continues to consult its users with disabilities, and actively encourages their feedback, through surveys, a DES Working Group, and a focus group involving both students and staff. Partnerships have also been established – with Morley College, for example – which strengthen our capacity to identify areas for improvement, and students and staff with disabilities are represented on the Equality Assurance Committee

### **Leadership and Management**

Embedding the Centre's commitment to disability equality has always been considered high priority by senior staff – so much so that for many years the Principal has taken direct responsibility for this aspect of the Centre's work. The lead role on developing the Disability Equality Scheme is currently taken by the Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Quality), who is Chair of the Equality Assurance Committee as well as a member of the Senior Management Team and of the Management Committee.

The Equality Assurance Committee – which includes representatives from staff, students, and governors – has established a DES Working Group made up of students and staff with disabilities, the Special Needs Co-ordinator, and the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality). This Working Group will develop and monitor the Scheme, and monitor the impact assessment of the Centre's policies, procedures and practices.

The Disability Equality Scheme will form part of the Mary Ward Centre Quality Standards and will therefore inform self-assessment processes. The DES Action Plan will be incorporated into the Centre's SAR and Development Plan in order to underscore the whole Centre's responsibility for the Scheme. In addition, all key staff will be involved in reviewing progress on the DES Action Plan at regular managerial meetings, to ensure that disability equality is actively promoted throughout the Centre.

The new Disability Equality Duty will be communicated to staff across the Centre using a variety of means – including staff training events, the Staff Bulletin, and regular briefing sessions and updates at team meetings. For students and prospective students, information about the DES will be available in the Prospectus and the full Scheme will be placed on the website.

### **Gathering information**

The DES Quality Improvement Grid accompanying this document identifies the data gathered by the Centre on staff and students with disabilities, including recruitment, retention, and (for students) achievement statistics. This document is supported by the Centre's Student Profile Report and its Retention and Achievement Report, in which data on users with a variety of disabilities and learning difficulties are compared and monitored annually. The Vice-Principal (Curriculum & Quality) is

responsible for the gathering and analysis of such data, which inform the Centre's course review, self-assessment, and development planning process. Performance against the Centre's Development Plan is regularly monitored by the management team and the governors of the Centre.

### **Putting the Scheme into practice**

The DES Quality Improvement Grid specifies the information already gathered and the developments we wish to make in the future. Initial priorities were identified by the DES Working Group, although these may change in light of further consultation. A programme for impact assessment of the Centre's policies, procedures, and practices also accompanies this document, which specifies the Centre's current priorities for impact assessments and the timescale within which those assessments will be undertaken. The Vice-Principal (Curriculum & Quality) and the DES Working Group will monitor the progress of impact assessments, in conjunction with the key Centre manager responsible for the policies, procedures and practices being assessed.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The Quality Improvement Plan and Action Plan will be regularly updated, following twice-yearly reviews by the DES Working Group and an annual review by the Management Committee. These groups will be responsible for both monitoring progress and ensuring that updates to the Quality Improvement Grid and Action Plan are incorporated into the Centre's planning cycle as required.