



STEPHENSON COLLEGE

DISABILITY STATEMENT

1. Background

The College is mindful of its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Sections 30 (3) and (4) which:

require institutions in the Further Education sector, as a condition of grant, to publish 'disability statements'

and to

report annually to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on their progress and plans for the future in providing further education for disabled students.

2. Definition of Disability

The definition of disability for the purpose of the Act is this;

A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The definition of disability in the Further and Higher Education Acts (1992) has a different definition:

'a person has a learning difficulty if (a) he has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons his age, or (b) he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by institutions within the further education sector for persons of his age.'

Our own College definition should encompass both the Acts and the LSC's definitions and might incorporate details along the following lines:

- a student who has learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD) is someone who may experience difficulties in their learning and who may require one or more of the following:

- a provision of special means of access to the curriculum through specific equipment, facilities or resources, modification of the physical environment or specialist teaching techniques.
- a provision of a special or modified curriculum.
- a provision which gives particular attention to the social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place.

Thus the term 'SLDD' could include students who have a physical or sensory disability, or who have learning difficulties which could be specific, mild, moderate or severe or who experience emotional, behavioural, or linguistic difficulties or who have mental health problems.

3. College Policies

The Disability statement embodies the college's duty and commitment to ensure equal opportunity to access and to benefit from its curriculum to all people who can benefit from it, as a right. This right is detailed in the College Charter and in all of its Policy documents, its Strategic Plan, its Prospectus and in its marketing materials.

4. Admissions Arrangements

Opportunity to allow potential students to provide information about their additional needs will be provided in

- Enquiry Forms
- Application Forms
- Enrolment Forms

This will enable assessment of a student's individual needs to be made and necessary facilities/support made available, wherever possible.

At all points in the Enquiry/Admission process, there will be liaison between the student, the named member(s) of staff responsible for this area of work, Student Support Services, and members of staff who would be involved in teaching the student. This must ensure that no enquiry/application from a student who has a learning difficulty or disability and who seems otherwise suited to the course for which s/he is applying will be rejected before s/he have been referred to the named members of staff and have been allowed to explain their difficulties and to indicate how, with additional support, their barriers to successful study can be removed.

The College will be flexible in the way it operates and interprets its admission criteria for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

The College will be flexible in the operation of its enrolment and admission procedures for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

There will be liaison with the appropriate external agencies e.g. Social Services, RNIB, Educational Psychology Service where relevant during the admissions procedure.

5. Educational Facilities and Support

Students needing additional support will be identified initially through the Enrolment/Admissions procedure.

On enrolment, further opportunities for assessment will be arranged for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. These will include initial assessment and vocational assessments and any others relevant to each student's individual needs.

Following assessment each student will be offered a plan aimed at meeting their individual needs in relation to their course of study. This plan may include support from a variety of agencies and/or personnel and will involve regular monitoring so that changes to the original plan can be made where appropriate.

A student has the right to decline any support that may be offered, unless this is needed for Health and Safety reasons.

Flexible learning opportunities for students with learning difficulties and disabilities will be provided outside the traditional learning environment where possible.

The College will seek to establish close links with schools which have students with additional needs in order to make the best possible provision for their requirements if and when these students progress to the College.

Both 'infill' provision and individual programmes for the integration of students with additional needs will be promoted.

Students who have learning difficulties/disabilities will be made aware of the range of specialist services available to them when they leave College e.g. specialist Career Service, independent specialist job-finding agency.

6. Staffing

The College employs staff who are experienced in working with people with disabilities.

The College will identify the following named staff for learning support who will be responsible for the welfare of students with additional needs, for co-ordinating services and facilities and for disseminating information on this subject and for co-ordinating funding returns to the LSC and other relevant funding bodies:

- Disability Co-ordinator
- Learning Support Co-ordinator
- Health & Safety Officer
- Site Engineer
- Adult and Child Protection Staff
- Careers/Guidance Staff
- Counsellor
- Student Support Services Staff

7. Training

Training for staff to enable them to support and assist students with a range of additional needs will be promoted, as part of a planned programme of staff development.

The Disability Statement will be incorporated into the induction process for all staff.

8. Access to Buildings

Wherever possible, buildings will be made to conform to the provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 vi3.

S4(i) Any person undertaking the provision of a building to which the public are to be admitted shall, in the means of access both to and within the building, and in the parking facilities and sanitary conveniences to be available (if any) make provision, in so far as it is in the circumstances both practical and reasonable, for the needs of persons using the building, who are disabled.

Under S8 (2b) existing educational buildings are specifically excluded from the Act. However the College will strengthen its commitment and plans to further improve access to all of its buildings and its facilities for students with physical disabilities.

Reference will be made in the College's Strategic Planning to those specific plans to further improve access.

The College has excellent access to its facilities for students requiring wheelchair access. In addition, a system of room allocation will be adopted to ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, wheelchair accessible classrooms are reserved for groups which include students who have mobility problems.

9. Complaints/Suggestions - Student Support Services

The Complaints procedure should be instituted by any student with learning difficulties/disabilities if the service received is in their view inadequate.

In addition to this procedure, as a means by which the quality of the College's services to students who have learning difficulties/disabilities can be improved, the named members of staff and any member of Student Support Staff will welcome comments on how our service can be amended.

10. Examination Arrangements

The College will review its arrangements for examinations/formal assessments in order to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to accommodate the special needs of students with learning difficulties/disabilities.

Special arrangements already available include the provision of amanuenses, appropriate equipment, extended time allowances and/or adapted examination materials e.g. large print. The purpose of the special arrangements are to compensate for the restrictions imposed by a disability without impairing the validity of the examination. Where a student has had a 'statement' at school detailing his/her individual needs, this will be taken into account in this assessment.

11.Future Plans

The College has set up a focus group comprising staff and students who are reviewing arrangements and strategies for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The College has asked this group, as its first task, to make recommendations as to the dissemination of this Disability Statement and will publicise it to appropriate individuals/groups in the community in a manner appropriate to their needs e.g. by Audio Tape, by Braille, by Video.

The College will establish a system for the review and evaluation of the Disability Statement.

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