

SUTTON COLLEGE OF LEARNING FOR ADULTS

Equality Scheme Summary 2006-2009

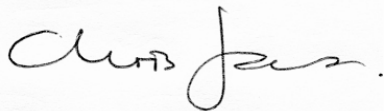
1. FORWARD

This is Scola's first Equality Scheme. The idea of it is to show the College's commitment to ensuring that everyone has the chance to learn and develop. The scheme sets out how we intend to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in all areas - specifically to do with race, disability and gender.

We will make sure that people can learn in a warm and friendly environment which welcomes and includes everyone. We are always willing to listen to what our students have to say, and will be pleased to take suggestions on board.

The scheme will be available in all our centres and on our website. It will be reviewed and up-dated regularly to ensure it is in line with the law, and also to make changes as suggested by people.

We want to support all people regardless of their race, disability or gender. We would like everyone to have the chance to learn, and the chance to do well in education and in life.



Chris Jones
Principal
May 2007

2. DEFINING DISABILITY

There are many different types of disabilities. These can be to do with physical or sensory difficulties, mental health issues or learning difficulties.

The Disability Equality Duty is a set of guidelines to help Colleges like ours to make sure we are doing what the law says. It is this duty that asks that we recognise the "social model" of disability. This means that someone is considered to have a disability if they cannot take part in everyday life to the same level as other people or without help. This may be because of physical and/or social barriers. It is against the law to discriminate against, socially exclude or display a bad attitude towards a person with a disability.

2.1 EMBEDDING DISABILITY, RACE & GENDER EQUALITY

Embedding race, disability and gender equality is about making sure that everyone knows that discrimination of any kind is not acceptable. All people need to feel welcome and included whether working or learning at Scola. It is every person's responsibility to make sure this happens by promoting equality.

Managers will work together to make sure that everyone can take part in Scola's activities if they so wish. Consideration will be given to anything which could possibly cause problems or difficulties for people. This might be to do with the location, time, content or other features of a course. Similarly, working conditions for staff will also be looked at.

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL DUTY AND THE DISABILITY, RACE & GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

In addition to The Disability Equality Duty which was mentioned earlier, there is a Race and Gender Equality Duty. Together, these three duties form "The General Duty". It is these combined sets of guidelines which form the basis of Scola's Equality Scheme.

The Government has written some set statements for each duty. It is the responsibility of everyone to pay "due regard" to these. This means that we need to recognise and respect the contents of these statements. The Government has actually said that it is OK to offer extra help and resources to people with disabilities.

To make sure that we obey the law, we have some sets of tasks which we will work through to ensure that we as an organisation are doing our very best to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. These sets of tasks have been written into a table document and are known as action plans. The action plans have dates listed on them so that we can work through the tasks in a manageable and ordered way. We will regularly check how we are progressing with our tasks.

Everything that Scola does will be checked to make sure that people are not treated unfavourably, or made to feel excluded from certain things. This process is called carrying out "Impact Assessments". These are filed on record, and are also published on our website.

People have been told about the existence of our equality scheme and what it is for. People with disabilities have been involved in the putting together, writing and editing of the scheme and action plans.

4. SCOLA'S DISABILITY EQUALITY STRATEGY

Scola is serious about making sure it obeys the equality laws. It has demonstrated its promise to do this by writing and publishing its scheme. It is Scola's intention to include and involve everyone in all of its activities despite race, disability, gender, age or faith.

Managers will take extra care when planning their courses to make sure that people are not left out or ignored due to personal circumstances, beliefs, difficulties or disabilities. Regular checks will be made on the accessibility of the buildings we use for our classes.

People who wish to study on a Scola course can let us know about any difficulties or disabilities they have at the time of enrolment. Anything that people tell us about themselves is private, and will not stop them from being offered a place. We are happy to help people who find filling in an enrolment form difficult. Our College has lots of types of support that can be offered to people who need it.

New and existing Scola staff are invited to training days and a group meeting which is called induction. At this meeting, people are told about our College and our commitment to promoting equality. We have lots of policies. These are set of rules and guidelines which make sure that we all understand what is expected of us. People who apply for jobs at Scola are all considered equally, irrespective of race, disability, gender, age or faith.

Scola treats all aspects of Health and Safety with great importance. Equality and Diversity is seen as an essential part of all Health and Safety matters. There is a recognised link between these two areas, and Managers work together to make sure that all possibilities are considered when making decisions which might affect people with specific difficulties, preferences or disabilities.

5. PUTTING THE GENERAL DUTY INTO CONTEXT FOR SCOLA

The General Duty's statements have been re-written in a form which explains what they actually mean to us at Scola. All of this has been included in our equality scheme, and can be found in all of our centres and on our website.

6. SCOLA'S DISABILITY, RACE AND GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

Scola is responsible for making sure that its equality scheme is published. As mentioned earlier, copies will be on hand in all centres and on the website. This summarised version will also be available.

The purpose of our equality scheme is to show how the joint works of our scheme and action plans identify and link with the specific duties. The specific duties are at the core of the general duties. They are steps, methods or arrangements which make sure that the terms of the general duty are met as a main aim.

The main purpose of this is to make sure that Scola manages inclusion in a way which meets the requirements of the law, and deals with all forms of discrimination. The most important issue here is to ensure that equality throughout our organisation is both promoted, and enabled.

Our intentions are to make sure that as an organisation, our actions and processes fully meet the requirements of equality law in line with all specific areas of equality. We take pride in our efforts and achievements in our equality related work, and look forward to a positively inclusive future for all of our clients and associates.

6. A STATEMENT OF HOW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT OF OUR DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME AND ACTION PLAN

Membership of SCOLA'S Equality and Diversity Committee has been extended to include some people with difficulties and disabilities. This committee is holding extra meetings which are just about looking at the needs and requirements of the Disability side of Scola's Equality Scheme, the related Action Plans, and Impact Assessments.

Committees and User groups for adults with learning difficulties, and the Learning Difficulties Advisory committee have all been informed of recent changes to legislation, and have also been advised about what Scola is doing with regard to the completion of the equality scheme, actions plans and impact assessments.

8. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DATA AND STATISTICS AND FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Scola keeps a lot of records about its staff and students. The kinds of things we record include numbers of people who enrol, or are employed, attend, and have disabilities, different ethnic backgrounds, age, gender and many other things too. These records help us to assess how well we have catered for our learners and staff, and how we can improve on the learning programmes, working environment, facilities, equipment and support that we offer.

We are always pleased to receive comments and suggestions from our staff and students. This happens through several methods. These are: course evaluation forms, focus groups, observation of teaching and learning, staff appraisal, road shows, your voice correspondence, minutes of meetings, training event evaluations and complaints & compliments.

9. MOVING FORWARD WITH NEW CONCEPTS IN DATA AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

As previously stated, Scola is very thorough in its keeping of statistics and other records. As one of our goals we feel that we would like to look into bringing in a system which records peoples' reasons for leaving their jobs at Scola, and withdrawing from courses before the end of the programme. This is so that we can check that we are not ignoring any needs or support issues for individuals.

10. MONITORING OF PROGRESS

Scola will regularly monitor all of its equality related procedures and documents as a matter of course. All college policies, procedures, plans and practices will be Impact Assessed on a rolling basis. The equality scheme will be updated, and the related action plans will be assessed and addressed as part of the work carried out by the Equality and Diversity committee.

Ofsted inspectors will check all of this when we have both full and monitoring inspection visits. Scola will also be asked to formally report back on progress made each year.

11. ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

Scola Managers and staff all work well together as a team in order to ensure that there are no oversights or mistakes in the implementation of equality matters. It is important that we as an organisation recognise and celebrate our achievements in this field.

Students with learning difficulties have been very involved in the promotion of equality by their work on the production of an excellent DDA DVD. The college holds termly staff training days, which offer a variety of workshops - some of which are equality related. Several employees attend external training events which also fit into this category. Further examples of Scola's achievements can be seen in the full copy of the scheme. Scola's support systems offer help in many ways for people of varying needs.

12. IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEME

The college ensures that it broadly communicates information about all laws and stipulations which have been set out by the government. Records are kept of all occasions where such information has been passed on. Future development of the scheme, action plans and impact assessments will take place as a result of monitoring of these documents at various cross college committees and groups. This will not just be about making changes and amendments, but ensuring that effectiveness of systems and procedures are measured and assessed to ensure that positive outcomes for all are achieved.