Written response to the recommendations from Moray College

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the comprehensive Equal Opportunities Report — Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities. As a college we are committed to a social model of disability — ‘a recognition that disabled people are not limited by impairments, but by environmental, attitudinal and cultural barriers to full participation’.

It follows from the above that we are committed to addressing such barriers to ensure that disabled people are enabled to achieve their full potential such that their ability is not wasted. This in turn is linked to the ‘anticipatory’ imperative from the DDA whereby we must reflect on the support that disabled staff and students might need in the college.

A key aspect of the necessary mindset is not to think of reasons why we cannot support staff or provide a service to students but rather to think of ‘reasonable adjustments’ we can make to enable full participation. All staff of the college are made aware of equalities issues (and appropriate responses) during the induction process and through ongoing staff development.

The college is intent on mainstreaming equalities issues and I will attempt to illustrate this in relation to some the more salient and specific recommendations from the report:

**Recommendation 7**

A commitment to equal opportunities is integral to job descriptions. Our view is this is appropriate given that mainstreaming will not be achieved without the involvement of all staff i.e. whilst some staff might have specific responsibilities, all staff have a duty to promote good relations and to remove barriers to access.

**Recommendation 18**

The college participates in the Guaranteed Job Interview Scheme for Applicants with Disabilities. It is our view that the public sector should take a lead in employment practices in relation to disabled people.

**Recommendation 37**

The college is a member of the local More Choices More Chances (NEET) strategy group. Positive action should be taken to increase the attainment levels of disabled young people.

**Recommendation 38**

Information on the monitoring and evaluation of service provision is undertaken under the auspices of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Students were surveyed with regard to our Disability Equality Scheme and the Committee will consider results. The college is establishing a
Disabled Persons Steering Group with participation from disabled students and key stakeholders. There is also an intention to establish focus group to provide another source of feedback on our provision.

Recommendation 39

Stakeholder feedback is enabled through links with the Local Council and through other bodies such as LEAD (Linking Education and Disability). The college has signed a partnership agreement with LEAD and provides office space and infrastructure support for LEAD in the college. The LEAD representative shares an office with our own Learner Support staff. We have also established a Learning Disabilities Liaison Group, which has membership from Social Work and Education Departments of Moray Council.

Recommendations 40, 41 and 42

The college welcomes support in developing and promoting support for disabled people. This includes the support provided by Equality Forward.

Recommendation 50

The college agrees that research and dissemination of best practice would be useful. The Learning Disabilities Liaison Group, the Assistant Director for School/College links and the Learner Support Co-ordinator are all working towards seamless transition.

Recommendation 52

The college promotes familiarisation visits as best practice for all students. This enables students to decide whether our provision is right for them. Learner Support staff work with students with disabilities in an attempt to assure that any necessary support arrangements are in place at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 55

Our procedures are revised annually with a view to encouraging disclosure.

Recommendation 56

The college is building up its equipment, hardware and software to enhance accessibility.

Recommendation 94

Our equality and diversity training does include disability training and makes use of case studies/case law from the former DRC website. Disabled people should be involved in design and delivery. The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee has disabled student representation.
I hope this response is helpful. We are committed to removing barriers and creating opportunities. We still have progress to make and we are hoping to work with Equality Forward to ensure that we discharge our equalities’ responsibilities in the most efficient and effective manner.

Please note that this response was considered and approved by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee on Wednesday 5 December 2007. The Committee also re-affirmed its commitment to a social model of disability and the view that “the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical health conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers”

Mike Devenney
Principal
Moray College
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