

Single Equality Scheme 2019-2022

CEO/Group Principal's Introduction



The South Thames Colleges Group is very proud of its diverse community of learners and staff. It has a legal responsibility to ensure that it eliminates unlawful discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity as well as inclusion and ensures that these are embedded within The Group's policies and procedures. The words 'equality', 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are widely used but not as widely understood. It is worth therefore, taking time to explain what we mean when we use these words throughout this scheme. 'Equality' means ensuring everyone is able to participate in all our activities on an equal footing. 'Diversity' acknowledges

there are differences between people which should be respected, recognised and celebrated. 'Inclusion' means that all people, regardless of their race, gender, abilities, learning difficulties, disabilities, or health care needs, have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of their communities and given equality of opportunity.

Our Single Equality Scheme sets out how we will meet the statutory duties contained in the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that equality of opportunity and respect for diversity and inclusion is at the heart of all we do. It sets out how The Group will work to eliminate discrimination and promote good relations between people of different groups regardless of:

- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Faith, Religion and Belief

At The South Thames Colleges Group we believe in working positively together to celebrate diversity and advance equality of opportunity and inclusion for everyone in our community.

We believe in the right of every individual to be treated with respect and dignity, in an environment where a diversity of backgrounds and experience is valued and respected. We aim to ensure that all staff and learners, whether existing or potential, receive fair, equal and inclusive treatment when applying to, or working as, members of the Group community and are committed to challenging and eliminating any attitudes and behaviour which deny these fundamental rights.

The values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are central to the Group's strategic ambitions that are agreed on an annual basis by the Board of Governors. These are reflected across a range of strategies, policies and processes.

Our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is supported by the following cross-Group arrangements:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across the Group will be led by the Assistant Principal Quality & Innovation, through the TLA Matrix Team.
- College Principals will ensure that the key principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continue to be promoted throughout every college in the Group.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives will be monitored by Senior Managers and the Corporation.
- Coordination, updating and publication of the key EDI documents including: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Single Equality Scheme and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report (including updates on progress against the EDI Group Objectives), will be led by the Assistant Principal, Quality & Innovation.

We will judge our success each year by:

- The achievement of the Objectives in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Action Plan (2018/19).

Objectives 2019/20

OBJECTIVE 1	Reduce gender pay gap
OBJECTIVE 2	Improve diversity of Management Teams
OBJECTIVE 3	Continue to improve and develop inclusive facilities
OBJECTIVE 4	Continue to develop flexible opportunities and curriculum offers for High Needs Learners
OBJECTIVE 5	Improve the collection of equality and diversity data for learners and staff

Our Strategic Ambitions and Equality Objectives

The Single Equality Scheme is supported by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives. The Group is committed to ensuring good Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practices are embedded across and to its commitment to consultation with stakeholders, at all levels.

Our Strategic intentions:

We want to:

Specialise: concentrate on areas of excellence and expertise within our Group that are relevant to the regional economy in partnership with employers and other providers.

Excel: standards for success and progression across all programmes will rise above national averages and secure the position of The Group as learning organisations, becoming excellent providers based on confident governance, management and effective practice.

Grow: continue to foster a business-facing culture throughout The Group to promote growth in apprenticeships, respond to the demands of the economy and engage with the workplace for all learners in a modern learning environment.

Collaborate: develop relationships with new and existing learners and partners to extend our capabilities, expand opportunities for us and our learners and help us operate more efficiently.

Recognition: recognised for the employability of our learners, the quality of our outcomes and our financial efficiency.

It is our intention to create a positive and inclusive work and study environment where all learners and staff feel valued and respected.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The General Equality Duty:

- We will eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- We will advance the equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic
- We will foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Specific Equality Duties:

- The provision of sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with the general duties
- The provision of evidence to show that analysis of all information has been undertaken
- Provide details of the engagement and consultation that has taken place within The Group and publish annual equality information.

Purpose of the Single Equality Scheme

- To provide guidelines for excellence in all matters relating to the treatment of staff, learners and other members of the Group communities, and in the provision of, and access to, the facilities, benefits and services that each college provides

- To outline the legislative framework for the general and specific duty and to bring with that greater transparency to our ambitions in relation to advancing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within The Group
- To set within the context of our strategic ambitions our approach to Equality objectives, and form the basis of our four year action plan
- To inform our cross-Group strategies and processes for the elimination of discrimination, and the promotion of an environment in which people feel safe, valued, respected and included.

Commitment into Practice

Within The Group we are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and will continue to develop procedures and practices to encourage a diverse learner population and staff membership that fully participates in all aspects of college life.

The Equality Act 2010, protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics'.

The following are Protected Characteristics under the Law:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

In addition, the new public sector Equality Duty includes protection from discrimination and indirect discrimination against gender, gender reassignment and disability by association and/or perception.

All policies, procedures and plans will be subject to a generic impact assessment, to establish, both positive and/or negative impact, and where appropriate, to make modifications.

Our main aims are:

- to ensure all processes, policies, procedures and provisions are free from discrimination.
- to build equality impact assessments into everything that we do.
- to narrow the achievement gaps between groups of learners and take relevant positive action for those groups that are disadvantaged.
- to achieve an accessible learning environment for all.
- to have a representative workforce at all levels that reflects the diversity of our learner base.

The Group will not tolerate any form of discrimination. Any learners or members of staff who engage in discriminatory practice will be subject to disciplinary action.

Valuing Staff and Learners

For our Learners:

We will provide an outstanding environment for teaching and learning and ensure that we work to ensure equality of access by:

- Using marketing strategies that target underrepresented groups to attract learners from a variety of backgrounds.
- Providing guidance for learners that is sensitive to equality, diversity and inclusion issues.
- Ensuring that The Group offers a wide range of programmes that cater for all potential learners.
- Delivering a curriculum that meets the needs and reflects the diversity and inclusive nature of our learner body and community.
- Acting in a robust manner to challenge and eliminate prejudice, bullying or harassment.
- Making reasonable adjustments for learners with particular needs.
- Complying with all equalities related legislation.
- Providing accommodation that creates an accessible, safe and secure environment for all learners.
- Providing a wide range of forums for learners to ensure that their voice is heard and issues raised are acted on.
- Encouraging open and frank discussions around issues that support learning, educational attainment and aspiration.

For our Staff:

To ensure that we are an employer of first choice for talented and innovative staff the Group is committed to investment in its employees. To recruit and retain a motivated workforce which reflects the local community we will:

- Ensure that our HR policies are impact assessed.
- Have a swift, robust response in terms of challenging and eliminating bullying or harassment.
- Ensure that all new staff undertake a robust induction that includes The Group's equality, diversity and inclusion ethos.
- Regularly review and report on workforce monitoring for equality, diversity and inclusion and take action where needed.
- Use a variety of recruitment methods to ensure that we attract and retain staff from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Comply with all equalities related employment legislation.
- Train staff in equality, diversity and inclusion issues to enable them to carry out their role that reflects the ethos of the Group.
- Make reasonable adjustment for staff with particular needs.
- Work to develop a workforce that is reflective of our local community.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting

The Group will produce an annual monitoring report that will set and monitor performance indicators against protected characteristics and where applicable, to ensure that all learners participate, achieve and progress in line with their peer groups. We will also monitor staff profiles, recruitment and leavers.

Learners

We collect, monitor and report on the following:

- Retention, achievement and rates for identified groups to ensure that all groups are progressing.
- Attendance
- Progression
- Learner satisfaction
- Work placements and work related learning
- Complaints
- Disciplinary action
- Assessment appeals

Any underperformance will be identified and appropriate interventions put in place to narrow gaps. The Group monitors protected characteristics to ensure that no group is disadvantaged or indirectly discriminated against:

Staff

We will collect, monitor and report staff profiles in relation to the following:

- Gender
- Religion and Belief
- Disability
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Age

Alongside this we will ensure that we break down and analyse the following:

- Staff disciplinary by group
- Promotion rates by group
- Grievances by group
- Leavers by group

How the information will be used:

The information that we collect will enable us to ensure that no group is experiencing inadvertent discrimination, and will show any differences in the way that groups are treated. We are then able to put in place the following:

- Investigate the causes of any difference and identify where action is needed.
- Highlight any possible discrimination and take swift action.
- Compare our data to local and national statistics.
- Ensure that all our facilities remain accessible, diverse and inclusive.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff will comply with the general duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster inclusive relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Particular responsibilities in the organisation are listed below:

The Board of Governors: are responsible for ensuring that the Single Equality Scheme is in place, and that The Group meets its obligations including the general duty and the specific duty.

The CEO/Group Principal: is responsible for providing overall direction and leadership in advancing and monitoring the Single Equality Scheme.

The College Group Principals: are responsible for giving a consistent and high profile lead, and ensuring the Equality Objectives are set in relation to the Strategic Ambitions and devising and implementing the annual action plan. They are also responsible for leading on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion to ensure that the key principals of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continue to be promoted throughout their Colleges.

The Assistant Principal, Quality & Innovation: is responsible for Leading on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across the Group in terms of: updating the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Single Equality Scheme; monitoring, coordinating and publishing the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group report. They are also responsible for ensuring that the EDI Objectives and any associated actions are monitored and reported on to the Senior Leadership team and the Board of Governors.

All managers: are responsible for ensuring that identified objectives, where appropriate, are embedded within their functional or curriculum action plans and for putting the scheme and related policies and procedures into practise. They are also responsible for ensuring that their staff know and understand their responsibilities with regard to this.

All teaching and learning staff: are responsible for embedding the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into their professional practise and using naturally occurring opportunities to promote and development our learners understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

All staff: are responsible for ensuring that equality of opportunity and respect for diversity and inclusion is at the heart of all we do. They are also responsible for working to eliminate discrimination and promoting the right of every individual to be treated with respect and dignity. They are responsible for keeping up to date with equality training.

All contractors and service providers: are required to be aware of our Single Equality Scheme and to follow this in any contracts or agreements.

Gender Reassignment

The Group takes seriously its duty to address and eliminate the unlawful discrimination and harassment of transsexual people. This includes treating transsexual people less favourably for being absent because they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment than if they were absent because they were ill or injured. The Equality Act provides protection for transsexual people. A transsexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected – so a woman who decides to live as a man, but does not undergo any medical procedures would be covered. It is recognised that there may be differences between physical sex and gender identity.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation relating to gender reassignment.
- We welcome all people, in all areas, of all gender including those who identify as transgender.
- We will support and protect anyone who seeks to undergo gender reassignment, or who chooses to live full, or part time as the gender that they identify with.
- We will ensure all staff receive training and understand issues relating to gender reassignment.

Intended Impact:

- The advancement of gender identity equality.
- Elimination of discrimination based on gender reassignment.
- The fostering of good relations between gender groups.
- Positive progression for all learners.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn in which diversity is embraced.

Disability

The Group takes seriously its duty to promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other people; eliminate discrimination and harassment; promote positive and inclusive attitudes to disabled people; encourage participation by disabled people in public life, and take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment. Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on an individual's ability to perform normal daily activities.

Our Commitment:

- We will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or and victimisation relating to disability.
- We welcome all people, in all areas, regardless of any disabilities.
- We will ensure all staff receive training and understand issues relating to disability.
- We will promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and will take steps to take to remove any barriers, even if that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than others.
- We will make reasonable adjustments wherever practicable to support staff with disabilities.
- We will provide support to learners with disabilities to overcome disadvantage and enable them to achieve their potential.
- We will monitor the impact of our success in improving the conditions and success of disabled staff and learners within The Group.
- We will involve disabled learners, staff and stakeholders in consultation to improve our policy and practice.

Intended Impact:

- The advancement of disability equality.
- Elimination of discrimination based on disability.
- Staff and learners to feel confident in declaring any disability or learning difficulty and feel supported to do so.
- Retention, success and satisfaction remain high for learners with disabilities.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn in which diversity is embraced.

Age

The Group takes seriously its duty to protect those who share the protected characteristic of age from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Age is defined by reference to a person's age group. It means a person belonging to a particular age group. An age group includes people of the same age and people of a particular range of ages. Where people fall in the same age group they share the protected characteristic of age.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or and victimisation relating to age.
- We will eliminate any criterion, provision or practice that disadvantages people of a particular age, unless it can be objectively justified.
- We will identify any learner achievement gaps between different age groups and work to close any gaps.
- We will promote positive attitudes towards people of all ages.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of discrimination based on age.
- Our curriculum offer, facilities and support services cater for the different needs of our learners.
- Achievement gaps between different age groups of learners are identified and closed.
- Younger employees are given the support they need to grow and progress.
- Older employees are not discriminated against because of their age.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn where diversity is embraced.

Marriage or Civil Partnership

The Group takes seriously its duty to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership. Marriage covers any formal union of a man and a woman, man and a man, woman and a woman which is legally recognised in the UK. Civil partnership refers to a registered civil partnership of a same sex couple under the Civil Partnership Act 2004, including those registered outside the UK.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or and victimisation relating to marriage or civil partnership.
- We will eliminate any criterion, provision or practice that disadvantages people on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership unless it can be objectively justified.
- We will recognise the parity of marriage or civil partnership.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of discrimination based on marriage or civil partnership.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn in which diversity is embraced.

Pregnancy & Maternity

The Group takes seriously its duty to ensure that women are protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of their pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which they are entitled.

Pregnancy and Maternity covers the condition of being pregnant and subsequently the period after giving birth. It is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, including as a result of breast-feeding.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or and victimisation relating to pregnancy or maternity.
- We will promote our commitment to breast-feeding and provide appropriate support and facilities for staff or learners who choose to breast-feed.
- We will provide support to learners who are pregnant or return to study after pregnancy to ensure they are safe and enable them to achieve their potential.
- We will strive to support staff and learners to balance work, study and family life effectively.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity.
- Retention, success and satisfaction remain high for learners who are pregnant or with young children.
- A high return to work rate for staff returning from maternity leave.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn in which diversity is embraced.

Race

The Group takes seriously its duty to eliminate racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups. Race refers to a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or and victimisation relating to race.
- We welcome all people, in all areas, regardless of their colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.
- We will promote positive attitudes and raise awareness of different racial groups.
- We will identify areas where black and minority Ethnic (BME) learners are underrepresented and take positive action in recruitment.
- We will strive to increase the number of staff from BME groups.
- We will eliminate any criterion, provision or practice that disadvantages people of a particular race.
- We will ensure all staff receive training and understand issues relating to race.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of racism.
- The fostering of good relations between different racial groups.
- Increase in learners from BME backgrounds in non-traditional vocational areas.
- Achievement gaps between different groups of learners are identified and closed.
- A staff team profile that matches that of our local communities.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn in which diversity is embraced.

Religion or Belief

The Group takes seriously its duty to eliminate discrimination because of religion or belief.

Religion means any religion, including a reference to a lack of religion. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief affects life choices or the way people live their lives for it to be included.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or and victimisation relating to religion or belief.
- We welcome all people, in all areas, regardless of their religion or belief.
- We will provide facilities and opportunities for religious observance.
- We will facilitate time off / leave for religious festivals.
- We will promote positive attitudes and raise awareness of different religions or beliefs.
- We will eliminate any criterion, provision or practice that disadvantages people of a particular religion or belief.
- We will ensure all staff receive training and understand issues relating to religion and belief.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of discrimination related to religion or belief.
- The fostering of good relations between different religious groups.
- Involvement across The Group in celebrating a range of faith days and festivals.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn, where diversity is embraced.

Sex

The Group takes seriously its duty to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment including gender re-assignment and to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. Sex relates to the gender of an individual – i.e. whether a man or a woman.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation relating to sex.
- We will ensure that all employment related policies and practices are fair, transparent and free from gender bias.
- We will eliminate any criterion, provision or practice that disadvantages people of a particular sex.
- We will ensure that we have a well-developed curriculum that positively reflects gender identity, and gender contributions in the workplace.
- We will ensure that our staff recruitment process is free from bias and based purely on merit. We may take positive action where necessary to abolish stereotyping.

- We will ensure that our recruitment processes for learners encourages participation in a wide range of careers regardless of gender under representation.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of sexual harassment or discrimination.
- A staffing profile that provides role models for learners within their own gender groups, irrespective of curriculum area or traditional under-representation.
- A pay and recognition structure which prevents pay gaps between genders.
- Achievement gaps between learners of different genders are identified and closed.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn in which diversity is embraced.

Sexual Orientation

The Group takes seriously its duty to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of someone’s sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation. This includes discrimination against someone because of their association with others who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Sexual orientation relates to whether a person’s sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Our Commitment:

- We will be clear that we will not tolerate any form of homophobic behaviour.
- We welcome all people, in all areas, regardless of their sexual orientation.
- We will not make assumptions that partners of staff or learners are of a different sex.
- We will make every effort to ensure that workplace benefits will apply equally to same-sex partners as to different sex partners.
- We will provide support to staff or learners who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, whilst understanding and maintaining their right to privacy and confidentiality.
- We will strive to be an organisation where the lesbian, gay and bisexual community is visible and valued.
- We will develop staff and learners to be more informed about sexual orientation issues.

Intended Impact:

- Elimination of discrimination related to sexual orientation.
- An organisation where staff and learners feel confident and able to be open about their sexuality.
- A tolerant, inclusive environment in which to work and learn where diversity is embraced.