

Suffolk New College

Single Equality Scheme

2017 – 2021

1. Introduction

Suffolk New College is committed to ensuring that all of our students, staff and community experience a fair, open and equal environment. The College is passionate about not only meeting the statutory requirements but to also embed equality and diversity into all aspects of College life.

1.1 Equality and diversity and a commitment to inclusion are embedded into the College's Strategic Plan and values:

'Suffolk New College commits to treating everyone with dignity and respect. We wish the ethos of the College to reflect a community that is free from discrimination, valuing all members of our College community equally and fairly.'

One of the College's Strategic Aims is:

'To promote and embed inclusion, equality and diversity to combat disadvantage.'

1.2 This Single Equality Scheme brings together our commitments to equality and diversity and our equality ambitions and plans across the organisation. It embraces all members of our College community and its objectives demonstrate our wholehearted commitment to continued action in tackling inequality and promoting diversity. This Scheme will build on our previous equality work. We will continue with our efforts to break down barriers and challenge unfairness, and ensure opportunities and experiences which help people and communities reach their full potential.

2. Our Aims

2.1 The purpose of this Scheme is to set out the ways in which we will continue to meet our legal requirements under the following legislation:

Equality Act 2010

The public sector equality duty consists of a general equality duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, and specific duties which are imposed by secondary legislation. The duty covers nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership.

The general equality duty requires due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act

- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The specific duties require Public bodies to:

- Publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty
- Set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives

Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act came into force in October 2000 and obliges public authorities to treat people in accordance with their rights under the European Convention of Human Rights.

2.2 The aim of this Single Equality Scheme is twofold:

- To develop further measures and actions that focus on the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality for all those who share protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation.
- To promote equality so that our approach goes beyond compliance with legislation and remains embedded in our culture.

3. Our Vision

- 3.1 We are building a College community that through its leadership, recruitment, teaching and learning is free from discrimination and secure and confident in its diversity. The College is committed to ensuring that every individual student and employee is valued, supported and respected. We welcome and celebrate the unique talent and experience of each individual student and employee.
- 3.2 Effective teaching and learning require a safe environment, free from prejudice and discrimination, where the values and ethos of equality and diversity inform all College activity. Suffolk New College, therefore, has zero tolerance of approach to discrimination. These values apply equally to staff and governors, as well as students, volunteers and organisations that we do business with.
- 3.3 Our Single Equality Scheme and associated policies outline how we seek to ensure that the College is free from unlawful discrimination, and strives constantly to move beyond legal compliance towards excellence and best practice in promoting and celebrating equality and diversity.
- 3.4 Through creative and responsive teaching and learning, and a broad spectrum of extra curricula activities our students will understand better the world within which they live, and the impact of their own actions on community cohesion and wellbeing.

4. Our Commitment

- 4.1 This Scheme aims to demonstrate our commitment to go beyond compliance with legislation and towards mainstreaming equality and diversity. Our comprehensive Equality Objectives/Action Plan (see appendix 1) will ensure that our commitments are carried out. The impact of our Single Equality Scheme will be assessed via our quality assurance systems, Equality Impact Assessments, observations of teaching and learning, Self-Assessment Reports and feedback from our students, staff and partners and will be celebrated in our Annual Report on equality and diversity.
- 4.2 This Scheme has direct implications for all other College policies. We believe that delivering equality and diversity is one crucial strand of the College's approach to overall quality improvement and we place it at the heart of everything we do. Our Equality Impact Assessment process will continue to help us to ensure that all of our major decisions and actions are thoroughly considered before implementation.
- 4.3 This Scheme will be published on the College website and intranet. Targets associated with this scheme and its objectives for each year, will be displayed prominently throughout all areas of the College, including social spaces and teaching and learning areas.
- 4.4 This Scheme relates to all members of the College, including employees, students, contractors, and visitors as appropriate.
- 4.5 We will address unequal experiences for all who share protected characteristics:
- Gender
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Race
 - Religion and Belief
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Pregnancy/Maternity
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership

We will also be mindful of our actions in relation to socio economic factors.

5. Our Context

- 5.1 Suffolk New College is based on a single-site, modern campus in Ipswich town centre. The College attracts learners from Ipswich and the surrounding rural areas, which together have a population of around 135,000. Around half of all young people in Ipswich taking GCSE examinations achieve five or more grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics. This is below the all-schools average for the whole of England by around three percentage points. More people of working age are employed than nationally but unemployment is slightly higher than in England as a whole. A lower proportion of the local population is educated to levels 3

and 4 than in the region and across England. The College offers study programmes and adult learning provision in all areas except land-based subjects, and apprenticeships.

6. Delivery of our Single Equality Scheme

6.1 Boundary Setting and Stakeholder Voice

We will continue with our CHAD (Challenge Hatred and Discrimination) campaign and clear boundary setting with students. Our student union will continue to have executive member leads for equality and diversity and to promote LGBT and disability support for students. CHAD supports students to come forward with any concerns and to be supported using our zero tolerance approach to all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination. Fair and appropriate usage of our Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy will continue to challenge inappropriate behaviour and support students to take responsibility for their actions.

Our strategies to listen to our staff, partners and our customers provide channels for all to be heard and responded to. Ofsted in 2017 commented that *'Students and apprentices demonstrate high levels of mutual respect and are tolerant of one another's differences'*

Opportunities are provided for students to raise concerns via their student representative system, personal tutor, 'stop it' button on the Virtual Learning Environment, surveys or complaints system. Employer and parents' views are received via surveys and strong relationships enable prompt reporting of concerns. Our on-going work with employers and students, particularly apprenticeships, in the workforce will ensure we respond effectively to all and support the drive to develop both industry and the skills of its workforce. These approaches collectively create a culture in which all can be heard and valued and opportunities for discrimination, harassment or bullying of any kind are minimised.

6.2 Improvement Planning

We actively plan to address inequalities and to take positive action where it is legitimate to do so in order to equalise opportunities for all. Our plans will be widely published and our progress against them will be made visible, including the production of an Annual Equality and Diversity Report which formally evaluates performance against our objectives. Our main documents and processes to drive improvement are:

- Strategic Plan
- Single Equality Scheme
- Equality Objectives/targets
- Self-assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) for curriculum and service areas
- Equality Impact Assessment Process

6.3 Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment (EIAs) are a practical way of examining new and existing policies and practices to determine what effect they may have on equality for those affected by the outcomes. The College has developed an impact assessment process and an electronic template

for use across the College. The Single Equality Scheme has been impact assessed in line with the College's impact assessment procedures and has involved consultation with key stakeholders. We will continue to use our Equality Impact Assessment process to review significant plans, policies, procedures and practices at the College to drive equality forward. Our Annual Equality Report will comment, as needed, on the outcomes from the Equality Impact Assessment process.

6.4 Teaching, Learning and Support

Our teaching, learning and support services take due regard of the needs of different groups and adapt practices in order for those needs to be met, in order to give every individual student the greatest opportunity to succeed. Where it is appropriate to do so, we will take legitimate positive action to encourage participation and to equalise success rates, and will use specialist advice from outside the organisation where our expertise in supporting different groups of students needs to be enhanced. We have invested a significant amount in staff development to ensure that staff embed equality and diversity in curriculum.

6.5 Monitoring and Planning

Our Community Stakeholder Group will continue to meet regularly to review progress against the Equality Action Plan. The Group consists of staff from academic and service areas, students, lead governor, and representatives from the Community. It is chaired by the Associate Principal.

Our Complaints system, withdrawals and disciplinaries will be monitored to check for any issues related to equality and diversity and reporting any emerging trends to the Senior Management Team (SMT) and governors via the Academic Scrutiny Group so that an appropriate actions in response can be taken.

6.6 Partnerships

Proactive networking and collaboration within our local area will continue to increase our awareness and understanding of local need and help us to make appropriate responses. External membership of our Community Stakeholder Group will continue to increase its rigour and ensure an appropriate breadth and knowledge base for monitoring and decision-making.

7. Gender

7.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College welcomes people of all genders at all levels in all College departments and curriculum areas. Our culture is strong in relation to mutual respect or ourselves and others in relation to gender status and identity. We do not tolerate gender based harassment. We will remove barriers and actively encourage inclusive participation in traditionally gender specific job roles, job levels and curriculum areas and levels, within the parameters of the law. Suffolk New College is a place where people will be encouraged to follow their chosen career or learning pathway regardless of gender status and identity and seek to build an environment where respect is practised and valued by all. To proactively reduce the Gender pay gap.

7.2 Our Context

The student gender profile at Suffolk New College is consistently similar between male and female students and they achieve at similar levels. We will continue to promote gender balance in some areas of the curriculum as this remains a target for on-going action. We are committed to dealing swiftly with any gender related concerns students may have and students increasingly report feeling safe at the College. We have more to do to increase confidence in disclosing transgender for both staff and students.

A key strength for the College is its workforce. The College has a strong track record in equality and diversity and has taken significantly steps to address gender issues in our workforce. We have robust data concerning the gender of our staff. Levels of female staff are higher than male which reflects the balance within the curriculum and within the FE sector. We will do more to make HR data better understood within the organisation and to understand the experiences of our staff by their protected characteristics. We will revisit our current practices in light of any new legislation and ensure that we continue to address any issues identified and promote a culture of gender equality in all areas and levels of the workforce. Legislation includes:

- Equal Pay Act
- Equal Pay for temporary workers
- Equal employment rights of part time workers
- Maternity leave, parental leave
- Right to request part time work after maternity leave

7.3 Our Intended Impact

- Student recruitment which actively encourages them to access careers of their choice regardless of traditional gender under representation
- A well-developed curriculum that positively reflects different gender contributions in the workplace and promotes them equally and effectively
- A staffing base in which students can see role models of their own gender, irrespective of the curriculum area and the traditional stereotypes
- A governing body with a similar gender mix to that of the College
- Facilities that enhance and support the experience of men and women equally in using the College's services or as College employees
- A reward and remuneration structure which prevents pay gaps between the genders
- A robust approach to gender-based discrimination and harassment that tackles unwanted attention and unfair behaviours directly and decisively at all levels and promotes a culture of respect
- A fully developed approach to equality in employment and career progression based on secure evidence relating to pay, opportunities, role and position across all genders and with due regard to physiological differences
- An approach to transgender issues that promotes understanding and welcome for those involved in any kind of change to their gender
- Provide a physical environment that is welcoming and accepting of people at different stages of transition including gender neutral toilets around the building

- Publish the Gender Pay Audit findings and include information on actions being taken to close the gap.

8. Age

8.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College is committed to equality of opportunity for our students and our staff regardless of their age. Our passion is to enable all students to access learning and be successful and use their new learning to enhance personal and professional development and life chances. We work to further narrow any age related success gaps. Our commitment to support all students who leave the College are skilled, professional and enterprising will improve their potential for employment throughout their working lives.

Our recruitment methods and employee support will reflect best practice. Opportunities for staff to have a voice will help them to contribute fully to the development of the College. Excellent professional development and progression opportunities will help staff to evolve their own careers irrespective of their age. We will act firmly to eliminate any unfair behaviour arising from differences in age.

8.2 Our Context

Suffolk New College delivers educational experience for some students from 14-16 who the schools send on day release but mainly from 16-19+. However, government funding agencies clearly differentiate between the needs of provision and support for different age groups. Barriers to access for adult students have been minimised as much as possible through effective usage of hardship funding, but support with fee costs has been limited. The College will continue to maximise opportunities available to support adults in learning and career progression and will monitor carefully the impact of reducing the age eligibility for loan criteria from 24 to 19 which is now in its second year.

The age of our staff ranges from 16 year olds on apprenticeships to those over the age of sixty. The College maintains its duty under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 to ensure that staff are treated fairly irrespective of age.

8.3 Our Intended Impact

Within the context of legislation and government funding and priorities, we aim to break down barriers associated with age both as a provider of education and as an employer.

We aim to ensure that:

- Our curriculum offer, facilities and support services cater for the different needs of our students
- Achievement gaps between adults and young people are addressed and closed

- All students are given the support they need to progress into and at work
- Younger entrants to the workforce are given the support they need to succeed and progress
- Older employees do not face discrimination on account of their age
- Our HR policies support staff to balance work with family requirements

9. Race

9.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College recognises that students and staff may have experienced discrimination because of protected characteristics at some point during their lives. We are committed to making our College a place where all are valued and respected and able to develop equally, and where all can feel confident that racism is dealt with swiftly and effectively. We will continue to promote best practice in race equality and we will identify and combat discrimination and disadvantage. We will take positive action to eliminate racism and its effects. Racial harassment will not be tolerated in any area of College life. We will continue to take positive action to encourage the recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups of students on all courses and to narrow any gaps in success that may materialise. Our curriculum and extra curricular activities will raise awareness and enable students to gain self-esteem and confidence. We will continue to seek to increase the number of staff from BME groups. We will work to develop role models through our ex-students, our community and our employer network and recognise the contribution they can make to students' aspirations. We will work to secure the fullest participation of BME students and staff in College life, including the College's planning and decision-making processes. Our stakeholder group will help us to hear what students, staff, parents and employers from different groups and backgrounds tell us and act upon views to further develop our College.

9.2 Our Context

Suffolk New College serves a diverse and changing community. It is characterised by social and economic disadvantage in many of its wards and school performance is below the national average. The BME population in Ipswich and South Suffolk is changing and 2011 Census tells us that the BME population has risen significantly from 6.6% in Ipswich in the 2001 Census to 11.1% which is higher than the national average. On average 20% of our students and 5% of our staff are from BME communities. The College will continue to create an environment which challenges racial discrimination and promotes race equality as central to its mission.

We have positive role models for BME staff and students in our senior management team, our teachers and our Fellows.

9.3 Our Intended Impact

In further developing and strengthening our work around race equality so that we can maximise the positive impact we have on students and staff from different racial groups, we aim to achieve the following:

- Retain the high success of BME students on all provision and ensure no significant gaps emerge
- Increase the profile of BME staff to achieve a workforce that is representative of the local community at every level of the organisation
- Promote good relations between different groups

10. Disability

10.1 Our Pledge

Students with learning difficulties/disabilities are well supported and thrive at Suffolk New College. We are committed to the development of new and better opportunities for disabled people and aim to develop both practice and delivery options in order to ensure their success. The College has an approach to proactively remove barriers to participation and success for students and employees with learning difficulty or disability. We will assist disabled staff to succeed in their employment at Suffolk New College.

10.2 Our Context

CENSUS report 2011 indicates that health in Ipswich is slightly better than the England/Wales average for people whose day to day activities are limited 'a lot' and for people whose activities are limited 'a little' is in line with the national average. There is no data available from the census related to learning difficulty. The Equalities Act 2010 has consolidated the rights of people with disabilities. We recognise that it covers a broad spectrum of requirements, including:

- Sensory impairment
- Restrictions to mobility
- Mental ill-health
- Long-term debilitating illness

Suffolk New College has a significant number of students with a learning difficulty or a disability. This matched by consistently high success rates and high levels of student satisfaction and engagement with activity across the College. The College has maintained comprehensive data on the disabilities of students collected through the enrolment process and has had a planned response to their needs. Although opportunities area available for staff to declare disabilities we feel that some may choose not to do so. We will continue to encourage staff to disclose by increasing the opportunities they have to do so and to respond more effectively to their needs. We will work to dismantle any barriers to career progression and self-fulfilment for both staff and students.

10.3 Our Intended Impact

We will:

- Through training and awareness raising campaigns support staff and students to feel confident to disclose any disability or learning difficulty, particularly 'hidden' disability issues, such as mental health and development disorders
- Continue to celebrate the success of those students who have overcome disadvantage to succeed in our College

- Focus support to ensure retention, success and satisfaction remain high for students and staff with disabilities or learning difficulties
- Implement a forum for students
- Monitor the impact of our success in improving the conditions and success of disabled staff and students within the College
- Where appropriate, enhance students' ability to live independently by reducing their dependency on additional learning support
- Reasonable adjustments will be conducted for both staff and students where needed

11. Sexual Orientation

11.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College celebrates the diversity of its staff and students and welcomes people of any sexual orientation. We adopt a zero tolerance stance to homophobia and actively challenges homophobia when it arises. The College will be a place where the lesbian, gay, bisexual, community is visible, valued and its contribution to the College and wider world is recognised. We will consult our staff, students and partners to ensure that the services and support we provide meet the needs of all staff and students. Our approach is to offer staff and students the opportunity to disclose their sexuality if they wish to, and create an environment where people can feel free and safe to disclose. Stonewall estimates that between 6-7% of people aged 16 or over are LGBT.

11.2 Our Context

The College has a strong track record in equality and diversity. In order to increase the amount of data we can collect in relation to protected characteristics, and therefore the opportunities to support students and staff, including, sexual orientation the College has decided to collect this information on our enrolment and/or application forms. During the life of this Scheme we will be creating opportunities for staff and students who have enrolled or started work to disclose if they wish to. However, we have facilitated the student union and main teaching union to have LGBT lead representatives who are pro active in raising awareness within the College and provide information and support for those who require it. We need to do more to support tutors to feel more informed about sexual orientation issues through our CPD programme and to provide information including links to support groups.

11.3 Our Intended Impact

- A welcoming place for all and an environment where all staff and students feel confident and free to be open about their sexuality if they choose
- A college where the rights of all students and staff are respected and recognised regardless of sexual orientation
- A student community where all students feel comfortable, supported, actively involved in College life and whose voice is heard
- A community of staff which is confident and able to anticipate and to respond to the needs of all colleagues and students regardless of sexual orientation

- A zero tolerance stance on homophobia with a workforce that is trained and confident to challenge homophobia when it arises
- Provide a physical environment that is welcoming and accepting of people at different stages of transition including gender neutral toilets around the building

12. Religion and Belief

12.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College always welcomes people of all faiths and none, and will promote learning and understanding between religions. We will act firmly to eliminate any discriminatory behaviour arising from differences in belief.

Suffolk New College is not and never will be a place of one faith. We will work to secure respect for beliefs, faiths and religions and welcome all equality into our community. We will provide opportunities for the faithful to celebrate their beliefs. Suffolk New College is a place of learning and we will place firm emphasis on the primacy of education as a defining value for our community. We will use our curriculum to strengthen moral and social awareness wherever it is appropriate.

12.2 Our Context

Suffolk New College is sited in a more diverse area than compared with rest of Suffolk. Ipswich has increased diversity in the community between the 2001 and 2011 Census but this does not translate in terms of changing the spread between religions or beliefs of the community. The Census indicates that by far the majority of local people are declared as Christians of various denominations. Ipswich also has the largest Muslim population in Suffolk. Other faiths are represented but in smaller numbers. Ipswich scores low on all indices of community cohesion. The law (Equality Act, 2006 and 2010 and Human Rights Act, 1998) require us to protect service users and employees against unfair treatment on the grounds of their religion. Our data in relation to religion and belief is limited but will expand as people become more confident to disclose. This will enable us to effectively support curriculum and enrichment activity and create an environment where people can feel free and safe regardless of religion or belief.

12.3 Our Intended Impact

- A climate of understanding in which religious discrimination is promptly addressed if it ever arises
- Events which celebrate a range of faiths
- A clear and equal message of welcome for people of all faiths (or none)
- Continued support for the joint Chaplaincy shared with the University of Suffolk
- A contemplation space for private reflection and prayer for people of any religious persuasion or none
- A respectful and value-based curriculum that promotes social and moral development

- Improved data on the profile of religious belief by students and staff to help us develop our services, with a distinction between cultural identity and actual religious practice

13. Pregnancy and Maternity

13.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College welcomes students and staff who are pregnant, are on maternity leave or who have recently given birth. We will act firmly to eliminate any discriminatory behaviour against those with this protected characteristic.

We will make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that those who are pregnant or have recently given birth can access the educational and employment opportunities available to them.

13.2 Our Context

Suffolk New College is an employer with family friendly procedures in place to support women and also partners during this exciting time. Risk assessments are carried out to identify any specific needs that an employee needs during this time and any adjustments that need to be made to their working environment. Identity arrangements can be put in place for both staff and students to support them particularly as they approach their due date or if they have periods of feeling unwell. Contact is encouraged during period of maternity leave to a level that the individual is happy with and support is given to assist returning staff with coming into the work place and using Keeping in Touch days if they would like to.

13.3 Our Intended Impact

- To become an accredited member of the Tommy's Pregnancy at Work Scheme which has been designed to assist organisations with the tools they need to provide the best level of support for pregnant employees and their managers. The scheme also provides a wealth of information, including how to best manage time and productivity and how to ensure a smooth return to work after pregnancy
- A climate of understanding where pregnancy is not a barrier to learning or work
- Reasonable adjustments which remove or minimise barriers to learning and work
- Access to a variety of information packs to provide support and guidance on pregnancy, medical issues, having a healthy pregnancy and planning ahead.

14. Marriage and Civil Partnerships

14.1 Our Pledge

Suffolk New College celebrates the diversity of its staff and students and welcomes people of any marital status, whether single, married or in a civil partnership. We will consult our staff,

students and partners to ensure that the services and support we provide meet the needs of all staff and students.

14.2 Our Context

The College has a strong track record in equality and diversity and serves a diverse and changing community. It is characterised by social and economic disadvantage in many of its wards. We will ensure that no student or member of staff is treated less favourably because of their marital or civil partnership status.

14.3 Our Intended Impact

- A climate of mutual respect for all students and staff regardless of their marital or civil partnership status
- A welcoming place for all and an environment where all staff and students feel confident and free to be open about their sexuality if they choose

15. Socio-Economic

15.1 Our Pledge

There is currently no legislative duty in relation to socio-economic factors. However, Suffolk New College is based in a disadvantaged community and has made plain its purpose in serving the needs of this community. We are committed to understanding the nature and impact of economic disadvantage and will work to reduce the barriers faced by people in our locality through the provision of high quality teaching and learning outstanding support and a curriculum based on the needs of industry and the community. We will continue to emphasise the development of provision designed to attract those with lower expectations of success and prosperity and, with our partners, will explore new ways of working that make our provision more accessible to those who are disadvantaged.

15.2 Our Context

54% of our students and 65% of our staff live in Ipswich. Many of our students live in or on the edge of poverty and experience higher than average levels of ill-health and poor educational attainment. We believe that the College has a duty to its community to address issues relating to class and social mobility if it is to deliver its mission fully. Our College is committed to treating deprivation as a context and not an excuse for poor performance. Our emphasis is on developing students who leave the college that have an advantage in the labour market through enhanced personal and professional skills such as the College's ePass Scheme and raised aspirations through the Inspire Programme. This will help them to build a better future for themselves and their communities.

15.3 Our Intended Impact

- To have a curriculum offer and support services which encourage recruitment
- To enable students who live in areas of deprivation to do as well as their peers who do not
- To consider socio economic factors when impact assessing major plans, policies, procedures and practice

16. Objectives

The College has set the following overarching objectives to be achieved within the life of this Single Equality Scheme.

- Curriculum development which responds to the needs of students and our community
- Delivery of targets set for curriculum and business support which are designed to promote equality and diversity or to drive equality forward
- Increasing the disclosure rates of the newer protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 for students and staff and using the information to promote and drive equality forward
- Foster ownership amongst the student body for the development of a set of positive behaviours which reflect the very best in all cultures, but which reaffirm the understanding of and compliance with the rule of British law and British Values
- Professional development which continues to support staff to promote equality and diversity routinely into their daily activity