



Royal Veterinary College  
University of London

**DRAFT**  
**Disability Equality Scheme**  
**2007 - 2009**

## **Our target audience**

This document is aimed at:

- Students (present & future, undergraduate & postgraduate)
- Staff (present & future)
- Visitors
- Clients
- Relevant external stakeholders

## **Alternative versions and further information**

This Scheme is published as a Word document and as a PDF file on the College website at [www.rvc.ac.uk](http://www.rvc.ac.uk) .

The standard copy is in minimum 12 point Arial font. Large print (18 point), Braille, electronic & audio recording versions can be provided. We have aimed to make the layout and structure accessible for all but welcome comments if the report does not meet those requirements for you. We will also explain the content verbally and/or in a simplified version as required.

To request an alternative version, or if you have any other queries about the document format, please contact:

**Tan Razaq, Human Resources Adviser**

**Email** [trazaq@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:trazaq@rvc.ac.uk)

**Tel** 01707 666380

Comments on content will be referred on to other staff as necessary.

# Contents

- 4 Foreword by the Principal
- 5 Purpose of this document: our legal duties
- 7 How these duties relate to our functions as a public authority
- 11 The involvement of disabled people
- 18 Information gathering and use of information
- 30 Impact Assessment methodology
- 32 Monitoring, evaluation & publication of the DES

*Appendix A*

*Draft Action Plan Nov 2007 – December 2009*

## **Foreword by the Principal: Leading the Way to Equality**

It is a great pleasure to present to you the Royal Veterinary College's Disability Equality Scheme 2007.

First published in December 2006, we have taken the opportunity to update and to improve the Scheme following further consultation with disabled staff, students & external stakeholders, the Disability Rights Commission (now part of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights) and the Equality Challenge Unit, which advises universities on their duties in this area. I would like to acknowledge our gratitude for the input of these interested parties, who have helped us to enhance our commitment to disability equality.

Since 2000, the Royal Veterinary College has acquired an international reputation for our landmark work in opening up the veterinary profession to students with a wide range of physical and mental impairments. This work has been taken up by other professions such as medicine and is continuing to effect change to the benefit of disabled people across professional and academic life.

As a public authority, we are keen to achieve similar excellence in the provision that we make for disabled academic and non-academic staff, visitors and clients. It is also our intention to ensure that in the new climate created by a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights, disabled people who come into contact with the College for whatever reason can be confident that we will not lose sight of the particular barriers that they face. Disabled people will be at the heart of all our equality work, ensuring that those who face additional barriers because of their gender, race, age etc, will find that they are accepted, understood and acknowledged on our campus.

Please take the time to digest the contents of our Disability Equality Scheme; alternative formats can be provided for you as necessary. My staff look forward to receiving your comments on any aspects that you feel could be improved.

Work with us so that we can obtain equality for disabled people at the Royal Veterinary College.

**Professor Quintin McKellar**  
**Principal**  
**The Royal Veterinary College, University of London**

**October 2007**

## **Purpose of this document: Our legal duties**

### **Disability Equality Scheme**

Through the Disability Equality Duty (DED), the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 imposes a duty on public authorities to actively promote disability equality, and to build it into the way they carry out all their business functions, from planning through to evaluation. This is done by producing a 'Disability Equality Scheme' (DES) with a three-year Action Plan. The Scheme that follows in this document outlines our plans up to the end of December 2009. Before moving on, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves what is meant by 'disability' in this context.

### **The legal definition of 'disability'**

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 defines the term 'disability' as:

**a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.**

The definition applies to a wide range of impairments and conditions including: mental health conditions, specific & other learning difficulties including dyslexia, physical, mobility & sensory impairments, progressive and/or long-term health conditions such as multiple sclerosis, arthritis, cancer, HIV & Aids, and a past history of disability. 'Hidden impairments' such as diabetes, the effects of which may not be noticeable to other people, are also covered by this definition. People who do not consider that they have a disability, even if their condition meets the legal definition, must also be taken into consideration.

The approach adopted at RVC follows the principles of the '**social model**' of disability – i.e. it is society that disables people with an impairment – rather than the '**medical model**', which views disabled people as people who have conditions or impairments that must be 'cured' or 'treated'. The social model favours equality for disabled people because it does not expect them to 'adapt themselves' so as to fit into society but rather demands that society – in our case, a public authority – should become fully inclusive of disabled people across all its functions.

### **Our Obligations: General and Specific Duties**

The Disability Equality Duty differs from the other parts of the DDA because rather than focusing on adjustments for and treatment of individual disabled people, it requires disability equality to be an integral part of all the functions and activities of the College as a 'public authority'.

The Duty includes both **general** and **specific** duties. We will use these as the basis for our work, although it is our intention to go beyond mere compliance in order to become role models for the higher education sector and for other public authorities. We are describing the duties as 'ours' to emphasise that we have taken to heart their application to us as an individual higher education

institution. We believe that the first step to meeting the 'negative' duties is to be highly successful in meeting the 'positive' duties.

### **What are our 'general duties'?**

We have grouped these into the 'positive' duties – i.e. – what we must do – and the 'negative' duties – i.e. what we must avoid.

#### **Our 'positive' general duties**

##### **Promote equal opportunities between disabled people and others**

EXAMPLE: We will ensure that disabled applicants have the same opportunities as other candidates during the recruitment process.

##### **Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people**

EXAMPLE: Our senior managers will encourage their disabled staff to provide direct feedback to them about any issue that might affect their quality of working life at the College.

##### **Encouragement of participation by disabled people in all areas of the organisation**

EXAMPLE: The Equality & Diversity committee will review how each of the College's committees can augment the participation of disabled people.

##### **Meeting disabled people's needs even if this requires more favourable treatment**

EXAMPLE: Staff in relevant departments e.g. Estates, Information Technology, Library, will give the highest priority to making the appropriate reasonable adjustments for students, staff, visitors & clients.

#### **Our 'negative' general duties**

##### **Elimination of unlawful discrimination under the DDA**

EXAMPLE: Staff training will help staff to recognise such discrimination & know what action to take if they become aware of any unlawful discrimination towards disabled people at the College.

##### **Elimination of harassment related to disability**

EXAMPLE: In the unfortunate event of any claim of disability-related harassment at the College, Human Resources will review whether any additional training needs to be provided to individuals and/ or groups of staff.

### **What is our 'specific duty'?**

The specific duty requires certain public authorities – including all higher education institutions such as RVC – to draw up **Disability Equality Schemes** every three years starting from December 2006. Our current & previous (Dec 06) scheme therefore cover the years 2007 – 2009, with progress reports required in Dec 07, 08 and 09. The DES includes an Action Plan for the period in question. (Note: 'Disability Equality Scheme' or 'DES' in this document is intended to include the 'Action Plan' integral to it.) The purpose of the DES is to enable us to achieve the general duties already listed, with the active involvement of disabled people a pre-requisite for producing a DES that is truly 'fit for purpose'.

## **How these duties relate to our functions as a public authority**

The College's Mission Statement declares that the College will:

- strive for excellence in veterinary & paraveterinary undergraduate and postgraduate education, and scholarship
- enhance its international reputation in biomedical & veterinary research
- disseminate knowledge through learned publications and business development
- improve the health & welfare of animals through the provision of outstanding clinical services, and through clinical education & research

The College is working towards these aims by means of the following activities, all of which are covered by our general & specific duties under the Disability Equality Duty.

### **Governance, Leadership & Management**

The College is a constituent College of the University of London, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, other grant awarding bodies, commercial companies & private clients. The Governing Body is the College Council, advised on academic matters by the Academic Board. The College is managed through its academic departments & the Clinical Services Division supported by the Academic Support & Development Unit and the departments of Estates, Finance and Human Resources. The Biological Service Units support the research mission of the College & its collaborators. The London BioScience Innovation Centre (LBIC) is a company wholly owned by the College whose mission is to provide, on a commercial basis, laboratory space & services for early stage spin out-companies from the College & other sources to exploit intellectual property. Day to day management of the College is undertaken by the Senior Management Group (SMG), chaired by the Principal.

The College has developed a comprehensive risk management framework, with a strategic risk register identifying those risks assessed as being likely to impact on achievement of the College's corporate objectives. The College Council has responsibility for overseeing risk management within the institution as a whole, with the Principal and SMG supporting, advising and implementing policies approved by Council. Risks are managed at all levels with heads of departments reporting to the SMG on their discussions at departmental level.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The College provides a comprehensive range of veterinary & paraveterinary undergraduate, postgraduate degree and professional development programmes. A Student Disability Officer oversees provision for disabled students, working within a team led by the Student Services Support Manager and liaising with other staff including the on-site Occupational Health department. The College has a leading role in the 'Widening Participation in the Health Professions' partnership, working to widen access & attract the most talented students from all social backgrounds and abilities.

Our Centre for Lifelong & Independent Veterinary Education, LIVE, is an educational programme established in 2005, which enhances veterinary education through the development of novel approaches to learning in its new, state-of-the-art LIVE Centre.

## **Research**

Our research is focused into five main groupings: Musculo-skeletal Pathobiology, Reproduction & Development, Infection & Immunity, Cardiovascular Biology & Inflammation, and Clinical Sciences. We are striving to create incentives for high research performers by improving research infrastructure, increasing collaborative research and reducing their teaching & administrative duties. As well as identifying, disseminating and co-ordinating funding opportunities, we are improving teaching provision on grantsmanship, publication & presentation to enrich the learning environment of graduate students.

## **Clinical Services**

The College provides clinical services and treatment for animals. This area of our activity provides approximately 20% of the College's income, with further growth expected over the next three years. Inclusive protocols and policies have been developed to ensure that we meet the needs of all clients.

Our students gain essential experience from a range of learning environments, including the Royal Veterinary College Farm, the Beaumont Animals' Hospital in Camden, the Equine Referral Hospital and the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals (QMHA), where the workload focuses on small animals. Students also spend time in diagnostic laboratories to learn both gross and clinical pathology. Both the farm and the equine ambulatory practices continue to grow, to ensure that veterinary undergraduates can achieve the necessary 'day-one skills' required for qualification as a veterinary surgeon.

Collaborations and partnerships with commercial practices give our students access to invaluable practical and research experience. We are working to integrate partner organisations & practices to enrich the students' learning experience. With the expansion of the Emergency & Critical Care Service in the Equine Hospital, we are actively seeking to increase our equine referral work to enhance student experience and improve business efficiency.

The Royal Veterinary College Animal Care Trust (ACT) was established in the early 1980s to increase fundraising to facilitate the development of clinical services.

## **Business**

Alongside activities for the RVC, the Business Development team manages the London BioScience Innovation Centre (LBIC). LBIC is already home to the College's own two spin-out companies plus a further sixteen independent clients, mostly small companies created by other London universities and research institutes. Other objectives are to: build a portfolio of commercially viable, patented technology; commercialise new technologies through licensing and spin-out creation; develop & extend enterprise and commercial

awareness training for the College's students and staff, and negotiate fully-costed and realistically-priced commercial contracts. We are sharing best practice and integrating approaches to technology transfer and business development with the partner universities in central London that form the Bloomsbury Consortium, which includes a working group of disability officers. Our Marketing Manager plays a key role in ensuring that the College's own internal and external means of communication (publications, intranet and Intranet sites, on-campus signage etc) meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## **Estates**

Our aim is to provide and manage a physical environment that facilitates optimal support for teaching, research and clinical activity. Our estate is of crucial importance to the quality of the College's work in these three areas. The College is continuing to maintain, improve and develop its estate, to provide an accessible environment conducive to the performance of our students and staff. The estate must also instil confidence in our clients and partner businesses.

## **Human Resources**

The College aims to attract and retain a team of the most talented veterinarians, bioscientists and support staff in the world, while ensuring equality of opportunity and increasing diversity of the workforce. Our HR strategy aims to provide a working culture that staff from all backgrounds and at all levels will find attractive and rewarding. We are reforming the pay and reward systems and structures to help to improve staff morale, increase rates of staff retention and make the RVC a more attractive employer for people from all sectors of the community. Our staff appraisal scheme has been designed to enable the College to communicate its mission and objectives to all staff, and to focus everyone's efforts towards achieving them. We are working to reduce absences by introducing a robust sickness absence monitoring system that will support staff facing personal difficulties that may arise during working life. The College is committed to the development of its staff at all levels and is preparing to achieve Investors in People status, with the challenging standards that this entails in the areas of staff development, management development and effectiveness & communications. Human Resources provides the lead on all equality and diversity issues, working closely with the College's Occupational Health Service, Student Services & Widening Participation teams on day to day matters relating to applicants, students and staff. The Occupational Health team play an important part in enabling disabled staff and students to continue or to return to work, contributing to College policy as necessary.

## **Finance**

The College's financial planning is well developed, and a full risk analysis was carried out in 2002 – 03. We are currently developing a comprehensive financial strategy to facilitate financial planning, budgeting & control which will support the College in achieving all of its corporate objectives.

## **Areas that are contracted out, purchased in or delivered in partnership with other organisations that may not be covered by the Disability Equality Duty**

All of the College's functions described above involve making use of the services provided by a wide range of external stakeholders who may not be covered by the Disability Equality Duty. It is general College policy that members of staff who contract in such services are responsible for ensuring that the organisations or individuals concerned give due regard to disability equality. For example, the Academic Registrar oversees the extramural studies placement process, working with the Student Disability Officer to ensure that placement providers are properly prepared to work with and support disabled students on placement. Another example is that the Director of Estates ensures that tender documents for contracts include details of how the successful contractor will be required to operate while under contract to the College.

## **The involvement of disabled people**

The involvement of disabled people in our Disability Equality Scheme is an ongoing, interactive but complex process, necessitating respect for the very varying perspectives and approaches of disabled people themselves. When our first DES was drawn up (December 2006), input by disabled people was as follows:

- The College's Student Disability Officer conducted a programme of confidential consultation, including two focus groups, with students with a variety of disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- HR staff had close contact with disabled staff and were therefore aware of their needs and concerns. A staff survey in 2005 had also provided useful background information. The Equality & Diversity Committee had at least one disabled member of staff as well as the previous Student Disability Officer, who were both able to represent the views of disabled people at the College. For operational reasons, a proposed staff questionnaire – which was planned to kick start work with disabled staff and raise awareness around the College – did not take place until mid 2007.

With regard to the involvement of external stakeholders, disabled staff and students have requested that we take more time to establish the strategy for doing this. One disabled member of staff has committed to join one of the local representative groups for disabled people but does not want to be rushed into making a decision about this before he/she is ready. However, the intention is to link whichever group is selected to the work of the College. This will then enable us to plot out how the widest range of physical and mental impairments can best be represented within the College's disability equality work.

Our Clinical Services department has been carrying out ongoing consultation with clients, and makes every effort to accommodate individual needs, for example by providing Braille labels on drugs prescribed to treat clients' animals. As soon as recruitment to a recently vacated post takes place, this information will be filtered to determine priorities for disabled clients and establish how disabled clients can best contribute to the College's work. As a number of clients use assistance dogs, we are currently exploring the possibilities for involving organisations such as the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. This organisation makes use of the College's premises and staff in the training of new guide dogs and therefore staff have the necessary insight to understand how disability equality can be achieved within the specific context of the College.

We will also explore various suggestions made by non-disabled members of staff who have some personal or professional experience of disability. They either have disabled family members, work/have worked with disabled or experience gained in other environments including with disability-related organisations. More time is needed to pursue such contacts, particularly given some of the sensitivities involved.

To conclude, we are moving on from consultation to engagement and active involvement at varying rates with disabled staff and students, clients and

external stakeholders. We believe that it is important for this process to be properly coordinated so that there are as few gaps as possible.

### **Present and future role of the Disability Equality Group**

The Principal established the Disability Equality Group (DEG) in 2006, to take responsibility for developing the Disability Equality Scheme during 2007. This included ensuring the active and ongoing involvement of disabled staff, students & external stakeholders. The DEG reports to the Principal as well as providing ongoing briefings for the Senior Management Group. The terms of reference of the DEG have been to advise how the College will put the Disability Equality Scheme & Action Plan into practice, recommending priorities & encouraging change where appropriate and communicating the DES to staff, students and relevant external stakeholders.

The DEG is keen to ensure that the Disability Equality Scheme becomes even more embedded within the mainstream work of the College. For this reason, the DEG will transfer its work at the end of 2007 to the College's Equality & Diversity Committee. This will also ensure that the specific characteristics of disabled people in relation to their gender, race etc will be given due consideration in policies and procedures in all other areas of equality.

### **Membership of the Disability Equality Group during 2007**

It was originally anticipated that disabled members of academic & academic support staff would be actively involved in the Disability Equality Group. This has not been possible to achieve up until now, for reasons relating to the disabled staff themselves. Despite these difficulties, some level of input has been possible as stated below. However, this situation is now set to change as members of academic & academic support staff have indicated their willingness to participate in the future.

An important feature of the RVC DEG during 2007 was that it was chaired and therefore championed by the Assistant Principal & Secretary to Council, a member of the Senior Management Team who also oversees the work of the Academic Support & Development Unit (ASDU). This Unit has pioneered the College's work for disabled students and is the home of the Widening Participation section. While it is not currently anticipated that the Assistant Principal will chair the new Equality & Diversity committee, the postholder will continue to monitor the DES during its lifetime to ensure its continuity and success.

Three other staff from the Senior Management Team formed part of the DEG, namely the Directors of the departments of Estates, Finance and Human Resources. Other DEG members have included the Academic Registrar (to Sep 07), Student Services & Support Manager (from Sep 07) & the Student Disability Officer. The Students' Union was also represented, with Officers including some with dyslexia.

An external consultant with extensive knowledge of the College's systems and staff, having worked for over 5 years on disability related projects, was appointed to the group. The consultant established immediate contact with disabled staff already known to her and therefore was able to make their anonymous contribution to the work of the DEG. The consultant was also

responsible for setting up the staff disability consultation exercise (July – August 07) and therefore further developed such contacts. Many staff stated the express wish that the consultant should represent them on the DEG. Apart from the desire to remain anonymous, they were reluctant for various reasons to participate in a College committee. Although membership of the Equality & Diversity Committee will include disabled people, it will nevertheless be necessary to ensure that there is a mechanism for introducing the views of disabled staff such as those described above.

### **Our overall approach to equality**

The College has long aimed to have a culture where equality and inclusion are promoted, where discrimination is not tolerated and staff and students feel able to report discrimination knowing that appropriate action will be taken. In pursuit of its mission, the College recognises that it must enable all its staff and students, whatever their background, to achieve their full potential. The College recognises and welcomes the substantial demographic change witnessed in recent years in the UK veterinary and paraveterinary professions. Anticipation of, and adaptation to this change is pivotal to its future. Widening Participation and disability initiatives have therefore been a key strategic priority for the College.

### **How disabled people have influenced the development of the College's provision for disabled students**

The link between disabled people's priorities and the College's provision for disabled students can be clearly documented and is outlined below. Provision for disabled staff, clients & other stakeholders has always existed but is less easily documented until more recently.

#### **Prior to 2000**

Responses to a letter published in the Veterinary Record in 2000 indicated that a number of students who enrolled at RVC in the immediate post-Second World War period came to the College with various physical, sensory & mental disabilities, usually as the result of injuries sustained in combat. These students graduated and practised as veterinary surgeons for the rest of their working lives, providing confidential testimony of the extent to which College staff facilitated this for them. Other anecdotal evidence has indicated that subsequent cohorts of students usually included at least one disabled student, although the absence of legislation and general disability awareness meant that disabled students largely passed unnoticed. What we would now call 'reasonable adjustments' were made on an ad hoc basis, with the only requirement being that the student would still be able to meet the essential requirements of the course to qualify as a veterinary surgeon. RVC alumni have reported that provision for disabled students was made as a matter of course and tailor-made to the needs of each student.

With the development of the College's administrative functions, and the introduction of disability legislation, provision for disabled students became more formalised during the 1980s – 1990s. In 1996, the College established the Academic Progress Review Committee (APRICOT), to provide advice and support for students who find it difficult to fulfil the requirements of the course for various reasons including a disability. At the same time, students and applicants with disabilities could obtain personal advice and support from the Head of Registry and the College's Occupational Health department. Special Examination Arrangements for students with disabilities were also established

during the late 1980s - early 1990s. Both APRICOT and the Special Examination Arrangements grew out of the demands of students themselves who felt that provision should now be more structured.

## **2000 – 2002**

### **HEFCE project to improve provision for students with disabilities**

With the introduction of a funding programme by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 1999, the College was able to appoint a part-time Student Disability Officer (SDO) from October 2000. This was the first time that on-site dedicated support for disabled students was possible, with one-to-one contact, as requested by disabled students, available for two and a half days a week. The SDO also assisted other staff in streamlining their provision for students with disabilities, summarised in a Guide for Students with Disabilities published in 2001.

A study was also undertaken to reconcile the specific demands of the veterinary undergraduate course with the requirements of disability legislation, in particular the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA).

This resulted in the publication of the resource 'At the Portal of the Profession: The Veterinary Profession & People with Disabilities.' (RVC, London, 2001).

Available online HTTP (accessed 26 October 2007)

<<http://www.rvc.ac.uk/AboutUs/PolicyAndLegal/Accessibility/Documents/AtThePortal.PDF>>

Whilst this was the first study worldwide to address these issues, extensive work was still required to be able to provide relevant information for people with the widest possible range of impairments who wanted to train as veterinarians. Close contact had been established by 2002 with colleagues working on similar issues in medical and dental schools, so that an application for further funding from HEFCE was made in that year under the 'Strand Two' funding programme. This funding was granted and resulted in the three-year DIVERSE project described below. Disabled people wanted advice tailored to the demands of the veterinary curriculum and this would now be possible.

## **2003 – 2005**

### **DIVERSE – The UK Veterinary Medicine Disability Project**

Website <http://www.medev.ac.uk/diverse/about/> (accessed 26 October 2007)

DIVERSE was the largest of the 23 projects to be funded within the 2003-2005 HEFCE special funding programme: '*Improving provision for disabled students*'. The DIVERSE project was important in breaking down barriers for disabled people, because it included work reaching out to the other healthcare professions such as medicine and dentistry. Of greatest importance was the input of disabled students and practitioners, who were either involved in the steering group or provided confidential anonymised input to the project director. Disabled doctors, dentists and medical & dental students also had input into the project, enabling common issues to be addressed.

The Royal Veterinary College was the lead higher education institution for the project, providing significant management time and resources to support the work of the project Director in the coordination of the project. DIVERSE was a collaborative initiative with the three English veterinary schools which existed

at that time at the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge and Liverpool. The University of Nottingham has since opened a School of Veterinary Medicine and Science in 2006 and staff were able to make use of the work of DIVERSE in 2005 when preparing for opening. Although not funded by the project, the 2 Scottish veterinary schools at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow also provided support and input to the project.

Hence DIVERSE involved all the UK's veterinary schools, allowing the maximum input from those involved in the undergraduate degree courses leading to qualification as a veterinary surgeon. This input was consolidated by the participation of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council in the project's steering group, enabling direct links to be made between the educational process and qualification & regulated practise as a vet, doctor or dentist. Dissemination of the project's work and outcomes was significantly enhanced by the involvement of the then Learning and Teaching Support Network subject centre for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine LTSN-01 (now Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine).

The DIVERSE website is still operative and provides an ongoing source of information for disabled people. The key resources produced during the project continue to be mailed out upon request and are also available online:

'Time To Take Stock: Disability and Professional Competence'.

Available HTTP online (accessed 26 October 2007):

< <http://www.medev.ac.uk/diverse/resources/TimeToTakeStock.pdf/>>

'Pushing the Boat Out: An introductory study of admission to medical, dental & veterinary schools for students with disabilities' &

'The Sequel to Pushing the Boat Out'.

Both available HTTP online (accessed 26 October 2007):

< [http://www.medev.ac.uk/resources/features/pushing\\_the\\_boat\\_out/](http://www.medev.ac.uk/resources/features/pushing_the_boat_out/)>

The most noticeable success of the DIVERSE project to date has been the decision by the General Medical Council to use it as a cornerstone for the GMC Gateways disability project currently underway (October 2007) to develop guidance encouraging people with disabilities into medicine. For disabled people, this has resulted in raising their status within professions which have traditionally been considered to be hostile to them. Disabled people's concerns and ambitions have therefore been at the heart of RVC policy for nearly a decade, providing a solid foundation for ongoing work.

## **LIVE**

Funding for the DIVERSE project ended on 31 December 2006 but the College was keen to make a further commitment to integrating the work achieved into the lifeblood of the College's developmental work in the area of teaching and learning. This was done by awarding the former Director of DIVERSE a six month 'LIVE' disability Fellowship (Jan - June 2007).

LIVE (Lifelong and Independent Veterinary Education) is the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) established at the College in 2005 with a grant from HEFCE. LIVE, sited within its own new and fully accessible building, focuses specifically on capturing and expanding the best

teaching and learning practice characteristic of veterinary education around the world, with a strong commitment to inter-professional collaboration. As well as contributing general disability expertise to the work of LIVE in its initial stages, work was carried out examining the 'day one' skills mapping exercise to ensure that this followed on from the work of DIVERSE.

Since July 2006, LIVE staff and Fellows have continued to embed disability issues into their work, with some clinical skills tutors having previous experience of working with disabled people. Discussions are currently underway (October 2007) with a disabled member of the LIVE staff, with a view to this individual helping to take forward the work of the DES.

Another member of the College's clinical staff is currently (October 2007) undertaking a survey of disabled veterinary surgeons as part of a Masters degree project. This work is being fed into the overall work of the LIVE project and will also be channelled back into other areas of student support at the College. This will also enable further input from disabled external stakeholders.

### **2006 – 2007 onwards**

During the DIVERSE project, close liaison took place between the Director of the project and the College's Academic Registrar to ensure that continuity of service could be offered after DIVERSE ended in December 2005. For operational reasons, it was not possible for a new Student Disability Officer to take up post until July 2006 so the Academic Registrar undertook to coordinate provision for the first six months of 2006. This involved working closely with the Occupational Health service, the Senior Tutor for students, the Student Welfare Officer, the counsellors provided from Hertfordshire University and the RVC SU officers. This work was taken over from July by a Student Disability Officer (SDO) contracted one day a week from King's College London Disability Support Team. During the autumn term 2006, the SDO conducted a programme of consultations with students with dyslexia or a disability. A direct result of this consultation was the updating of the College's guide for disabled students, which was published under the title 'RVC Dyslexia and Disability Guide'. This was a collaborative venture with disabled and dyslexic students and contains a case study of a student with dyslexia.

The publication of the Guide coincided with the creation of and appointment to the new post of Student Services and Support Manager (SSSM), which was filled in August 2007. The appointee has extensive relevant experience, having previously managed a flagship HEFCE Strand One project at another institution, where she also chaired the Disability Equality Committee & produced the DES in December 2006.

The SSSM manages the work of the part-time Disability and Finance & Welfare Officers, as well as two front of house staff based in the Registry office. The role includes co-ordinating the student counselling service, working closely with the managers of the College's own halls of residence, the University of London housing & specialist careers services, as well as co-ordinating an in-house 'job' service. The SSSM also administers the APRICOT committee, liaises & works with the Student Union, advises senior staff on student legislation, & liaises with the college's Learning Support staff. As the Disability Officer post is a 0.2 post, the SSSM coordinates provision for disabled students on the other four days of the week which includes

maintaining a high level of one-to-one contact. This will enable her to streamline and integrate disability provision with other areas of student services, ensuring a fully integrated College experience for all students.

Following student feedback about external counselling services, with waits of up to six weeks for appointments, the College has now contracted on-site counselling services for students from mid October 2007 provided by the University of Hertfordshire. Appointments will be available on a 0.5 basis over the week between the two campuses. Students who have ongoing counselling needs will be given the option of appointments at the Hertfordshire campus. The SSSM is currently addressing the issue of locating rooms at RVC offering both confidentiality and accessibility to all staff and students. The College also offers a comprehensive tutor support system for all students, as well as the option of the College chaplain who is available for people of all faiths.

The SSSM and the SDO coordinated the circulation of the disability guide in time for Induction Week in September 2007. Copies were sent to all relevant heads of departments and other contacts, with supplies being kept by the Registry, Occupational Health, the Admissions and the Graduate School offices. The SSSM gave a presentation and presented copies of the guide to thirty members of teaching staff at the start of term, with a series of sessions also to present the guide to first and second year BVetMed students, first year BSc students, new Gateway students, all new postgraduate students and the Students' Union. There will be an ongoing programme throughout the term to present the guide to all students across the College, with the SSSM and the SDO acting as 'walking publicists' for the guide. The SU Welfare Officer has retained a stock of the guide to give to students as necessary and will undergo specific disability awareness training during the autumn term. Copies have been left in both campuses' reception areas as well as the Student Union social areas. New dedicated 'Student Support' notice boards will be located in Student Union areas at both campuses, enabling the guide and the DES to be publicised further. This will include info re Guide and DES. General information sheets about Student Support at the College, including information about the guide and the DES will be distributed in the College's own halls of residence during the autumn term.

### **2008 onwards: Integration of staff and student disability work**

The initiation of the College's new Equality and Diversity committee in January 2008 will also mark a new strategy for integrating the staff and student sides of disability provision. The College is recruiting new Equality and Diversity staff located in the Human Resources department, whose responsibilities will include developing provision for disabled staff, and co-ordinating the input of disabled students and Student Services staff into College-wide strategies. Based on discussion with disabled staff, it is the College's intention to develop a Single Equality Scheme, the most effective model for a relatively small institution. Integrating staff and student disability provision will help us to maximise the input of disabled people within such a scheme, enabling us to maintain a very effective disability working group. This group will ensure that the needs of disabled people are prioritised within the scheme so that all other areas of equality policy reflect disability equality within their own remit. Other aspects of disabled people's equality (e.g. gender, race) can therefore also be addressed successfully and in a more streamlined manner.

## **Information gathering and use of information**

In line with the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty, both qualitative and quantitative information has been collected.

### **Involvement of & information about disabled students**

Involvement was determined according to the size of the Royal Veterinary College and the numbers of students who had disclosed a disability (see table below). Due to the specialist nature of the College and the majority of students studying the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (with fitness to practice requirements), it was felt that an overarching questionnaire would be resource-intensive for little response and that given the smaller numbers, a more personal approach could be taken.

The College's Disability Equality Group (DEG) included a disabled student representative. The small numbers of students who have disclosed a disability (see below) mean that involvement in the process must be prioritised to the decision-making and co-ordination phase. The student representative on the group has been both a disabled student (dyslexia) and a representative of the Students' Union. The student has been involved at the key stage of developing and finalising the College's DES.

In addition, students have also been involved in determining the priorities which feature within the Scheme through focus groups held in October 2006. These gathered the detailed views of 14 disabled students to establish priorities based on a range of views and backgrounds, as a starting point for the Scheme (see Section B).

Ongoing involvement of disabled students is proposed by ensuring continued representation of a disabled student on key decision-making groups such as the Equality and Diversity Committee, which will have responsibility for determining impact assessment activities, determining actions and priorities and considering qualitative data about disabled students. In addition, ongoing feedback questionnaires are available on the College's Intranet. The responses are fed directly to the Student Disability Officer, who will summarise and promote any feedback and key messages for further development of the Scheme. The questionnaire will be systematically circulated each year to gather ongoing feedback and students' views about areas for development or any good practice e.g. in relation to combatting disability related discrimination and developing opportunities for disabled students to participate in College and public life.

The College will also aim to ensure that feedback and involvement of disabled students is specifically embedded into local departments planning and review activities through including specific questions about disability access into existing feedback mechanisms, such as Library Services questionnaires, or Estates consultations.

#### **Summary of actions**

- Ensure ongoing disabled student representation on the DEG or Equality and Diversity Committee
- Annual circulation of the Disabled Students feedback questionnaire and

summary of responses to be considered by the E & D Committee

- Embed questions about disability access into existing departmental feedback mechanisms

### **Qualitative data**

Due to the low numbers of students with disabilities at the RVC, it was decided that two focus groups would be held to determine the views of students with disabilities and set some priorities to feed into the DES. Two groups were organised, one for students based at the Camden Campus and one for students based at Hawkshead (Potters Bar). The students were selected from both undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the RVC and students with the following disabilities were represented:

- Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties
- Aspergers syndrome
- Physical/mobility issues
- Mental health – depression
- Hearing loss

Students attended an hour-long, lunchtime group that looked at the student life cycle from application through to examinations to help raise any issues or barriers. Students were then asked to highlight their priorities.

### ***What the students said***

The main subject areas highlighted by students in both groups were as follows:

#### ***Disability Support at the College***

- Lack of clear information about disability support at the College, on website or in print
- More information about disability support should be provided at open days or with the offer letter
- Mixed experiences about disability support to date, students felt they needed a continuous, named individual to contact for advice and support
- Students felt as though they had to seek out the information and organise their own support
- Students suggested that an informal network for dyslexic students might be useful to share tips and experiences

#### ***Staff awareness and perception of disability issues and personal support***

- Students had a mixed experience when asking for support, some tutors were very helpful, others were unsure how to refer the student (both front line and pastoral tutors)
- One student raised a perceived lack of support when she was feeling anxious and depressed, stating that a named individual in the College would be useful for support
- Students with dyslexia felt that a greater understanding of their difficulties and how these related to course was necessary

### ***Disclosure of a disability and the College's response***

- Some students raised a concern about whether to disclose their disability on their application form as there was a lack of 'up front' information about disability support
- More follow up was needed after a disclosure at the admissions stage – students felt that occupational health considerations were made but that there needed to be greater links between support and academic staff
- More proactive measures need to be in place to support students with physical mobility issues, especially at the Camden campus

### ***Teaching and Learning issues (to include materials and course structure)***

- The structure of the B Vet Med course was highly intensive and this may add to feelings of stress
- That multi-sensory approaches would be beneficial for students – good practice examples were given of helpful learning materials
- The need to access recordings of lectures
- Blackboard was seen as a very positive resource for reviewing work and providing learning materials in advance (circa 70% of notes available in advance of lectures)
- Suggestions for learning resources to include a glossary of difficult terminology, format of lecture note handouts, more directed feedback and greater clarity about essential v recommended reading
- In terms of learning resources – students requested extended library loans in the case of disability and more availability of key texts

### ***Examination arrangements***

- Students raised concerns about the special examination arrangements procedure and the need to apply annually
- Lack of clear procedure about what information is necessary to support requests

The above provides an outline of the key issues raised during the focus groups. From the feedback given at the focus groups and from informal meetings with individual students, the following actions have been recommended. The one-to-one student contact maintained by the SDO and SSSM on a daily basis allows students' issues to be fed into our thinking.

### ***Summary of Actions***

#### ***Disability Support at the College***

- Revise disability support and subsequent disability-related information available for students
- Produce a revised College Disability Handbook to be available at Open Days, online, during the application process and on campus
- Consider informal network for students with dyslexia and SpLDs
- Review the provision available for students with stress, anxiety and depression, such as counselling and mental health advice
- Develop annual reporting from the Student Disability Officer to provide accurate figures on students approaching the disability support service

***Staff awareness and perception of disability issues and personal support***

- Improved information about disability support targeting staff at the College
- Develop ongoing outreach and training activities for new and existing staff, prioritising individuals with front line responsibilities and pastoral support roles

***Disclosure of a disability and the College's response***

- Review and impact assess current admissions procedures and how they relate to students with disabilities
- Embed issues of physical access into current Estates planning and working practices

***Teaching and Learning issues (to include materials and course structure)***

- Highlight the issues raised by students with disabilities at the College's Teaching Committee, to ensure that these are embedded into existing course review procedures (B Vet Med curriculum has been revised this year)
- Develop specific, good practice guidance for staff producing learning materials
- Highlight the multi-sensory materials currently available for students within disability-related literature
- Develop specific services for students with disabilities in accessing the library i.e. extended loans and multi-sensory materials

***Examination arrangements***

- Review the current application procedure for special examination arrangements and how this is communicated to students
- Monitor, through the collection of quantitative data collection any developments and provide feedback on the results

**Quantitative Information**

As previously highlighted, current data collection is undertaken in different areas in relation to students. Data is collected annually through the following mechanisms:

- Annual Higher Education Statistics Agency Headcount data (HESA) sent in October
  - i. Includes number of disabled students and number in receipt of DSA
- Admissions statistics reported to College Teaching Committee
  - i. Includes number of applications by gender/ethnicity and enrolment figures
- Progression statistics
  - i. Provided by course
- Annual report of Apricot (student progression committee)
  - i. By course and subject of difficulty

The HESA headcount data gives the College its most reliable figures for the number of disabled students. In 2004-05, 36 students indicated disability, of which 33 students disclosed dyslexia or a specific learning difference. In the academic year 2005-06, this figure rose to 46, of which 42 students indicated dyslexia or a specific learning difference.

The tables below indicate students who have disclosed a disability by course and disability type for the past three years:

### Academic Year 2004-05

Course	Disability type	UG	PG	Total
Bachelor Veterinary Medicine	Deafness/Hearing Loss	1		20
	Unseen disability	1		
	Dyslexia/SpLD	18		
BSc Veterinary Sciences	Dyslexia/SpLD	8		8
BSc (Hons) Vet Science/Vet Medicine	Dyslexia/SpLD	1		1
MPhil/PhD Research	Dyslexia/SpLD		2	2
MSc Livestock Health and Production (distance learning)	Dyslexia/SpLD		1	1
MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy	Deafness/Hearing loss		1	1
	Dyslexia/SpLD		3	3
		<b>29</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>36</b>

### Academic year 2005-06

Course	Disability type	UG	PG	Total
Accelerated B Vet Med	Dyslexia/SpLD	3		3
Bachelor Veterinary Medicine	Deafness/Hearing Loss	1		27
	Unseen disability	1		
	Dyslexia/SpLD	25		
BSc Veterinary Sciences	Dyslexia/SpLD	6		6
BSc (Hons) Vet Science/Vet Medicine	Dyslexia/SpLD	1		1
MPhil/PhD Research	Dyslexia/SpLD		1	1
MSc Livestock Health and Production (distance learning)	Dyslexia/SpLD		1	1
MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy	Deafness/Hearing loss		1	1
	Dyslexia/SpLD		2	2
PG Dip Veterinary Physiotherapy	Dyslexia/SpLD		1	1
Veterinary Gateway	Deafness/Hearing loss	1		1
Veterinary Nursing Foundation	Dyslexia/SpLD	2		2
		<b>40</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>46</b>

### Academic year 2006-07

Course Name	Non-disabled	Disabled	Total
Accelerated Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme	29	1	30
Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine	957	55	1012
Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (with Intercalated BSc)	15		15
BSc (Hons) Veterinary Science/Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine	17	1	18
BSc Veterinary Nursing	118	9	127
BSc Veterinary Nursing (Top-up)	15		15
BSc Veterinary Sciences	164	5	169
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine	3		3

Intercalated BSc Veterinary Pathology	13		13
Junior Clinical Training Scholar	31	2	33
MPhil/PhD Research Programme	139		139
MPhil/PhD Research Programme at External Institute	14	1	15
MSc Control of Infectious Diseases in Animals	4		4
MSc Control of Infectious Diseases in Animals (PT)	2		2
MSc in Epidemiology and Public Health	52		52
MSc in Livestock Health & Production (Distance Learning)	28	1	29
MSc Veterinary Epidemiology	13		13
MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy	14	1	15
MSc Wild Animal Biology	15	2	17
MSc Wild Animal Health	9	1	10
PG Diploma Control of Infectious Diseases in Animals	1		1
PG Diploma in Epidemiology & Public Health (Distance Learning)	14		14
PG Diploma in Livestock Health & Production (Distance Learning)	15		15
PG Diploma in Veterinary Physiotherapy	45	3	48
Postgraduate Research Occasional Student	1		1
Senior Clinical Training Scholar	47	2	49
Veterinary Gateway	20		20
Veterinary Nursing Foundation Degree	57	5	62
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1852</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>1941</b>

The data presented from 2006-07, shows the number of disabled students on each course as a proportion of the total number of students. In 2006-07, 4.6% of the student population at the College had indicated a disability. On specific courses, this proportion increases to 5.7% (Veterinary Medicine) and 7.6% (Veterinary Nursing). With such small numbers, it is important to be cautious and determine any trends over a period, through systematic monitoring.

### Academic Year 2006-07 by disability type

Disability	PG	UG	Total
Autistic spectrum disorder		1	1
Deafness/Hearing loss		3	3
Diabetes		1	1
Dyslexia	6	43	49
Mental health illness		2	2
Multiple disabilities	1		1
Other disability		8	8
Unseen disability	6	18	24
NO DISABILITY	353	1399	1752
NOT KNOWN	61		61
INFORMATION NOT SOUGHT	1	1	2
LEFT BLANK	32	5	37
Grand Total	460	1481	1941

In the recent academic rise, the College has seen an increase in the number of students disclosing an 'unseen disability'. This may include dyslexia, or may represent students not wishing to name or label their health condition. This issue will need further exploration with students and the views of students about issues to do with disclosure will be important intelligence. It is recommended that this issue is specifically raised within a focus group environment and that year-on-year trends are monitored to see whether

increased outreach and disability support activity during the application process impact on these statistics.

From the data shown and the anecdotal figures from the Disability Service since August 2006, there may be discrepancies in the data and it may not reflect the true nature of the disabled student population at the RVC. The data above will be used as a benchmark against other data collection. One of the specific actions of the DES will be to review current information gathering activities and consider where key data collection about disabled students should be gathered. In light of the requirements of the disability equality duty, the following areas for collecting data will be prioritised:

- Application and enrolment data from students with disabilities
- Annual reporting of use of the Disability Support Service
- Progression and attainment of students with disabilities (though numbers may not be significant, investigations should be made to consider how this information might be gathered)
- Students seen by Apricot, the student progression panel according to health or disability-related reasons
- Continuous headcount data

The above will be used to consider the College's developments in promoting disability support for students and for use within impact assessment of teaching and learning-related policies and procedures.

***Summary of actions***

- A systematic review of data collection activities at the RVC, with a clear report to the E & D Committee by March 2008, based on the above priorities
- Further explore and monitor the issue of students disclosure of 'unseen disabilities' through the admissions cycle review and via student feedback/involvement mechanisms

## **Involvement of and information about disabled staff**

The College's involvement of and information gathering about disabled staff is at a relatively early stage, mainly because there have not been the resources to date to pursue this work on the same scale as that carried out with students. However, it has been possible to involve staff and obtain qualitative & quantitative information in the following ways:

- Disabled staff who have been employed at the College since October 2000 have been encouraged to liaise informally with the staff responsible for disabled students, obtaining support & advice and providing feedback about issues relevant for staff.
- HR has run an ongoing programme of disability & equality awareness training. This has provided disabled staff with the opportunity to explore relevant issues with their line or senior managers or directly with HR and raised awareness of managers to disability equality issues in relation to the recruitment, development and retention of disabled staff.
- In 2005, the College launched a major staff consultation exercise. Although this covered a range of issues relating to working life at RVC, information relating to disability issues was also captured. One of the main issues raised was about causes of and solutions for stress.

As a result, the College established a counselling and advisory service to RVC employees as an additional source of workplace support. This was run in partnership with Care First, a leading independent specialist provider of workplace counselling, information and advice services. Care First employs professionally qualified counsellors and information specialists, who are experienced in helping people to deal with all kinds of practical and emotional issues. The service provides: unlimited freephone access 24 hours a day, every day of the year for personal & work related issues; short term counselling & support by telephone and face to face (up to six one hour sessions); support & referral for longer term issues; a range of information services; management support & referral services and on site support following a traumatic incident, such as threat, injury or death

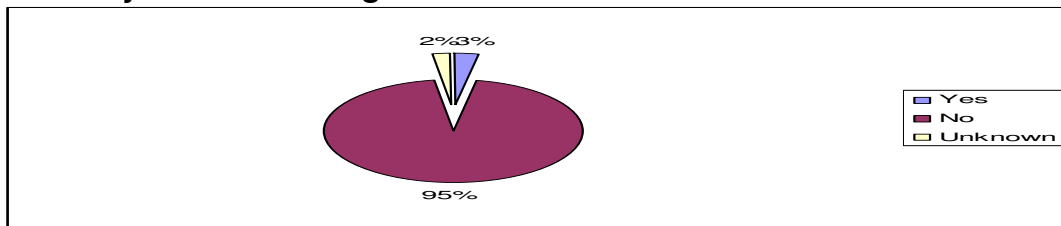
Although this service is offered on a strictly confidential basis between the employee and Care First staff, it has been useful in enabling staff who wish to do so to provide feedback to the College on how our systems & procedures might be improved. Some information relating to disabled staff has been obtained in this way and has been used to assist these staff in establishing the appropriate types of reasonable adjustments for them.

This has also been combined with generic (anonymised) advice provided to the College by the Occupational Health service. Where staff have been referred to the service by the College for advice on fitness to work, rehabilitation or support & adjustments, it has sometimes been possible for HR to incorporate the results into the ways in which they make provision for all disabled staff.

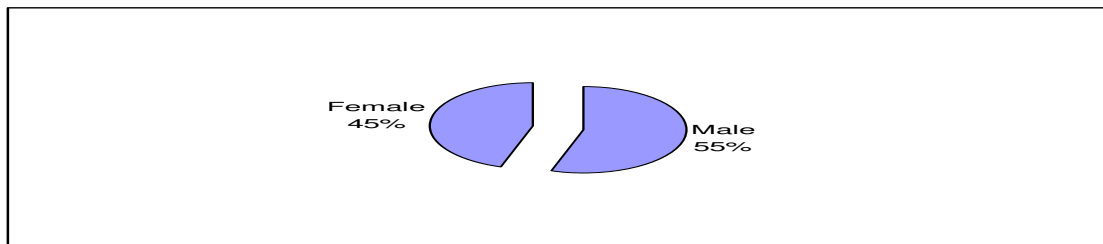
## Staff Baseline Data as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2007

The following information has been obtained from information officially disclosed by staff to the College.

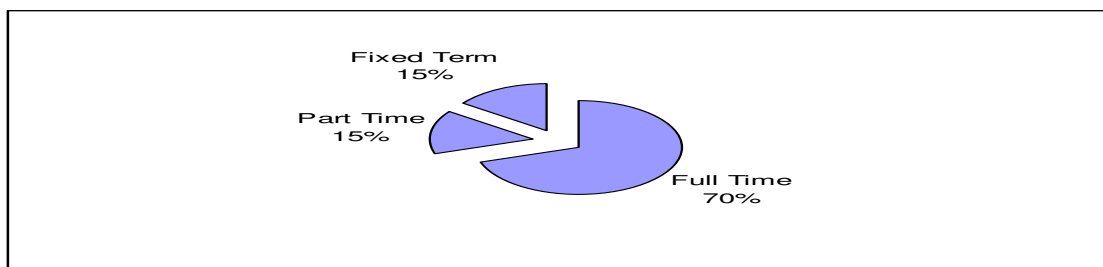
### Disability Profile – College wide



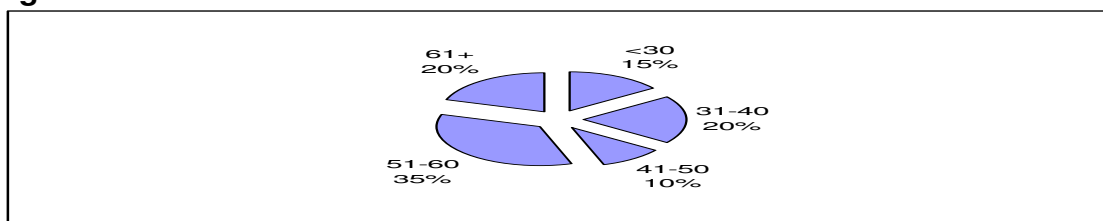
### Gender of Disabled Staff



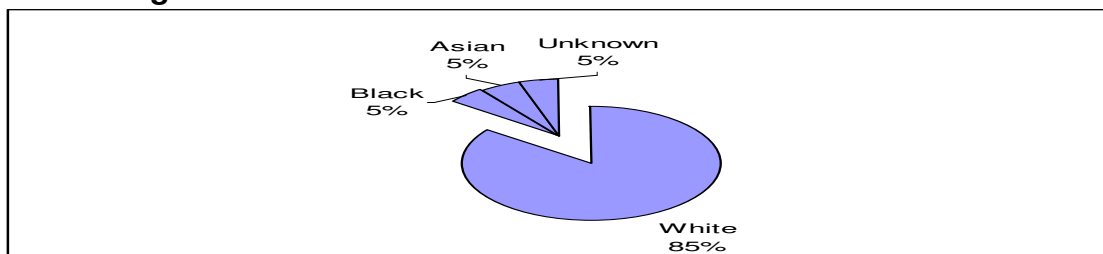
### Contract status of Disabled Staff



### Age Profile of Disabled Staff



### Ethnic Origin Profile of Disabled Staff



## **Staff disability consultation July – August 2007**

At the time of publishing the first DES in December 2006, the College was in the process of supplementing information provided by disabled staff by a series of one to one conversations with staff known to HR. This had been done in an informal way at the request of the disabled staff themselves. However, it was intended that a more structured consultation would take place as soon as possible in 2007 once the Disability Equality Group began work.

At the first meeting of the group, in April 2007, the external consultant was asked to work with disabled & other staff, to produce an appropriate questionnaire for the College. Models produced by other HEIs were examined and a questionnaire was tailor made for RVC purposes.

At the specific request of disabled staff, information was to be disaggregated by impairment type but not other dimensions such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation & religion or belief. Disabled staff felt that people with little knowledge of disability would get confused about the purpose of the questionnaire if these other aspects were included at this stage. However, the intention is to ensure that when the next consultation exercise takes place, it builds on the first one by exploring other aspects of disabled people's personal identity.



The results of the questionnaire were compiled in September 2007, with the original intention being that the Disability Equality Group would work with disabled staff to take forward the outcomes. Due to the need to dedicate time to revising the Disability Equality Scheme, it has not yet been possible to do this as comprehensively as we would have liked.



In agreement with disabled people who have seen the full results, we have decided that we need to wait until such full consultation takes place before the results are made public. Priority will be given to information provided about disability related harassment and opportunities to participate in College life. Agreement was reached that the results would feed into the revised Disability Equality Scheme and that some data would be released for the purposes of the DES. This data now follows.

## Staff data from disability questionnaire



September 2007










At the time of the exercise (July – August 2007), the College had 675 staff, of whom 131 completed the questionnaire. The response rate was therefore 19.4%. The percentages below are therefore percentages relating to nearly one fifth of the College's staff and not the full cohort.

Staff who are or consider that they are disabled			
Yes:		11.5%	15
No:		88.5%	116

Staff who consider that they have had a disability in the past			
Yes:		14.5%	19
No:		85.5%	112
	See breakdown below		

Staff with present & past disability	13
Staff with present disability only	2
Staff with past disability only	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

Disability acquired after first year in employment at the College			
Yes:		6.2%	1
No:		93.8%	15

Type of disability/condition			
Mental health condition:		15.8%	3
Long term, progressive or chronic medical conditions e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy:		36.8%	7
Cancer, multiple sclerosis, HIV:		5.3%	1
Dyslexia/specific learning difficulties:		15.8%	3
Visual impairment:		5.3%	1
Hearing impairment:		5.3%	1
Mobility impairment:		5.3%	1
Physical co-ordination impairment:		5.3%	1
Autism/Asperger's syndrome:		5.3%	1

## **Involvement and information about other disabled stakeholders**

Our other stakeholders are our clients, visitors & external stakeholders.

### **Clients**

We are working to create a customer-focused approach to all first opinion and referring clients including those with a disability. To achieve this, there is an ongoing process of client surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and competitor data analysis, to ascertain the requirements of all our clients, so that the appropriate protocols and policies can be put in place.

Staff undergo training to help them adopt a customer-friendly approach inclusive of disabled people. The College provides clinical care to clients with assistance dogs and therefore staff have expertise in ensuring that clients are fully included in the treatment process & receive any necessary additional assistance. Although no precise data relating to disabled clients was available in time to be included in this scheme, the Clinical Services department will be prioritising this once a new staff appointment has been made.

### **Visitors**

The College receives a wide range of visitors at both campuses and at many of the buildings offering services to external clients. The specific needs of disabled visitors will be catered for upon request. At present, we have no formal method of collecting data about disabled visitors. Our Estates department is currently investigating the most effective way to do this.

### **External stakeholders**

Organisations such as the Guide Dogs for the Blind have made use of the College's premises in the past in order to facilitate the training of new guide dogs. We are currently approaching them to invite their participation in commenting on the College's DES.

Disabled staff have a range of ideas about the types of other external stakeholders that they would like to involve. This is currently under discussion and will be confirmed once the new Equality & Diversity Committee is re-formed.

### **Working group on providing accessible data information**

From January 2008, a working group will be set up to develop brief guidelines on providing fully accessible data information. This includes, for example, creating accessible data tables. Guidelines will be submitted to the Equality & Diversity Committee for adoption as official College policy.

## **Impact Assessment methodology**

Another aspect of the Disability Equality Duty requires us to assess our policies, procedures & practices to ensure that they do not or are not likely to place disabled people at a disadvantage. We will do this using the following methodology (the word 'policy' includes 'procedures & practices' wherever it is used below). One of the first tasks of the Equality and Diversity committee will be to allocate responsibility for developing and implementing this process.

### **Stage One: Screening**

We will assess whether a proposed policy is relevant, which means looking at the extent to which it may have a negative impact upon disabled people. This involves deciding:

- the purpose or aim of the policy
- who is responsible for its implementation
- who is affected by the policy: staff, students, clients, visitors, consultants, contractor, suppliers & other external stakeholders
- whether different groups have different needs in relation to this policy
- whether the policy promotes or prevents disability equality
- its priority rating (high, medium, low) for impact assessment in terms of relevance to the Disability Equality Strategy

If a policy has no relevance for the DES, it will be reassessed at a future set date or sooner if any changes to the policy are proposed.

If an impact assessment is required for a policy, the following methodology will be used.

### **Stage Two: Impact Assessment**

The first step will be to determine the scope of the impact assessment required for a particular policy. This involves deciding the time, resources and expertise required and who should be involved. The level of action required will vary according to the level of priority given in the screening process. At this stage, it will be necessary to determine:

- the effects that the policy would be likely to have
- whether the existing qualitative & quantitative data is sufficient
- if additional data is required, what kind of data is necessary
- how that data can be obtained most effectively

Once any additional data has been obtained, the policy will be assessed using a range of factors including whether:

- the impact for disabled people is positive or negative
- the target group has different needs, experiences, concerns or priorities to non-disabled people in relation to the issue addressed by a policy
- the impact is direct or indirect
- the policy affects disabled people in a different way to the majority of their peers (staff, students, etc)

- there is an evidence base to substantiate the impact & data is available/needed

If there is no adverse impact, the assessment ends at this point.

If there is a positive impact, this will be recorded & the policy will be reassessed at a future set date or sooner if any changes to the policy are proposed.

If there is an adverse impact, the assessment continues to the next stage.

### **Ways of mitigating adverse impacts of a policy**

It will then be necessary to consider other ways of achieving the purpose or aim of a policy, including:

- making changes to the policy
- changing the way in which it is implemented
- replacing the policy
- introducing additional measures to improve its implementation

All stakeholders will be consulted on the final policy and on the assessed impact that such a policy change might have for other policies, that may involve a re-screening process.

### **Stage Three: Reporting on Impact Assessment & Follow up**

The overall findings of the impact assessment exercise will be used to make amendments to the DES Action Plan. A report will be presented to the Equality & Diversity Committee, which will delegate responsibility to a small working group to monitor new or revised policies to ensure that they are impact assessed before being approved.

## **Monitoring, evaluation and publication of the DES**

The College is legally required to report annually on the implementation of the DES, and to review it formally after three years.

The College is in the fortunate position of having had the first DES (Dec 06) reviewed by the Disability Rights Commission in July 07, with various requirements and suggestions being made as a result. When the amended version has been accepted by the new Equality and Human Rights Commission, the DES will underpin the College's work for the future. Its implementation in 2008 will be monitored and evaluated through the following mechanisms:

- Ongoing feedback from disabled people via a DES feedback form located on the College's intranet and internet sites & in printed format (with the possibility of alternative formats)
- Anonymised feedback from disabled staff & students who have agreed to provide this to a designated individual (Disability Officer, SU Officers, Equality & Diversity Manager or other named delegate(s))
- Systematic monitoring by a disability working group, with reports sent to the Equality and Diversity Committee.  
These reports will also be copied to the Assistant Principal who will alert the Senior Management Group and/or Principal of any urgent matter requiring SMG decisions or action. The Principal is the named person responsible for the operational implementation of the DES.
- The Director of Finance will monitor the financial Resourcing of the DES.
- Equality and Diversity Committee will review the DES in April, July & October, when any proposed amendments for 2009 will be discussed. The October meeting will also make indications in preparation for the annual report due on 4 December 2008.
- The College Council will oversee the above process, receive the annual report and approve any amendments to the DES.

### **Publishing the Disability Equality Scheme**

The DES will continue to be published on the College's intranet and internet sites, with references made to it in all relevant publications such as the annual report, undergraduate prospectus, etc. A report of the work of the Disability Equality Group will be published at the end of 2007, with the follow-on work of the Equality & Diversity committee and associated disability working group also being published. The Students' Union will promote the DES to students via its own communication channels.

### **Annex A Action Plan Nov 07 – Dec 09**

The Action Plan for implementing this Disability Equality Scheme is attached in Annex A. All staff and students of the College are required to support the objectives of this Scheme and to participate in training as appropriate.