St Helens College

University Centre St Helens

Knowsley Community College

Equality and Diversity Policy

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Responsible Officer:	Director of HR

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1. Introduction

1.1 SK College Group has a long history of commitment to Equality and Diversity. The College Group strives to build a culture that values equality, diversity, openness, fairness and transparency for its staff and students. The College believes that by embracing equality and diversity we are providing a sound foundation on which to build a successful and vibrant environment whose cultures and values are respected by both our students and the community as a whole. To this end the College Group is committed to produce, implement, review and monitor policies which promote equality and diversity for all those who study and work within the institution.

1.2 The terms Equality and Diversity are often used interchangeably. Equality is about fairness. It underpins and is at the heart of all that we are and all that we do. Equality goes well beyond just equal opportunities. To tackle traditional disadvantage and exclusion SK College Group aims to embed equality across all aspects of its work. This includes a commitment to having services that are of equal value to everyone, and recognise that this might mean different services to suit diverse needs. The word 'diversity' means a range of difference. We want to acknowledge and value this range of difference, whether in individuals, groups or in communities.

1.3 The Equality and Diversity Policy seeks to ensure that SK College Group is fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and fairness in all areas of employment and education, and in recognising the value of diversity.

1.4 The College Group believes its people and its learners are the key to its effectiveness

1.5 To be successful the College Group aims to appoint, develop and motivate people and create a working environment which encourages high performance, trust and cooperation between individuals and teams. Equality and diversity is fundamental to the achievement of this aim.

1.6 The College Group will continually strive to enhance its 'positive environment' by valuing difference and recognising that people with different backgrounds, experience, skills and attitudes introduce new ideas and develop increased awareness, understanding and harmony within the College community.

1.7 The College Group has a clear mission and clear values which incorporate Equality and Diversity.

1.8 The SK College Group recognises the importance of the Equality Act 2010 and the related Public Sector Equality Duty is committed to the three main aims of the duty. Those aims are:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

1.9 The College Group will, through its commitment to Equality and Diversity, ensure that all individuals are able to achieve their full potential and realise their personal goals irrespective of :

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

1.10 The College staff recruitment and selection process, policies and practice are designed to ensure that when employment decisions are made they are based solely on the skills and qualities required for the position and comply with all relevant employment legislation and best practice standards.

2 Scope and purpose

2.1 The Equality and Diversity policy applies to all members of the College community including:

- Board of Governors
- Potential employment applicants
- All employees, consultants and agency workers
- Potential learner applicants applying for courses at the College
- All learners
- Third party partners/contractors
- Visitors to the college

2.2 All employees and students have a personal responsibility to create and maintain an environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected, and are personally accountable for their behaviour. Each member of staff and all students should therefore seek to ensure that the Equal and Diversity Policy is applied actively on a day-to-day basis. Behaviour, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the College's disciplinary policy for staff or students.

2.3 The purpose of this policy is to establish clear College guidance regarding equality and the overall commitment to Equality and Diversity.

2.4 This policy will be applied in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and guidance issued by ACAS and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission

2.5 The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal business requirements. Progress relating to the policy will be recorded annually and a full report will be presented to the Executive, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Governors.

3 Leadership and Responsibilities

The College Group celebrates and values the diversity of its students and its workforce. It believes that the College Group will benefit from employing a diverse workforce at all levels of responsibility, and across all areas of work and by encouraging a student population which is representative of the community it serves. The Colleges corporate responsibilities, together with the responsibilities of individual members of the College, are explained below:

3.1 Through having a representative workforce and Governing Body the College seeks to provide role models across the curriculum and the various functions of the College. The College is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students. This commitment applies to the operation and implementation of all its policies.

3.2 All employees consultants and agency workers for the College Group have a responsibility to comply with Equality and Diversity Policy.

3.3 The Policy forms part of the formal contract of employment for staff, failure to comply could result in disciplinary proceedings. In certain circumstances, a breach of the Equality and Diversity Policy may constitute a criminal offence and the College may be required to report the matter to the police.

3.4 Staff responsibilities:

- Treat all individuals fairly, with dignity and respect
- Comply with all College policies, best practice standards and promote an environment where everyone feels safe, supported and included
- Report all incidents where a breach of Equality and Diversity has occurred
- Comply with all Equality and Diversity initiatives
- Promote the principles of Equality and Diversity to other staff and students

3.5 Manager/Supervisory responsibilities:

- Foster a College environment free of bullying, harassment and discrimination
- Take appropriate action in accordance with College policies and procedures in circumstances where a breach of Equality and Diversity has occurred
- Not discriminate unfairly if involved in the recruitment, promotion and management of staff, or in the selection and supervision of students

3.6 Learner responsibilities:

- Treat all individuals fairly, with dignity and respect

- Comply with all College policies, best practice standards and promote an environment where everyone feels safe, supported and included
- Report all incidents where a breach of Equality and Diversity has occurred
- Comply with all Equality and Diversity initiatives
- Promote the principles of Equality and Diversity to other learners

3.7 All College Partners/Third Party Contractors are expected to comply with the Equality and Diversity Policy. It is a requirement of staff to bring to the attention of all College Partners/Third Party Contractors (including work placement providers) the College Equality and Diversity Policy and seek assurance regarding the Third Party Organisations approach to Equality and Diversity in the workplace.

3.8 Equality, Diversity and Safeguarding Committee. The College has an Equality, Diversity and Safeguarding Committee with membership representative of College staff. The Equality and Diversity Committee sets the strategy, direction and focus for Equality and Diversity issues and produces an annual Equality and Diversity report, which is agreed by the Board of Governors. The College has an Equality and Diversity Action Plan. It is led by the Head of Quality and translates strategy into an action plan of improvement and development initiatives. The action plan is then used to measure progress. The action plan has four key areas of focus:

- ✓ Curriculum
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Quality
- ✓ People

4. Legal Duties

4.1 The College undertakes to fulfil all the legal duties put upon it by:

- The Equality Act 2010 and its associated Codes of Practice
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Employment Rights Act 1989
- The Criminal Justice Public Order Act 1994

This means there will be no discrimination against staff or students unless otherwise justified in law. The College Group undertakes to fulfil its duty to make reasonable adjustments to enable staff/students to do their work, and not to treat disabled staff/students less favourably than non-disabled staff/students.

4.2 The College Group accepts that there are inter-related legal requirements to the “public sector equality duty” which apply to it as a Further and Higher Education institution. The College Group, in carrying out its duties agrees to have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

(a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

(b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

(a) tackle prejudice, and

(b) promote understanding.

4.3 The College Group will also comply with its Specific Duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are:-

(i) The College Group must publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the duty imposed by section 149(1) of the Act not later than 31st January of each year; and subsequently at intervals of not greater than one year beginning with the date of last publication.

(ii) This information will include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are—

(a) its employees;

(b) other persons affected by its policies and practices (ie students or prospective students).

(iii) he College will prepare and publish its objectives to enable it to achieve to the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) of section 149 of the Act.

The objectives must be published— (a)

not later than 6th April 2012; and

(b) subsequently at intervals of not greater than four years beginning with the date of last publication.

In compliance with the specific duty, these documents will be published in a way which is accessible to the public.

4.4 To ensure that its staff are fully aware of their legal obligations and responsibilities the College Group has purchased an on-line training package on Diversity in the Workplace which is compulsory for all staff to complete.

4.5 The College Group is committed to supporting the underlying principles of the Equality Act which are –

- To promote fairness and equality of opportunity;
- tackle disadvantage and discrimination; and;
- to modernise or strengthen our law to make it fit for the challenges that our society faces today and in the future.

5. Equality as part of our Business Cycle

5.1 The College Group planning commences in November with strategic planning for the forthcoming academic year and a review of current performance. Priorities are identified, plans made and actions agreed to deliver learning.

5.2 We will:

- ensure equality is a mainstream element of all teaching and learning and that equality is embedded in everything we do. This will be reflected in our action plans.
- where provision of services are to be procured through tendering we will build action for equality into procurement arrangements, in line with the requirements of the European Union procurement directives.
- assess the impact on equality and diversity of implementing our policies and procedures
- collect evidence to monitor compliance, set improvement measures and report on progress in achieving these measures.

6 The College as an Education Provider

6.1 The College Group's mission is to deliver excellent education and skills for life and work enable our students to fulfill their creative ambitions and to progress to, and through successful careers

6.2 The College Group's values are to ensure all those who can benefit from studying, working or visiting any of the campuses are not disadvantaged due to a protected characteristic.

6.3 Admissions

The College G r o u p will not discriminate against a person in relation to admission to the institution. This means that everything the College Group does in relation to deciding who is admitted to the institution will be nondiscriminatory. This covers everything from course design and setting admission requirements to the information provided about the institution and the course application and admissions process.

All admissions information and application forms will be available in accessible formats to ensure that we comply with the reasonable adjustments duty to disabled people.

6.4 Curriculum Content

The College Group is not restricted in the range of issues, ideas and materials used across its syllabuses and will have the academic freedom to expose students to a range of thoughts and ideas.

6.5 Curriculum design

Although the actual content of courses is not subject to the discrimination provisions, the College Group recognises that it must ensure that its courses are taught in a way that will not subject students to discrimination and the way in which the curriculum is taught is crucial to challenging stereotypes and addressing inequality.

a. Assessments and examinations

These come in a variety of forms including the following:

i. Written examinations. ii. Work-based assessment. iii. Critiques, orals and presentations. iv. Practicals and performances.

v. Dissertations and coursework.

vi. On-line learning and assessment materials

The College Group recognises that it is important for its staff to ensure that they do not discriminate against students with protected characteristics. Assuming uniformity in students' cultural, linguistic, and religious or lifestyle experiences could result in for example, indirectly discriminating against students from particular racial groups. The College Group will make all reasonable attempts to try to avoid discriminating indirectly against students in the timing of examinations and assessments. For example students may have difficulty attending examinations or assessments because of issues surrounding the side effects of medication, religious prayer times or festivals or caring responsibilities.

A competence standard is defined as an academic or other standard applied by the College Group for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability. It is not a provision, criterion or practice and there is therefore no duty on the College Group to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the application of a competence standard. However, the College Group recognises that its legal duties do apply to the process of demonstrating that a person meets the

competence standard. In practical terms this means that the mark required to pass an exam would be a competence standard, so the College Group would not be subject to the duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled student. However, the College Group will consider reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities to sit an exam. Such adjustments may include providing an exam paper in enlarged text for a student with a visual impairment.

6.6 British Values

Colleges **have** been required to promote British values since 2014, and this will continue to be part of our response to the Prevent strategy.

British values include:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty & mutual respect
- Tolerance of different faiths & beliefs

The College Group embraces British Values and embeds them throughout the curriculum and within all activity.

6.7 Educational trips

The College Group will ensure that educational trips which are arranged do not discriminate against any of its students and where required make reasonable adjustments to enable students with a range of disabilities to access them.

6.8 Qualifications

The College Group will avoid discriminating when awarding, renewing or extending qualifications to students, including any form of authorisation, approval or certification that it makes. For example if a student were to undergo gender reassignment during their time with the Group and notifies the College Group of their change of gender and change of name, the data that records and informs the student's progress and achievement will be amended accordingly

6.9 Work placements

The College Group will ensure that it does not discriminate in any of the arrangements that it makes with work placement providers and that where relevant they are made aware of the needs of their placement students with protected characteristics. This includes making sure that the work placement provider is aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments for those disabled students who require them. If the College Group is informed that discrimination has occurred, it will negotiate with the work placement provider to try and resolve the issue and if appropriate may need to find an alternative placement.

6.10 All material published by the College G r o u p will seek to avoid the use of offensive and discriminatory language and images. Significant course publicity materials and exhibitions will include a statement outlining the College's commitment to Equality. Such marketing materials will be directed at encouraging the widest representation of cultural and social groups on the College's programmes. Equally, materials prepared by the College Group to deliver the curriculum will be free from racist, sexist, and other discriminatory assumptions, images and language, unless they are being studied as examples of such.

6.11 The College Group respects the wide diversity of the student body and will endeavour to ensure that systems and practices do not conflict with cultural and religious beliefs. Where there is potential for such conflict, staff are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from appropriate managers. Academic advice and guidance will be available to meet diverse needs and to ensure that students are aware of appropriate progression routes.

6.12 In recognising its duties to a diverse audience the College Group will provide facilities which are accessible in terms of physical structure (or reasonable adjustments for individuals affected by such accessibility issues); accessible information; and hours of service which reflect client usage. Facilities will be regularly audited and upgraded in the light of such considerations.

6.13 In addition to support its students, the College Group will:

- Ensure our student policies are fit-for-purpose and review them regularly.
- Act robustly to challenge and eliminate prejudice, bullying or harassment.
- Support the Students' Union and other representative forums.
- Regularly review our student monitoring figures and take action where appropriate.
- Use a variety of different methods to attract and retain students from all equality backgrounds.
- Comply with all equalities-related legislation.
- Provide assistive technology and other services for students with particular needs.
- Encourage open, honest discussion about issues which support students' educational attainment and a learning culture.
- Continue to develop a student community that is reflective of the diversity mix of the area and beyond.

7 How we will deal with Complaints

7.1 It is the College Group's aim that most concerns or issues will be raised with and resolved in conjunction with tutors (for students) and line managers (for staff). In addition the College group has a range of support options available to staff and students, including counselling. However, it is appreciated that resolution through these means is not always possible, or that the matter is of such a nature that it needs to be addressed more formally.

7.2 The College G r o u p has therefore procedures in place to consider all complaints, through either informal or formal routes. These procedures apply to our equality obligations, including allegations of harassment or discrimination, or racism.

7.3 Where a complaint is made the College Group will look to address it within the terms of these procedures and will seek to provide a fair, proper and constructive response to complaints. Outcomes of complaints relating to equality and diversity will be considered in the review process for this scheme without breaching confidentiality.

7.4 If individuals, community organisations, trade unions or others are concerned that the College Group fails to comply with its statutory duties, we hope that in the first instance they will raise their concerns with the College Group directly via our complaints procedure.

8 External Relations

8.1 Visitors and representatives from organisations attending the College Group and campuses on any business will be expected to conduct themselves in a manner which matches the College Group's Ethos on Equality and Diversity. External staff, consultants engaged by the College group will be expected to adhere to the principles of equality of opportunity and, wherever possible, have adopted their own Equal Opportunities Policy

8.2 Organisations providing services for the College Group and employers participating in any work placement scheme will be made aware of the College Groups's position on Equality and Diversity.

8.3 The College Group will use its influence to encourage wider understanding and acceptance of equal opportunities within the fields of both education and employment through its relationships with its external partners.

8.4 To further develop its policies the College G r o u p will establish and maintain contact with external organisations which can contribute positively to the College Group's understanding of current law and good practice.

9 Publications Policy

We will ensure that this scheme and accompanying documentation are accessible by publishing them electronically in appropriate formats and making them available on request in formats for anyone with a visual or hearing impairment.

10 Monitoring, Reporting, Reviewing and Updating

10.1 The Equality and Diversity Policy will be reviewed annually. On occasion an earlier amendment may be required to reflect a legislative change, best practice or College Group procedural amendment.

10.2 Monitoring of the success of this policy will be through the College's Equality and Diversity Committee. The Equality and Diversity action plan is agreed by the Committee

and is a flexible document. It identifies a range of actions for implementation and is monitored on a termly basis. The Committee will report annually on progress to the Executive, SLT and to Governors through the appropriate college committees.

10.3 The College Group will, as part of its daily business, monitor key areas, review policies and procedures, ensure effective and proportionate Equality Impact Assessments, and identify areas of improvement for consideration and incorporation within the Equality and Diversity action plan.

10.4 The College Group will also identify strategies to reduce any identified achievement shortfall or areas of underrepresentation, thereby ensuring all staff and learners attain maximum benefit and the College Group is representative of the community it services.

10.5 Data, conclusions and recommendations arising from monitoring exercises i.e. Compliance with the public sector specific duties, will be reported to the Equality and Diversity committee, Quality groups, Executive, SLT and Governors.

Appendix 1

Applicable Projects

[There are currently no applicable projects]