



Disability Equality at LSE

APRIL 2006

The new duty to promote Disability Equality (DDA 2005)

From the Director



Director Howard Davies presenting Disability Friendly awards during Disability Awareness Week in 2005

Our first priority in the Strategic Plan, 2005-10, is 'To maintain excellence in teaching with high quality

student support services'. A creative and comprehensive Disability Equality Scheme (DDA) will certainly help us to achieve that aim.

It is helpful that the amended disability discrimination legislation has focused attention on how higher education institutions can become more accessible, in the widest meaning of the term, not only for students, but for members of staff and visitors to the School as well.

To meet the new duties, every section of the School will have a part to play, building on the excellent progress we have already made through SENDA (Special Educational Need and Disability Act 2001).

From the SU Disability Office

By Kanishka Aubeelack, disability officer, SU Executive, and chair of the Society for Students with Disabilities and Dyslexia

Having been the SU's disabilities officer for the past year, I am glad that this legislation is finally being taken seriously.

The School has indeed taken steps to improve the student life of those with disabilities in general and in some areas it provides an outstanding service. But there are many other areas where a lot is still left to be done, mainly regarding academic matters.

The layout and infrastructure of the campus poses many challenges as far as accessibility is concerned and in this respect, a number of steps have been taken to improve it. However, it is unfortunate that many of these actions have sometimes been undertaken without consulting those students directly concerned, which occasionally leads to impractical results.

The greatest challenge is to ensure all LSE staff

know the best means to communicate with people with disabilities.

In my opinion, such improvements would benefit the School and further enhance the quality of education and employment at LSE. I sincerely hope that this action plan will go beyond the requirements of the DDA 2005, and I urge all departments to consult disabled colleagues, visitors and students when reviewing the impact of their policies and practice.



What do we need to do to develop an LSE Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 2006?

Understanding the general and the specific duties

The new legislation places both general and specific duties to promote disability equality. The general duty requires all public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

In addition, there are specific duties for listed public authorities including education providers and funding bodies. These organisations will need to:

- publish a disability equality scheme by December 2006
- prepare and regularly review an action plan detailing the steps it plans to take to meet the new duties
- review, revise and publish their Scheme every three years.

Key elements of a DES will include:

- your vision, key areas for improvement and specific outcomes to achieve within the next three years

- the ways in which disabled people are actively involved
- the methods for assessing the impact of policies and practices
- the arrangements for gathering information to measure and evaluate progress and performance
- the ways in which progress and performance are reported annually.

The DES will also need to explain how staff will understand their roles and responsibilities.

Gathering and making use of information

As a minimum, you must consider the:

- recruitment, retention and career development of disabled staff, including qualifications achieved. This should be interpreted broadly and include, for example, access to student facilities and trips.
- educational opportunities available and the achievement of disabled learners, including qualifications achieved. This should be interpreted broadly and include, for example, access to student facilities and trips.

You will need to gather both qualitative and quantitative information from a wide range of sources using a variety of methods. Your DES should also include your arrangements for analysing and making use of the information collected.

A vision for the future



Existing main entrance



Proposed main entrance

The new duties

taken from the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (LSDA) briefing paper, 2005

What is the difference between current DDA legislation and this new duty?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 introduces a new duty to promote disability equality on education providers and other public sector bodies including the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

The new duty will be in force from December 2006 and is perhaps the most significant legislative development for the post-16 education sector's duties towards disabled people.

This legislation will build on progress already made by many providers in improving disability equality in education. However, it will extend the DDA1995 requirements, which were to anticipate and respond to the individual needs of disabled people, to a duty under which organisations must become proactive agents of change.

The new legislation will encourage a systematic whole-organisation approach by mainstreaming disability equality to make it central to the work of all public sector bodies.



The staff perspective: dyslexia – an invisible disability

Louise Hatcher tells her story

Louise joined the LSE Library in 1996 and became aware that she is dyslexic in 2003. The possibility of dyslexia was raised by her manager, Jean Sykes, during their appraisal discussion when talking about minute taking. Louise told Jean that because of weaknesses in her short-term memory, she found it too difficult to retain information to take minutes. She also explained that she found the idea of taking the Diversity Toolkit telephone test daunting for the same reason.

The discussion provided the last pieces of the jigsaw for Jean. Jean, who considered Louise's performance as her PA to be outstanding, had previously noticed that she seemed anxious, lacked confidence at times, for example on public occasions, appeared to have to concentrate hard at staff meetings, and looked tired at the end of the day. Jean put together both her understanding of dyslexia – that it is not simply a matter of jumbling up letters (ie, misspelling or putting words in the wrong order) – with Louise's comments, and raised the possibility of dyslexia with her. Louise agreed to speak to the Human Resources Division to see if the idea could be investigated.

Gail Keeley, adviser for staff with disabilities, referred Louise to a suitable, qualified psychologist, Dr Sylvia Moody (co-author of *Dyslexia in the Workplace*, a copy of which is in the Library) who carried out a diagnostic assessment and confirmed that Louise is dyslexic.

What being dyslexic means to Louise

Dr Moody sent Louise a questionnaire for completion before their meeting, which identified difficulties with the following:

- reading aloud, or quickly, or with good understanding and recollection
- writing quickly and taking notes or minutes at meetings
- following conversations, contributing to discussions and presenting her thoughts succinctly
- remembering spoken instructions, phone numbers and messages
- mental arithmetic, and understanding tables of figures and graphs
- concentrating for periods in excess of about thirty minutes, and against a background of noise.

Unsurprisingly, these difficulties caused Louise to feel frustrated, anxious, embarrassed and lacking in confidence.

Dr Moody's conclusion that Louise had significant, and previously unrecognised, dyslexia proved to be a truly life changing experience for Louise. It was an enormous relief to her and greatly increased her self-belief. Dr Moody's description of her as a woman of high intellectual ability began the boost to her self-confidence, which developed to such an extent that a year later she was able to speak confidently and unflatteringly to a group of senior School managers about being dyslexic.

How Louise has been supported

Dr Moody's workplace assessment recommended a programme of tuition with a tutor who specialises in helping dyslexic adults who have workplace difficulties together with technological aids such as a portable CD minidisk to record meetings and discussions, a Dictaphone and 'Inspirations' software.

Jean Syke's working style happens to fit in well with the way in which a dyslexic person can best interact. Jean gets into the office early, plans work in advance, sends email messages to Louise at the start and throughout the day, and marks documents with instructions for Louise to act upon. Interruptions are kept to a minimum, which is helpful as people with dyslexia find interruptions off-putting.

Louise's successful working strategies

- using techniques such as reading words and sentences bit by bit or grouping words. Visualising and relating information to personal experiences
- recording meetings, discussions, and instructions on a portable minidisk recorder
- seeing written instructions or a diagram of how things work, rather than talking and listening about a subject, or being hands-on
- looking at what is important in written documents by looking at the outline framework and finding the principal topics and ideas
- highlighting key points in documents, using colour coding and mind

maps (graphic alternatives to a list) which helps in planning and remembering things. This works by using key words rather than whole sentences and colours and images that stimulate the brain and therefore aid memory and creativity when planning or problem solving

- keeping the desk tidy, being well organised and planning ahead
- asking people to repeat what they say and sometimes asking for written back-up, probably email, if the message is long and involved
- using email to allow more time to think before responding to requests
- learning techniques to help filter out background noise
- learning to be more relaxed and less anxious all the time.



L-r: Louise and Jean

How Louise has raised the awareness of others and why she is doing this?

Louise and Jean played a significant part in a workshop for senior managers on raising awareness of dyslexia in the workplace, which was organised by Gail. They did so because they felt that there may be a number of LSE staff who are struggling with dyslexia, either because they are covering it up or are unaware of it. Their managers may unwittingly make things worse for them if their working methods do not happen to be helpful in this context or because they perceive them as being slow at their work, unusually defensive or aggressive, unwilling to take on new tasks, or resistant to training.

Louise is happy to talk to others who are, or may feel, they are dyslexic.

‘I found that once I approached Gail (the adviser to staff with disabilities), I was able to get funding through Access to Learning for digital hearing aids which are better than analogue as they are fine tuned to my needs and screen out distracting background noise, making my job easier.’
[Hearing impairment]

‘I got the support [from the administrator and the department] without being made to feel different. That was everything to me. That, if you really want to know, is what made it special. You don't get that very often as a disabled person.’
[Visual impairment]

DES proposed timeline

Planning Day, 28 April, 9.30am-4.30pm

The DES Planning Day will be held at the Diskus Centre, Transport House, Holborn.

We will build on the progress the School has made through implementation of the SENDA action plan, using similar section headings in a series of workshops. Prior to the planning day, we will send a briefing pack to those attending.

By completing the initial stages in a one day planning, it is hoped to make the process as simple and straightforward as possible. To do this we need every section of the School to be represented by at least one senior member of staff to take responsibility for drafting a programme of impact assessments of their policies and practice, related to disability equality, within a three year action plan which forms part of the disability equality scheme.

Presentation of draft DES to the Consultative Forum, 10 May, R301

Presentation of first draft to LSE Council, 22 June

Launch of DES

The launch of the DES will take place during Disability Week, 13-17 November

‘Web CT in general was very good; the odd thing was scanned which made it inaccessible but overall it was great.’
[Visual impairment]

‘I said after the first seminar, listen; there is no way I can make it to that room safely for a whole term. They hummed and hawed a bit and said that there were huge problems with rooms (you know it is impossible to get one) yet they managed to change it for the following weeks.’ [Mobility]

‘The lecturer gave his overview of the course at the first lecture and then said that if there was anyone in the room that felt that their learning might be disadvantaged in any way they should have a chat with him in confidence. I was really surprised when he said it. I think he meant those that could not speak English very well but it made the difference for me and I went up to him afterwards and told him about my condition.’ [Dyslexic]

Accessible Education Matters

Under the disability discrimination legislation, we have a collective responsibility to promote disability equality across the School. Accessible Education Matters is a disability awareness-raising package, which provides a starting point for all staff and students.

Each of the three versions (flash, rich HTML, plain HTML) includes an introduction, five key learning areas and a quiz to help you assess how well you have understood the material. We recommend that you print your quiz score as a record of achievement, as your results will not be recorded.

To access this package, go to:
www.lse.ac.uk/resources/accessibleEducationMatters/

Are you protected?

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005) may protect and support you. Find out more at the Disability Rights Commission website: www.drc-gb.org

Dyslexia@LSE

About 40 per cent of dyslexic students are not formally identified as such until after their arrival in HE. About half of the students known to have a disability at LSE have dyslexia or an associated specific learning disability such as dyspraxia.

Not all disabilities are visible

Be prepared! Over 8 million adults in Britain are considered to be disabled, but you can't always tell by looking.

It is easy to see a wheelchair or a white stick or even hearing aids. But you can't see stammer, ankylosing spondylitis, lupus, renal dysfunction, chronic fatigue syndrome and many other disabilities and serious medical conditions.

Do you have an invisible disability and need others to make adjustments for you? Like having chairs at convenient places, keeping queuing to a minimum, being given priority in the lift, leaving handrails free, etc.

Disability and you

Disability equality is the responsibility of all members of the School community.

To find out more, see:
www.lse.ac.uk/collections/disability_office