



Skills for Learning Professionals

# Equality Framework Further Education

## End of pilot impact report

March 2011



## **1. Background: Outcomes and impact of Phase One Pilot exercise**

The outcomes and impact of the first phase of the pilot exercise concluded the primary motivator for providers involved in the project was the organisational advancement of equality and diversity and to share good practice. A secondary driver was the achievement of an improved contributory grade against the Common Inspection Framework. All participants wished to expand their knowledge and understanding.

The seven learning providers in phase one found the content of the framework to be relevant to their organisation and the process of completing the self-assessment was straightforward. The framework assisted providers to identify gaps in performance and steps for improvement; a direct consequence of the review meeting following the provider's own self assessment. The extent to which the process helped organisations prioritise their actions and activities was less clear-cut and an area for improvement in the second stage of the pilot.

All participants found Lifelong Learning UK and the one-to-one support valuable and concluded that involvement in the pilot had been positive for advancing equalities in their organisation. Feedback from the first phase of the pilot was positive with constructive feedback and resulted in a revised framework incorporating suggested minor changes, with accompanying expanded guidance notes.

## **2. Summary findings from the pilot**

Excluding the learning providers from the initial phase of the Equality Framework pilot an additional thirty-one lifelong learning and service providers were involved in the second phase of the pilot. Providers were engaged at random through stakeholder events following presentations, or became interested through feedback offered by providers already engaged on the pilot. Each provider was involved in the pilot at different times throughout the pilot's life, and in the majority of instances followed a presentation to the provider's senior management teams in order to highlight the benefits of involvement and deal with any queries. For many providers the initial meeting and presentation provided the encouragement needed to get involved in the pilot exercise.

Each provider was different, highlighting the variety and richness of the lifelong learning sector across England. Their difference also extended to their performance on equality and diversity as an employer, service provider and

place in the community. Sixth-form colleges, large, small and medium general colleges of further education, national specialist colleges for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties, land based colleges, residential colleges, advice and guidance services, private providers of vocational training and apprenticeships, consortia of learning networks, established organisations, newly merged or merging organisations, organisations facing challenge and change, or with improvement strategies very high on their agenda, all took part with enthusiasm and perseverance.

The cohort was chosen to extend and challenge the validity of the framework as a tool for developing effective strategies to move organisations forward. Providers started from very different points, whether from a recognised base of good practice or the need to improve rapidly, or from a base of experience in one aspect of inclusion, but recognising the need to reach out to meet the full requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

With learning and service providers entering the pilot at different times and with different organisational priorities, providers were given the freedom to choose how many achievements within the 'developing' level they would self assess against. Those providers who had more time/resources could work against all 32 achievements within the level and those with less time/resource could choose which achievements to work against. However many achievements the provider self assessed against it was more important that that provider undertook an objective self assessment, were able to gather evidence to substantiate their score and took the time to devise an appropriate improvement action plan.

Despite organisational differences, providers grew in confidence as a result of their engagement with the project and were motivated to stretch higher and further in their pursuit of excellence in equality and diversity practice. All valued the opportunity to be part of a national initiative working in consort with others; all were keen to benchmark their progress and to contribute towards peer review and other ways of sharing and building good practice.

The formalisation of standards and agreement on criteria for moving from level to level was felt to be very important, as was a form of recognition for the level achieved, and certification of the standard achieved. Judging the distance travelled and measuring progress against targets was often one of the most under developed aspects arising from the self assessment process. Similarly, the performance area that required higher levels of improvement following self assessment was related to workforce equality and diversity. This demonstrated how there has been a negative impact in this area, perhaps as a result of incentives and focus on learner outcomes encouraged through the equality and diversity aspects of the Common Inspection Framework.

The support given by Lifelong Learning UK through the provision of specialist advice and guidance and the provision of a critical friend to the providers was instrumental in broadening horizons critically and constructively. In turn the support raised levels of confidence and performance, particularly where under performance and or lack of awareness was a feature. By the latter stages of the pilot, providers had increased their level of engagement with other providers to share good practice and facilitate peer review and challenge. Involvement in the pilot was thought to be worthwhile by all participants.

Of the thirty-eight providers involved in the Equality Framework pilot one work based learning provider, Michaeljohn Training School, was the first to achieve grade one, in place and performance is outstanding standard across the thirty-two achievements in the 'developing' level. This provider will now begin to work against the 'achieving' level.

Although only one provider had met the standard within the 'developing' level under pilot conditions, there were a number of other providers that are almost ready to proceed to engage their peers in validating performance against the 'developing' level. The pilot exercise ran out of time to test the validation process, so this will be an important developmental area where provider feedback will be crucial to the success of the validation process in future. This will require an evaluation process to measure its success.

### **3. Phase Two Pilot: The Participants**

The opportunity to participate in the phase two pilot was extended to participants from phase one; Bilborough College, Bradford College, Fortune Centre for Riding Therapy, Highbury College, Michaeljohn Training School, Otley College, Riverside College, Halton.

Highbury College declined to participate in phase two, as their nominated lead manager had to prioritise management of an extensive human resources task. Riverside College, Halton did not participate in phase two due to a senior leadership change in responsibility for equality and diversity. For information about the initial phase of the Equality Framework pilot exercise please refer to *An Equality Framework for Lifelong Learning: Report on the pilot project March 2010*, (LLUK 2010).

The second phase of the pilot exercise began in August 2010 and together with the five remaining providers from the initial phase, the following learning and service providers were involved:

A4e Ltd  
Alliance Learning Ltd

AMAC Training Ltd  
Anne Clarke Associates Ltd  
Beneast Training Ltd  
Bexley College  
BL Hairdressing  
Burton College  
Careers Yorkshire & Humber  
Carlisle College  
CfBT Next Steps  
City College, Brighton & Hove  
Cornwall College  
Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium  
East of England Next Steps  
Epping Forest College  
Halesowen College  
Hopwood Hall College  
In Touch Care Ltd  
Kensington & Chelsea College  
Kingston College  
Nash College  
National Star College  
NETA Training Group Ltd  
Oakwood Court College  
Peterborough Regional College  
Petroc College  
Portland College  
South Nottingham College  
Tyne Metropolitan College  
Yeovil College

By the time of writing this report the majority of the providers in phase two of the pilot had received one-to-one support following their self assessment review. Providers were brought into the pilot at different times and it was not always possible for the self assessment to be completed within the allocated time. Visits were completed under pilot conditions in late-March 2011. Section four of this report provides an overview of the self assessment reviews from those providers who had arranged a review meeting.

#### **4. Outcomes and impact on providers**

##### **A4E Ltd (Learning and Skills)**

A4E Ltd is a national training provider specialising in public and private sector training. The company works across four continents in eleven countries, employing 3,500 people. A4E's mission is "doing well by doing good". There

are a number of divisions within the A4E group including Advice and Learning, Education and Learning, Advice and Guidance, Offender Management, Welfare to Work, Flexible New Deal and International.

A4E Learning and Skills is based in Sheffield, it is the direct delivery arm of vocational learning and delivers vocational qualifications in a wide range of subjects and aims to equip individuals improve their skills and gain accredited qualifications in the workplace.

A4E became involved in the Equality Framework through their Learner Equality and Guidance Manager who was motivated to introduce the framework to the division because she thought it would offer strength to the strategic plan for implementing equality and diversity.

The Learner Equality and Guidance Manager used the structure of the framework and self assessment to audit compliance, identify gaps and areas for development and improvement. There were some noted information gaps, each criteria was addressed and where the knowledge and evidence was available incorporated into the document. Actions arising were clear and a prioritised improvement action plan collated.

The exercise highlighted the impact of corporate and group policy and practice upon the activity of the division and examining the inter relationship between the division and the group was helpful in identifying ways to take the work forward.

A sound beginning had been made to the developing level of the framework, which was thought useful going forward within the division. More guidance on how to complete the self-assessment would have been appreciated as would greater focus on the curriculum and teaching and learning.

There was some progress in developing the characteristics of the framework within the division, with an acknowledgement that considerably more was to be done. Ofsted had awarded a contributory grade three for equality and diversity to a recent leadership and management inspection, and although there were plans to raise the grade, "the paint was still wet".

The lack of apparent clarity for responsibility for equality and diversity between the group and the division was perceived to be the biggest obstacle to making significant progress, accompanied by resistance from some colleagues who perceive the emphasis "on implementation to be somewhat over the top".

An equality consultant had been engaged by the group to review the organisation's single equality scheme, and this was seen as a very important and helpful step in making progress throughout the organisation, and supportive to the work in the division, including the framework and self

assessment. The self-assessment review was extremely useful, helping to clarify and give focus to planned actions, direction, and reinforcement of a possible strategy within a large organisation.

In conclusion, a review of the single equality scheme and self-assessment because of the equality framework presented two very positive and interrelated activities, from which equality and diversity could become strong within A4E, and very importantly, central to the success of the division.

## **Anne Clarke Associates Ltd (ACA Ltd)**

Anne Clarke Associates Ltd is a private training provider based in Downham Market, Norfolk, delivering Train to Gain, apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeship programmes, largely in health, public services and care.

Based in Norfolk, ACA Ltd deliver programmes of training and assessment in partnership with a range of employers across the East of England. The Company works in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. Training and assessment are based in the work place and assessors generally recruited from the area where provision is delivered.

The Managing Director led the impetus to engage with the Equality Framework pilot, assisted by her senior staff and with a consultative approach to completion of the self assessment process. Prompted by the understanding that it was necessary for ACA Ltd to embed and cascade equality of opportunity throughout the organisation, and ensure full compliance with legislative requirements in its own practice, whilst satisfying itself that those with whom it worked also demonstrate good practice.

Mindful of the requirements of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, ACA Ltd hoped engagement with the Equality Framework would assist understanding and capacity for the promotion of equality and diversity. In doing so, they hoped to be able to offer all Anne Clarke learners the best possible chances of success, and ensure equality of opportunity would not be a limiting grade in future Ofsted inspections.

Ofsted inspected ACA Ltd in July 2009; it had not been inspected before. As a contributory grade to the Leadership and Management grade 3, equality of opportunity received a grade 3, satisfactory. Prior to the inspection, a newly established equality and diversity steering group began to review policy and procedure and ensure compliance. ACA Ltd, were keen to make improvements and a working party has been meeting for the last 8 months under the direction of the Managing Director.

The working party produced a single equality scheme, underpinned by a new strategy and action plan for the promotion and embedding of equality at ACA Ltd and progress in implementation monitored through the provider Self Assessment Report, (SAR).

The group has redrafted ACA Ltd policies and procedure documents to ensure all aspects of equal opportunities are included, for example in policies for work with employers, staff and learner recruitment, job descriptions learner and staff handbooks and an improved website. Equality and diversity is now prioritised at all staff training, and at standardisation meetings.

Additionally greater attention has been placed on data analysis, and learner feedback, and an understanding of the importance of developing a range of equality and diversity impact measures (EDIMs) is recognised.

Work on the Equality Framework and self assessment document was seen as a tool for assessing progress in actions taken and as guidance for further activities. The team completed the self assessment document together, predominantly, awarding Grade 1's and 2's with brief supporting statements to support their decisions, and some brief action points. A paper file of evidence was available.

Much of the review meeting concentrated on amplifying and or discussing the evidence and reasons to support the grade awarded by the team. Some written statements did not accurately match the grade criteria, although subsequent questioning amplified many of the statements made. Aspects of the Company's work and progress in the development of equality and diversity were not well reflected, and the statements in the self assessment document provided an incomplete picture.

Action points in the self assessment report were briefly referenced, however discussion revealed an appetite for improvement not captured on paper, and a responsiveness to exploring suggestions for improved practice and learning from others. The team determined to re-examine what they had put forward and why they had not made explicit many of the activities undertaken or the values underpinning the organisation, or the approaches developed often in unique circumstances to ensure equality of opportunity, access and attainment and socio-economic success for all Anne Clarke learners.

Five key actions emerged for action by Anne Clarke to accompany the strides taken, which if acted upon place completing the 'developing' level of the framework well within their grasp.

The organisation concluded they had found the framework and self assessment process extremely worthwhile, the review meeting helping them



to concentrate on their policy and practice and to question things they knew and to be explicit about action taken, e.g. the importance of data analysis and actions arising.

They felt the framework had helped them make headway on a long journey and they had made some progress in developing the protected characteristics, although there was further to go, more guidance and direction was sought and the support available ardently welcomed. As a result of being engaged in the pilot Anne Clarke determined to review the language used throughout the organisation, and place equality and diversity centrally within the organisational framework and systems.

## **Bexley College**

Bexley College is a small general further education college in north east London. It is the largest provider of vocational education and offers nine subjects although some subjects have a small numbers of learners. The college has a high number of adult learners.

In September 2009 the college established a monthly governors meeting of the Board and Audit Committee members. Regular reports on equality and diversity are presented to the governors within an established reporting cycle, and the board has a nominated equality champion. The college has a new Principal, appointed in July and a renewed senior management team, many of whom are relatively new to the college. The strategic importance of equality and diversity is to be revisited, and it is anticipated the Equality Framework will provide a structure to guide a journey of improvement for the college and all its learners, placing equality and diversity at the heart, and with quantifiable impact on teaching and learning and the curriculum and learner outcomes.

The self assessment process was led by the Director of Staff and Learner Services, and completed within the Equality and Diversity group, which she chairs. At the last Ofsted inspection equality and diversity had been awarded a contributory grade 3 and the Equality and Diversity group were keen to lead improvements.

The group completed their self assessment against the performance area of leadership and organisational commitment in advance of the review visit. The sections on learner and stakeholder engagement, learner engagement and access, a modern and diverse workforce and community awareness and equality mapping were not completed, although it was affirmed the team intended completion before the end of March 2011.

In preparation for the review meeting, the group undertook the assessment together and through discussion awarded a range of grades from two to four. Some brief evidence was highlighted and actions identified for follow up. These actions were not allocated to individuals.

Areas for action included an urgent review of the single equality scheme and mandatory training in the development and application of equality impact assessments, monitoring, reporting and action taking. Staff development had been developed but deferred because take up had been low. The establishment of an effective communications strategy was seen as a key driver for change and to ensure compliance with the college's duties and obligations to promote harmonious relations. Staff training was also being developed on the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, and a diversity module incorporated into cross-college training.

The college was invited to join the pilot, as it was thought it might assist the development of an improvement strategy. The college responded enthusiastically, understanding it had work to do and hoping that working on the framework may give the impetus needed. The distance travelled by the college was felt to be great, with the lead senior manager feeling she had learnt a lot personally and also understood much more clearly what the college needed to do to raise its game.

The framework offered a clear starting point for the college, and a toolkit with which to work, with a clear focus for the journey to be undertaken. Examining the evidence to support assertions made was a positive learning experience for the team undertaking the exercise. The college felt that only limited progress had been made as a result of the self assessment because the college had much work to do, and did not yet have evidence to support any other assertion.

It was concluded that the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, and of meeting the obligations of the protected characteristics were not yet embedded within the college, but they could become so, and the framework and self assessment process had helped the team believe that goal could be achievable with their hard work. The college was more confident in tackling it's under performance, and wanted to reach out to other providers who they felt might be able to support them as they began a new and invigorated journey.

## **Bilborough College**

Bilborough is a sixth-form college in modern premises on the outskirts of the city of Nottingham. Learners aged 16-18 study full-time programmes and

come from a local catchment area, with traditionally low levels of participation in continuing education. Bilborough has an increasing number of learners from minority ethnic communities.

The senior leadership team took responsibility for the adoption of the Equality Framework and for self assessment in both phases of the pilot. By phase two Bilborough had acted upon identified gaps, areas for improvement and action points from their phase one self assessment and action plan. In updating their self assessment, the leadership team noted significant progress against many criteria. Their second self assessment was thorough, extensively illustrated and stronger evidence submitted. A strong improvement plan was in place tied to the college's quality improvement plan, and Self Assessment Report process.

The document illustrated clear recognition of the strategic importance of equality and diversity in the college's drive for quality improvement and the prominence given by the college leadership including governors to improving equality outcomes for all learners and the workforce, and the relationship of the college in the local community.

Considerable practical activity had taken place and much planned to meet the standards of the framework and to stretch to the next level. Examples include a targeted recruitment campaign leading to the appointment of new governors and a governing body more reflective of the community as a whole.

Revision of the college's single equality scheme highlighted a more rigorous approach to the analysis of equality impact assessment, with measures being monitored, reported and acted upon, evidenced by the college's additional learning support being identified for equality impact assessment to understand the impact on learners success of those who received additional learning support and those who did not.

The active engagement of leaders, learners and staff in the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion within the college had led to an imaginative programme of activities and curriculum initiatives focusing on promoting understanding of all the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

Bilborough had been motivated to join the project searching for a steer towards improving practice, they remained enthusiastic and wish to do better welcoming the focus and support their participation in the project had given. The leadership team valued the confidence they had gained as they moved between the phases, and are motivated to seek further improvement.

Bilborough determined they had almost completed the developing level, prioritising more work on workforce development, community awareness and

mapping and target setting for completion and whereas progress had been made in the promotion and understanding of the protected characteristics in the college, this was uneven and remained an area for action.

Commitment from the leadership team was palpable, self assessment actions arising and critical reflection was a team effort. Self assessment was thought to have been an extremely valuable process, because it “pulled things together, it gave us a list of things to do, and made us look at equality and diversity as a holistic process.” Bilborough are keen to develop peer review and critical support and to make contact with other providers and learn from sharing practice.

The college thought the second version of the framework and self assessment clearer than the first and more jargon free. The support from Lifelong Learning UK was valued highly and the self assessment review meeting and one-to-one support thought extremely useful.

In conclusion, the college valued participation in the project highly and had come a long way towards making a difference in equality and diversity practice. The college had been open to criticism and challenge and looked forward to continuing the journey it had begun. It intended to continue to use the framework to that end.

## **BL Hairdressing Training**

B L Hairdressing delivers City and Guilds hairdressing courses throughout the North East, with centres in Newcastle on Tyne, Middlesbrough, and Darlington, Durham, Sunderland and Ashington. Training is delivered to over five hundred and fifty employed hairdressing apprentices in over three hundred and thirty salons. Training is a combination of day release and on the job training. BL Hairdressing provides a recruitment service for school leavers and young people interested in hairdressing and provide courses for all ages, from apprentices to salon managers.

BL Hairdressing was motivated to join the Equality Framework pilot because they wanted to extend their experience, knowledge and skills in implementing equality and diversity. BL Hairdressing has a commitment to continuous quality improvement and wishes to intertwine equality and diversity goals with their drive for high quality and standards. Working in a highly competitive market, BL Hairdressing was also conscious they must attract and retain learners from wider communities.

BL Hairdressing received two review visits; the first clarified questions raised by the framework, provided guidance on completion of the documentation,

and reviewed evidence. The second later in the year, considered the completed self assessment.

The self-assessment was completed as a senior leadership team exercise, co-ordinated by one of the team of three directors. The document was carefully completed, each criterion was assessed and graded and evidence offered in support of the grades. Actions were identified arising from the self assessment, which was incorporated, into the company's single equality scheme action plan, which is monitored at board level. The company did not want to duplicate action plans.

The self assessment highlighted aspects of interesting practice and areas for development. Of particular note was work being undertaken on the development of hate crime reporting, teaching materials for the company and on professional development for BL Hairdressing staff with direct benefit for learners.

The self assessment was of value to BL Hairdressing and thought extremely worthwhile providing a structured and systematic way of evaluating their work and priorities, and action planning for success in implementing equality and diversity throughout the company and its provision. BL Hairdressing welcomed the opportunity to benchmark with others and was keen to be part of the development of peer review as the framework developed in this area.

The company thought they had made progress in developing the characteristics of the framework, and heightened their understanding of practical steps to support the development of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, for example with the introduction of materials developed by them to tackle homophobia and hate crime. The team was keen to develop more initiatives of this kind and were confident to do so.

BL Hairdressing felt they had travelled a considerable distance because of their involvement with the pilot project, for example increasing their skill in judging the impact of their actions and in data analysis and environmental scanning, enabling them to target outreach into communities more effectively.

The review meeting was very useful, maintaining momentum for the senior team to move the organisation on. The external focus and feedback was especially valuable to BL Hairdressing, "as a small organisation, we can so easily become inward looking; we know this and always welcome opportunities to work with relevant partners!"

## **Bradford College**

Bradford College is a large college of further education in the city of Bradford offering provision from entry level to level four and higher education. The college has demonstrated a strong commitment to equality and diversity and inclusion recognised by inspection, by the sector, by peers and colleagues and the community the college serves.

The Principal initiated the college's engagement in the phase one pilot. The promotion of equality and diversity was demonstrably at the heart of the college, as was a holistic approach to meeting the needs of all learners and the wider community and to driving success for all.

Working with the Diversity Manager and the Principal self assessed college performance at the highest level of the developing stage of the framework in all but one of the achievements and provided full supporting evidence across eight actions in the leadership and organisational commitment performance area.

At the time of the first self assessment, the College had not produced a single equality scheme, although it had discreet elements in place. A key action arising from the self assessment was the establishment of a group from the Operational Equality and Diversity Committee tasked with production and consultation on the Single Equality Scheme

The Diversity Manager, supported by the Principal embraced the framework as a useful tool to inform her work, and highlight activity for the college. In consultation with lead managers for human resources, student services, and learning support, learning resources, marketing, community and vocational skills, information services and the student union the completed self-assessment was comprehensive, managers took two aspects of the framework each for reflection and review and then came together.

A varied picture emerged, which identified many strong aspects and areas for growth and development, including the formulation of a single equality scheme. Evidence was brief, indicative areas for action noted, as were areas where the college could take opportunity to present a fuller picture of its activities. The college considered it was halfway towards completing the developing level.

The following broad areas were identified for improvement, the formulation of a single equality scheme, refinements to the appraisal system ensuring equality and diversity targets are set and monitored. The need for ever greater communication and consultation on the even promotion of all protected characteristics, a re-launch of the hate crime reporting system, and an

exploration of the question of examining conflicting interests against an overall ethos of tolerance and respect for difference and for opportunities to extend and amplify learners' voices.

A commitment was made to the development of a detailed action plan, monitoring, measuring and reporting achievements through the single equality scheme. The Equality Framework, the self assessment process and review meeting was thought very worthwhile, but it was felt that the framework did not provide a sharp enough focus on teaching, learning, and outcomes for all learners.

The college concluded it had made much progress in developing all the protected characteristics, but this was not evenly reflected throughout the organisation, and that there was more work to be done.

In conclusion, the framework was thought to be a very helpful tool for taking essential areas of work forward. The college determined they would continue to work towards completing the developing level and then move to the achieving level.

## **Burton College**

Burton College is a medium-sized general further education college serving Burton upon Trent, East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire. The college delivers programmes of learning in all sector subject areas. Provision ranges from pre-16, to higher education, including adult and community learning,

The college was motivated to participate in the Equality Framework pilot because the commitment of the principal and senior leadership team is for continuous improvement and cultural change in all aspects of Burton College's work. The promotion of equality and diversity is one of the college's core values. Burton College staff are encouraged to incorporate equality and diversity strategies into their work and make a commitment to community service within the locality. The Principal and senior leadership team model this commitment in their own practice.

The Principal introduced the Equality Framework to the college and coordination of the self assessment process conducted by the Vice Principal Resources. The senior leadership team completed the self assessment document. Each criterion was addressed and comprehensive evidence supported the range of grades awarded by the team.

Actions arising were clear with allocated responsibilities for each action. Actions were smart, realistic, and achievable enabling the college to complete

the developing level with ease if actions identified were complete within the allocated timescales. At that stage, an improvement action plan had not been drawn together.

Consultative mechanisms for engaging staff and learners, with clear reporting lines to governors were contained within the actions identified. Embedding equality and diversity impact measures throughout the college was given high priority to ensure the effectiveness of the college's single equality scheme, an active key document for the college. Many examples of innovative and interesting practice were noted.

The self assessment review meeting concentrated on building from the approaches and plans identified in the self assessment document to enhance and increase performance. In discussion, exploration of ideas and additional and further evidence identified, lead the team to think they may reconsider their self assessment.

Following the review meeting, the Vice Principal Resources intended to compile an improvement action plan, incorporating points from discussion with those from the self assessment document, for further review by the team. The Governing Body would review the Equality Framework and self assessment, and consultation would take place within College teams.

The team felt the framework had assisted the journey of cultural change they had embarked upon, and that they had had travelled some way towards achieving their goal. The Principal and her team were motivated to complete the developing level and move towards the achieving level of the framework within the academic year.

The process of self assessment and review were very worthwhile, it had been affirming, and identified practical and achievable actions within a vision for the college and the community. The step-by-step approach of the framework fitted the college ethos well, and systematic self assessment one with which they were familiar as a critically reflective team.

The team considered they had made considerable progress in developing the characteristics of the framework within the college; excited by the work still to undertaken, they took great pleasure from the involvement of learners and the place of the college in the community and their role in making equality and diversity and inclusion live.

The college recognised it had further to go in ensuring even handed development of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 within the college, however they wished to push boundaries and were considering



stratagem to progress this duty, and wished to co-operate with other providers to take this forward.

There were no perceived boundaries to taking the framework forward, only enthusiasm for the task. Arising from the college's engagement in the pilot would be a strong improvement action plan, actively monitored for effectiveness. The review meeting was thought to be extremely useful, contributing to practical improvements and a strong action plan.

Improvements to the framework might include a great emphasis on the impact on teaching and learning and a glossary of terms.

## **Careers Yorkshire and Humber Ltd Next Steps (CYH)**

Careers Yorkshire and Humber, Next Steps is the prime contractor for **Nextstep** Yorkshire and the Humber. Careers Yorkshire and Humber is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. It has five members: Calderdale and Kirklees Careers, Aspire-I, igen, Prospects Services Limited and VT Enterprises. The board of directors, drawn from the members provides strategic leadership. CYH operates in four regions, West, North and South Yorkshire, and Humberside. The regional manager of CYH reports to the board. Each sub region has an operations manager who reports to the regional manager. Policies and procedures, marketing, information systems are corporate and across the board. Services are delivered locally through subcontractors.

In November 2009, CYH received a contributory grade 3 for equality and diversity as a part of an Ofsted grade three for leadership and management. Ofsted observed aspects of the promotion of equality and diversity as satisfactory, and noted examples of commendable practice, however many actions taken were not measured or monitored for effectiveness with responsive action taken as a consequence of analysis.

Details of the Equality Framework were sent to Careers Yorkshire and Humber and the Quality Manager was eager to participate, motivated to raise the contributory grade at future inspection, to improve outcomes and services to customers and an interest in service accessibility and inclusion.

Introduced to the framework towards the end of the life of the pilot, the short span of time to utilise support available was a constraint. The Quality Manager swiftly completed the self assessment, wanting to get as much critical friend support as possible, as a personal reflection from her knowledge of the service as an indicative indication of where Careers Yorkshire and Humber was and where it wanted to be.

The manager's intention was to start an interactive process, with the benefit of feedback from the review meeting and work through the self assessment process with her team and the delivery network of subcontractors when she felt confident in use of the Equality Framework and self assessment process.

Although completion of the self assessment document was brief, all the criteria were addressed, and ranges of grades awarded. Evidence to support the grades awarded was available electronically or in a prepared portfolio. Action points arising from the self assessment were clear and the beginnings of an improvement action plan emerging.

In a very short space of time and because of becoming engaged with the framework, the distance travelled had been extreme. The framework provided a manageable tool from which to lead an organisational focus for improving equality and diversity, accessibility and inclusion. It encouraged participation, and the post holder was very enthusiastic to complete the developing level, sharing practice with others and learning with other next steps providers. The framework and self assessment was valued as very worthwhile. The initial feeling about the pilot was "scared at first", the organisation was not there, "but the framework has helped in climbing a mountain!"

It was felt the biggest obstacle to progress with the framework was the lack of data from which to make judgments, the introduction of a new corporate management information system which was experiencing teething troubles, presented a source of frustration and disappointment and inhibited reliable data informing the self assessment.

The development of the characteristics of the framework within Careers Yorkshire and Humber because of the pilot was limited, because of the brief length involvement; however, the impact for the longer term was thought to be considerable and would be even greater if the board of CYH were able to endorse the framework as one of their priorities. The promotion of all the protected characteristics of the equality act was identified as one of the essential areas to be addressed corporately, for example, data collection was determined corporately.

Key actions arising from the self assessment was to set up team meetings to explore the self assessment at a more detailed level and to implement the actions arising. The review meeting was deemed extremely useful, giving a focus to activities and actions to drive equality and diversity and imbuing confidence in what it is planned to be done. In conclusion, Careers Yorkshire and Humber wishes to continue with the framework and welcome any support available.

## **Carlisle College**

Carlisle College is a small general further education college, serving the post-16 education and training needs of North Cumbria. It is the only further education college within a thirty-five mile radius. The college provides mainly vocational programmes and offers provision in eleven subject areas. The college runs a small programme of higher education. Six wards within Carlisle are within the most deprived 20% of wards in England. There is a significant proportion of low waged employment.

Carlisle College was motivated to join the Equality Framework pilot because they had as a college embarked on a journey. They wanted to replenish and refocus their attention on that journey and move on changing the culture, embedding equality and diversity into every aspect of the college because it enriched the lives of students and the college community.

In December 2009, Ofsted commented the college had made significant progress in improving the promotion of equality and diversity. The college had for example become the lead college for equality and diversity across Cumbria and created a varied programme of external and internal activities to promote awareness and extend understanding and knowledge. Carlisle's leadership team were keen to ensure continuous improvement and viewed the framework and self assessment as an opportunity to reflect where they had come from, where they wanted to be, and the steps to ensure they reached the highest point possible.

The team leading the introduction of the Equality Framework, the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality, and the Retention and Achievement Officer were ambitious for the college and conveyed that ambition, bringing together a strategic and operational interpretation of action and activities to bring policy and practice together. It is hoped that future opportunities arise to evaluate the impact over the medium and long-term and to follow the progress of participants.

Much of the practical implementation of equality and diversity evolved from the involvement of learners in the formulation of college plans and policy review. Learners contributed to discussion and debate, which informed college strategy, captured for example in the single equality scheme. One of the main drivers for the team was to promote practice that challenged a low waged, low aspiration culture in a settled predominantly rural and semi-rural community from which few people move away, or come into, except tourists reflecting the social composition of the county.

The team addressed all the criteria in the self assessment, awarding grades from one to three with evidence to support the claim. Documented files accompanied the evidence submitted including examples of interesting practice. A greater depth of available evidence became apparent in discussion. Arising from clarification during the review meeting, two incomplete criteria, which explored procurement and contracting of services were followed up.

Actions arising from assessment were not complete. However, the college had a clear picture of action required and the timescale and method for completing the improvement action plan, built on those already identified in the self assessment document, which they wished to align with other college systems.

The college thought it too early to assess the distance travelled since joining the pilot; they had a clearer vision, understood gaps, and areas for improvement and those for development and a plan for action, but wished to see the impact of work before quantifying progress. Consulting with staff and learners, senior leaders and governors on the outcomes of the “audit”, the self assessment and gaining feedback, was they felt the next stage and one that would enrich the action planning process, completed within the scope of the equality and diversity committee.

Self assessment was thought extremely worthwhile; giving those tasked with leading the process, an overview, and an opportunity to capture and validate current practice, and facilitating the prioritisation of actions to improve.

The college judged considerable progress had been made, moving from a very low base to becoming an organisation in which many of the characteristics of the Equality Framework could be found. They were enjoying the challenge of the journey and the stimulation of pushing ahead. Assistance in developing more fully all the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 would be highly valued, especially in terms of embedding appreciation and impact into teaching and learning and enrichment.

The limited time available for support was the biggest obstacle faced by the team; the college valued highly the support available and wanted more. The Excellence Gateway was thought to be a valuable tool and empowerment of operational managers by the senior leadership team the greatest enabler for achieving the college's equality and diversity goals.

The self assessment review meeting was deemed extremely useful to the college. Clarifying standards of evidence required, working through priorities and extending thought processes and exploring and illustrating links between strategic and practical levels was valued highly.

The team was highly motivated to engage others on their journey, they thought the framework was applicable across different college teams and could assist them to achieve their vision of continuous improvement towards excellence in equality and diversity in Cumbria.

## **CfBT Advice and Guidance: Next Steps North East**

The prime contractor for North East **Nextsteps** is CfBT Advice and Guidance a registered charity limited by guarantee. The North East, area comprises Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Wear side, County Durham and the Tees Valley. Throughout the region, there are wards with very high indices of deprivation. The proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds is about half the national average with considerable local variation.

CfBT Advice and Guidance were informed about the Equality Framework and the CfBT Regional Manager and the North East Quality Improvement Manager were eager to become involved. The Regional Manager took lead responsibility.

In February 2010, CYH received a contributory grade three satisfactory for equality and diversity as a part of an Ofsted grade three for leadership and management. Ofsted noted for example appropriate equality plans and policies, and checks on subcontractor policies, and an effective equality and diversity forum for sharing intelligence and best practice but noted insufficient data was collected on subcontractor equality and diversity to ensure CfBT were meeting their requirements.

CfBT Advice and Guidance wished to develop beyond satisfactory, and viewed the Equality Framework and self assessment as an opportunity to put rigour and structure into their desire to improve their grade at future inspection, and most importantly enhance service delivery to customers.

CfBT had little time to maximise use of the pilot, alerted as they were to towards the end of the life of the pilot. The Regional Manager and the North East Quality Improvement Manager rapidly completed the self assessment with enthusiasm. All sections were completed with the exception of a modern and diverse workforce, which was felt to be outside the remit of the team.

Each criterion was briefly addressed and grades were given with a brief evidence statement where the team was comfortable to do so. Actions arising from the self assessment were not completed prior to the review meeting, nor an improvement action plan compiled.

The team was motivated to join the project, albeit very briefly, because they wanted to support development and improvement of equality and diversity practices and outcomes. They felt it was too early to judge the distance travelled because of their involvement, but that they had gained many ideas and an appetite to trek forward. In the time available under pilot conditions, they had only been able to complete part of the self assessment but had a much better understanding of what was required and how to work it through with colleagues.

The consultative style they had adopted to complete the self assessment thus far would be the one they would take forward within CfBT, and they looked forward to working together on the framework across the teams. The process was thought to be extremely worthwhile; it had identified areas for improvement and confirmed existing areas of good practice to build on.

The development of the characteristics of the framework within the organisation because of being involved with the project had seen only limited progress, because it was too early to assess any impact.

Some of the terminology used in the framework presented an obstacle to participating fully in the pilot, and that this needed to more carefully reflect the language of advice and guidance. However, this was simply and quickly unpicked at the review meeting, the review meeting being viewed as extremely useful and instrumental in helping to plan actions and improvements and to prioritise activities and responsibilities. Since the self assessment with CfBT a bespoke framework has been launched to the Career Guidance sector.

The introduction of a new corporate information system was cited as an obstacle to completing the self assessment and inhibiting the application and analysis of data to inform judgements and monitor progress. It was felt this would be shortly overcome.

In conclusion, CfBT were very enthusiastic about continuing to work with the framework and looked forward to completing the developing level and moving forward.

## **City College Brighton and Hove**

City College Brighton and Hove are a large general further education college in the centre of Brighton, drawing from the town and wider area.

The College viewed membership of the second stage of the Equality Framework pilot as an opportunity to guide and re-shape its commitment to

excellence in equality and diversity practice; promoting a core value and providing a structure and process for creating organisational step change.

Seven core values underpin the work of the College, introduced consultatively by the Principal three years ago. Core value four states “we celebrate difference and respect individuals” and the college decided to re emphasise the importance of equality and diversity in the demonstration of that core value. The introduction of the framework and the self assessment process was lead by the Head of Student Support, with active support from the Vice Principal. In addition the leadership team proposed the Governing Body take responsibility for oversight of implementation and progress of the equality framework and self assessment, at their (November) Board meeting.

At the date of the review meeting, the College's Head of Student Support had completed the Leadership section of the self assessment document. From the review meeting she planned to lead a consultative process, beginning with the senior team. Remaining sections were to be completed by the Head of Student Support and consulted upon using as first reference point the most relevant parties, inviting cross-college comment and engagement, prior to review of the completed document by the Governing Body.

Firm strategic leadership ensured the college's 2009 – 2014 Strategic Plans includes the aim of integrating and actively promoting equality and diversity throughout the College, and the senior team has committed equality and diversity as a College theme for 2010/2011. The College has an Equality and Diversity Committee chaired by the Principal. This monitors achievement of the equality and diversity aims of the Strategic Plan through an overarching Equality Action Plan, and contributory Equality Strands Action Plans.

College leadership carries individual responsibility for strands of equality and diversity, and report to the committee accordingly. Many aspects of equality and diversity are embedded in established College processes, for example data collection and analysis and monitoring of achievement, the Self Assessment Report (SAR). A single equality scheme is in place, driven by Governors, and an autumn launch planned to promote the scheme.

A number of operational initiatives are unfolding to implement the strategic lead. Examples include the summer development conference at which the Vice Principal launched a Teacher's guide to equality and diversity, accompanied by an on line training module, certified by the college.

Other examples of this practical rollout include enrichment activities with an emphasis on equality and diversity, and a suite of attractive marketing and publicity materials that promote difference and celebrate individual's success. The processes of staff recruitment and commissioning have been highlighted

as areas for review and development to improve their impact on equality and diversity practice.

The Head of Student Support plans to lead “conversations” with teaching team leaders as part of the SAR process to practically promote equality and diversity within the curriculum, for example in teaching materials, assessment and tutorial practice to ensure practical outcomes for all learners are of the highest.

The college has strong partnerships within the Brighton and Hove communities. It has drawn on experience from the Local Authority and other partners in developing aspects of equality and diversity practice, including data collection and measures for impact assessment using their descriptors.

The college’s decision to revitalise work in equality and diversity had a strong strategic beginning and practical strategies to achieve the vision were being put in place. The review meeting strengthened this resolve and agreed thought needed to be given to extending activities to include all characteristics of the Public Sector Equality Duty. For example, an understanding of the impact of age on patterns of provision and achievement, and the collection of a wider data set.

The college’s self-assessment was considered accurate, plans achievable, and motivation to succeed in reaching the goals set, very high.

The college valued the framework and self assessment as extremely worthwhile, support from Lifelong Learning UK and one-to-one support was extremely useful and the motivation increased through the process. It was felt a very strong beginning had been made towards achieving the goals which motivated the college to join the project. The college would be keen to utilise the framework again and move towards working against the achieving level.

## **Cornwall College**

Cornwall College is a very large general further education college with sites across much of Cornwall. It is a complex, widely dispersed college. Cornwall is a predominantly rural community that has suffered from a decline in traditional industries; low household income, low skills levels, and high rates of unemployment characterise the area, although there are some areas of affluence. The college offers courses in all subjects, the majority of full-time learners are 16-18, and there are significant numbers of adult part-time learners, the number of learners from minority ethnic heritage is small, reflecting the social composition of the county.



The college is keen to ensure continuous improvement in a challenging area, and was motivated to participate in the pilot project because it presented a useful tool and framework for taking equality and diversity forward systematically. Additionally the college was keen to broaden its horizons and to work with peers extending knowledge and experience. Ofsted had concluded, “the promotion of equality had improved significantly and is good” and the college were determined to aim higher.

Introduction of the Equality Framework and self assessment was led by the college’s equality and diversity coordinator working in concert with the equality and diversity committee. All sections of the self assessment were addressed, although there was a concentration on key aspects of the framework, namely leadership and organisational commitment and a modern and diverse workforce, reflecting the expertise of the post holder.

Grades awarded were wide ranging with three predominating and evidence considered and measured with commensurately detailed actions indicated. The improvement action plan was not completed.

Completion was planned within two months, and a review of the self assessment and grades awarded conducted by the senior leadership team by the Christmas break. The college concurred it had roundly begun the developing level and pledged to complete it by June 2011, ready to move on to the next level.

Three key questions were unanswered at the review meeting stage, who owns the action plan, what is the most effective working method for introduction across the college, and what are the next steps. The Equality and Diversity Committee would deliberate these points, and a proposal presented to the senior leadership team with the completed self assessment.

The self assessment was regarded as extremely worthwhile offering a valuable rigour and structure, and the escalator of working towards the excelling level was extremely worthwhile. Progress towards developing the characteristics of the framework within the college was good, with more to do.

Key actions arising from the self assessment included revisiting the vision for equality and diversity in the college, and for professional development and principal and senior leaders to support and endorse the Equality Framework as part of achieving the vision. The importance of completing the improvement action plan and aligning it with other planning processes was also fundamentally important.

The self assessment review meeting was seen as extremely useful to the college, highlighting important discussion points, and provoking thought and

actions and assisting prioritisation. Future versions of the framework may benefit from closer examination of equality and diversity in the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies it was agreed, and definitions of some terms might be helpful.

In conclusion, the pilot was exceedingly valuable for the college and the post holder and Cornwall College would welcome opportunities for future involvement.

## **Derbyshire Learning and Development Consortium (DLDC)**

Derbyshire Learning and Development Consortium were established in 2000 as a partnership project between the community and voluntary service organisations in Derby and Derbyshire. Its purpose is to support country and community sector organisations across Derbyshire to access funding and key information to enable them to develop and deliver high quality learning and development opportunities for their staff, volunteers, clients, and learners. In 2007, DLDC became an independent organisation with a separate legal identity, its purpose is unchanged.

The Chief Executive of DLDC was keen to join the pilot because she knew there was much good practice within partner organisations, but that it was not captured systematically and not recorded. With a background in learning in further education, and one eye to a possible Ofsted inspection, the Equality Framework was seen as a good discipline to follow, offering focus for thought and reflection and a structure for evidencing practice without which the consortium might not reflect in the best light.

The framework was considered to have relevant questions, from which a clear plan of action could be developed without being overwhelmed. DLDC completed the self assessment in full, with extensive amplification of evidence in the text and well presented accompanying sources of evidence. Each criteria was followed by actions to be taken following on from the self assessment and a strong prioritised action plan with activities, responsibilities, resources, and plans to involve stakeholders clearly articulated.

Leadership of the self assessment rested with the Chief Executive, who had consulted with senior colleagues internally and at a DLDC staff development day. The exercise was undertaken thoroughly and with enthusiasm, Attention was paid to the detail of how to make things happen as well as envisioning at a strategic level. The action plan was due to be considered and adopted by the board of DLDC, as a consortium this was a very significant stage in the development of the framework, and this had not happened at the time of the

review meeting. There had been consultation with colleagues and the small DLDC team of officers. It was felt more evidence would be available as the self assessment was tested within DLDC.

The self assessment was open and critical, it indicated a journey towards completing the development level, completion had to bear in mind the very real limits on resources, and the fact this was a membership organisation where influence was the key rather than more traditional forms of line management. It was thought to be extremely worthwhile, providing an anchor without which it was considered “we would have floundered...our organisation is different to so many and that is one of its strengths and challenges”. “It was not an onerous process and we have built confidence through the self assessment process which has encouraged us to stretch further”.

Some progress was noted in developing the characteristics of the framework, although this was noted as an area for development. The framework was taken very seriously as was the self assessment and as such there has been a distance travelled, much more confidence about equality and diversity and how it fits in to teaching and learning and our work within the communities of Derbyshire.

Key actions arising from the self assessment were incorporated into an action plan to be adopted by the consortium board. The self assessment review meeting was extremely useful highlighting areas missed, but existing DLDC and gaps in practice to inform the action plan further. It also helped to join key aspects together, for example the importance of the strategic plan on one level and of relevant and inspirational teaching materials.

In conclusion, DLDC were very positive about the application of the framework and self assessment as a tool for organisational development.

## **East of England Next Steps (within Suffolk County Council)**

Suffolk County Council’s Enterprise Employment Advice and Guidance Division hold the Skills Funding Agency contract for the East of England **Nextstep** service. The service covers the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. A small team of independent advisers is used to deliver the service across the region where specific need is identified; 255 advisors deliver the remainder of the service from 44 subcontractors, in approximately 250 venues across the counties.

The East of England is an area of wide social and economic variation; with both urban and rural populations. A diverse ethnic minority population encompasses new migrants from eastern European Union accession states,

as well as more established minority communities. The current rate for unemployment is lower than the national average, although low pay and poor educational attainment is a significant feature of many of the areas within these counties.

In April 2010, Next Steps East of England received a contributory grade 3 for equality and diversity as a part of an Ofsted grade three for leadership and management. Ofsted observed aspects of the promotion of equality and diversity was satisfactory, and stated outcomes were not evaluated and analysed by specific minority ethnic groups, and that not all advisers participate in appropriate equality and diversity training.

Next Steps East of England were invited to participate in the Equality Framework, and responded positively to the invitation. Introduction of the framework was made by the Next Step Contract and Improvement Manager.

Coordination of the self assessment process was by the Quality Improvement Adviser who worked with the Contract and Improvement Manager to complete a first draft self assessment document and subsequently consulted the Next Step Management Team and the Quality Improvement Group on the document, incorporating their comments.

The self assessment toolkit presented a means of guiding delivery teams through equality and diversity to ensure the service was addressing all the factors coming into play from April 2011 as a result of the Equality Act 2010. It was also thought to provide a valuable instrument to inform the organisational self assessment report and development plans.

Engagement with the Equality Framework support was brief, as the team's introduction was close to the end of the pilot's life. Their exposure was limited therefore, however in judging the distance travelled, the team reviewed each of the criteria and probed in depth how they were doing, how they would like to be doing, and how to improve performance to embed equality and diversity at every level of the service to their customers. As such, the distance travelled was accelerated, and considered "quite far" because of the questioning undertaken.

The team completed the self assessment fully, and awarded grades to each criteria. Evidence statements were made in support of each point, documented evidence was not made available. Clear actions were identified arising from each self assessment statement, and an outline improvement action plan had been compiled. Actions were prioritised, responsibilities allocated, and the resources and involvement of relevant stakeholders were identified. Timescales were not stated.

In the time the team had available, the level of depth and reflective attention in the self assessment was impressive. Following the review visit, the team planned to add more detail. Engagement with the framework and self assessment was thought to be very worthwhile enabling the team to illustrate and evidence their commitment to equality and diversity, and prepare for external validation.

Considerable progress was thought to have been made in the development of the characteristics of the framework within the organisation because of engagement in the pilot, in a short space of time. Working through the evidence was encouraging, and provided a tool to share with subcontractors and inform them of their equality and diversity requirements, mandating them to participate fully in training and other developments.

The biggest obstacle was “working out what organisational framework to respond to the framework from, Next Step nationally, Suffolk County Council or East of England Next Steps?” In the end, the sections were completed according to their sphere of most influence on the service. The team knew there was more work to be done locally and corporately in the promotion of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, and felt more confident to press for strategic level improvements where necessary, as well as take local action.

Key actions arising from the self assessment included exploring ways to capture good practice in monitoring, measuring and evaluating information for service improvements. Also in embedding monitoring and reporting of equality and diversity in the advisor observation system and monitoring customer skills action plans for equality impact.

The review meeting was deemed extremely useful, helping to evaluate the current position and assist the team to identify how consistent improvements could be made. Ongoing development and continuation of the framework and associated support was the only point for improvement from Next Steps East of England who found the experience enriching and motivational.

## **Epping Forest College**

Epping Forest College is a medium sized college of general further education in West Essex. It serves the local communities of Debden and Loughton, and also draws learners from neighboring boroughs, including Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Newham, Redbridge Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets. It occupied new purpose built premises adjacent to its old site in

September 2008, and fourteen subjects are offered from entry to advanced level.

Equality and diversity gained a contributory grade two in the latest Ofsted inspection where the college overall fared less well, and was reported by Ofsted to have a high profile within the college. Prior to the inspection the interim Principal had appointed an Equality and Diversity Manager with a remit to embed equality and diversity throughout the college.

The Equality Framework was seen by the newly appointed manager to provide a framework for auditing the depth and breadth of the college's commitment and its understanding of equality and diversity and to action plan in a structured way for improvement.

During the pilot two review visits were made to the college. In the first visit the extent of the role and the work to be undertaken were explored and the ways in which the framework and self assessment process might dovetail to ensure progress was made in a constructive and supportive way. Strategies and timescales were identified and a date for a review of the completed self assessment documentation was agreed later in the year. The second visit reviewed the self assessment document. The process was led by the Diversity manager meeting with individual managers, graded at the Equality and Diversity Forum and the Principal had moderated the grades.

The self assessment broadly indicated criteria being met at grade three which is "...largely being established following discussion to address relevant areas. There are clear results to show action is being taken and an improvement strategy is being developed to impact upon learners, the workforce and relevant governance structures in a measurable way".

Of great significance therefore was the action plan which flowed from the self assessment moderation, and the journey it would take to be implemented. Seven key prioritised actions emerged.

The motivating factor for the college in joining the project was to push an agenda for equality and diversity forward with a structure to monitor progress and achievement. The self assessment exercise had achieved that with support from the leadership team and managers with service responsibility for movement in the seven key actions.

As the officer with lead responsibility, the Equality & Diversity Manager felt the college was constantly travelling and had a hard road and long distance to reach. She had however found the project and the support afforded had motivated her to continue and assisted with travelling a long way along the road.

Both Lifelong Learning UK and the one-to-one support were deemed extremely useful. It was pointed out the self assessment documentation could have been even more helpful to the college with a greater emphasis on teaching and learning and impact on the curriculum. This was agreed as an area for improvement for the future.

The college felt it had much work to do on the protected characteristics it felt most comfortable with and even more to ensure even understanding and compliance on all aspects, including developing effective monitoring. This was an area where further advice and guidance would be welcomed.

The framework and process of self assessment, together with the establishment of equality and diversity champions were considered to be the most helpful enablers in facilitating organisational cultural change. Individual conversations with managers to build rapport and opportunities for challenge and critical reflection within the equality and diversity group were also helpful. The framework was seen as a tool to help the college raise the bar and not just the preserve of the lead manager.

The college intended to work towards completing the development level, and would look forward to the achieving level, welcoming support and engagement from others along the route.

## **Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy**

The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy is an independent specialist residential college in the New Forest. Forty-five learners between 16 -18 follow a curriculum based on learning through equine studies and care of horses adapted to meet their special needs.

Self assessment on the phase one pilot highlighted a number of strengths and many areas for development on a long journey for the Fortune Centre, willingly embraced by the newly appointed principal for learning who leads the college's engagement in the Equality Framework.

During phase one, data collection and analysis was identified as a significant area of improvement to understand the impact of provision, the development of individual action plans, measuring and monitoring learners' achievements and progression, and for professional development of staff and other stakeholders. It was suggested that sharing practice on data collection and analysis with local providers as a helpful source of support and challenge.

In reviewing the phase two self assessment, the motivational factors for remaining in the project were to progress the previously identified areas for

improvement and the belief that equality and diversity provided a locus for organisational focus on raising outcomes for learners with special needs and for staff development.

As a result of joining the pilot, the Fortune Centre had gained a much broader understanding of equality and diversity than it had twelve months ago, and that understanding had had a beneficial impact on the daily lives of learners and staff alike.

As with the first phase, the self assessment process was led by the Principal for learning in consultation with the Equality and Diversity group. The Fortune Centre had been preoccupied by organisational change and only some aspects of the self assessment process had been completed at the time of the review visit. It was hoped all aspects of self assessment would be completed by March 2011. The aspects completed were considered extremely valuable by the Principal and the Equality and Diversity group, and considered to have had an impact on provision and culture. The view was the centre had a greater understanding of the extent of inclusion, beyond their own experiences, and though that very valuable indeed.

Some progress was thought to have been made in developing an appreciation of all the protected characteristics and in considering how that might be woven into the taught and pastoral curriculum. However, much more was to be done, where priority had been afforded, success could be evidenced, but overall, the centre was more comfortable in some aspects than others, which was a noted area for development.

It was noted greater attention must be given to the collection of evidence and data analysis to reflect the work of the centre well and to correlate commitments to examples from practice in completing the self assessment documentation by the March deadline.

Engagement in the project was thought very valuable. Lifelong Learning UK and the one-to-one support was highly valued, particularly in clarifying the relationship between the Equality Framework, the centre's strategic plans, quality improvement plans, and self assessment documentation. The Centre suggested easier use of electronic links would have been beneficial and found the Excellence Gateway a supportive tool.

## **Halesowen College**

Halesowen College is a tertiary college located in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley eight miles west of Birmingham. It operates from three sites close to the centre of Halesowen. The college serves a local population from



surrounding townships in the Borough of Dudley and Sandwell and West Birmingham. The area served by the college is primarily urban wards with high indices of deprivation. The college offers courses in eleven sector programmes and caters largely for full-time learners aged 16 -18, and a significant cohort of 14 -16 year olds.

The college was motivated to join the Equality Framework pilot as the Principal wished to build confidence and competence in the staff team to build excellence in equality and diversity into everyday practice throughout the college. The Principal was responsible for introducing the framework into the college. The Principal and the Quality and Equality Champion completed the self assessment as the first stage and initiated discussion with the senior leadership and management team and key college personnel to discuss taking the framework and self assessment forward.

The self assessment addressed all the criteria critically and a range of grades awarded. In the main, grades were supported by reference to evidence, although documentation was not offered. Examples of interesting practice were noted and there was clear identification of actions to be taken arising from the self assessment, these did not include responsibility for carrying the actions forward, timescales or milestones. At this stage, an improvement action plan was not completed.

Examples of actions to be taken included comprehensive training for staff managers and governors on the Equality Act 2010, and exploration of the impact of the protected characteristics for practice and the daily life of the college, and a proposal to link with the trade unions to review equality impact assessment on practice, in addition to policy and procedures.

As to the value of the self assessment, it was hoped it would prove worthwhile. The college places sound emphasis on equality and diversity, for example the Principal chairs the equality and diversity forum, equality and diversity training and development is given high priority and college strategic and operational plans reflect that commitment. The framework was considered an opportunity to stock take, to assist the leadership team to improve understanding across the college and identify areas for improving practice, and for college leaders, and governors “to capture where we are” and what we must do.

The college imperative was in “getting it right with the staff, we can add to learners’ experience”. The framework and self assessment was valued as providing compliance and building confidence within the organisation as whole. Remaining an inclusive college and raising standards was seen as essential and equipping staff and being able to improve and be benchmarked as improving was a key motivator.

Exploring the extent to which the characteristics of the framework were in evidence in the college welcomed opportunities to explore thoughts and feelings, to celebrate difference and step up to taboo and difficult subjects with support. For example, in considering the impact of the protected characteristics and teaching and learning,

The leadership team perceived differing levels of understanding and confidence within the staff group to be an obstacle to progress to support organisational growth and enhance skill and knowledge. The leadership team wished to continue to promote the Equality Framework as a useful tool. The review meeting was deemed very useful it had been thought provoking, and arising from it an action plan would be developed.

## **Hopwood Hall College**

Hopwood Hall College is the tertiary college for the metropolitan borough of Rochdale. The college is located on two main sites, one in the town centre and the other campus in Middleton, a few miles away. The college provides mainly vocational programmes, in fifteen subject areas. Most full-time learners are aged 16 -18 and just over a third study at advanced level. In April 2010, over twenty percent of the learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is more than double the proportion found in the local population. Rochdale is one of the most deprived boroughs in England.

Hopwood Hall were motivated to join the Equality Framework pilot because they wanted a mechanism for the college to value the work it had done to date and serve as a quality improvement tool. Hopwood Hall had gained a contributory grade two in Ofsted inspection towards a leadership and management grade two and did not want to stand still.

The upward movement and systematic approach of the framework appealed to the college. The ability to complete the framework at the developing level, move through to the achieving level and gain recognition at the excelling level provided encouragement and a personally satisfying goal for the college's Equality and Diversity Manager.

The introduction of the Equality Framework to the college came with full support from the principal and senior leadership team. The Equality and Diversity Manager coordinated and completed the self assessment process, inviting views and evidence in one to one meetings with key staff and senior leaders identified by the Director for Quality who reviewed the document. The self assessment document was extensively completed. Detailed and lively evidence addressed the criteria, with clear links to college publications

intranet links, and documentary evidence. There was evidence of good practice, clear ideas for development and the document conveyed a high level of activity and energy. More meetings were planned to gain the fullest picture of college activity.

The column capturing actions arising from self assessment was incomplete at the time of the review meeting. Considering completion of the improvement action plan to ensure congruence with the college's single equality scheme (SES) and other corporate plans had provoked thought. The SES derived from the college's strategic direction, values, and 3-year improvement plan document. This had determined ten strategic priorities for equality and diversity underpinning the SES. Some integration of plans expected with oversight by the senior leadership team and the governing body. The review meeting took place at the end of September and completion of the developing level planned by January 2011.

The college felt it had travelled a considerable distance in the implementation of equality and diversity throughout the college, with an emphasis on teaching and learning and learners understanding within the curriculum.

The college deemed the value of the self assessment to be extremely worthwhile. Time for structured reflection focusing on how to demonstrate something existed to a high standard and to illustrate it and how to improve it was stretching and at times humbling. Considerable progress had been made in developing the characteristics of the framework albeit there was further to go. The college had good solid practice to hand which needed to be evidenced, measured, and made consistent, and strides had been made in this direction.

One of the biggest obstacles in developing the framework in the college had been a lack of time to make a difference; embedding practice takes time, which was not available because of the point at which the college became involved with the pilot.

A suggested glossary of terms was thought to be helpful. A parallel use of language in the different levels with a clear cross-referenced numbering system for each criterion and more explicit statements of the values afforded to each aspect of the criteria helpful for the future. Standardisation of evidence was proposed for further thought and to what extent evidence is required at which level, and the depth of actions to be tested in order that judgments about self assessment are like with like across the sector. Peer review was considered an excellent tool for driving standards up, maintaining momentum and enthusiasm alongside an externally nationally recognised form of validation.

## **In Touch Care**

In Touch Care is a private training provider based in Sheffield. In Touch Care specialise in training and development in Health and Social Care and Childcare Training and Development. In Touch Care delivers provision to all ages, including young people aged ten to eleven in partnerships with schools and adults in partnership with employers.

In Touch Care were motivated to participate in the pilot exercise as a work based learning provider of excellence. They were particularly interested in opportunities for peer review and keen to develop their practice having gained an Ofsted grade one for leadership with a contributory grade one in equality and diversity at their last inspection.

In Touch Care introduced the Equality Framework throughout the organisation and completed the self assessment completely and with rigour. Each criterion was examined thoroughly and detailed evidence offered in support of the assertions and grade awarded. Detailed and practical actions were identified, comprehensive evidence files were available and the company's self assessment documentation was an exemplar of good practice.

The self assessment process was led by the Equality and Diversity Champion and conducted with the senior leadership team including the Executive Director who took a lead role in moderation. Notes were taken at the launch of the pilot which guided the process undertaken. Leadership and organisational commitment was self assessed at grade one, other criteria at grade two. In discussion in the review meeting, further examples of good practice were highlighted, which it was considered might raise the grades. Additionally it was agreed if actions proposed were completed with the alacrity suggested in the meeting, then In Touch Care could soon complete the developing level of the framework and be ready to move to the achieving level.

The process of self assessment against the framework was thought to be extremely worthwhile, providing an excellent tool to drive equality and diversity strategies forward, consequently helping to raise quality and standards across the board, benefiting all learners and the company. The criteria provided a good focus for reflective thought and questioning, and hence organisational growth and development, stimulation and advancement.

Equality and diversity was described as an evolving company journey, increasingly embedded into learner experience and company practice. The Equality Framework had been viewed as an opportunity to consolidate practice, to review past and present actions and to bring together areas for improvement and to focus developmental activity within a coherent structure.

It was thought considerable progress had been made in developing a confident approach to promoting all the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 at In Touch Care, stemming from their outward focus and deep commitment to equality and diversity as an intrinsic core value of the company. Staff training was in place and a review of policies and procedures were planned to ensure In Touch Care could ensure compliance seeing this as an area for growth and reassurance.

In Touch Care's review of the framework and their methodical approach to self assessment meant they embarked upon an extensive exercise. The biggest limiting factor in their engagement within the pilot was one of time. However, the not inconsiderable time they put aside for the work was felt to be extremely worthwhile and to have significant impact for the company and for learners.

The self assessment review was valued as being extremely useful, raising critical questions for reflection, clarifying levels of attainment and assisting the illustration of aspects for further development.

Going forward, In Touch Care would be very interested in moving to the achieving level, in benchmarking best practice and in peer review.

## **Kensington and Chelsea College**

Kensington and Chelsea College is a major provider of education and training in West London. The College has four centres within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, is a lead provider for Offender Learning and Skills in five prisons and delivers training in business and community venues in central and west London. The largest number of learners are adults, with an increasing number of young people attending in recent years.

The senior leadership team and governors at Kensington and Chelsea were determined to refresh their equality and diversity practice as a strategic priority, stemming from the college's strategic plan.

Kensington and Chelsea were therefore motivated to participate in the pilot through a desire to enhance their practice and focus planning for improvements they wished to make in implanting strategies to improve equality and diversity, quality and standards. The support offered and the availability of an external critical friend was a key factor in their engagement with the pilot. The Equality Framework and self assessment process was seen as structure to frame discussion and guide action plans.

The introduction of the framework and self assessment was led by the Vice Principal assisted by the Human Resource Manager and Quality Improvement Manager. It was planned that the Equality Framework, completed self assessment and action plan would be presented to the senior leadership team and the governing body for review and monitoring.

The team completed an initial self assessment themselves, as a first step to determine the path for taking the framework forward operationally throughout the college. At the time of the review meeting the team had completed the self assessment and all the criteria were addressed. Some criteria had begun to be well illustrated and evidenced and others more sketchily addressed. All points had brief actions identified, and it was proposed to amplify and draw these together into an outline action plan for development within the college teams.

Grades awarded varied, but did not include grade four, action criteria not adequately in place, although discussions may have taken place to initiate policy, strategy or action planning. The team believed they had made good strides towards completing the developing level and wished to take the framework forwards as a tool for holistic development across the college. Circulating and consulting upon the framework at team meetings was identified as a practical and feasible way to take the framework forward within a realistic timescale to be agreed by the senior team and the board of governors.

In discussion, there were priority areas for action, for example, the team was aware of the importance of updating their single equality scheme in the light of the Equality Act 2010. In addition to the need to ensure coherence between strategic and operational plans, self assessment and data analysis, consequent action taken, equality impact assessment of policies and achievements of targets set and of seeking alternative methods for effective communication with learners and learner involvement. The team agreed improvements in data collection and interpretation were key areas for action by the college and one which underpinned the success of all current initiatives.

Many examples of interesting practice were noted, including mandatory level one equality and diversity training for all staff, which is monitored centrally for compliance and level two training for front line staff and managers at open sites beginning in the autumn.

The process of self assessment was thought to have been very worthwhile, and confirmed the need to get more people involved. The college felt it had made more than some progress towards developing the characteristics of the framework within the college but considerable progress could not be claimed

at that point. Lack of time was felt to be the biggest inhibitor in developing the framework and completing the developing level, external support was the biggest enabler, and the college remained motivated to move the framework forward.

The college suggested some questions might invite duplication of evidence, and suggested it may be helpful if the guidance notes included definitions of terms. The suggestion that further revisions to the framework might have an increased emphasis on teaching and learning and curriculum impact was welcomed.

## **Michaeljohn Training School (MJT)**

Michaeljohn Training School is a privately owned company providing government funded work based learning courses in hairdressing. The school provides recruitment and placement services for learners and has links with over one hundred and fifty salons across the Manchester region. The school is based in purposely adapted facilities in the city centre. In their second year of the Equality Framework pilot MJT continued to demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for equality and diversity throughout the organisation, and with an unmistakable lead from the Managing Director and her senior team.

A visible, tangible commitment to the promotion of all aspects of equality of opportunity, to learner safety and well being, learner voices, social justice and community cohesion, and valuing all the protected characteristics may be found in the school.

There is a culture of continuous improvement. This leads to a committed team with enthusiasm for developing practice and procedures, learning from data analysis, reflection and planning for change. Learner success is the heartbeat of MichaelJohn training, and quantitative and qualitative data are used to judge progress and drive up standards. MichaelJohn have embraced the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 as opportunities for innovative strategies for learning, for both staff and learners clients and employers with whom the salon works.

Participation in the Equality Framework and self assessment was seen by MJT as a framework for benchmarking practice, a chance to learn from others and raise their game to a higher level.

MJT completed their self assessment in a consultative manner, engaging learners and staff in the process with moderation by the senior leadership team. The document was fully completed.

The team self assessed each action criteria at grade 1 for all aspects of the developing level. All statements made in support of the grade were extensively evidenced, both as text in the self assessment document and by files of paper evidence, which was used to amplify the assertions made. MJT clearly demonstrated that they had achieved the criteria within the developing level of the framework. Action criteria are in place and performance is to an outstanding standard. MJT has evidence to show actions have been in place for some time, which are effective and demonstrate a real difference. MJT are able to demonstrate measurable change and improvement over time.

There were many examples of innovative practice with a positive impact on learners and staff. For example, support from MJT to facilitate the inclusion of a deaf learner at interview for a place on a MJT programme the afternoon of the review meeting. Materials presented in support of the self assessment are lively, and branded in an attractive manner. Messages of support for learners, expectations and responsibilities were conveyed with consistency.

MJT consider the Equality Framework to have been invaluable in giving a focus to their work in equality and diversity, and promoting and embedding the characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. They believe the pilot has assisted in accelerating an essential step change for the organisation and are of the view that without the framework, such developments may have taken longer to achieve.

MJT was motivated to remain with the pilot to learn and share and embed best practice with others in the sector, and to benchmark progress. MJT were motivated to understand what impacted on learner's achievement, and welcomed strategic challenge from which they could develop further improvements.

It was agreed that the team had travelled a significant distance as a result of their involvement in the pilot. The process of building evidence to support assertions and of critical challenge in the self assessment had strengthened their team effectiveness and brought them together.

The one-to-one support and review meeting were found to be extremely useful. MJT were keen to use the framework to accelerate progress, and felt the framework and the self assessment impact to be very beneficial.

## **Oakwood Court College**

Oakwood Court College is based in Dawlish in Devon. It is owned by Phoenix Learning and Care and is an independent specialist college for students aged sixteen to twenty five; a significant proportion of whom have learning



difficulties. The college offers three types of learning programmes at foundation level: vocational training, pre-vocational training and experiential training. The learning needs of the students who attend the centre are becoming increasingly complex. The college received an Ofsted grade four contributory grade for equality and diversity in January 2009 towards a grade four for leadership and management. By March 2010 improvement was made and both grades rose to a grade three. The college was therefore very keen to participate in the pilot and learn how they might continue to improve equality, quality and standards.

The Principal of the college has a commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity in its widest interpretation. To ensure his own updating, he is studying for an ILM Level 4 qualification in Equality and Diversity. Supported by the senior leadership team the Principal has initiated a number of initiatives to ensure inclusivity and diversity. Examples include action to benchmark with other providers to understand low representation of learners from minority ethnic groups and to target widening participation. Staff at the centre are recognised to have a wide experience of work with learners with different abilities, but have yet to translate that understanding into other areas of equality and diversity classroom practice, a structured programme of professional development is therefore in place, supporting staff to extend their knowledge and skills. Plans are in place to increase learner's appreciation of all aspects of equality and diversity, and the challenges presented by the Equality Act 2010 and development of the protected characteristics. An equality and diversity curriculum audit has been carried out.

Oakwood College was motivated to participate in the pilot by the personal commitment of the principal and his team, with a genuine wish to improve practice and extend their skills in a very specific context and with small groups of learners for the benefit of the learning community of Oakwood Court. The Equality Framework was welcomed as a structured tool "to guide a journey of potential turns with a group of people keen to take the turnings and complete the journey in full".

The self assessment process was lead by the Principal, who completed a first draft which he intended to take to his board of directors and staff teams for comment and adaptation after feedback from the review meeting. He felt his perceptions needed testing and looked forward to critical input from his colleagues.

The self assessment was completed in full, each criterion was addressed, and evidence offered to substantiate the grades awarded. Some evidence was less substantial than points, certain aspects were well amplified and others sketchy, which was recognised in the text.

A strong action plan began to emerge with priority actions and named responsibilities and some timescales. The self assessment was thought to be extremely worthwhile, as it underpinned passion with articulated activities and illustrated what the college tried to do and what it intended to do for further improvement

The college felt it had made some progress in developing the characteristics of the Equality Framework; it was clearly comfortable with many aspects of the protected characteristics, but welcomed opportunity and support to gain greater confidence in this area. It was felt that whereas the college might identify the characteristics, their impact on practice was yet to be fully developed.

The greatest obstacle to the framework was felt to be an uneven buy in to the very essence of the Equality Act 2010, which needed to be unpacked much more within the college and the impact understood and planned for. Professional development was planned for staff with a roll out to learners and it was considered that exploring beliefs and behaviors and establishing a code of conduct would help to move a complex yet essential area of work forward. Sensitive issues such as age, faith and sexual orientation in a closed environment were touched upon and were aspects on which more guidance and opportunities for discussion would be very welcome.

Arising from the self assessment key actions included leadership of a change management programme in which a clear corporate agenda was established and from which an action plan could be taken forward confidently. Equality and diversity would permeate every aspect of the programme and the plan.

The self assessment review meeting was perceived as extremely helpful, focusing the mind at a strategic level at a busy time when it would be easy to become lost in the detail or go “down a cul de sac from which there was no return.” It was thought excellent to have someone to reflect off and discuss complex issues in a developmental way and more opportunities for such one-to-one support would be invaluable.

The framework was considered very straightforward and easy to follow although some questions could be a little more simply expressed and a glossary very useful.

## **Otley College**

Otley College is a specialist land based college in rural Suffolk serving several towns including the conurbation of Ipswich and the local catchment area.

Learners study a range of full and part-time courses, which are increasingly extending beyond its original land based specialism.

The college participated in the pilot in order to help it enhance understanding of equality and diversity, broaden strategies for inclusion and embed these within college strategic and operational plans. The college saw the limitations of its experience and position as a drawback with the potential to limit learner success and viewed the framework as a tool for guiding improvement.

In the first phase of the pilot, initial completion of the self assessment document identified significant gaps and areas for improvement. During the self assessment review meeting the college began to identify a range of actions to assist improvement, from which they drew together a comprehensive action plan.

During the second phase, the college began to put those plans into action, and was able to present a more extensive body of evidence in support of the grades awarded. Leadership of the Equality Framework and self assessment was by the Vice Principal and Head of Learning Support, and Teaching and Learning Quality Adviser. Collaboration with Easton College was underway, whose Human Resource Manager contributed to the self assessment review.

The college was able to indicate where progress had been made and was encouraged by the range of actions taken to turn commitment into practical action. Examples include a simple and clear single equality scheme which had been updated, and a range of professional development opportunities for staff to ensure understanding of the protected characteristics and the implications for teaching and learning and organisational policies and procedures. Another was the commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity now found on the college website and in other college communications.

One significant area for development was that of equality impact assessment, and setting of targets, review and analysis to measure the effectiveness of actions taken the progress made by learners, or potential learners and the community. The college was keen to establish measures for assessment, evaluation and review and action and had training planned to develop consistent application across the college.

The college valued Lifelong Learning UK and the one-to-one support provided, and was motivated to seek further improvements as it gained confidence in the effectiveness of the steps it had taken. The grades awarded in self assessment varied in range and reflected well the work still to be undertaken for the college to complete the developing level. Nevertheless, the college had made significant strides, and was motivated to continue to use the framework to guide an improvement process.

## **Peterborough Regional College**

Peterborough Regional College is a large college of further education on the edge of the city of Peterborough serving a wide catchment area across East Anglia. It has in excess of two thousand full-time and in excess of eight thousand part-time learners studying a broad range of subjects.

Peterborough Regional College established an Equality and Diversity Committee in April 2009, chaired by the Principal. Members of the leadership team champion single equality aspects and chair four equality sub-committees, which report to the College Equality and Diversity Committee. The four equality champions are committed to actively promoting and implementing the equality framework, which they view as an important tool helping them lead essential culture change.

Led by the Senior Director of Quality, the equality champions have an ambition to excel, and are proud of the fast track journey the College embarked upon as it moved from an Ofsted contributory grade 4 for Equality and Diversity in April 2008, to a contributory grade 2 in December 2009. The team set a goal of completing the developing level of the Equality Framework, with tangible differences in place by the end of April 2011, and at the time of the review visit was on track to achieve their goal.

Strategic and operational plans contain clear statements about the centrality of equality and diversity, and a strong strategic focus is given through an extensive single equality scheme. A comprehensive network of meetings reporting to governors provides a structured approach to planning, target setting and monitoring the achievement of quality and equality objectives.

Clear targets are set, and there is an extensive system of equality impact assessment and an accompanying action plan. Ten priority Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs) are included in the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan emphasising the College's intention to secure raised success for all learners, and to monitor progress in all characteristics of equality and diversity, with measurable outcomes.

The team completed the self- assessment document together, they shared and identified evidence and then presented the document to the Principal. Discussion generated actions accordingly and grades agreed and moderated by the team.

An extensive body of evidence was available to support the statements made and the grades awarded. Evidence was available electronically with clear links to college processes, policies and documents. The team will plan to integrate the outcomes and actions from the Equality Framework self assessment with

their single equality scheme, and other relevant systems to ensure an embedded approach.

The college recently appointed a new Principal and the Equality Champions believe processes are now in place from which to reach their goal of excellence in equality and diversity. They welcome the Equality Framework as a guide to their effective leadership, offering structure and encouragement thereby enabling them to “tail flip” college culture, as they work towards becoming an outstanding college.

The team presents a visible, tangible commitment to the promotion of all aspects of equality of opportunity. They are keen to develop further examples of positive action to move forward. There are a number of interesting new strategies in place, and include working with a specialist equality and diversity advisor in the design and delivery of staff development to strengthen and embed equality in the curriculum, revisions to lesson plans and lesson observation to include equality and diversity and changes in Human Resource and other college systems and a multi faith chaplaincy in partnership with the University.

The team has a grounded understanding of what is still to be achieved, with an equal quiet determination that change will be implemented. Whereas the single equality scheme and action plan may be overlong, if it and the actions outlined in the Equality Framework self assessment are implemented huge strides will have been made.

The team was modest about good practice, only when pressed were examples cited of the ways in which the college has changed with changing communities in the area, and how it has handled difficult conflict and complex race relations. In one instance tension spilt over between a group of Afghan and Pakistani youths, and the college in concert with the police, and the youth service, established an initiative called Unity Peacemakers concerned with harmony and understanding. This will be considered as an example of good practice to share with others and further thought given to its applicability to aspects of equality and its development for future harmony.

The college has begun to explore issues of transgender with learners, introducing them to the Boston Belles as part of lesbian and gay history week, and has worked closely with the Terrence Higgins Trust to open up hitherto silent issues of sexual orientation and marital status. Other examples of good progress were identified on reflection, and the college team was keen to draw them together to inspire and encourage their colleagues further.

There was broad agreement that the self assessment had been undertaken self critically and was a valuable exercise. The review meeting raised many

interesting points for further discussion, and it was agreed the work undertaken would be raised with the whole leadership team, and the governing body to ensure their commitment and understanding of the broad agenda, and for practical consideration of emerging issues such as succession planning with an equality and diversity emphasis and more detailed data analysis of college outcomes and wider community demographics.

The team was interested to learn how others managed the development all the protected characteristics and are keen to learn and share with other providers. The Equality Framework and self assessment review process were deemed to be extremely valuable, the college intended to move forward to the achieving level and felt it had made significant progress as distance travelled with the guidance from the framework illuminating much that was to be done to achieve their goal of excellence.

## **Petroc College**

Petroc College was formed from a merger of North Devon and East Devon colleges in 2008. Petroc offers courses in all sector areas with limited provision in agriculture, horticulture and animal care. Petroc provides work based training and Train to Gain courses, and serves a predominantly rural population in an area with limited transport links and significant economic challenges.

Petroc were invited to participate in the pilot to support the leadership and management team in developing improvements in equality and diversity across the college. The college wished to ensure equality and diversity was not a limiting grade in Ofsted inspection. The College has an Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Committee, chaired by the Assistant Director Learner Quality and Equality and Learner Support Services.

Responsibility for introducing the framework and self assessment process rested with the Coordinator for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. A brief introduction to the post holder highlighted he was a member of the Learner Support Team with a day to day brief to work with challenging and excluded teams in the college and for developing equality and diversity at an operational level.

The self assessment document was completed by the Coordinator for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Prior to the review meeting, the self assessment had been completed by the post holder. Grades had been awarded for each criterion at the developing level, however evidence columns

were not complete nor were any actions arising identified. Paper evidence files were offered at the review meeting, although they had not been aligned with the criteria of the framework at that stage.

The meeting therefore offered an opportunity to explore the purpose of the framework in more detail and practical strategies to take the framework forward within developing leadership and management structures, and possible models for completing the self assessment process consultatively and with a wide range of stakeholders. Discussion emerged about the importance of support for the development of equality and diversity and inclusion and mentoring and coaching schemes were explored.

The Chair of the Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Committee joined discussion about the Equality Framework towards the end of the review meeting. The relationship between the Equality Framework, the college's quality improvement plan and self assessment was investigated and referred as an area for internal clarification. It was agreed the college would complete their review of the Equality Framework and self assessment completing the evidence section in full and action planning accordingly.

## **Portland College**

Portland College is an independent specialist college, located in parkland near the city of Mansfield. Funding is through the Skills Funding Agency and the Department of Work and Pensions, and charitable foundations. Significant investment has upgraded college facilities to include an art zone, a multi-faith chaplaincy, a specialist disability enterprise centre and a hospitality suite, which is open to the public.

The college recruits nationally and provides for students aged over 16 with physical disabilities and associated neurological conditions, many with complex needs. The college focuses on developing independence and employability for learners and is committed to their achievement and to excellence throughout the college.

The promotion of equality and diversity is a core value at the college and Portland was motivated to join the pilot project because the Equality Framework offered a tool and a structure through which they could work towards their aspiration for excellence in equality and diversity practice. The leadership team was fervent about implementing a system that would enable them to measure progress and identify developmental steps towards their goal.

The Assistant Principal led the self assessment process, asking key members of the leadership team to review a specific section of the document with their teams. The college's equality and diversity and inclusion committee reviewed sections, moderated by the Assistant Principal and Customer Services Manager into one document. The equality, diversity and inclusion committee includes of college leaders and managers, learners, volunteers, teaching and support staff, and health care workers who champions each of the protected characteristics of the equality act as part of their work on the committee.

The self assessment was fully completed, with detailed evidence offered to support the grades awarded. Many examples of interesting practice were included. Documentary evidence had not been prepared, but was "available". Consideration had been made of all criteria. The college self assessed either at grade one, in place and to an outstanding standard, where the action criteria has been in place for some time and is effective, as it demonstrates a real difference. Or, grade two, in place to a good standard and responsibility taken to make a difference, and where improvement is required, action is supported by a strong improvement strategy.

Clear action points reinforced each criterion stating what further work was required to bring about improvements in performance. At the time of the review visit, these had not been compiled into an improvement action plan. This was the key action arising from the self assessment and the self assessment review visit.

The college concluded they had travelled a long distance in a short space of time, the structure of the framework had helped them "recognise we are better placed than we originally thought" and was encouraging because they had a firm foundation from which to build a strong improvement plan which was inspiring. The college had come late to the pilot and felt constrained by a lack of time therefore. They felt they were moving towards completions of the developing level and that the self assessment process had been very worthwhile.

Considerable progress had been made by the college in developing the characteristics of the framework, which they considered core to the organisation, and this included recognition that more work had to be done to develop the protected characteristics of the equality act, and was welcomed.

The self assessment review meeting was viewed as extremely useful and noted points for improvement was a stronger emphasis on teaching and learning and the taught curriculum and formatting of the Equality Framework documentation.



## **South Nottinghamshire College with Castle College**

South Nottinghamshire College with Castle College are two newly merging colleges of further education in the City of Nottingham. South Nottinghamshire College is a medium size further education college with two main centres in Clifton and Rushcliffe, and learning centres in Bingham, Cotgrave and the City. Around half of all learners come from Nottinghamshire and around 40% come from Nottingham City postcode areas, the college has significant numbers of part-time adult learners (Ofsted 2008). Castle College is a large general further education college with campus at Beeston, Stapleford and the Nottingham City Centre, and provision in community venues. There is a significant number of learners from minority ethnic heritage studying at the college, the majority of who are 16 -18 and enrolled on courses at level two or below.

A sector event introduced the Equality Diversity and Professional Development Coordinator for South Nottingham College and the Equality and Diversity Coordinator for Castle College to the Equality Framework. Eager to establish a structure for equality and diversity within the new college they considered the framework to offer an anchor for work on equality and diversity during the detailed implementation of the merger proposals. With the accompanying self assessment, a tool for auditing current provision and practice, strengths and areas for development, identifying a strong improvement action plan for the new college.

Merging data, data analysis and evaluation, developing a unified single equality scheme, and strategy and processes to accelerate the development of equality and diversity were key drivers in the proposed adoption of the Equality Framework. Introduction to the framework was very late in the life of the pilot. It had not been possible for the self assessment documentation to be completed and the self assessment review meeting concentrated on an exploration of possible methods of engaging the newly merged organisations in the framework and self assessment.

As an example, the implications of the Equality Act 2010, and preparation for forthcoming inspection were the subjects of pre-arranged training. South Nottingham College's equalities and diversity committee met regularly and had an equalities action plan in place. Agreement was reached to invite members from Castle College to an equalities meeting, review the outcomes of these activities, and complete a draft Equality Framework self assessment as an information exchange and team building exercise with a proposed presentation of the draft to the line managers of the Equality and Diversity Coordinators from both colleges.

The colleges were considered to encompass many of the characteristics of the Equality Framework, policies had been reviewed and found to be comprehensive, and impact assessed consistently. Addressing equally the protected characteristics was viewed as an opportunity for raising standards, and reaching the wider community, there was work to be embarked upon, but that could be a very positive strand in the new merged organisation.

Other models and strategies were explored, a clear idea of the work to be undertaken emerged, and possible timescales and milestones. It was concluded the framework provided an excellent vehicle from which to drive a stratagem forward. The review meeting, was thought to be extremely worthwhile, providing a sense of scale, and achievable steps along the way.

Uncertainty with the pending merger had been an earlier dominant theme, now because of engaging with the Equality Framework a clear action plan was beginning to be unfurled, and two equality and diversity coordinators were champions, ready to drive forward an improvement action plan for their new college together.

## **Tyne Metropolitan College**

Tyne Metropolitan College is a large college of further education in Wallsend, North Tyneside. It has three hundred and twenty full-time equivalent staff and three thousand full-time equivalent learners, of whom the majority are 16 -18 year old and some one hundred to a thousand adults studying part-time. Increasingly learners come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The college works closely with neighbouring colleges, of whom there are five in the surrounding areas.

In recent years the college has placed an increasing importance on strategies to promote equality and diversity and effective inclusion working in partnership with external partners, for example the North Tyneside Strategic partnership Equality and Diversity group. Responsibility for the introduction of the Equality Framework rested with the Director of Quality Improvement, the senior manager tasked with responsibility for equality and diversity and the Head of Teaching and Learning, tasked with promoting equality and diversity in teaching and learning.

The Equality Framework was perceived by the college to provide a clear focus for planning improvements in equality and diversity throughout the college. The lead managers were aware of the job to be undertaken and where they wanted the reach. As distance travelled they were aware there was a long journey, and welcomed the opportunity offered by the framework to focus

attention on standards that can be achieved and identifying what specifically needed to be done and by whom.

The self assessment process was lead by the Director of Quality Improvement, and concentrated on the leadership and organisational commitment section, other sections were briefly complete, and the lead officer was conscious of the benefit and need of extending the self assessment process to other lead senior managers.

The evidence submitted was scant; however a definite start was made to consider how college practice met the criteria very realistically. Areas of existing practice and for development were noted and aspects for new action highlighted. The self assessment process was thought to be very worthwhile and the team motivated to take it forward to build a more complete picture and action plan in depth, they recognised the work to be done and showed an aptitude for it.

Examples of proposed work to be undertaken included aligning the single equality scheme with the self assessment report, training on best practice in impact assessment for all staff, and on the implications of the Equality Act 2010 for all staff, developing a lesbian and gay monthly forum and proposed conference, and becoming a reporting centre for hate crime, and the development of a marketing and communications strategy to ensure representation of a diverse learner community within all publications.

The college was enthusiastic about delivery of its plans, it felt confident in some aspects of the protected characteristics and recognised it had more work to do before it was meeting or exceeding requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The self assessment review visit was thought to be very useful for gaining clearer understanding of what was to be achieved, and assisting the lead team prioritise actions going ahead. The team welcomed Lifelong Learning UK and one-to-one support and wished there were more opportunities to meet and take the framework forward with assistance. In conclusion, their involvement in the pilot had been very helpful, and they wished for more.

## **Yeovil College**

Yeovil College is in the town of Yeovil Somerset and is a medium sized further education college established as a tertiary college in 1974. It offers a wide range of vocational and GCE A and AS programmes for young people and adults.

Yeovil College were motivated to join the pilot because they saw in the framework an effective tool to guide improvements they wished to make in equality and diversity practice. The framework was thought to offer the leadership team a coherent structure “bringing an overwhelming tapestry together” offering a clear focus for reflection and action in a coherent way. The team working on the framework included the Principal, the Vice Principal Learning and Quality and the Head of Learner Support Services

Working together on the framework had increased team cohesion and commitment to the promotion and understanding of equality and diversity and of inclusion within the college. Consideration of the framework and self assessment gave the team a greater appreciation of what had been achieved and a clear sense of direction for the future. The identification of gaps, and prioritising actions emphasised the need to involve the whole college in the development of equality and diversity. The team felt they had a strong sense of what needed to be done and an appetite to plan how to achieve their goals in a consultative and open manner.

The self assessment document was comprehensively completed, and an extensive range of evidence in place. Actions to be taken arising from the self assessment were detailed and wide ranging. A few of the criteria needed further amplification, and discussion in the review meeting enabled these points to be addressed. Towards the end of the review wide ranging areas for action were noted, with nine key actions noted.

Key actions included, revisiting the strategic plan and strengthening the position of equality and diversity within the plan, organising a convention on human rights for learners and staff, and devising a positive images marketing and communications campaign with learners. Also included was a focus on data improvement and analysis and measuring actions arising, determining a workforce strategy, acting upon it, and establishing a data set on the local community and surrounding areas. A further review of the self assessment was suggested, adding to the body of evidence in greater depth from current practice and from improvements in the light of new initiatives implemented and reviewing the grades awarded moderated with peers. These actions were followed with implementation of the college’s ‘Aspiration’ agenda, a campaign to promote aspiration and hope, and then finally moving from a strategic to a tangible passion for equality and diversity throughout the college.

The self assessment process was thought to be extremely worthwhile, focusing the minds of the team on what they considered to be a well designed document. The team felt the college had made some progress in developing the characteristics of the framework within the college and were comfortable that many of the protected characteristics were being developed although

were more comfortable with progress in some than others. The self assessment review meeting was thought to have been extremely useful, inviting positive criticism and engagement.

The team was proud of their Moodle/VLE reporting 'do you need help?' button and of their Learner and Staff Handbooks and of the journey they had embarked upon, they saw the framework as a guide to that journey and were enthusiastic about continuing to use the tools they had available.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Equality Framework and self assessment review was valued highly by all who participated in the pilot exercise. Despite some organisations being involved in working with the framework for a relatively short period of time, the way in which providers were able to assess performance was the catalyst to embedding equality and diversity. Regardless of a provider's previous Ofsted inspection scoring against equality and diversity, all the providers on the pilot found the Equality Framework at the 'developing' level challenging.

Under pilot conditions the Equality Framework had a positive impact in the short term; increasing motivation, confidence and competence and encouraging ambition and the search for continuous improvements in the promotion of equality and diversity and inclusion strategies. Interesting and creative examples of practice have emerged to inform the practice of others. The proportion of providers who have met or are at the point of meeting the 'developing' level demonstrates the level of additional work and support that learning and service providers in the further education sector require in order to meet minimum requirements. The Equality Framework has proved that it has provided the further education sector with a holistic approach to equality and diversity that retains provider identity and ownership and encourages creativity in devising local solutions.

The pilot was concluded in March 2011 following the launch of an Equality Framework Further Education and Equality Framework Career Guidance. These frameworks are accompanied by a user guide, self assessment toolkits and validation templates. The latter templates can also be used by providers to publish their information to report progress against the performance areas in order to meet the forthcoming specific equality duty.

The Equality Framework is aspirational and the learning and service providers that became involved in the pilot, despite being affected by immense change and challenges in other areas, have proved that improvement is indeed possible – even in a short time. The providers involved in the pilot have shown

that in time they are more than capable in achieving excellence in equality and diversity practice and that the principle of self assessment, evidence gathering and peer review and challenge can now drive up standards across the further education sector.

There are areas following feedback that remain to be strengthened; teaching and learning and curriculum development and perhaps other areas, and if there had been sufficient time within the development project these changes could have been made. Over time a greater understanding and interpretation of these areas can be developed amongst providers using the Equality Framework, to develop, maintain and share good practice.

The further education sector will shortly be working towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and it is felt that the Equality Framework has set providers off in the right direction with the right tools to enable providers to do so. It is hoped that future opportunities arise to evaluate the impact over the medium and long-term and to follow the progress of participants, and report whether this has indeed been the case.

## 6. Acknowledgements

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