

# Achieving Excellence in Equality and Diversity (and how to become outstanding)

## WEA East Midlands



### Introduction

This project aimed to identify ACL & FE Providers awarded Grade 1 by Ofsted for Equality and Diversity and using an appreciative enquiry approach and to produce a free online top tips and handbook on how to work towards Grade 1 for E&D and a DVD illustrating what excellence in E&D looks like. The participating organisations are listed in the methodology section of this report.

### Project aims

The project aims were to raise awareness across the ACL/FE sector of what is required from Ofsted to achieve a Grade 1 for Equality and Diversity and to identify current examples of good practice from outstanding ACL and FE providers.

The project aimed to seek to identify good practice in relation to all 7 strands of equality legislation and practice, and identified at least 101 practical examples under the 7 key areas to be considered by Ofsted inspectors in relation to Equality and Diversity. The Common Inspection Framework asks the question how effectively is the provider actively promoting equality and diversity, tackling discrimination and narrowing the achievement gap, and considers the following criteria: (which acted as our framework for identification of good practice examples)

- 1) Manages equality and diversity, particularly disability, gender and race, and actively promotes equality and diversity among staff, learners, employers, parents and other partners
- 2) Assesses the impact of its work in relation to equality and diversity and takes appropriate action in response to its findings
- 3) Makes sure training in equality and diversity is effective so that leaders, managers, governors or supervisory bodies, staff and learners understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity
- 4) Makes sure that all learners and staff are protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination, including those based with employers and at other sites external to the providers
- 5) Manages incidents and complaints specifically about disability, gender and race equality
- 6) Sets challenging targets and uses data to monitor, analyse and improve engagement and performance by different groups of learners
- 7) Takes action to reduce any significant variation in outcomes between different groups of learners, to maximise their potential.

The project highlighted numerous examples of excellence across ACL and FE providers and as a result we were able to select a good number of those examples to showcase within the research report and the Top Tips guide. The changes this has brought are to increase the quality of equality and diversity practice, improve learning standards and develop good community cohesion provision between learners, staff and communities locally as well as with selected community based stakeholders. The primary reason this work is seen within an innovative framework for participation is based upon gathering national examples from a wide range of participants who have developed, applied and tested positive results from their active engagement with learners and through good governance practices. Such practices have shown to work and improve learning standards and they have also encouraged inventive styles of providing adult and community learning for disadvantaged groups and individuals. The quality of work undertaken by providers has been of outstanding value to the sector.

## **Project methodology**

### **The following identifies the main activities that were undertaken**

- Desk research to identify transferable cross sector examples of excellence in equality and diversity standards which would complement aims of project
- A semi structured telephone conversation with relevant Ofsted staff in order to support identification of examples of good practice in equality and diversity in ACL and FE provision.
- A detailed review of published Ofsted inspection reports to identify samples of ACL and FE Providers who have been awarded outstanding in equality and diversity.
- Contact organisations identified and interviews requested with senior management team members / Equality and Diversity leads using appreciative enquiry model (see list in Box 1)
- Identifying projects with complementary activities and aims in order to maximise dissemination and mainstreaming opportunities.
- Production of toolkit including top tips, handbook with illustrative case studies and a production of DVD
- Production of final project report
- Seminar/Conference for dissemination of findings of the research

The review and evaluation process of the work of the project enabled greater awareness of the challenges faced by providers and this opened up opportunities to use the methodology to cross examine experiences and improve our research techniques and support in-depth discussions on the work of the learning provider.

There were no major unforeseen problems that the project faced except that there was an over estimation of the number of ACL Grade 1 providers. As a result of this we extended the research programme to include FE Grade 1 providers and found that whilst this was a welcome improvement there were still insufficient numbers of providers to interview. We therefore re-evaluated the process and further included those providers who had achieved an LSIS Beacon Award. This made a total of 25 providers of which 15 providers agreed to be interviewed. They are listed in Box 1.

The project had set up a Steering Committee made up from senior professional staff within the WEA and invited a senior staff member from LSIS to 'support' the work of the Steering committee.

In addition to this the project set up an Advisory Panel and invited relevant professionals from LSIS, UCU, EHRC and a FE provider to support the work of the project manager and to be a critical friend to the project.

Both of these groups added enormous value based upon experience, skills and understanding of the project activities. The professional colleagues were positively engaged in ensuring that the project was meeting its target outcomes and assisted in the promotion of the project across different sectors within education and community development activities.

| <b>Box 1</b> | <b>Provider</b>                         | <b>Provider Status</b> |
|--------------|---|------------------------|
|              | Beaumont College – A Scope College      | Specialist College     |
|              | Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council    | ACL                    |
|              | Burnley College                         | FE                     |
|              | City of Sunderland College              | FE                     |
|              | Darlington College                      | FE                     |
|              | East Riding of Yorkshire Council        | ACL                    |
|              | Essex County Council                    | ACL                    |
|              | Hugh Baird College                      | FE                     |
|              | New College Durham                      | FE                     |
|              | Newham College                          | FE                     |
|              | Oxford Ethnic Minority Business Service | ACL                    |
|              | Portland College                        | Special College        |
|              | Trafford College                        | FE                     |
|              | Wakefield College                       | FE                     |
|              | Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council     | ACL                    |

## **Project outcomes**

### **The project has produced the following:**

- 1) Equality Unboxed – a toolkit on good equality and diversity practice within the adult learning sector. The toolkit can be downloaded from the Equality Unboxed blog <http://equalityunboxed.com>
- 2) Summary report of headline findings from the analysis of the research undertaken with the participating organisations (listed in Box 1 above) with a detailed conclusion on the findings and this work can be downloaded from the WEA website
- 3) Project blog set up (see above) to disseminate toolkit and report and encourage the continuing sharing of good practice across the sector.

- 4) A DVD of interviews, entitled “Join our Conversation” has been produced identifying examples of good practice amongst the participating organisation and will be viewed at the dissemination seminar and a copy will be available for participants to takeaway
- 5) End of Project dissemination seminar event launching the work of the project, inviting interested participants from across England to engage and share in discussions and workshop activities on how to achieve good practice for a Grade 1 inspection
- 6) Pledge by ACL/FE providers attending the Seminar to work towards improving equality and diversity practice and develop sector appropriate resources

## **Dissemination of project findings**

The dissemination process is planned to engage with providers from across the ACL/FE sector and those others who would find value from learning about our findings. The strategic outline of the process will include the following:

- Seminar event in Nottingham 3 March 2011 where we had 100 registered delegates/attendees plus a reserve list of around 10
- We had over a 150 enquires from potential participants for the seminar by email and telephone calls. Those who were not able to attend have asked for the research report and Toolkit to be sent to them. They agreed to contact the regional office for this information after the 3<sup>rd</sup> March
- On-line access to the research report, the Equality Unboxed Toolkit and the DVD
- Hard copy of the Executive Summary of the research report and the Top Tips Guide and the DVD
- Periodic presentations within WEA supported training events which will be open to all ACL and FE providers and internal WEA staff (a minimum of three such events to be undertaken across England during the period 2011/12)
- Press Release promoting the work of the project and its resources to be issued after the 3<sup>rd</sup> March seminar event and completion of the Toolkit and report.