

Disability Action Committee

Thursday 5 March 2020

10:00-12:00

Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present:

Mr John Neilson	College Secretary – Chair (JN)
Mrs Chris Banks	Assistant provost (Space), Director of Library Services (CB)
Prof Michael Bearpark	Professor of Computational Chemistry (MB)
Dr Benita Cox	Principal Teaching Fellow, Business School (BC)
Prof Stephen Curry	Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) (SC)
Ms Ailish Harikae	Secretary to DAC (AH)
Mr Mike Horner	Service Line Manager (Education), ICT (MH)
Ms Kani Kamara	Equality & Diversity Manager (KK)
Ms Angela Kehoe	Strategic HR Partner (FoNS) (AK)
Ms Susan Littleson	Deputy Director– Organisational Development & Inclusion (SL)
Ms Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Ms Elizabeth Nixon	Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Ms Claire O'Brien	Director of Occupational Health (CO)
Mr Hilliam Tung	ICU Disabilities Officer (HT)

Agenda Item

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 JN welcomed the Committee to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from: Mr Mark Allen, Mr David Ashton, Ms Hannah Bannister, Dr Lorraine Craig, Mr William Hollyer, Mr Adrian Mannall, Mr Richard Martin, Prof Peter Openshaw, Ms Lisa Phillips, Ms Paula Phillips, Mr Shervin Sabeghi, Mr Roddy Slorach, Ms Maggie Taylor, Mr Jon Tucker.

2.0 Minutes and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate record of events.
- 2.2 There were no matters arising from the last meeting.
- 2.3 The action tracker was considered. The following points were noted:
 - 12 November 2019, Minute 3.2 - staff disability declaration: KK reported that she had been liaising with Senior HR Partners in relation to the annual invitation to staff to declare a disability and that Heads of Department would be sending this by the end of March. JN flagged that the annual declaration of interests return was also planned for March and to avoid sending the communications at the same time. KK said that another potential window was the email from Pensions in April, when staff would be asked to check that their details were correct in ICIS.

- 12 November 2019, Minute 3.3 - accessibility: AH told the Committee that an approach had been made to Richard Farish, Head of Building Operations, in relation to the accessible door from Main Reception to Dalby Court. JN said that he would follow up with Estates if there was no response.
- 12 November 2019, Minute 3.3 - adjustments to student assessment: On behalf of David Ashton, AH reported that the Registry had identified the need to review the process for adjustments to student assessment and planned to do so as part of the Student Information Management Programme implementation.
- 13 March 2019, minute 4.3 - staff disability support project: KK reported that the initial phase of the project had involved working closely with the Staff Hub to ensure that adjustment procedures, guidance for managers and information for new starters was up to date and clear. EDIC were now working on clarifying what should happen following a declaration in ICIS.

3.0 Disability Action Committee Plan 2019-20

3.1 The 2019-20 Action Plan was considered, and the following updates were noted:

3.2 Raising awareness:

- KK told the Committee that Able@Imperial were considering a joint event with other staff networks, to coincide with Staff Networks Day on 13 May 2020.
- It was noted that an update on Disability History Month 2019 would be provided under agenda item 4.

3.3 Removing barriers:

- MH reported that the Assistance Technology Service Enhancement Project had re-started following a project freeze. College was planning to continue its relationship with Diversity and Ability (DnA), which had been delivering workshop-based training to students. The project group was also exploring a more cost-effective alternative to the Mindview mapping software that could be made available on personal devices.
- KK told the Committee that the Calibre 2020 Graduation was planned for 13 May 2020 and would be held at South Kensington.

3.4 Improving support

- CO told the Committee about the Mental Health at Work Commitment, an initiative launched in October 2019 to help organisations implement the recommendations of *Thriving at Work*, an independent review of mental health and employers. Amy Bangs (Project Manager, HR Division) was undertaking an analysis of mental health provision at College to identify gaps. Line management training appeared to be the main gap. Although a lot had been achieved at Imperial through Mental Health First Aid training, and with limited resource, signing the Mental Health at Work Commitment would require a more robust training offering and delivering this would have budgetary implications. CO said she would provide an update once the review had been completed.

Action: CO

4.0 Disability History Month 2019

- 4.1 EN provided an update on the communication campaign for Disability History Month 2019. The focus of the campaign, *More than meets the eye*, had been invisible or hidden disabilities. Imperial Stories, a new long form platform, was used to host five staff and student case studies, which had so far received 1,916 unique page views. A lot of people had put themselves forward to be profiled, which was a positive sign. The new photography commissioned for the campaign was available to all in the College asset library. It was agreed by all that it had been a positive campaign and visually powerful.
- 4.2 KK updated the Committee on the programme of activity. She said that EDIC had worked closely with Able@Imperial and ICU to put on a variety of awareness-raising events, including a talk by Elizabeth Takyi, Founder and CEO of Aspire2inspire Dyslexia, attended by 63 staff and students. Elizabeth had talked about dyslexia awareness, the strengths of dyslexia, and dyslexia in education and the workplace.

5.0 Update on workplace adjustments process for staff

- 5.1 KK told the Committee that, since the implementation of the new workplace adjustments process in May 2019, EDIC had responded to 40 requests, including five approaches from line managers. Before the new process was implemented, EDIC received ten requests a year on average. The most frequent adjustment requested by staff with a disability was flexible working (e.g. changes to working hours or working from home). A lot of staff still felt they could not broach this matter directly with their line managers. 73% of the requests received had been from professional services staff, which showed that further work was needed in the Faculties to raise awareness of and signpost to EDIC.
- 5.2 KM said that line managers were generally willing to implement adjustments but were not always sure they were doing so in the right way. There was a perception that HR needed to be involved before an adjustment could be implemented. However, all that was required was for a discussion about the adjustment to take place and for a written record of what was agreed to be kept.
- 5.3 MH asked whether there had been an increase in requests from ICT, following the introduction of smart working. KK said that there had been three requests for advice and support from ICT line managers since smart working was implemented.

6.0 Update from Imperial College Union

- 6.1 HT told the Committee that the ICU events planned for Disability History Month 2019 had been a success. ICU had also been working with Mary Bown and the Disability Advisory Service on funding for disability-related support.

7.0 Update from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

- 7.1 Through its membership of the Business Disability Forum, KK reported that EDIC had been able to provide further guidance for line managers on supporting disabled staff.

This included helpful documents on workplace adjustments, having difficult conversations and a list of appropriate adjectives to use in relation to specific conditions.

7.2 KK said that disability awareness training for staff and managers had been delivered by EDIC on 28 November and was well received by participants.

7.3 KK reported that the staff disability declaration rate for College stood at 4.5%, up 0.1% on March 2019. The current declaration rates by area were as follows:

Professional Services:	6.3%
Business School:	5%
Faculty of Engineering:	4%
Faculty of Natural Sciences:	4.1%
Faculty of Medicine:	3.6%

The industry benchmark for Higher Education was 4% and the Faculty of Medicine fell slightly below this. It was agreed that AH would make Paula Phillips, the Faculty of Medicine's representative on the Committee, aware of this.

Action: AH

7.4 KK said that Able@Imperial had been involved in a recent presentation at Head of Departments' Lunch on the staff networks.

8.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service

8.1 It was agreed that DAC members would be informed once a successor for Mary Bown, former Head of the Disability Advisory Service, was in post.

Action: AH

9.0 AOB

9.1 Following recent discussions at the Health, Safety, Training and Implementation Committee, SL asked whether there were plans for the College's new room booking system to capture accessibility requirements at the point of booking (e.g. by having a box where people could communicate needs). CB said that the need for this functionality had been flagged with suppliers, as Planon and CELCAT software did not currently offer this. JN reiterated that room bookers had a responsibility to ensure rooms met the requirements of everyone attending.

9.2 CO made the Committee aware that Mental Health Awareness Week 2020 was planned for 18 – 24 May 2020 and that the theme would be sleep and mental health. She also announced that College had renewed its contract with Sleepio, a digital self-help tool to tackle insomnia, which would continue to be available to staff and students.

Next meeting: 25 June 2020