

Disability Action Committee

Thursday 11 October 2018

10:00 – 12:00

Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present:

Mr John Neilson	Chair and College Secretary (JN)
Ms Mary Bown	Head of the Disability Advisory Service (MB)
Ms Sally Campbell	Faculty Centre Safety Compliance Manager, Medicine (SC)
Dr Lorraine Craig	Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Engineering (LC)
Prof Stephen Curry	Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) (SC)
Ms Ailish Harikae	Apprenticeships Manager (AH)
Ms Sam Haselgrove	Disabilities Officer (SH)
Mr Mike Horner	ICT Service Line Manager for Education (MH)
Ms Kani Kamara	Head, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (KK)
Louise Lindsay	Director of Human Resources (LL)
Prof Peter Lindstedt	Senior Consul (PL)
Ms Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Ms Becky Neil	ICU Deputy President (Welfare) (BN)
Ms Elizabeth Nixon	Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Ms Claire O'Brien	Director of Occupational Health (CO)
Ms Lisa Phillips	Senior HR Manager (LP)
Ms Beth Richardson	Secretary (BR)
Ms Cynthia So	Management Trainee (CS)
Ms Maggie Taylor	Assistant Buildings Manager (MT)
Mr Jon Tucker	Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (JT)

Agenda Item

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 JN welcomed the Committee, and explained the format, frequency and purpose of the meetings.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Mr Richard Martin, Mr Mark Allen, Ms Wendy Gould, Ms Janette Beetham, Mr David Ashton, Mr William Hollyer, and Ms Hannah Bannister.

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:
 - The Secretary confirmed that the staff disability declaration rate currently stood at 4.1%.
 - (re: 7 June 2017, 3.2) It was noted that David Ashton would provide a written update as he was not present at the meeting.
 - (re: 20 October 2017, minute 3.6) It was noted that David Ashton would provide a written update as he was not present at the meeting.
 - (re: 23 May 2018, minute 4.13) it was noted that Kalpna Mistry had provided a report summarising the spend on the Reasonable Adjustment Fund which could be found in the paperwork.

3.0 Update on the latest version of the EDI strategy – review disability related action points

- 3.1 SC confirmed that the EDI Strategy had been published and was available to download on the College webpages, and that a short booklet had been created to raise awareness. SC introduced the document, and advised that the Strategy had been informed by various working groups across the College.
- 3.2 SC addressed section 4.3.4 of the EDI Strategy, which highlighted the action in support of disabled staff and students. The following points were made:
 - SC said that it was important to establish the support available and to ensure that it was put in place in a timely manner. MB highlighted that a mechanism for recording student requests was already in place for students, and that this should be reflected in the strategy. SC said that he recognised that the DAS provided a very good service and noted MB's points. This action was about raising awareness of the support available, so that managers knew how to advise and support their staff.
 - The Chair asked CO to comment on the number of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs). CO said there had been a reduction in the number of trained MHFAs due to turnover. She confirmed that there were more female than male MHFAs, and that the majority were in support services. Occupational Health wanted to increase the number of male MHFAs, along with the number of academic

representatives.CO spoke about the MHFA training due to take place for Hall Wardens. PL thanked OH for arranging this and emphasised the importance of having MHFAs in Halls. SC suggested that the shorter MHFA Light was a possible way to attract academics, given that the full MHFA course took two days. CO explained that the intensive course previously took three hours, but had been increased to four and did not offer accreditation. She said she wanted to avoid taking shortcuts around mental health training. The Committee agreed that it was more favourable to offer the full MHFA course, given the accreditation awarded, but that the shorter programme was useful for awareness-raising.

- It was noted that the DAC would publish its plan and minutes on the website.

ACTION: Secretary

- SC advised that some College buildings were still not accessible, and that College needed to improve its provision for disabled staff and students.
- SC highlighted the need for adapting the College's educational offering in terms of assistive technology. He added that this was part of the new Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- SC confirmed that the College would be working towards the Disability Confident Leader status. The Chair asked for an update regarding this at the next meeting.

ACTION: EDIC

- SC said that College would continue to promote Able.

3.3 MT highlighted DisabledGo's re-brand to AccessAble, adding that building surveys were currently being undertaken. MT also said that she had created an access handbook for the St Mary's Campus, and planned to roll this out across all campuses. She said she would provide a presentation on this at the next meeting.

ACTION: MT

3.4 JT asked about guidance on fire evacuation. MT confirmed that this would be covered in the handbooks, adding that the use of PEEPs and lifts would also be addressed.

3.5 MB explained that the process for students sat within departments, adding that the department created the PEEP. MB also mentioned that this process could often get devolved, which could cause issues, for example in relation to evacuation chairs.

3.6 MB also asked about including links to DisabledGo on the College landing page, as it would be useful for prospective disabled students when considering whether Imperial was the right University for them. EN confirmed that the links were present on the map pages of the website. MT advised that she would speak to Estates about including a link on the landing page of the College's website.

ACTION: MT

4.0 Review progress against the 2017-18 DAC Plan & construct draft 2018-19 DAC Plan Appendices 3 & 4

4.1 The Chair confirmed that the Secretary would incorporate SC's points into the Action Plan and circulate to the Committee for review.

ACTION: Secretary

4.2 The Chair went through the top-level points in the Action Plan and asked for feedback from the Committee. The Committee gave feedback on the following:

- Raising Awareness: KK reported that there were plans to run another campaign that focussed on increasing staff declarations across protected characteristics, adding that the campaign would be a rolling exercise.
- Removing Barriers: MB mentioned building access and highlighted the importance of considering adjustments before building works were completed, rather than at the end. MT added that it would be interesting to see the outcome of the surveys.
- SC said that all planning for new buildings should have EDI input. MB said that she was present at relevant meetings, but that it was sometimes difficult to implement the adjustments she suggested because of the cost. In her view, Imperial wasn't as proactive as some other universities with regard to buildings access for disabled staff and students.
- Improve Support: PL said that it would be useful to get an update from David Ashton regarding financial implications and interruptions of studies. The Secretary confirmed that she would email DA to request the information.

ACTION: Secretary

- It was agreed that students would be included in action 3.1 of the plan going forward.

ACTION: Secretary

4.3 MB explained the process for encouraging students to declare disabilities. All new students received a letter about the DAS and there were regular awareness-raising events, such as the activities planned for Disability History Month. MB added that the disability declaration rates should not be the only focus, however.

4.4 SH (Disabilities Officer) said that part of his plan as Disabilities Officer included improving the perception of those with disabilities, raising awareness about disabilities that were not physical and a communications campaign for students. The Chair said that this was a good idea, and that SH had a lot of material that he could use to help his campaign.

5.0 Update on Staff Disability Support Project

5.1 CS summarised her project, which aimed to review the workplace adjustments for disabled staff at Imperial. CS advised that her findings were informed by the current support available and feedback received from disabled staff, adding that she had collated the information reviewed by relevant stakeholders across the College.

5.2 CS reported that the experience of disabled staff varied, adding that some staff members were unsure how to start the process of arranging necessary adjustments. CS highlighted the important role line managers have in terms of support, but that some staff reported a negative experience in this regard, adding that managers were sometimes too busy and not equipped to deal with requests or how to escalate them.

- 5.4 CS reported that there was no formal mechanism for recording disability, and therefore no way of keeping track of cases. CS suggested operating a passport system, or recording this information on the HR system. CS also advised that the Business Disability Forum (BDF) recommended having a central budget for support for workplace adjustments and highlighted the EDIC fund that should be further publicised.
- 5.5 CS summarised the following recommendations from her project and report:
- A single, College wide-process for reasonable adjustments
 - Provision of clear information about the process and support available
 - Promoting and improving support offered to line managers
 - Introducing a passport system
 - Raising awareness of the access to work fund
 - Considering the possible implications of sickness absence recording
 - Reviewing flexible working benefits
- 5.6 MB offered to help in terms of advice on how the student process could be adapted to the provisions in place for staff.
- 5.7 CO commended CS for her work on the project. She highlighted flexible working in particular as an area that should be progressed given the considerations for working families.
- 5.8 The Chair highlighted the impact on wider HR processes, and asked HR to comment. SL said that CS had worked closely with HR to make sure that the recommendations were achievable, adding that there was a lot of work around formal mechanisms. SL said that she was happy with the recommendations. LL agreed and said that the recommendations covered a lot of areas and that she hoped we could take them forward.
- 5.9 The Chair noted the references in CS's report to establishing a central fund. LL said that she had had discussions around this and confirmed that there was no commitment to implement a central fund, but rather central support. SL explained that this was more about having an oversight of the arrangements in place, and ensuring that there was a clear process for recording, and that line managers were aware of the legal requirements.
- 5.10 The Chair asked EDIC to provide an update at the next meeting on the proposed handling of the recommendations in the report.

ACTION: EDIC

- 5.11 KK thanked CS on behalf of EDIC for her work, adding that she had helped EDIC realise the work that needed to be done, and that it involved much more than adjustments.

6.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service - Summary of Accommodation Subsidy

- 6.1 MB advised that 50 more students had declared a disability compared with last year. MB reported a £25,500 spend on the Reasonable Adjustment Fund last year, and that £6,000 had been committed in the first week of term this year.
- 6.2 MB advised that the DAS was short-staffed but was still aiming to process reasonable adjustment documents within seven days of seeing the student.

6.3 MB confirmed that the DAS was continuing support for students on the autistic spectrum, adding that the DAS had plans to organise more social events and encourage networks, along with offering more training and support for departments such as drop-in sessions for those who had questions about studying.

7.0 Update from Imperial College Union

7.1 BN gave an update, which was provided in Appendix 6. BN added that she was a fulltime officer, and that SH (Disabilities Officer) was a volunteer.

8.0 Update from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

8.1 KK provided an update covered in Appendix 7, highlighting the declaration campaign and Disability History Month.

8.2 KK agreed to share the link to the dates for relevant events around Disability History Month.

ACTION: EDIC

8.3 SH added that he was hoping to host some events for students, which would include guest speakers if possible.

9.0 Update from Able@Imperial

9.1 LP advised on plans to re-launch Able and provided new communication material that she would like to publicise around the College.

9.2 LP advised that she had invited a senior partner in a Solicitor's firm to come and deliver a talk in November.

9.3 LP also mentioned the training days that Able and EDIC had been creating, that centered on policies and guidance notes for managers, along with 'Pop-up' sessions where staff could bring along cases for discussion.

9.4 LP highlighted that Able had 60 members, some of whom she did not know, therefore LP was planning to re-launch Able with plans to recruit new members.

10.0 AOB

10.1 EN mentioned that she was working with Hannah Bannister to promote a new suite of assistive technology, adding that this would be open to all students.

10.2 CO advised that OH was reviewing referral documents in respect of workplace adjustments, and opportunities for adjustments.