

## **Disability Action Committee**

Wednesday 13 March 2019

14:00 – 16:00

Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Camp

### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

Mr John Neilson	Chair and College Secretary (JN)
Mr Hisham Abdel Aty	Undergraduate, Department of Chemistry (HA)
Mr David Ashton	Academic Registrar (DA)
Ms Hannah Bannister	Director of Student Services (HB)
Ms Ailish Harikae	Secretary (AH)
Mr Sam Haselgrove	ICU Disabilities Officer (SH)
Ms Nazia Hirjee	Faculty Operating Officer, Natural Sciences (NH)
Mr Mike Horner	ICT Service Line Manager for Education (MH)
Ms Kani Kamara	Acting Head, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (KK)
Ms Louise Lindsay	Director of HR and Organisational Change (LL)
Ms Susan Littleson	Deputy Director – Organisational Development & Inclusion (SL)
Prof Peter Lindstedt	Senior Consul (PL)
Ms Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Mr David Mooney	Dyslexia SpLD Co-ordinator (DM)
Ms Elizabeth Nixon	Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Ms Becky Neil	ICU Deputy President (Welfare) (BN)
Ms Lisa Phillips	Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (LP)
Ms Paula Phillips	Institutional Affairs Manager, Medicine (PP)
Dr Anna Stern	Occupational Health Physician (AS)
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 to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received from Mr Mark Allen, Professor Michael Bearpark, Dr Benita Cox, Dr Lorraine Craig, Prof Stephen Curry, Ms Claire O'Brien, Ms Mary Bown, Mr William Hollyer, Mr Adrian Mannall and Mr Richard Martin.

##### **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:

- (re: 11 October 2018, 3.2) A short written summary on the process of applying for Disability Confident Leader status had been provided.
- (re: 7 June 2017, 3.2) DA and colleagues were working to improve the information available to students (including PhD students) on the implications (including financial) of interruptions of studies, which were often complex. The new student information system would make the process easier to manage and a single set of regulations would be made available to students from next year. PL said that it was important to get this right, to avoid adding to stress and anxiety. DA said that his team were working to reframe communications around some of the regulations. It was agreed that the matter would remain on the action tracker.
- (re: 20 October 2017, minute 3.6) DA confirmed that a review of examination spaces had taken place with a view to reducing the use of suboptimal and inaccessible rooms.
- (re: 28 February 2017, minute 2.3) HB reported that the student counselling room at Charing Cross was still inappropriate. AH advised that MT had provided a form that should be used to escalate the issue and that she would share it with HB.

### **3.0 Formal approval of DAC Plan 2018-19**

3.1 The Committee approved the final iteration of the Action Plan.

3.2 The following progress updates were noted:

- Action 2.2: MT told the Committee that AccessAble surveys were underway across the estate and would be completed by the end of March 2019.
- Action 2.7: DA advised that work was ongoing to review the process for determining and approving adjustments for student assessments.
- Action 2.8: MH said there had been delays with the purchase of assistive technology software and some shortcomings with the provider.
- Action 3.6: DM reported an increase in demand across all categories of support funded by the Suggested Reasonable Adjustment Fund.

### **4.0 Staff Disability Support Project – Update on Next Steps**

4.1 KK told the Committee that a draft action plan had been developed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre in response to the recommendations made by Cynthia So in her report on supporting workplace adjustments. KK said that there was synergy between actions in this plan and the DAC Plan and that she would welcome feedback.

4.2 KK confirmed that the priority for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre for the current quarter, as highlighted in the plan, was to establish a mechanism for recording requests for adjustments from staff. The support available to staff was currently being

mapped and this would be included on the EDIC website, making it easier for people to find straightforward guidance. Ensuring that line managers had the skills to respond to requests in a sensitive and knowledgeable manner was an ongoing endeavour and would be supported by a suite of new briefing sessions, which Professor Sara Rankin and Able@Imperial were involved in developing and which would be piloted in May 2019.

- 4.3 JN thanked KK and asked her to provide regular progress updates at meetings in the usual way. He also requested a full progress report in spring 2020.

**Action: KK**

## **5.0 AccessAble and St Mary's Access Handbook**

- 5.1 MT advised that DisabledGo had been rebranded as AccessAble. Any DisabledGo links on the College site would continue to link to AccessAble.

- 5.2 MT reiterated that AccessAble were in the process of surveying College campuses and that their findings and any recommendations would be made available to Estates in due course. Meeting rooms and non-teaching spaces would be included this time.

- 5.3 MT told the Committee that she had developed an access handbook for St Mary's campus in response to a lift failure at the site, which had prevented someone from accessing a building. MT had looked at all routes into the buildings, as well as identifying accessible toilets, the location of hearing loops, local public transport and fire safety information. The resulting guide was a useful resource for everyone who used the campus and work was underway to develop a guide for Charing Cross.

- 5.4 LL expressed concern that 170 Queen's Gate and 58 Prince's Gardens, high-profile event spaces on campus, were still not accessible. These venues were used for high-profile events (e.g. long service award presentations) and some staff were excluded as they could not access the venues. She asked whether College could explore alternative routes into these venues – or look to hold events in alternative, more inclusive spaces. MT said she would ask the building Managers involved. There might be portable ramps, for instance, that could be made available for these events.

**Action: MT**

## **6.0 Managing with Mental Health in Mind – Update on mental health training for line managers**

- 6.1 AS reported that Occupational Health had developed a pilot mental health awareness programme for managers. The programme had been well-received and incorporated MHFA Lite content, as well as specific tools for line managers. OH would like to offer the programme more widely (possibly as an ILMDP elective), but would need more people to be trained to deliver it.

- 6.2 LL said she had attended an early pilot and had found the scope to be broad. An important message was that everybody had different levels of wellness and that *how* you managed could be preventative and help people to stay well. There were discussions around whether this type of programme should be mandatory for all managers. PL noted that the inadequacy of training and awareness around mental health often became apparent once things went wrong. SL suggested exploring what was required in an integrated way, starting from the high-level message that all new staff received as part of their induction.

## **7.0 Revised Occupational Health referral forms**

- 7.1 AS told the Committee that the Occupational Health referral forms had been updated. There was now a section where managers were encouraged to record any adjustments already in place. This was designed to encourage a more proactive approach and to change perceptions.

## **8.0 Update from the Disability Advisory Service**

- 8.1 DM told the Committee that student declarations continued to increase. DAS had seen an increase in the number of referrals and the number of students supported. However, there were still students who were not accessing the service. Some students declared disabilities to their departments and were not being encouraged to contact DAS until problems became unmanageable. DM said DAS was working to address this, with monthly forums, which were well-attended.
- 8.2 The SpLD team had been running events with an inclusive focus in departments, offering drop-in sessions and study skills advice for all. These were a good opportunity to signpost support services. 17 departments had participated, and 100 students had been referred for assessments.
- 8.3 Professor Sara Rankin (Faculty of Medicine) had collaborated with DAS and EDU on a project to make teaching and assessment more inclusive for students with SpLDs. The aim of the project was to encourage academic staff in the Faculty of Medicine to evolve long-established teaching and assessment into more inclusive and effective approaches for students with SpLDs (in turn benefiting all students). This would provide a blueprint of inclusive good practice to be used more widely.
- 8.4 DAS was also working closely with ICT on the Inclusive Technology Service Enhancement Plan. This project aimed to upgrade and expand inclusive technologies across College, for the benefit of all students and staff. In May 2019, Microsoft Global Champions would be visiting College to promote the inclusivity functionality within Office 365.
- 8.4 DM reported that DAS was experiencing some staffing issues, which made it challenging to meet deadlines for appointments.
- 8.5 The Committee noted the significant increase this academic year in student declarations. DM said that DAS had done a good job of promoting the service. Well-being reps had also potentially had an impact.
- 8.6 There were some discussions about lecture capture. MH reported that College had been speaking to providers but were not convinced of the quality. Imperial lectures used very specific technical and scientific language; ensuring that this was accurately translated to the spoken word required checking, which was time-consuming and expensive. HA suggested that student volunteers could be recruited for this, but there were concerns expressed about the time pressures students were already under.

## **9.0 Update from Able@Imperial**

- 9.1 LP told the Committee that Adrian Mannall from ICT had been appointed as co-chair and would be helping to set up a Yammer group for the network to communicate.
- 9.2 In terms of upcoming activity, LP reported that Able planned to run a survey of its members to find out whether people had declared their disability and if not, to understand why. The survey would also help Able to establish how many members it had. Able hoped to run another event with a speaker, following the success of Raquel Sigaporia's talk for Disability History Month. EN said that she would be pleased to help promote future events.

## **10.0 Update from Imperial College Union**

- 10.1 BN reported that ICU had been involved in the inclusive technology project described by DM and were excited to see how this developed. ICU were also currently looking at how students with diverse needs were represented.
- 10.2 HA said he was disappointed that the new buildings at White City, which had the potential to give him full independence, were not doing so; doors were automatic, but the card readers were unreachable. BN said that ICU had been in touch with Estates about these accessibility issues, but NH asked HA and BN to contact her directly so that she could escalate these issues. MT added that repositioning card readers was relatively easy. SH raised concern that only the ground floor route used by HA was fully accessible; the buildings were not generally accessible. NH said that the buildings had been designed with the needs of current staff and students in mind.

**Action: HA/NH**

- 10.3 HA told the Committee that he was having to use taxis to travel from South Kensington to White City, because the shuttle buses were not accessible. JN reported that Jane Neary had explored accessible transport, but that none of the companies who tendered to run the shuttle bus service had accessible buses. College had been assured by the current provider that when their vehicles were next upgraded, they would be accessible.

## **11.0 Update from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre**

- 11.1 KK told the Committee that Disability History Month in December 2018 had been a success, with activities including: disability awareness training run by the Business Disability Forum; a short video launched on mental health; a Calibre taster session and Raquel Sigaporia's keynote talk. EDIC was now making plans for the 2019 events and would welcome suggestions from the Committee on a potential keynote speaker.

**Action: All**

- 11.2 KK reported that EDIC were continuing to engage with Action on Disability and Change 100, but that there were no plans at present for departments to offer placements. DAC members should contact KK if they wanted to explore offering a placement.
- 11.3 KK told the Committee that this year's Calibre programme had started on 18 January and was going well. Facilitated by Dr Ossie Stuart and KM, it involved five modules and an away day. This year there were eight internal and two external delegates. KM asked the Committee to note that the graduation date had changed to 24 May 2019 and that she would circulate an updated invitation.

**Action: KM**

**12.0 AOB**

- 12.1 AS told the Committee that Claire O'Brien had written an article for the most recent edition of *Health and Safety Matters* on mental health awareness and disability.

**Date of next meeting: 21 June 2019**