

## **Disability Action Committee**

Friday 21 June 2019

10:00 – 12:00

Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Campus

### **Minutes**

Present:

Mr John Neilson	College Secretary and Registrar – Chair (JN)
Mr Chris Allen	Senior Occupational Health Advisor (CA)
Ms Helen Bell	Calibre 2019 Programme Participant (HB)
Ms Mary Bown	Head of the Disability Advisory Service (MB)
Dr Lorraine Craig	Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Engineering (LC)
Prof Stephen Curry	Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) (SC)
Ms Ailish Harikae	Secretary to DAC (AH)
Ms Kani Kamara	Acting Head of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (KK)
Ms Louise Lindsay	Director of HR and Organisational Change (LL)
Prof Peter Lindstedt	Senior Consul (PL)
Ms Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Ms Elizabeth Nixon	Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Ms Maggie Taylor	Assistant Buildings Manager (MT)
Mr Jon Tucker	Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (JT)
Ms Sara West	Calibre 2019 Programme Participant (SW)

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, Professor Michael Bearpark, Ms Janette Beetham, Dr Benita Cox, Ms Nazia Hirjee, Mr William Hollyer, Ms Fran Hyatt, Ms Susan Littleson, Mr Adrian Mannall, Mr Richard Martin, Ms Claire O'Brien, Ms Becky Neil, Ms Paula Phillips, Ms Lisa Phillips, Mr Roddy Slorach.

#### **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 point was noted:

- *13 March 2019, Minute 5.4:* MB reported that a recent building survey at 170 Queen's Gate had confirmed that installing a platform lift would not be possible, nor was a temporary ramp safe or practicable. As such, this venue should only be used when event planners were certain that there were no accessibility issues. Similarly, no adjustments to 58 Prince's Gate could be made due to the

listed status of the building. Introducing an entrance through the restaurant (from Prince's Gardens) would make the ground floor accessible, but the toilets and lift were inaccessible. It was noted that it was the responsibility of venue bookers to check on attendee requirements as a matter of course before confirming either venue, although it was acknowledged that this was not always possible for large events booked many months in advance. LL suggested that the Dyson Boardroom might be provide a suitable alternative for high-profile events.

### **3.0 2018-19 Action Plan**

3.1 The 2018-19 Action Plan was considered, and the following updates were noted:

#### 3.2 Raising awareness:

- EN told the Committee that Comms had produced some materials for EDIC, which were being used for specific awareness-raising events.
- KK reported that EDIC would be holding a series of four roadshows over the Summer 2019, across campuses including Silwood Park, and that one of the themes would be encouraging declaration. There was some discussion about whether the annual invitation to staff to declare a disability had been sent. LL said that she would check and report back.

**ACTION: LL**

- SC noted that the DAC Action Plan had not yet been made available on the website. AH said that she would request for this to be added.

**ACTION AH**

- To help raise awareness, JN suggested that EN include a brief report on the Committee's recent activities in the upcoming *Staff Briefing*.

**ACTION: EN**

#### 3.3 Removing barriers:

- MB reported that the College's strategic lead for timetabling was drawing up minimum standards for teaching rooms so that these would be fully accessible. She acknowledged that replacing inaccessible equipment and practices (e.g. using chalk boards, which were particularly popular in Maths and Physics) was not always straightforward, as some lecturers favoured these. MB said that she had recently visited the University of Leeds, where teaching rooms were being equipped with iPads the size of a table. PL made the point that new and high-tech equipment needed to be reliable.
- There was some discussion about toilet facilities at the College. SC reported that the issue of providing different types of facilities (e.g. accessible toilets, gender-neutral toilets, etc.) had been raised at a recent EDI Forum and that a meeting was planned with stakeholders. He confirmed that College met its legal requirements but did not go much further. It was agreed that there were complexities and subtleties, particularly in relation to gender neutral toilet provision. For information, it was agreed that JT would provide AH with the discussion paper on this topic (for the upcoming Athena SWAN Committee Meeting), to be circulated to the Committee.

**ACTION: AH, JT**

#### 3.3 Improving support

- KK reported that there was now a link on EDIC's website where staff could make requests for workplace adjustments, with clear contact details for the

relevant advisors in EDIC. SC added that this had made the process clearer and was a step in the right direction. KK also reported that EDIC was working on a Disability Guide for Managers, a booklet that would make the process clearer still and would be distributed at the upcoming roadshows. She circulated paper copies of a draft.

- CA provided an update on the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) project, which he said was on track to meet its target number of mental health (MH) first aiders by 2020. CA was asked whether there was activity data for the programme. He said that it was hard to quantify the impact of the course, but that a Qualtrics form had been introduced to try to capture the frequency and types of conversations that MH first aiders were having; unfortunately, it was not yet being well-used. CA told the Committee that Yammer was being used for the group to keep in touch. LL noted that the 2019 staff survey indicated a 5% increase in the proportion of staff who knew where to go for support with mental health, which was a reflection of initiatives like this. There was some discussion about engaging more men with the programme. CA said that there were more female than male MH first aiders, but that this was improving. He reported that he would be delivering a half-day of training for technicians in the Faculty of Engineering. AH said that she was pleased to hear this, as [recent research by the Technician Commitment](#) had shown that this group played an important role in student mental well-being. She said she would circulate the report.

**ACTION: AH**

#### **4.0 Calibre Programme 2019 – Presentations by Participants**

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed HB and SW to the meeting and said how impressed he had been by their presentations at the recent Calibre graduation.
- 4.2 HB told the Committee about her experiences of the Calibre programme. She said that she had been encouraged to participate by her line manager. She explained that she was deaf and that, during her 26 years' service at the College, she had tended to avoid asking for help or telling people about her disability, relying on colleagues to make others aware. Calibre had opened her eyes to the support and adjustments that were possible; she had learnt that technology could support her job role and make her feel more connected to colleagues. The programme had also taught her that she should not be embarrassed to ask for help.
- 4.3 JN thanked HB for sharing her story. MB said that she was about to start a survey of loop systems at the College and wondered whether HB would be interested in participating. HB said that she would be pleased to help.

**ACTION: MB**

- 4.4 SB told the Committee that she had been diagnosed with a long-term condition in recent years, which had left her physically and emotionally exhausted. However, she struggled to speak to her manager and colleagues openly about it and did not know whether to disclose it. The Calibre programme had taught her that she did not need to hide who she was. She had found the course empowering and learnt that it was not her responsibility to remove societal barriers, but that it was everyone's. The course had equipped her to have positive and useful conversations about her disability. She

said that colleagues' attitudes to disability were sometimes negative (she had heard comments such as 'disabled people are guaranteed an interview, so have an unfair advantage') and that she hoped to help change perceptions. The Committee agreed that work was needed to ensure that all staff and students understood why adjustments (e.g. for students in exams) were important and helped to level the playing field.

- 4.5 JN thanked SB for sharing her experiences with the Committee. It was agreed by all that both speakers had been excellent.

## **5.0 Update on AccessAble Surveys**

- 5.1 MT reported that AccessAble had carried out surveys of the College estate over a six-week period in the Spring. After being checked by Building Managers, the new webpages went live on 14 June 2019. The whole estate was included this time, including the new buildings at White City, the Dyson School of Design Engineering in South Kensington and the Grad Pad. MT said the surveying process had been smooth. She told the Committee that Estates Operations had organised a lunch and learn event about AccessAble, which was planned for 16 July 2019, and that a number of Committee members had been invited. She said the College had committed to repeating the surveys annually for at least the next three years. MT encouraged the Committee to visit the [AccessAble webpages](#) and to contact her should they have any questions or find any errors.

## **6.0 Update on Disability Confident Leader Status**

- 6.1 KM told the Committee that Imperial had achieved Disability Confident Leader status and that this was valid until 2022. Disability Confident Leaders were required to self-assess to show that they were delivering on their commitments. The Business Disability Forum (BDF) had looked at evidence and validated that Imperial was doing what it had committed to in relation to disabled staff. BDF had suggested some improvements around recruitment (e.g. making sure that telephone numbers as well as email addresses were provided as contacts in job adverts) and updating some of the language used in relation to disability on the website. BDF had also made some suggestions in relation to suppliers (e.g. could we ask them to evidence that they were also inclusive and accessible?). KM asked AH to circulate the full Disability Confident Leader self-assessment document, with recommendations made by BDF.

**ACTION: AH**

## **7.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service**

- 7.1 MB told the Committee that the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) had experienced staffing difficulties over the past year, with serious illness in the team placing a strain on the advisors. However, they were working hard and managing to give students appointments within a week of them making a request. Appointments at campuses other than South Kensington were being made on request, as the team could not resource a drop-in service. To date, there had been very little demand for appointments at other sites.

- 7.2 MB was pleased to report that the student disability declaration rate continued to increase and that the Reasonable Adjustment fund was working very well. The team had

a new administrator and she was helping to reorganise processes and update the website. MB said that the DAS had been involved in a number of meaningful projects this year including a wayfinding and signage project.

## **8.0 Update from Imperial College Union**

8.1 There was no update from Imperial College Union.

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

9.1 KK reported that the next Disability Awareness Training session was planned for 23 July and would be led by the Business Disability Forum. She circulated a calendar of upcoming events organised or supported by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (EDIC). It was agreed by all that this was a useful resource, although JT suggested a 'plain English' version with fewer acronyms.

9.2 KK referred the Committee to Appendix 8 for an update on the Staff Disability Support Project.

## **10.0 Update from Able@Imperial**

10.1 AH read an update on behalf of the Able@Imperial co-chairs, who were unable to attend. Able were planning to launch a welcome lunch in July for new members of the staff network. They were also looking to identify a speaker who would like to share their experiences to help raise awareness of disability and Committee members with suggestions should contact the co-chairs. KK suggested Mik Scarlet, an expert in the field of access and inclusion for disabled people, and Asif Sadiq, Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at *The Telegraph*.

**ACTION: All**

## **11.0 AOB**

11.1 CA took the opportunity to raise awareness of a new course, Managing with Mental Health in Mind. This programme was designed for line managers and aimed to equip them to notice and act on things they saw. It provided an opportunity to discuss real-life case-studies (e.g. a team member going on off sick and then having a phased return to work) and introduced them to the resources available on the website. It was agreed by all that this was potentially a valuable resource. There were questions raised about who should do the course and whether there was any overlap with Imperial's core management training.

11.2 JN recorded his thanks to Committee member Dawn Beaumont, who would be retiring from College on 31 July 2019, for her helpful contribution to the Committee in recent years.