

## Improving access to Higher Education for disabled students



### Information for staff working in Higher Education

Recent research by Lancashire Aimhigher Disability project has identified the following questions and sources of information that it may be useful to consider when thinking about how you support disabled learners.

#### **Are you aware of the different terminology and support arrangements between schools, Further Education and Higher Education providers?**

Within school and Further Education (FE) disability support is organised very differently to the systems of support in HE. For instance:

- ❖ In schools they refer to disabled students as having a Special Educational Need (SEN).
- ❖ Schools and FE colleges provide equipment and support workers, whereas in HE students need to claim Disabled Students' Allowance DSA.
- ❖ The staff who are responsible for organising support are called different things, which can make it confusing for students seeking help in HE.
- ❖ In schools pupils may have a Statement of Educational Need, or be on School Action Plus and Individual Educational Plans and these are discussed with parents as well as the disabled learner. In contrast, in HE disabled students are responsible for ensuring they have a current assessment of their need to enable them to access the DSA.
- ❖ Some HE learners do not regard themselves as having a disability and resist or reluctantly acknowledge the categories used by UCAS to describe disabled learners. For instance, students with dyslexia, Mental Health Difficulties or Deaf students using British Sign Language, who consider that they belong to a linguistic minority.
- ❖ Schools, FE and HE institutions are all influenced by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) and are required to 'make reasonable adjustments' and adopt an 'anticipatory approach'.
- ❖ From December 2006, all HEIs will need to have a Disability Equality Scheme outlining their support for disabled learners.

#### **Support with teaching and learning**

- ? Are you aware of the learning support available in your institution?
- ? How inclusive are the learning opportunities you provide? If one of your students was having difficulties is it your role to provide support? If not, who can help?
- ? How do you find out about the support needs of the students with whom you come into contact?
- ? What is the procedure in your department for notifying teaching staff about disabled students? or for teaching staff to notify departmental support staff?
- ? What consideration is given to the needs of disabled students when designing a new course, developing assessment criteria for assignments or planning sessions?

**For practical advice about making resources accessible:** see web page 'Making your teaching inclusive' <http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching/index.php>

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### ***Useful sources of information***

#### **Action On Access, Disability Co-ordinator**

Action on Access have a Disability Co-ordinator working nationally to provide disability support to higher education institutions and supporting staff involved in widening participation.

Mike Wray, Disability Co-ordinator,

Action on Access, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 4QP

[m.wray@actiononaccess.org](mailto:m.wray@actiononaccess.org) Tel: +44 (0)1695 650849

Action on Access Disability Pages <http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=15>

#### **Demos Online materials for staff disability awareness**

The DDA and SENDA adopt a social model of disability, which recognises the environmental and structural barriers faced by disabled people. For a staff development disability awareness course <http://jarmin.com/demos/course/index.html>

#### **Disability Effective Inclusive Policies (DEIP)**

A collaborative project between Sussex and Lancaster Universities funded by HE European Social Fund has produced a series of Discussion Papers on the following topics:

- Institutional disability policy analysis
- Transition entering and leaving HE employability
- Identity
- Dyslexia
- Physical and sensory impairment
- Disclosure
- Disabled students and
- Mental Health Difficulties
- Hearing impairments
- Employment advice

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/activities/509/>

#### **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

Provide general advice for different categories of staff working within Higher Education including:

- Admissions
- Central support services
- Examinations
- Libraries
- Residential services
- Senior Managers
- Careers
- Estates
- learning and teaching
- marketing
- staff development

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

#### **National Association for Disability Practitioners**

A professional association for disability and support staff in further and higher education

<http://www.nadp-uk.org/>

#### **Other LAD Information Sheets that may be of interest:**

LAD Information Sheet 6a Websites: Information, Advice and Guidance

LAD Information Sheet 6b Websites: Institutional Issues and Staff Development

LAD Information Sheet 6c Websites: Teaching and Learning

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Prepared on behalf of Lancashire Aimhigher

For further information about supporting disabled learners, or copies of other resources, contact:

✉ Lancaster University, Department Educational Research, REAP: Researching Equity, Access and Participation, County South, Lancaster, LA1 4YD

☎ 01524 593684

✉ Jess Walmsley: [j.m.walmsley@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.walmsley@lancaster.ac.uk)

or

✉ Ann-Marie Houghton: [a.houghton@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:a.houghton@lancaster.ac.uk) to change contact details

🌐 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/REAP/projects/LAHDIsability.htm>