

Treating People Fairly and Respecting Differences - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Strategy

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability, Socio-economic Disadvantage.

1. Policy Statement

Milton Keynes College Group (MKCG) recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and is committed to the promotion and advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion for its staff and learners. We believe in the power of difference, and we aim to provide a learning and working environment which values individuals equally and does not disadvantage individuals on any grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex(gender) and sexual orientation.

Definitions:

The Equality Act 2010 (the 'act') legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society including education. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender/gender reassignment, marriage/ civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Direct Discrimination is defined as being where a person discriminates against another because of a protected characteristic or treats a person less favourably than they would others because of the protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination is defined as being where a person discriminates against another in that they apply a criterion or practice which is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic.

MK College Group (MKCG) includes all college campuses, prison services, and commercial enterprises.

2. Responsibilities

ALL STAFF AND LEARNERS

Staff and learners are responsible for their own conduct and should ensure that their behaviour does not make any other person feel uncomfortable. Every member of staff and every learner have a responsibility to question their own prejudices and assumptions. It is the duty of all staff and learners to avoid unfair discriminatory practices, to challenge them in others and to accept personal responsibility for abiding by this policy.

THE CORPORATION

The College Governors are responsible for ensuring that MKCG complies with the Equality Act 2010. The Corporation members are responsible for setting the policy framework for MKCG and for monitoring the delivery against the policy.

THE GROUP PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Group Principal and Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the operation of the Policy. The Group Principal and CEO is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the actions listed in the Equality Strategy Action Plan (ESAP). The Group Principal and Chief Executive may nominate a member of the Strategic Leadership Group to support the operation and implementation of the Policy.

EQUALITIES STRATEGIC REVIEW GROUP

The key responsibilities of the Equalities Strategic Review Group which is chaired by the Group Principal and Chief Executive and attended by members of the Strategic Leadership Group, representatives from Schools and Business Partner areas are:

- Setting MKCG's actions for advancing equality, diversity and inclusion on an annual basis
- Reviewing progress against these actions on a termly basis
- Receiving assurance that MKCG is meeting its public sector duties
- Receiving reports and updates, including analyses of learner participation and success measures, staff demographics and staff experience.
- Ensure policies, processes and projects have been assessed to advance equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Keeping up to date on changes to the law and best practice in this area.
- Ensure that an annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Report is presented to the Governing Body.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP GROUP

Designated members of the Strategic Leadership Group are responsible for providing and interpreting learner and staff data and providing the data to the Equalities Strategic Review Group and to Group Principals and Group Directors for monitoring purposes.

These roles also have overall responsibility for the implementation of strategies which will contribute to equality, diversity and inclusion for learners and staff. Examples include the cross college and cross group events calendar and key elements of the personal development entitlement that are delivered within the curriculum, and staff experience

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

The Chief People Officer has overall responsibility for monitoring and interpreting employment data and for staff development related to equality, diversity and inclusion.

GROUP DIRECTORS/HEADS OF SCHOOL AND LINE MANAGERS

Group Directors/Heads of School and Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff have completed the mandatory Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training. They are also responsible for ensuring their staff understand equality, diversity and inclusion issues and how to report any perceived discrimination or unfair treatment. They are also responsible for allocating development

opportunities for their staff on a fair, objective basis based on individuals' and College needs. In addition, they are responsible for ensuring their part-time staff are not disadvantaged in any way and that complaints of discrimination or offensive behaviour are dealt with promptly.

All Managers are responsible for ensuring pro-active dialogue about equality opportunities issues and practice with partner organisations, contractors, customers, learners, and employers providing work experience to learners.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

External partners with which MKCG work must comply with this policy and share the Group's commitment to it. Before any agreements are drawn up the Group will ensure that external partners are made aware of the requirements and that appropriate policies and procedures regarding equality, diversity and inclusion are in place.

VISITORS, CONTRACTORS AND SUB-CONTRACTORS

Visitors, contractors, and sub-contractors must comply with the Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

3. Statutory Duties

The College will abide by its statutory duty for both learners and staff, in line with stated duties under the Equality Act 2010:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups

4. Learners

RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS

MKCG will ensure that:

- Recruitment and publicity materials are designed in a range of formats to ensure they are free from bias and stereotypes, and encourage applicants from all groups in the community
- Applicants for courses are considered on the basis of their ability to meet the entry criteria, as specified in the course information
- Applicants are not treated less favourably because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation
- Applicants are interviewed on the basis of their academic ability and/or potential to succeed
- Application and enrolment procedures give learners the opportunity to identify any additional learning support available for their needs

- Where assessment(s) form part of the application process for a particular course, all applicants will take the same assessment(s), with adjustments being made for identified additional learning needs
- New learners are made aware of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and behaviour expected of them during induction, the information on the Student Moodle and through the tutorial programme
- Links with local community groups and relevant organisations are established

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The College will ensure that:

- All aspects of teaching are sensitive to, and promote, equality, diversity and inclusion, including language used, delivery methods and activities
- Teaching and learning materials and delivery methods avoid stereotypes and bias, and promote the rich cultural diversity of the local community
- Resources are available in formats appropriate to the needs of individual learners, including the use of specialist equipment where appropriate
- There is an ethos and learning environment which is inclusive and enables learners and staff to feel comfortable and valued as individuals.

SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES

MKCG will:

- Provide support services and facilities that enable all learners to participate fully in college life. This support will include a Personal Development curriculum, additional learning support to enable learners to access work experience, English and maths where appropriate.
- Provide additional learning support for example for those learners with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or challenges with their mental health
- Provide bursary and welfare advice
- Counselling (referrals made to external agencies to provide long term support where necessary)
- Social and catering facilities
- Prayer facilities
- Ensure that learners and staff are aware of the support that is available

5. Workforce

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

MKCG will:

- Ensure that a Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures is in place and adheres to the Equality Act 2010
- Ensure that all vacancies have person specifications identifying the essential and desirable levels of qualifications, skills and experience required for the job
- Ensure that all jobs are advertised appropriately to attract applicants who meet the person specification
- Ensure that applicants are interviewed solely on the basis of their suitability for the job and their ability to meet the person specification.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

MKCG will:

- Through regular 1:1 meetings with line managers, the training and development needs of all staff will be identified and supported.
- Make available a range of training opportunities to meet identified needs
- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion training forms a mandatory part of all staff induction programmes

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

MKCG will:

- Make reasonable adjustments to premises or working arrangements to ensure that employees are not disadvantaged on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

6. Harassment, Victimisation and Discrimination

MKCG will not tolerate harassment, victimisation, discrimination or bullying.

Learners who feel that they have been affected by any of these, or otherwise treated unfairly within the scope of this policy should raise their concerns with the Course Team Leader for their course, or the relevant Deputy Head of School in the first instance.

Staff who feel that they have been unfairly treated within the scope of this policy should raise their concern in accordance with the staff grievance policy.

Staff or learners whose conduct breaches this policy will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary policy and procedures.

7. Monitoring

The profile of both staff and learners by age, gender, disability, and ethnicity is monitored. The collection of this data is the responsibility of the MI and Funding team and People Services team.

The profile information is reported through the Equality Strategic Review Group and to MKCG annually.

Monitoring at course level is the responsibility of Course Team Leader and Deputy Heads of School. The information is evaluated and included in self-assessment reports and where there are differences in the data for different groups of people, actions are identified to eliminate these differences. These actions are monitored through the Strategic Leadership Group and by the Head of School.

8. Equality Impact Assessments

MKCG guidance document on Equality Impact Assessments states that due consideration must be given to the potential impact of the Group's policies on different groups of staff and learners.

9. Linked Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Admissions Policy
- HE Admissions Policy
- Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy (Students)
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (Staff)
- Student Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Treating People Fairly and Respecting Differences: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

At Milton Keynes College Group we actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion within our policies, procedures, practices, plans and activities by:

- Ensuring that equality of opportunity and valuing diversity are embedded in all our policies, procedures, practices, plans and activities, and regularly reviewing the impact of these on learners, staff and other stakeholders
- Embedding EDI in curriculum planning to deliver our strategic priorities and policy aims.
- Celebrating EDI through Group events and activities.
- Ensuring all course information promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and is free from explicit or implicit discrimination.
- Providing clear written entry criteria and procedures which are free from any discriminatory practice.
- Providing impartial advice and guidance for all applicants, which takes in to account any support needs and ensures placement on an appropriate course.
- Implementing timetabling and premises policies that support access.
- Providing programmes that are flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals and groups.
- Recognising that equality of opportunity is not additional or marginal to our activities, but central to the efficiency and development of the institution as an employer and as a provider of education and training by actively promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all Group activities.
- Incorporating equality, diversity and inclusion in all core and supporting processes.
- Creating a visibly diverse and inclusive institution which values and celebrates difference and enables all our learners to succeed.
- Celebrating the success of our learners and staff in publications and displays, and at events.
- Encouraging and supporting underrepresented groups to work and study at the College through proactive marketing and recruitment strategies.

At the Heart of our Purpose and Vision

Purpose

To be at the heart of our communities creating excellent learning in partnership with every area of our society and economy

Vision

Excellence for our learners, our communities, and our business partners.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is about treating people fairly and respecting their differences. This means that all are given an equal opportunity to succeed, whilst also recognising and celebrating our differences.

Embracing and advancing equality, diversity and inclusion are central to delivering the Group's values, ensuring that we meet the needs of our diverse community, and that all staff and potential learners are supported and inspired to achieve their very best. This ethos is not limited to Group premises: we are proud of the leading role we take on our community, both locally and nationally, to promote EDI, and will continue to fulfil our civic responsibility with pride.

The Group will ensure that no individual is disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Treating people fairly and respecting their differences is not merely a box-ticking exercise. In addition to recognising the protected characteristics as described in law, the Group will identify and support the needs of the individual, needs which may have nothing to do with a protected characteristic, such as having limited money, being long term unemployed or an ex-offender. In short, this means opening up education – or a career in education – to as many as possible and encouraging them to succeed.

The Group will seek to continue to have its efforts recognised externally and maintain its link with external agencies and continue to seek validation through accreditations such as Leaders in Diversity, Race At Work, Mindful Employer, and Disability Confident Employer.

Central to our Values

EDI underpins the Group's values.

To **inspire**: *where everyone motivates, engages, challenges and stretches each other*

The Group will inspire individuals to succeed, in spite of previous barriers, such as encouraging females in the construction industry, males in childcare, and learners from under-represented ethnic backgrounds into apprenticeships.

To strive for **excellence**: *where everyone recognises their own potential and becomes the very best they can be*

We will acknowledge the potential of individuals and seek all to excel, challenging preconceived expectations.

To show **respect**: *where we listen, consider the views of everyone and value everyone*

Perhaps the value with the most explicit link to equality, diversity and inclusion, 'respect' is about continuing to foster a culture where individuals are valued, and our differences and achievements are celebrated.

To **innovate**: *where new ideas and thinking are generated around people, products, and processes*

A diverse workforce, learner population and partnerships provide an exciting hub of new ideas, and the Group will seek to maximise the creativity and innovation abundant amongst such a wide group of individuals.

To demonstrate **integrity**: *where everyone is committed to being open, honest, and doing the right thing*

Acting with integrity requires all at the Group to always seek to do the right thing, living by these values and treating individuals with decency and respect.

To **belong**: *Where everyone feels safe, supported, valued, accepted, and included*

When staff and learners feel that they truly belong at work, they feel more connected, committed, included, and engaged. Belonging is a consequence of embedding all the Group's values consistently across all its functions and systems.

Working in Partnership and Serving our community

The recent history of Milton Keynes is one of migration of individuals and families from across the country and, indeed, globe. The city has proven itself to be a dynamic, innovative, and inclusive place. The population is becoming increasingly diverse, with the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population now amounting to nearly 30% (provisional data Census 2022) of the total citizenry.

Educational achievement and economic prosperity are mixed in the city. Skill levels in general are at or around the national averages. Those holding five or more GCSEs at grades 9 to 4, including English and maths, are now above the national average. Levels of child poverty are above the regional average with 1 in 5 children now living in poverty and with 21 areas inside Milton Keynes ranking among the 20% most deprived areas in England.

Our community is not confined to the immediate area of Milton Keynes, with well-established links across the southeast and east midlands, and the Group's Offender Learning provision affording us influence at a national level.

The Group prides itself in taking a central role in the development of its local and national community and will continue to serve the whole population and not just part. As well as ensuring that Milton Keynes College Group is an outstanding employer and education provider, we will work with our partners to encourage social cohesion and economic prosperity within the community.

Delivering the Strategy

The principles outlined in this strategy underpin the Group's overarching 'fairer futures' strategic priorities:

1. Drive aspirational, innovative and learner-focussed educational experiences
2. Develop meaningful partnerships to grow our influence and create opportunities
3. Achieve and maintain financial and operational sustainability
4. Deliver the skills needed by employers to aid productivity
5. Deliver the skills needed by employers to aid productivity
6. Create organisational unity around our shared vision and purpose

In addition to the success measures outlined in the organisation's overarching strategic plan, by 2026 the Group will:

- Ensure no barriers to the College's provision exist, with a learner population representative of our local communities
- Recruit and retain the excellent teachers and professional business partners, with an aim to develop our staff population to be more representative of our local communities

- Enable 90% of our learners to succeed in their qualifications, with a variance of no greater than 0.5% success for any groups of learners
- Develop new impact measures for work in our communities as reported in our Community Impact Report.
- Be regularly assessed and implement recommendations from external bodies such as Leaders in Diversity and Disability Confident Employer
- Continue to monitor and embed the actions needed to meet our commitment to the seven calls to action of the Race At Work Charter

Student Councils and Union

EDI features regularly in discussion items at regular Student Council meetings, formed by course representatives from across the College.

Equality Strategy Action Plan (ESAP)

The Equality Strategy Action Plan is a live document which captures, monitors, and drives actions across the Group driven by the Group's fairer futures strategy. The ESAP will be regularly reviewed by the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, and the Equality Strategic Review Group.

Employee Networks

The Group will continue to support and strengthen the presence of Employee Networks. The Employee Networks will help drive the Group's fairer futures strategy in the following ways:

1. Celebrate the successes of under-represented groups
2. Raise awareness of the issues that are specific to under-represented groups
3. Challenge the Group where relevant when implementing change
4. Provide safe spaces for under-represented groups to raise issues
5. Membership to ESRG and other relevant groups

Equalities Strategy Review Group (ESRG)

Chaired by the CEO & Group Principal and comprising strategic leaders from across all functions of the Group. The purpose of ESRG is:

1. To review progress and risks in implementing the MK College Group Equality Strategy Action Plan
2. To work collaboratively to solve problems and deliver solutions
3. To share practice and evaluate opportunities and risks to inform future action
4. To develop a values-led, distributed leadership approach

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

The Group commits to ensuring that any new, amended, or abandoned policy, process, project or initiative that impacts any category detailed in the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance conducts an Equality Impact Assessment.

Friends and Allies' Network

Milton Keynes College established a Friends and Allies Network (FAN) in March 2020. The FAN discusses different topics that are affecting MK and surrounding areas, gives voice to a variety of perspectives on the College's equality, diversity and inclusion activities and provides development opportunities for staff and students. It is made up of college staff, learners, and external stakeholders – sharing knowledge and resources that are mutually beneficial to the College and wider communities.

Board of Governors

The Group's governing body receives an annual report on EDI, ensuring the organisation meets both its own strategic objectives and its public sector duties. An EDI Link Governor also works with the Board and organisation as a whole to oversee and challenge the activities and approach taken.