

## Planning for UHI Mainstreaming Report 2015

### Shetland College UHI

Key area where progress has been made with regard to equality and diversity:

**Voluntary groups and charities have been encouraged to regularly visit the college to promote their activities and engage with learners and staff.**

Action you have taken to progress this key area:

At the start of 2012/13 a pilot initiative was created to encourage local support organisations to come into the college to provide information to learners.

The aims for the initiative were:

- Increase awareness of support services available within the community
- For learners to gain access to volunteer opportunities to enhance their CVs
- An awareness raising of careers within the voluntary sector

Initially a wide range of local organisations were contacted to see if they were interested in visiting the college. Following some successful visits, word spread and several groups contacted the college directly to book slots. Following positive feedback from staff, visitors and learners, it was quickly seen that the initiative was fulfilling its aims.

In addition to the visits, the college also promoted Black History Month in October 2013, LGBT History Month in February 2014 and 2015 and Women's History Month in March 2015. The college highlighted displays in the café and library, as well as having relevant resources available in the library and sharing of electronic resources via email. Plus there were various promotions on our Facebook Page and college Equalities webpage.

Measures you are using to monitor your progress:

The visits are managed and coordinated by the Communications and Student Engagement Assistant, who maintains a learner engagement log which records a description of the visit or activity and the number of learners that engaged in the event. This data enables to formulate and plan future activities and events.

Evidence of progress that has been made:

Since 2012-13 there has been a steady growth of evidence of engagement with visitors. When Women's Aid visited the college to promote White Ribbon Day, sixty staff and students signed their pledge; fourteen students made enquiries when Voluntary Action Shetland had their first stand; and four students signed up to

volunteer with the Samaritans when they visited the college as part of UHI Mental Health Awareness Day. When the NHS Legal Highs Working Group visited the college in 2014-15 they reported that around sixty students and staff interacted with their stand.

In some cases visits were planned to coincide with awareness campaigns; for example, when OPEN peer educators visited on World AIDs day, or when the NHS Healthcare Improvement Team visited to promote their drink aware campaign just before Up Helly Aa.

There appears to be consistent positive feedback from visitors, as they considered it a good awareness exercise - even if learners didn't engage directly with their stand.

As well as high levels of interaction, there have also been a number of indications of students seeking support. For example, Women's Aid noted that a helpline number had been torn from one of their leaflets when they were packing up after their visit in 2012-13. Similarly, when Sexual Abuse Survivors visited the college one student specifically told them 'I've seen your ad in the paper every week, but it is so good to meet you in person.' These learners may have found it difficult to make contact with these support services had they not been invited into college.

Despite the disruption of major building works in 2013-14, we were still able to facilitate fifteen visits. Towards the start of semester one, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Shetland Islands Credit Union and The Scottish Health Council were invited to take part in the college for 'Welfare Week' and OPEN peer educators visited the college as part of national 'Mental Health Awareness Week.' In addition to the agencies contacted previously, representatives from the Community Mediation Team, SIC Environment and Energy Services, Trading Standards and Family Mediation Shetland also visited during 2013-14.

Building on these successes, a total of sixteen visits were scheduled for semester one of 2014-15. As well as returning visitors, 2014-15 has also seen visits from The Shetland Recreational Trust, Police Scotland and The NHS Legal Highs Working Group.

#### Challenges that have been faced in progressing this key area:

During 2013/14 the college underwent major building works in the area normally located for the information stands and activities. This meant that the college was restricted in the number of visits and activities that could be invited due to the lack of physical space.

#### Further action you intend to take:

In January 2015 it was decided that this successful initiative should be put forward for the UHI Student Support Initiative Award 2015. Below are the Judges' comments.

*'Very good planning to invite such a wide range of organisations into the institution and also to base them in a public area rather than set up a specific time for a*

*presentation. The project was well run and could be replicated in other centres, although larger communities may have a very large number of organisations to choose from and would need to be selective!*

*I liked this a lot. Simple but effective way to engage students and community/support services/interest groups/voluntary sector. Well presented and well thought through rolling programme of engagements and opportunities.'*

The college now provides a regular commitment to promoting local organisations – one slot is offered per week throughout the academic year.

The college is currently looking at ways of how the curriculum provision can link in with the local agencies visits and activities. It is envisaged that there will be equality and diversity themed displays and activities undertaken by learners in the café area.