



# Equality Strategy 2014-18

Approved by NCG Corporation on: 8 September 2015

## **Location and access to the Equality Strategy**

This document is available for download from the NCG website at:

[www.ncgrp.co.uk](http://www.ncgrp.co.uk)

The document is also available internally as follows:

- NCG Intranet: Group Services: Group Policies and Procedures

**If you would like this information in audio, DAISY, large print, Braille or in a language other than English, please contact us.**

**Contact details are shown on page 30.**

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## 1. Introduction

NCG Corporation is committed to meeting its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, advancing equality in its provision for learners and customers and co-operating with related requirements of funding bodies.

We aspire to excellence and are committed to ensuring that our staff integrate and embed equality and diversity in processes and practices across the organisation. This includes staff in NCG's colleges, subsidiary companies and sub-contractors.

We will not tolerate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. All employees and agents of NCG have a personal responsibility to avoid any such behaviour.

NCG has policies and procedures in place regarding respect and consideration for others and we will remind staff, learners and customers that we do not tolerate bullying and harassment.

NCG will approach managing diversity by recognising the diverse needs of staff, learners and customers (both actual and prospective) and by ensuring that barriers to diversity are removed in relation to:

- understanding the concept of diversity and NCG's approach
- enhancing each individual's commitment to equality
- promoting the recognition of individual differences
- ensuring objective and fair policies and processes are in place
- ensuring that policies, practices and procedures promote equality
- managing in a way which makes all individuals feel valued and harnesses their potential
- encouraging a culture of empowerment through an environment characterised by open communication, participation and consultation and an absence of prejudice and discrimination
- ensuring that on-line materials adhere, wherever practicable, to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility standards and guidelines

The "social model" of disability sees disability as the result of the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference, and looks at ways of removing barriers. We endorse the social model and encourage participation in learning where the programme or course and progression route are meaningful and purposeful.

This Equality Strategy 2014-18 builds on our Single Equality Scheme 2010-14. We present NCG's equality aims and objectives for 2014-18 and identify roles and responsibilities.

We will update the Equality Strategy, as appropriate, on the introduction of new legislation, regulations, codes of practice or changes to our organisation.

## 2. Executive summary

This document applies to the colleges operated by NCG Corporation and also to its subsidiary companies. The colleges and companies are referred to as “Divisions” and the whole organisation is referred to as “NCG”.

This Equality Strategy outlines NCG’s commitment to achieving an organisation which values diversity, advances equality and eliminates bias and discrimination from the way it operates. NCG is committed to match or exceed the requirements of legislation and external funding agencies.

We must:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations

NCG’s equality aims are:

- (a) Raise the awareness and skills of staff to promote fairness, equality and good relations
- (b) Embed Equality and Diversity in Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- (c) Raise the awareness of learners and customers to promote understanding and good relations between diverse groups
- (d) Provide a hospitable and multi-cultural environment that welcomes, respects and protects diverse people
- (e) Monitor learner and customer representation and success and take action to promote equality.
- (f) Ensure that all learners and customers achieve good outcomes, whatever their background
- (g) Monitor representation amongst all staff types and take action to promote equality
- (h) Consult and involve representative staff, learners, customers and outside organisations
- (i) Embed the evaluation of equality impact evidence into policy development, business planning and quality assurance processes
- (j) Ensure that partner organisations meet NCG’s standards and requirements for equality

Each Division is responsible for taking action to support progress towards meeting the equality aims, ensuring compliance with legislation, relevant quality standards and funding body requirements.

NCG has also set specific and measurable equality objectives in relation to staff across the organisation and for each Division. Progress will be monitored and published on an annual cycle.

### 3. NCG

NCG Corporation (formerly named Newcastle College Corporation) is incorporated under the Further and Higher Education Act for the provision of education to students. Its trading divisions are Newcastle College, Newcastle Sixth Form College, West Lancashire College and, from August 2014, Kidderminster College. Its subsidiary companies are The Intraining Group Limited and Rathbone Training.

Management arrangements are integrated. In this document "NCG" refers to the whole organisation and "Divisions" includes the subsidiary companies.

**Kidderminster College** is a small general further education college operating in Kidderminster and the Wyre Forest.

**Newcastle College** is a large general further education college based in Newcastle upon Tyne comprising several academic and vocational schools.

**Newcastle Sixth Form College** is based in Newcastle upon Tyne and provides academic programmes in an environment with the distinct character of a sixth form.

**West Lancashire College** is based in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk and provides a range of academic and vocational programmes.

**Rathbone Training** is a UK-wide voluntary youth sector organisation providing opportunities for young people to transform their life circumstances by re-engaging with learning, discovering their ability to succeed and achieving progression to further education, training and employment.

**The Intraining Group Limited** operates nationally and provides a range of skills and employability programmes.

**Group Services** provide a range of support services across the organisation.

#### **4. NCG's commitment to equality**

This Equality Strategy outlines NCG's commitment to achieving an organisation which values diversity, advances equality and eliminates bias and discrimination from the way it operates.

NCG aims, through the implementation of the Equality Strategy, to increase the satisfaction of its customers, enhance its reputation, strengthen its roots within communities, meet the wider needs of learners and customers, become an employer of choice, enhance partnerships and match or exceed the requirements of legislation and external funding agencies.

NCG recognises and celebrates diversity in its staff, learner and customer community. This diversity reflects visible and non-visible differences, which include factors such as age, disability, physical and mental health, marital status, national origin including language ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social background and trade union membership. This is an indicative list and is not intended to be exhaustive. Harnessing these differences will support a positive and cohesive culture in which all individuals are valued, where their potential is maximised and through which NCG's mission can be achieved.

Since first publishing the Equality Strategy 2014-18, NCG became subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. This includes not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit. As part of meeting this duty, HM Government expects institutions to encourage students to respect other people with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. HM Government expects staff to challenge extremist ideas which are used by terrorist groups and can purport to legitimise terrorist activities; we have the same expectation of our staff. HM Government defines extremism as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths or beliefs" including "calls for the death of members of our armed forces". We have developed the approach presented in this Equality Strategy to include an explicit statement that we will challenge extremist ideas in accord with the Prevent duty

HM Government also expects institutions to have clear and widely available policies for the use of prayer rooms and other faith-related activities. These policies should outline structures in place for managing prayer and faith facilities and mechanisms for managing any issues arising from use of the facilities. At NCG, it is the responsibility of Divisional Heads to manage such facilities. We have included an explicit statement in this Equality Strategy that the responsibility of Divisional Heads includes maintaining and implementing policies for the use of prayer rooms and other faith-related activities.

## 5. Legal and regulatory context

This section summarises key requirements of law, quality standards and funding bodies. Its purpose is to raise awareness and provide a context for NCG's Equality Aims and Objectives. It does not provide a comprehensive statement of requirements. NCG's policies and procedures provide guidance on the approach to be taken in particular situations.

### 5.1 Equality Act 2010

#### 5.1.1 General Duty

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") places a general duty on public authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

As an education provider and employer, this duty falls upon NCG.

#### 5.1.2 The Protected Characteristics

**Age:** Someone of a particular age or in a range of ages

**Disability:** Someone who has, or has had, a physical or mental impairment with a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

**Gender reassignment:** Someone who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. There is no requirement for this person to require medical supervision in order for this person to have this protected characteristic.

**Marriage and Civil Partnership:** Someone who is married or is a civil partner

**Pregnancy and maternity:** Someone who is pregnant or within 26 weeks following the date of giving birth or taking maternity leave

**Race:** Someone of a particular racial group defined by colour, nationality, caste, ethnic or national origins

**Religion or belief:** Someone of any religion or philosophical belief, including a lack of religion or belief

**Sex:** Whether someone is a man or a woman

**Sexual orientation:** Someone's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, opposite sex or either sex

### **5.1.3 Eliminating prohibited conduct**

Unlawful conduct includes:

1. Direct discrimination;
2. Indirect discrimination;
3. Discrimination arising from disability and failure to make reasonable adjustments;
4. Harassment; and
5. Victimisation.

Direct discrimination occurs where a person treats someone else less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic. It also occurs where someone treats someone less favourably because it is mistakenly thought that they have a protected characteristic or because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a general provision, criterion or practice has the effect of putting people who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. However, if it can be shown that the provision, criterion or practice is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, this will not amount to discrimination. Legitimate aims include maintaining academic standards and ensuring health and safety. To be proportionate, the approach must be appropriate and necessary.

Discrimination arising from disability occurs when an individual is put at a disadvantage because of something connected with their disability and their treatment cannot be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (as above).

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic, or which is of a sexual nature, that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation occurs when a person treats someone badly because they have carried out a "protected act", as defined under the Act. Examples of "protected acts" include bringing a claim or raising a complaint under the Act.

#### **5.1.4 Advancing equality**

The Act explains that having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

NCG, as a public authority, must also take steps to meet the needs of people who are disabled and to take account of the disabilities of people who are disabled.

The Act enables public authorities, such as NCG, to take positive action to remove any disadvantage faced by people with protected characteristics. This can include targeted provision or resources to address the disadvantage. However, it is important to remember that positive discrimination is not permitted under the Act.

#### **5.1.5 Fostering good relations**

The Act also explains that having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- tackle prejudice; and
- promote understanding.

#### **5.1.6 Reasonable Adjustments**

The Act imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to avoid the disadvantage. Where this relates to the provision of information, such steps include providing information in an accessible format.
- Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to avoid the disadvantage. Physical features include buildings, access to and from buildings, fixtures, fittings, furniture, equipment and other property. The steps taken can include removing, altering or providing a means of avoiding the physical feature.

- Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to provide the auxiliary aid (reference to the provision of an auxiliary aid includes the provision of an auxiliary service). Where this relates to the provision of information, such steps include providing information in an accessible format.

It is not generally permitted to require disabled people to contribute to the cost of these adjustments.

### **5.1.7 Requirements for NCG as an employer**

As an employer, NCG must not discriminate against or victimise employees in relation to:

- Arrangements for recruitment and selection
- Selection decisions
- Terms of an offer of employment
- Terms of employment
- Access to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training
- Access to any other benefit, facility or service
- Dismissal
- Any other detriment

NCG has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

NCG must not harass an employee or someone who has applied for employment.

The Act also provides similar protection for contract workers who are not employed directly by NCG.

### **5.1.8 Requirements for NCG as a provider of education**

As a further and higher education institution, NCG must not discriminate against, harass or victimise learners and customers in relation to:

- Admission, enrolment and deciding access to facilities. This includes course design, admission requirements, publicity, information and advice, the application and admissions process and the terms of offers; in very exceptional circumstances admission might be refused due to an occupational requirement;
- The way that education is provided. This includes induction, the approach to curriculum delivery, work placements, any field trips, assessments and exams and arrangements for academic progression and transfer;
- Access to a benefit, facility or service. This includes library facilities and centrally provided services;
- Arrangements for exclusion or any other detriment; and
- Conferring qualifications.

As a further and higher education institution, NCG has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. This includes anything which provides additional support or assistance such as equipment, staff time or information in an accessible format. The duty to make reasonable adjustments does not apply to competence standards but does apply to the process for demonstrating that people meet competence standards. For example, a pass mark is not subject to the duty to make reasonable adjustments but it might be reasonable to provide additional time in an exam for a student whose disability causes them to write slowly.

### **5.1.9 Specific Duties under the Equality Act**

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 place specific duties on NCG, as a public authority, to publish:

- information to demonstrate their compliance with their duties under the Act. This information:
  - must be published at least annually;
  - must be published in an accessible place for staff and the public;
  - must include information relating to employees and others affected by its policies and practices who share protected characteristics; and
  - must be published in line with the Data Protection Act 1988.
- specific and measurable equality objectives which help NCG further their duties under the Act at least every four years

## **5.2 Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Requirements**

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) sets conditions of funding through its Financial Memorandum.

The SFA Financial Memorandum requires NCG:

- to offer equality of access to learning opportunities and close equality gaps in learning and outcomes
- not to unlawfully discriminate in employment or the provision of services;
- to demonstrate regard to the public sector equality duties
- to ensure that equality of opportunity is built into all aspects of provision; the business planning process; and the self-assessment process
- to use analysis of data to inform future planning to improve the representation, participation and success of underrepresented and underachieving groups and challenge stereotyping
- to use specific and measurable improvement measures which are proportionate, relevant and aligned to the funded provision
- to comply with the principles set out in the SFA's Single Equality Scheme. The Scheme presents the expectation that providers will take the lead in advancing equality. The Scheme also describes the SFA's commitment to: build equality into its decisions and activities; create a fair, inclusive and diverse working environment for its staff; value diversity within its workforce and monitor equality data on its staff; integrate equality into all policies and practices; provide staff training on equality; show no tolerance for bullying, harassment, bias, victimisation or discrimination.
- to take all reasonable steps to ensure observance of the above by all staff and subcontractors

## **5.3 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) requirements**

NCG delivers employability services under contract with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). NCG is a Prime Contractor and involves subcontractors in contract delivery.

DWP requires that NCG and its subcontractors are aware of and acknowledge DWP's duties under equality legislation and co-operate with arrangements for compliance.

DWP requires NCG to provide an annual Diversity and Equality Delivery Plan which is specific to each contract and includes details for all subcontractors involved in delivery of the contract. The Plan must include:

- an overview of NCG's and any subcontractor's policies and procedures for preventing unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in respect of the protected characteristics;

- an overview of NCG's and any subcontractor's policies and procedures covering: harassment; bullying; victimisation; recruitment procedures; staff training and development;
- how the above policies are communicated to staff;
- details of general diversity and equality related training delivered to staff;
- details of the structure and resources directed towards diversity and equality within NCG and any sub-contractor's organisation;
- details of any diversity and equality cases and tribunals related to NCG and any subcontractors;
- evidence of assessment of impact on equality in relation to services delivered;
- evidence that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled people to make services accessible and that Information Technology services meet DWP's standards;
- evidence that staff have received training and understand the equality duties.

DWP also requires NCG to produce workforce monitoring data annually in relation to gender, disability, race and categories of subcontractor. This is to be compared with publicly available official statistics, where possible, and activities identified to try and improve the position.

#### **5.4 Skills Development Scotland requirements**

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has set out rules for the public funding of Modern Apprenticeships and Employability Fund Activity.

SDS is working to broaden representation of under-represented groups and to address gender segregation in its programmes. Each provider has a key role in broadening participation and must act to ensure equality of opportunity in respect of recruitment of participants and in the provision of programmes and to ensure that no acts of unlawful discrimination are committed. Each provider is required to promptly make available to SDS evidence of all promotional and other activity undertaken by or on behalf of the provider to meet this requirement.

The provider must have an equal opportunities policy covering both its own staff and participants, ensuring equality with respect to all the protected characteristics in the Equality Act. The equal opportunities policy and procedures must be in place before participants are recruited to programmes. The policy must show how it will be monitored and implemented. A copy of the policy must be available to SDS staff on request. The provider must comply with the policy at all times. The rules on Employability Fund Activity require the policy to be updated within two years.

Prior to a participant commencing the programme or activity, the provider is required to make him/her aware of the equal opportunities policy and what to do if he/she feels that he/she is being bullied or discriminated against.

The provider must record equalities monitoring information in accordance with the requirements of the SDS Corporate Training System (CTS).

## 5.5 Welsh Government Requirements

The Welsh Government Work Based Learning (WBL) Programme Specification places contractual obligations on providers.

Each provider is required to ensure that its duties towards current and potential learners are implemented consistently and effectively. The provider must demonstrate that it has formal policies and procedures in place to secure equality of opportunity for current and prospective learners, irrespective of disability, gender, race, age, religion/belief or non-belief, sexual orientation, or any other form of difference or “protected characteristic” as defined by equality legislation; and to ensure that it takes action to tackle discriminatory behaviour by learners, staff or managers.

Each provider must have a formal equal opportunities strategy, including as a minimum:

- i. A policy to ensure compliance with equalities legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, in line with guidance issued by the Welsh Government;
- ii. Clear guidelines to sub-contractors, to staff and to learners on their responsibilities in respect of equality and diversity;
- iii. Appropriate training for staff on their equality duties, the Provider’s own policies and where to access advice and best practice;
- iv. Where necessary, support for its employers to promote equality of opportunity, including sharing good practice; and
- v. Arrangements for monitoring participation and attainment by age, gender, ethnicity and disability status, including data and analysis from referral agencies and benchmarking participation rates against local and national averages; and taking positive action to improve participation and attainment by under-represented groups.

Each provider must undertake a formal review of its equal opportunities strategy at least every two years, and must use its own data and annual self-assessment to evaluate its effectiveness in implementing the strategy. The Welsh Government will use LLWR data and other evidence, including self-assessment reports, to monitor participation rates and to evaluate action taken by providers to secure equality of opportunity.

Each Provider, including its sub-contractors and/or members of its consortium, must have arrangements in place to address issues of bullying, discrimination, victimisation or harassment for both learners and staff. Arrangements will include procedures for investigating complaints about bullying or harassment (linked to the provider’s overall complaints procedure); support and advice for learners and/or staff members who are involved in investigations; and appropriate guidance and training. Learners and staff must be made aware of expectations in relation to bullying and harassment as part of induction. The policy must make it clear that bullying or harassment on the grounds of disability, gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation or any other form of difference will not be tolerated.

## 5.6 Ofsted expectations

Ofsted inspects education and training provision in England. The Ofsted Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills sets out the judgements that inspectors will make during inspection. The Ofsted Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills provides guidance on inspection and how inspectors will use the Common Inspection Framework to award grades.

Inspection will evaluate how individual learners benefit from their courses and learning programmes. The response to individual needs is tested by observing how well a provider helps all learners to make progress and fulfil their potential, especially those whose needs, dispositions, aptitudes or circumstances require particularly perceptive and expert teaching and, in some cases, additional support.

Inspectors will make judgements about:

- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare
- Outcomes for children and other learners

For effectiveness of leadership and management, the criteria include:

- how effectively leaders, managers and governors monitor the progress groups of learners so none is disadvantaged or underachieve
- the extent to which leaders promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics), and how well learners and staff are protected from bullying and discrimination, including those based with employers and at other sites external to the provider

The characteristics of an outstanding grade include “Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well so that the ethos and culture of the provider counters any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and learners do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour. The promotion of fundamental British values is at the heart of the provider’s work.”

For quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the criteria include:

- teaching, learning and assessment promote equality, raise awareness of diversity and tackle discrimination, victimisation, harassment, stereotyping, radicalisation and bullying
- staff are aware of and plan for individual learners’ diverse needs in teaching or training sessions and provide effective support, including making reasonable adjustments for disabled learners or those with special educational needs

The characteristics of an outstanding grade include “Staff are quick to challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language, including at work. Resources and teaching strategies reflect and value the diversity of learners’ experiences and provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of people and communities beyond their immediate experience.”

For outcomes for learners, the criteria include:

- Learners make progress during their programme compared with their starting points, with particular attention to progress by different groups of learners

The characteristics of an outstanding grade include “Across the provider and in different types of provision, including subcontracted provision, current learners make substantial and sustained progress from their different starting points.

## **5.7 Estyn expectations**

Estyn inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales in relation to Estyn’s Common Inspection Framework. The framework presents three key questions:

1. How good are outcomes?
2. How good is provision?
3. How good are leadership and management?

As part of their judgement about “How good are outcomes?” the inspectors will consider standards of groups of learners and may look at the relative performance of

- learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
- learners with additional learning needs
- learners from different ethnic groups; and
- male and female learners

The inspectors will also consider the standard of learners’ Welsh language skills.

As part of their judgement about “How good is provision?” the inspectors will consider ethos, equality and diversity in the learning environment. This includes how well the provider:

- establishes an ethos that is inclusive;
- challenges all forms of discrimination or inequality for all groups who potentially could suffer lack of fair opportunities for learning and/or employment;
- offers fair access to all training and challenges stereotypes in learners’ choices;
- develops tolerant attitudes and makes sure that all learners and staff are free from harassment; and
- promotes the prevention and elimination of oppressive behaviour through its policies and procedures

The inspectors will also consider the extent to which work-based learners are protected from harassment and discrimination in their workplaces and evaluate whether the provider:

- has a well-understood policy that promotes equal opportunities and human rights;
- has an action plan that ensures delivery of the policy;
- provides appropriate equality training for staff; and
- monitors and addresses any related issues or complaints that arise.

## **5.8 Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) expectations**

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) sets out in detail the Expectations that providers of higher education (HE) are required to meet in relation to academic standards, academic quality and information about higher education provision. The Quality Code also provides guidance on how these Expectations may be met.

Providers are required to promote equality through: the design, development, approval, monitoring and review of HE programmes; adherence to principles of fair admission; inclusive forms of teaching, learning and assessment which are supported by technology; accessible policies, regulations and processes; inclusive arrangements for student engagement; accessible, inclusive and fair procedures for appeals and complaints; guidance and support to staff to understand the impact of equality legislation on their roles as well as staff access to information on creating an inclusive learning culture; the provision of information to prospective students about how an inclusive learning experience is provided and diverse needs are met.

The Quality Code explains:

“Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, irrespective of the group or groups to which they belong, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, for example because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, location, or age, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and responsibility for, promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. The nature of students' particular learning experiences may vary according to location of study, mode of study, or academic subject, as well as their protected characteristics, but every student experiences parity in the quality of learning opportunities. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of individual reasonable adjustments wherever necessary. Offering an equal opportunity to learn is distinguished from offering an equal chance of success.”

## **5.9 Merlin Standard**

The requirements of the Merlin Standard should be met for relevant NCG supply chains.

The Element of the standard on Promoting Diversity and Equality includes three Criteria:

“The Organisation can demonstrate and Supply Chain Partners can validate:

- that in agreeing Supply Chain Partnership arrangements it has ensured that processes are in place and in alignment with their own commitment to Diversity and Equality.
- that effective processes are in place to monitor and promote Diversity and Equality throughout the supply chain.
- the way in which Equal Opportunities data is collected, analysed and used within the supply chain.”

### **5.10 Matrix Standard**

The requirements of the Matrix Standard should be met in relevant information, advice and guidance services.

The Matrix Standard includes a criterion that:

“The organisation implements policies to promote equality and diversity, impartiality, confidentiality and professional integrity in all aspects of service delivery.”

## 6. NCG's Equality Aims

NCG's equality aims provide a framework for the whole organisation in valuing diversity and advancing equality. The aims describe NCG's approach to meeting the General Duty placed on public authorities by the Equality Act 2010; the relationship between the General Duty and NCG's equality aims is shown at the end of this section.

Provision to learners and customers is delivered by NCG's Divisions. The equality aims provide flexibility for each Division to consider its particular circumstances including the local needs of learners and customers, the curriculum and services offered and the implications of funding body requirements and national quality standards. Human Resources specialists provide advice and support at Division level on matters relating to staff including recruitment and selection, staff training and development.

The equality aims are aligned with NCG's Single Equality Scheme 2010-14 and the general approach in relation to each aim builds on experience gained under that Scheme.

NCG's equality aims are:

### **(a) Raise the awareness and skills of staff to promote fairness, equality and good relations**

Approach:

- Mandatory staff training on equality and diversity on induction with bi-annual refresher training
- Equality and diversity training and development for specific roles, including for those with responsibility for delivery of teaching, learning and assessment as well as those responsible for delivery of initial advice and guidance
- Sharing of practice on ensuring an inclusive approach to delivery and on embedding equality and diversity within teaching, learning and assessment
- Consideration of feedback from learners, customers and staff
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

### **(b) Embed Equality and Diversity in Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

Approach:

- Equality and diversity embedded in the curriculum
- Equality and diversity topics delivered at induction and through tutorials
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(c) Raise the awareness of learners and customers to promote understanding and good relations between diverse groups**

Approach:

- Equality promoted through marketing materials and display boards / exhibitions
- Equality and diversity topics delivered through curriculum enrichment activities
- Challenge extremist ideas in accord with the Prevent duty
- Consideration of feedback from learners, customers and staff
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(d) Provide a hospitable and multi-cultural environment that welcomes, respects and protects diverse people**

Approach:

- Promotion of NCG's policy on Respect and Consideration for Others through staff, learner and customer induction, tutorials, class discussion, curriculum enrichment activities, handbooks, notice boards and intranets
- Notices on zero tolerance to bullying
- Reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and students based on assessment of need on entry or when disabilities arise
- Publication of support available to meet diverse needs
- Space provided and activities scheduled where possible to accommodate prayers
- Catering facilities which meet a wide range of dietary needs (although it is not feasible to produce authentic Halal or Kosher food on site)
- Encouragement of activities relating to protected characteristics such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) groups
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(e) Monitor learner representation and success and take action to promote equality.**

Approach:

- Accessible websites and marketing materials
- Activities and publicity targeted at under-represented sections of the community
- Communication to learners, customers and relevant external organisations of the support available to meet needs
- Encouragement for the disclosure of disabilities at all stages of the learner journey and efficient processes for referral and assessment of needs
- Monitoring of learner success through quality review and self-assessment with action to address achievement gaps

- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(f) Ensure that all learners and customers achieve good outcomes, whatever their background**

This aim relates to all learners and customers and is not limited to protected groups. This includes, for example, people with alternative educational backgrounds seeking progression to further and higher education.

Approach:

- Appropriate advice and guidance to ensure learners make informed choices
- Identification of needs at all stages of the learner journey
- Arrangement of support to meet individual needs
- Monitoring of learner outcomes through quality review and self-assessment with action to address achievement gaps
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(g) Monitor representation amongst all staff types and take action to promote equality**

NCG's staff types are Business Support, Learning Support, Lecturer and Management employed within a range of contract categories.

Approach:

- Fair and systematic Human Resources practices
- Recruitment processes which encourage applications from under-represented groups
- Reasonable adjustments for disabled staff based on assessment of need on entry or when disabilities arise
- Consideration of feedback from staff
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(h) Consult and involve representative staff, learners, customers and outside organisations**

Approach:

- Consultation with learners, customers and staff about individual needs
- Consider individual needs when providing initial advice and guidance
- Engagement with protected groups through forums, surveys, team meetings, one to one meetings and curriculum enrichment activities
- Liaison with relevant outside organisations including the supply chain

- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(i) Embed the evaluation of equality impact evidence into policy development, business planning and quality assurance processes**

Approach:

- Screening of policies when developed and reviewed for any direct or indirect discrimination or missed opportunities to advance equality
- Equality considered as an integral part of business planning and budget setting to ensure budget proposals include resource to support equality action plans
- Equality considered as an integral part of supply chain design
- Monitoring of learner outcomes through quality review and self-assessment with action to address achievement gaps
- Monitoring of equality practices in teaching, learning and assessment through observation processes
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

**(j) Ensure that partner organisations meet NCG's standards and requirements for equality**

Approach:

- Approval and monitoring processes for subcontractors and placement providers set out requirements for equality, including a suitable equal opportunities policy
- Equality criteria written into contract conditions where appropriate
- Active monitoring of practice at partner organisations through observations, performance and quality monitoring
- Sharing of best practice with subcontractors
- Other action identified locally to meet local needs and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions

### How NCG's equality aims meet the General duty

<b>General duty:</b>	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct	Advance equality of opportunity	Foster good relations
<b>NCG's equality aims:</b>			
Raise the awareness and skills of staff to promote fairness, equality and good relations	X	X	X
Embed Equality and Diversity in Teaching, Learning and Assessment	X	X	X
Raise the awareness of learners and customers to promote understanding and good relations between diverse groups	X		X
Provide a hospitable and multi-cultural environment that welcomes, respects and protects diverse people	X	X	X
Monitor learner representation and success and take action to promote equality		X	
Ensure that all learners and customers achieve good outcomes, whatever their background		X	
Monitor representation amongst all staff types and take action to promote equality		X	
Consult and involve representative staff, learners, customers and outside organisations	X	X	X
Embed the evaluation of equality impact evidence into policy development, business planning and quality assurance processes	X	X	
For all large contracts ensure that potential suppliers meet NCG's equal opportunities standards and requirements	X	X	X

## **7. NCG's Equality Objectives for 2014-18**

NCG has set specific and measurable equality objectives to provide focus. The pursuit of these objectives is in addition to routine activities to meet NCG's Equality Aims.

The equality objectives contribute to compliance with equality legislation and, in particular, the requirement for specific and measurable objectives under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

We have set objectives relating to staff across the organisation and also objectives for each Division. The objectives were identified in consultation with the Divisions and reflect the circumstances of each.

### **7.1 Staff**

NCG provides mandatory training modules for staff on Equality and Diversity and on Disability Awareness as part of induction and as a refresher every two years. The training is important in maintaining general awareness of the legal duties as well as awareness of the need for development specific to roles. The combination of new starters and the requirement to refresh training means that completion of these modules never reaches 100% of staff. Therefore there is a need for monitoring to ensure completion of the mandatory training by staff across all Divisions. Our Human Resources MIS team will provide Directors and Heads with monthly completion reports. Directors and Heads will encourage their staff to complete the training.

The proportions of disabled people and people from ethnic minorities amongst managers have declined from the levels in August 2012. Human Resources will arrange targeted recruitment to re-establish these levels.

NCG's equality objectives in relation to staff are:

- Raise the completion rate for mandatory staff training modules on Equality and Diversity and on Disability Awareness to 85% by July 2015.
- Raise the proportion of disabled people amongst managers to from 3.02% in 2013-14 to 3.76% by July 2016 and the proportion of people from ethnic minorities amongst managers to from 3.85% in 2013-14 to 4.51% by July 2016.

### **7.2 Newcastle College**

Newcastle College aims to promote equality of access to subject areas, removing real or perceived barriers to career pathways. Particular areas for focus are the proportion of female students in Construction, Engineering and Science (5.72% in 2013-14) and at the Digital Skills Academy (9.5% in 2013-14).

Newcastle College also aims to develop and nurture a deeper understanding of Equality and Diversity throughout all levels of the Division. Learner engagement on equality is a key area for focus.

Newcastle College's equality objectives are:

- Increase the proportion of female students in Construction, Engineering and Science (5.72% in 2013-14) and at the Digital Skills Academy (9.5% in 2013-14) to 12% by September 2018.
- Hold 20 learner forums during each year dedicated to identifying and addressing disadvantages suffered by learners who share protected characteristics (no dedicated learner forums were held in 2013-14).

These equality objectives are in addition to routine action and general development to pursue NCG's equality aims and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions.

### **7.3 Newcastle Sixth Form College**

Newcastle Sixth Form College (NSFC) aims to investigate underrepresentation of male learners and to address this through a review of curriculum enrichment activities and the approach to marketing. Males accounted for only 36% of learners at NSFC in 2013-14 and there was a similar pattern in previous years.

The retention and achievement of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities was below that for other learners at NSFC in 2013-14. The college aims to review its approach to communications at enrolment and its support arrangements to address this.

Newcastle Sixth Form College's equality objectives are:

- Increase the proportion of male learners aged 16-18 on academic Programmes of Study from 36% to 46% by September 2018
- Improve the retention of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities from 90% in 2012-13 so that by September 2018 it is equal to, or above the NSFC average (91% in 2012-13)
- Improve the achievement of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities from 83% in 2012-13 so that by September 2018 it is equal to, or above the NSFC average (87% in 2012-13)

These equality objectives are in addition to routine action and general development to pursue NCG's equality aims and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions.

## **7.4 Kidderminster College**

Kidderminster College has identified a need to close achievement gaps for female learners and non-white learners on particular courses.

Success rates for female learners have improved over the last three years. However, achievement by female learners aged 16-18 studying level 2 courses was below the national average and below that of male learners.

In 2012-13 there was general improvement at the College in success rates for white and non-white learners. Whilst the number of learners joining long courses was small, there was a gap in achievement between white and non-white learners on these courses.

Kidderminster College's Equality Objectives are:

- Narrow the achievement gap of female learners, aged 16-18, on level 2 courses by increasing their success rates from 69.8% to 84.0% during 2014-18
- Narrow the achievement gap of non-white learners on long courses by increasing their success rates from 78.6% to 84.5% during 2014-18

These equality objectives are in addition to routine action and general development to pursue NCG's equality aims and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions.

## **7.5 West Lancashire College**

In the five years preceding this Equality Strategy, West Lancashire College increased the proportion of full-time male learners aged 16-18 to approximately 50% of this cohort. However, male learners accounted for only about 30% of the largely part-time cohort of adult learners in 2013-14. This is to be addressed through a review of the curriculum offer to ensure this meets the needs and aspirations of male adult learners and the marketing of adult and part time provision to ensure this reaches all potential male learners.

West Lancashire College has made great progress in narrowing the achievement gap between different groups of learners. In 2012-13 there were positive variances in success rates against the performance of their counterparts for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) and for male learners at age 16-18 and a minimal variance (-0.8%) for learners from widening participation backgrounds at age 16-18. There were negative variances in success rates against the performance of their counterparts for male adult learners (-3.5%) and for adult learners from widening participation backgrounds (-4%). West Lancashire College aims to maintain and build on this progress in closing of achievement gaps and improved equality of outcomes and aims to deliver parity of success rates for all cohorts, and particularly those identified below, throughout the period 2014-18; parity being interpreted as a positive or negative variance of no more than 2% in success rates between different groups of learners.

West Lancashire College's equality objectives are:

- Increase the proportion of adult male learners on accredited programmes from 30% in 2013-14 to 40% by July 2018
- Continue to close the gaps in the success rates of all groups of learners to achieve parity of performance within +/- 2% of their counterparts throughout the period 2014-18, with a particular focus on male learners, learners from widening participation backgrounds and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

These equality objectives are in addition to routine action and general development to pursue NCG's equality aims and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions.

## **7.6 Intraining**

Intraining helps to train and develop a diverse mix of people ranging from school leavers just starting out on an apprenticeship to the long-term unemployed. Intraining's divisions include Employment Related Services, Work Force Development and Corporate Accounts. The company works with employers in the UK in all industries and sectors. A significant proportion of work done for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support unemployed people is subcontracted.

The complexity and geographical spread of Intraining's activities and subcontracting arrangements presents particular challenges for co-ordination and communication. Intraining aims to advance equality throughout its operations.

Intraining's equality objectives are:

- Produce an annual Diversity and Equality Delivery Plan for each Intraining division which includes all subcontractors and is developed in consultation with learners, building on plans in place for Employment Related Services and Work Force Development in 2013-14.
- Extend training in "Embedding Equality and Diversity in Delivery" as delivered for Employment Related Services to Work Force Development and Corporate Accounts by August 2015.

These equality objectives are in addition to routine action and general development to pursue NCG's equality aims and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions.

## **7.7 Rathbone Training**

Rathbone Training works with young people across the UK facing personal challenges in terms of their learning and social support needs. This work ranges from specialist provision for young people aged 14+ who are partially or fully excluded from school, to Advanced Apprenticeships.

Rathbone Training will operate a Youth Forum at all centres to encourage youth participation. Rathbone Training will also provide equality training and development for all staff.

In Wales, Rathbone Training promotes the Welsh Language through the use of incidental Welsh in centres, bilingual signage, Welsh word/phrase of the week and bilingual technical word dictionaries for each sector subject route. It is proposed to deliver some sessions through the medium of Welsh in future.

Rathbone Training's equality objectives are:

- Improve representation amongst learners during 2014-18 by increasing:
  - the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) learners participating in Rathbone Training's Traineeship programmes in Wales from 4.6% to 8.0%
  - the proportion of females accessing Study Programmes amongst Youth Programmes from 41% to 46%
- Narrow achievement gaps during 2014-18 by increasing:
  - the proportion of BME learners who achieve a qualification or progress positively from Traineeships in Wales from 69% to 74%
  - the proportion of male learners who achieve a qualification or progress positively from Traineeships in Wales from 83% to 85%
  - the proportion of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities completing apprenticeship frameworks through indirect delivery in Employer Based Training from 68% to 73%
  - the proportion of BME learners completing apprenticeship frameworks through indirect delivery in Employer Based Training from 80% to 85%
- Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into the curriculum by introducing sessions in Wales delivered through the medium of Welsh and raising the proportion of such sessions to 10% by 2018.

These equality objectives are in addition to routine action and general development to pursue NCG's equality aims and ensure that local activities comply with relevant legislation, regulations and contract conditions.

## 8. Roles and responsibilities

- All individuals within NCG, including staff, learners, customers and governors are responsible to ensure the proper observation of the principles of this Equality Strategy. In particular, this relates to the treatment of others so that the environment in which we operate is, as much as possible, free from prejudice and discrimination;
- The Board of Governors is responsible for: compliance with equality legislation in its own processes; overseeing the response by the Executive to equality legislation; approving this Equality Strategy and overseeing progress;
- The Chief Executive of NCG, supported by the Executive Board, is responsible for ensuring the organisation and its Divisions take action to comply with equality legislation.
- The Group Director Human Resources and Organisational Development, supported by the Group Head of Equality and Diversity, is responsible for
  - Policy development, implementation and monitoring to ensure compliance with equal opportunities legislation
  - ensuring the formal monitoring and review of this Equality Strategy in line with relevant research, legislation, Codes of Practice and good practice
  - monitoring to ensure progress in meeting the equality objectives
- Divisional Heads, supported by their staff, are responsible for implementation of NCG's equality aims and objectives at the operational level.
- The responsibility of Divisional Heads includes maintaining, implementing and communicating policies for the use of any prayer rooms or other faith-related activities. Such policies should outline structures in place for managing prayer and faith facilities and mechanisms for managing any issues arising from use of the facilities.
- All managers are responsible to ensure the effectiveness of the Equality Strategy by giving their support and ensuring that staff, learners and customers in their area understand NCG's expectations for each person under the strategy. Human Resources will advise managers on their responsibilities under this strategy, particularly regarding employment matters.

## **9. Monitoring and publication of outcomes**

Monitoring in relation to the equality aims and objectives will continue to be aligned with the annual business cycle to ensure progress.

In order to exercise responsibility under this Equality Strategy, governors and senior managers will be provided with a range of monitoring information. This will include data on the protected characteristics and other relevant information about staff, learners and customers. This is purely for the purpose of ensuring the maximum effect of this Equality Strategy; personal data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and security over data will be adhered to at all times.

Each part of NCG will take action locally to support progress towards meeting the equality aims and objectives, ensuring compliance with legislation, relevant quality standards and funding body requirements.

Progress will continue to be reported annually to NCG Corporation. The Equality Strategy and these annual reports are made available under NCG's publication scheme and are accessible on-line in electronic form and are also available in hard copy.

The Equality Strategy will be reviewed on a four year cycle.

## **Contacts**

### **Alternative Formats**

If you would like this information in audio, DAISY, large print, Braille or in a language other than English, please contact:

Peter Johnson  
Learner Services  
Rye Hill Campus  
Scotswood Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 7SA

Telephone: 0191 200 4354

Peter.Johnson@ncl-coll.ac.uk

### **Sharing your views on the Equality Strategy**

To provide feedback or suggestions about the Equality Strategy, please contact:

Mark Sacco  
Group Head of Equality and Diversity, NCG  
Rye Hill Campus  
Scotswood Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 7SA

Telephone: 0191 200 4300

mark.sacco@ncgrp.co.uk

### Complaints

Any complaint of unfair treatment under the Equality Strategy must be treated as a serious matter and does not need to be in writing from the individual nor submitted under a formal procedure. If the complaint is not in writing the person receiving the complaint will produce a written record of the details of the complaint and request that the individual agrees that the record is an accurate reflection of the interview.

In the event that an individual does not wish to access a formal procedure, and provided that the individual does not specifically request otherwise, the person receiving the complaint has responsibility for taking action about the matter, which may involve referring it to an appropriate senior manager within NCG if it is outside his/her scope of control.

If a member of staff wishes to make a complaint under a formal procedure about a matter relating to their employment regarding their treatment in relation to this Equality Strategy, he/she may submit a complaint under the Grievance procedure.

If a learner, customer or member of the public wishes to make a complaint under a formal procedure regarding their treatment in relation to this Equality Strategy, he/she may submit a complaint under the Complaints procedure.

A separate policy concerning 'Respect and Consideration for Others' provides additional support for recipients of harassment beyond that offered in the Grievance or Complaints Procedures.