

## Equal Opportunities & Access Policy 2023/24

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Original Issue Date	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
Next Review Date	September, 2024
Risk Assessment  (Please note here any identified risks of non-compliance with the policy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners disadvantaged in accessing learning and assessment opportunities</li><li>• Learners not achieving their qualifications</li><li>• Service not meeting the needs of all learners.</li></ul>



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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out:

- The service's commitment to equality and diversity
- What the service aspires to in relation to equality and diversity, especially in teaching and learning and assessment
- The responsibilities of staff and learners are in relation to equality and diversity.

### 1.1 Policy Statement

Adult Learning believes that equality is one of the key values of the service and must be embedded in everything the service does.

We are fully committed that everyone, whatever their circumstances or background, will:

- Be fully respected and valued
- Have equality of opportunity
- Have full access to all activities (wherever possible)
- Be treated as an individual.

This will be achieved through:

- Adopting a 'whole organisation/service' approach to diversity and inclusion
- Ensuring awareness of equality, diversity, and inclusion across the service and at all levels of staff
- Ensuring effective recording and monitoring of data on participation, retention, and success to narrow the achievement gap of key ED and I groups
- Ensure staff receive training appropriate to their role
- Adopting clear lines of communication with staff and learners, keeping them up to date on legislation and procedures, including keeping them within the law and supporting them to act in non-extremist ways
- Ensuring adequate links are kept with outside agencies and partners to promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ensuring all teaching, learning and assessment documents and materials support the concept of equality and diversity
- Ensuring clear and timely reporting procedure.

### 1.2 Scope

This policy statement covers all staff, volunteers, partners, and learners in Adult Learning in Cumbria.

## 2. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

This policy will be used to promote fairness in all aspects of practice within Adult Learning and support its commitment to be fully inclusive. The service recognises that some groups of learners may be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (e.g., learners with learning difficulties, mental health issues, refugees etc.).

All learners regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have the right to equal protection from all types of prejudice and the risk of radicalisation.

## 3. Reasonable Adjustments

A reasonable adjustment through learning support helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the learning and assessment situation.

To comply with equalities law, Adult Learning has in place clear arrangements to make reasonable adjustments in relation to its qualifications so that a learner with special educational needs, disabilities, medical illness, mental health issue or temporary injuries can demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the qualification.

Reasonable adjustments may be required at the time of assessment where:

- Learners have a permanent disability or specific learning need
- Learners have a temporary disability, medical / mental health condition or learning need
- Learners are indisposed at the time of the assessment.

The provision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration is made to ensure that learners receive recognition of their achievement so long as the comparability, validity and reliability of the assessments can be assured. Such arrangements are not concessions to make assessment easier for learners, nor advantages to give learners a head start.

A reasonable adjustment is any action which is taken arising out of the legal obligation to overcome disadvantage experienced by a person as a result of having a disability. Disadvantages may be caused by 'physical features' or by 'arrangements' and providers are required to take such steps, as it is reasonable for them to have to take in all the circumstances in order to remove that disadvantage.

A reasonable adjustment is intended to allow access to assessment but can only be granted where the adjustment does not:

- affect the validity or reliability of the assessment
- give the learner(s) in question an unfair advantage over other learners taking the same or similar assessment
- influence the outcome of the assessment decision.

In relation to learners, a reasonable adjustment may be defined as an accommodation or alteration to existing admission arrangements, learning and teaching, examination arrangements and rules relating to qualifications where these contain inherent barriers for learners with disabilities.

The implementation of a reasonable adjustment aims to allow learners to access education without disadvantage within a framework of standards. There is however no duty to adjust a 'competence standard' to make allowance for a disability.

## 4. Special consideration

Special considerations can be applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment. The following is a list of examples which might be eligible for special considerations (the list is not exhaustive):

- serious illness of the learner
- serious illness of a parent / dependant
- bereavement of an immediate family member
- incapacitating illness of the learner
- recent domestic crises
- accident and injury to the learner
- trauma caused by a recent event or experience.

Learners cannot enter a plea for special considerations for assessment solely on the grounds of disability or learning difficulty.

Where an assessment requires a competence to be met fully, it may not be possible to apply any special consideration.

### 4.1 Applications for Special Consideration

Learners who believe that they have been disadvantaged through circumstances beyond their control can request that special consideration is made regarding the outcomes of their assessment.

The learner must inform the assessor/invigilator at the time. The Centre must then complete the Special Consideration Request Form and send it to the MIS team to then contact the Awarding body as soon as possible always within the requirements of the specific Awarding body (in all circumstances no later than seven working days after the assessment).

Applications must be accompanied by supporting evidence, e.g., in the case of an illness, a doctor's letter or a statement of events from the Centre.

The Awarding body will confirm receipt of the request and provide written feedback on the decision to both the Centre and the learner.

## 5. Further sources of information:

### 5.1 Relevant legislation

- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2022
- Human Rights Act 2010

### 5.2 Relevant Council policies and guidance:

- Equality for all in Cumbria:

- [Equality Objectives 2022 \(Cabinet Report\) \(PDF 231KB\)](#)
- [Transgender Inclusion and Gender Diversity Policy](#)
- [Neurodiversity Guidance \(Doc 113KB\)](#)
- [Dyslexia Guidance \(Doc 98KB\)](#)