



## **SMARTT North East Ltd Single Equality Scheme 2013-2017**

Welcome to the SMARTT Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2013-17.

Our approach aims to respond to the existing legal duties and new duties under the Equality Act 2010. We will update the Scheme, as appropriate, on the introduction of new regulations and codes of practice.

SMARTT is committed to valuing diversity. The approach presented in this Scheme gives specific responsibilities to directors, managers, staff, participants, employers and employed trainees.

The Single Equality Scheme replaces our Valuing Diversity Policy, Disability Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme and Race Equality Statement. This provides simplification and fulfils the legal duty to review and revise the earlier Schemes and policies.

Created: June 2013

## Executive summary

The mission of SMARTT is " To effect and offer high quality training and assessment services to employers and individuals, and to build lasting relationships with our suppliers" and a key objective underpinning this mission is to “promote diversity”.

SMARTT is pleased to embrace the general equality duty presented by the Equality Act 2010 which is consistent with our mission and this aim. SMARTT’S equality objectives are designed to support the mission and achieve legal compliance.

This Scheme identifies a responsibility for all individuals within SMARTT including staff, employed trainees, employers and directors to ensure that the environment in which we operate is, as much as possible, free from prejudice and discrimination.

Management responsibilities to ensure equality are also presented. The Scheme presents: evidence of SMARTT’S strong commitment to equality and diversity, equality objectives and an action plan. SMARTT’S equality objectives are:

- (a) Raise the awareness and skills of staff to promote fairness, equality and good relations
- (b) Raise the awareness of employed trainees to promote understanding and good relations between diverse groups
- (c) Provide a hospitable environment that welcomes, respects and protects diverse people
- (d) Monitor trainee representation and success and take action to promote equality
- (e) Ensure that all employed trainees achieve good outcomes, whatever their background
- (f) Consult and involve representative staff, employed trainees and outside organisations
- (g) Embed the evaluation of equality impact evidence into policy development, business planning and quality assurance processes
- (h) Ensure that partner organisations meet SMARTT’S standards and requirements for equality

Targets arising from these equality objectives are to increase the proportion of employed trainees from these types by a minimum of 5% over the life of the Scheme.

SMARTT 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 SMARTT'S mission can be achieved.

SMARTT is also committed to avoiding harassment and has policies and procedures in place regarding respect and consideration for others which address this issue. We will take action to remind staff, employed trainees and employers that we do not tolerate bullying and harassment and that we have appropriate policies and procedures in place to address it. SMARTT will approach managing diversity by recognising the diverse needs of staff, employed trainees and employers (both actual and prospective) and by ensuring that barriers to diversity are removed in relation to:

- understanding the concept of diversity and SMARTT'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.
- ensuring that on-line materials adhere, wherever practicable, to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility standards and guidelines

## **Roles and responsibilities**

- All individuals within SMARTT, including staff, employed trainees, employers and directors are responsible to ensure the proper observation of the principles of this Scheme. 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 SMARTT is responsible for: compliance with equality legislation in its own processes; overseeing the response by the Executive to equality legislation; approving this Scheme and overseeing progress

The Managing Director of SMARTT, supported by the Board, is responsible for ensuring the organisation and its divisions take action to comply with equality legislation. A member of the SMARTT board is nominated to lead the process from a senior mgt perspective.

Divisional Heads, supported by their staff, are responsible for implementation of SMARTT'S equality objectives at the operational level.

All managers are responsible to ensure the effectiveness of the Scheme by giving their support and ensuring that staff, employed trainees and employers in their area understand SMARTT'S expectations for each person under the Scheme.

## **Equality for Employed trainees and Employers**

We aim to ensure all employed trainees and employers are able to fully participate in all aspects of provision.

We will gather data for monitoring purposes on enrolment to the programme. This includes details of race, sex, details of any disability or learning difficulty and the relevance of any Widening Participation category.

We aim to ensure that employed trainees with protected characteristics are just as likely to achieve a good qualification in their studies as other employed trainees.

We aim to support employed trainees into sustainable careers, including facilitating opportunities for employment and experience, as appropriate to their programme.

## **Equality in Employment**

We aim to ensure equality through the employment cycle including recruitment, selection, staff development, discipline and grievances. The relevant policies are subject to our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and an EIA will be carried out at each review.

Monitoring data will be gathered as part of recruitment and selection process. We will review our monitoring process in the light of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Staff Training and Development**

Staff training in requirements of equality legislation has been made mandatory across the company. There is an on-going need for staff training and development to increase awareness and sensitivity to needs associated with all the protected characteristics and to develop the capacity of each member of staff to fulfil the responsibilities associated with their role.

## **Consultation and Involvement**

- Consultation questions accompanying the Scheme
- Surveys, forums and informal dialogue with employed trainees and employers
- Communication within and between staff teams
- Liaison with employed apprentice representatives

There have been no customer complaints to date relating to equality. If this occurs these will be thoroughly investigated and resolved in accordance with our complaints policy and procedures.

We believe that a Single Equality Scheme achieves better overall communication with employed trainees, employers, staff, employers, partners and communities. Consultation and involvement is fundamental to the success of the Scheme and we are committed to embedding this in our business processes.

We will consider the views of all involved in further development of this Scheme and in the review of progress. Staff, employed trainees and employers are well placed to tell us how we can improve our approach. We also welcome views from external

organisations and the general public. We have made provision in the action plan to ensure that arrangements for routinely listening to people are developed, as appropriate, to better understand needs associated with protected characteristics.

### **Management Arrangements**

Equality monitoring and action planning is aligned with the annual business cycle. The SMARTT board will receive an annual report on equality and diversity. This report will include representation by race, disability, gender and age amongst employed trainees

### **Procurement and Contracting**

SMARTT has promoted equality through its procurement and contracting arrangements. Those delivering education or training services on behalf of SMARTT will be monitored by SMARTT staff to ensure equality. For all contracts we have required potential suppliers to have an equal opportunities policy in place. We will develop the relationship with such suppliers by using equality related award criteria and using and incorporating equality related contract conditions, where relevant and proportionate.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The purpose of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that the impact of proposed changes is considered before implementation. Our policies have been subject to EIA with particular concern for promoting equality in relation to race, disability and gender; this reflected the legal requirement.

We have developed our EIA process to harmonise the approach across SMARTT and reflect the wider range of protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act.

Since it is not practicable or desirable to apply a formal process to every day to day decision, members of staff are expected to cultivate sensitivity to needs and show consideration for colleagues, visitors, employed trainees and employers.

We believe that this consideration is as important as operation of the formal process and therefore have given high priority to on-going staff training and development in relation to equality and diversity.

Our action plan will include arrangements for routinely listening to people to better understand needs associated with protected characteristics.

We will also consider the views of staff representatives

### **Accessibility of Information**

SMARTT will ensure the accessibility of information. Information provided via the internet will be constantly reviewed to ensure that content is non-discriminatory. The production of on-line learning resources and publicity materials has adhered, wherever practicable, to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility standards and guidelines. Alternative formats will be made available when appropriate. Advertising and publicity materials will highlight the commitment to equality.

### **Accessibility of Buildings and other areas**

Commitment to accessibility is a commitment of the work undertaken on SMARTT building projects and the development of general site arrangements.

We embrace the challenge of change to continually improve accessibility to all groups, involving disabled staff, employed trainees and employers wherever possible to seek best solutions to access problems prior to physical alterations to premises.

### **Funding Body Requirements and Guidance**

In preparing this Scheme, we took account of the good practice that is required by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Education Funding Agency (EFA). The funding agencies have signalled that responsibility for the approach to compliance with equality law rests with providers.

The SFA/EFA sets as a condition of funding that each provider 'shall ensure that equality of opportunity is built into all aspects of provision; the business planning process; the self-assessment process; and that its strategic plan identifies SMART [specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound priorities in this area. The contract also requires compliance with the principles set out in the SFA's Single Equality Scheme.

The SES (Single Equality scheme) Action Plan presents our SMART actions.

The SFA's Single Equality Scheme encouraged providers to

- identify needs and challenges relating to all protected characteristics and to identify cross cutting issues

- develop single equality schemes because of the benefits of coherence and synergy

## **Ofsted Requirements**

We have taken into account the approach to grading providers described in the new Common Inspection Framework. Inspectors will consider how effectively a provider actively promotes equality and diversity, tackles discrimination and narrows any achievement gap.

The action plan describes the steps SMARTT will take to promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow any achievement gap.

## **Action Plan**

### **Format and Presentation**

The action plan is presented in relation to the equality objectives. It describes the steps SMARTT will take to comply with the general equality duty and includes SMART targets.

### **Arrangements for Monitoring, Review and Publication**

Monitoring in relation to the SES Action Plan will continue to be aligned with the annual business cycle to ensure progress. In order to exercise responsibility under this Scheme, directors 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, employed trainees and employers. This is purely for the purpose of ensuring the maximum effect of this Scheme; data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and security over data will be adhered to at all times.

Progress towards the equality objectives will continue to be reported annually to the SMARTT board.

The SES (Single Equality Scheme) will be reviewed on a 4 year cycle.

## **Single Equality Scheme Action Plan**

**Objective 1 - Raise the awareness and skills of staff to promote fairness, equality and good relations in the context of their roles.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Relevant aspects of general equality duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
<p>Ensure staff are competent to incorporate equality issues into their work including sensitivity to needs and consideration for differences relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Gender reassignment</li> <li>• Marriage and civil partnership</li> <li>• Pregnancy and maternity</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Religion or belief</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> </ul>	<p>Eliminate unlawful Conduct</p> <p>Advance equality</p> <p>Foster good relations</p>	<p>Staff training and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising and role specific training</li> <li>• Induction</li> <li>• Refresher</li> <li>• Recruitment &amp; selection training</li> </ul>	<p>MD supported by OD – overseen by Equality and Diversity leader (board member)</p>	<p>Annual monitoring of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training and development</li> <li>• Feedback from staff, employed trainees and employers</li> </ul>	<p>Feedback from staff, employed trainees and employers confirms there is appropriate consideration of diverse needs in day to day activities</p>
<p>Ensure there is</p>	<p>Promote equality</p>	<p>Formal monitoring</p>	<p>Equality and</p>	<p>Monitoring of</p>	<p>Evidence of</p>

accountability for promoting equality in relation to the protected characteristics			Diversity leader supported by Divisional managers	SMARTT Divisions in relation to the equality objectives on an annual cycle	initiative to promote equality across the organisation
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**Objective 2 – Raise the awareness of employed trainees to promote understanding and good relations between diverse groups.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Meets legal duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
Develop employed trainees' and employers' awareness and sensitivity to needs and positive attitudes towards differences relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Gender reassignment</li> <li>• Marriage and civil partnership</li> <li>• Pregnancy and</li> </ul>	Foster good relations	Learner/customer induction, reviews and tutorials  Publicity via notice boards	Equality and Diversity leader	Annual monitoring of feedback from staff, employed trainees and employers	Feedback from staff, employed trainees and employers confirms there is appropriate consideration of diverse needs in day to day activities

maternity • Race • Religion or belief • Sex • Sexual orientation					
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**Objective 3 – Provide a hospitable environment that welcomes, respects and protects diverse people.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Meets legal duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
Brief and remind staff, employed trainees and employers about policy and procedures on respect and consideration for all, including those with protected characteristics	Eliminate unlawful conduct • Foster good relations	Learner/customer induction and use of notices/posters  Staff induction, training and development	Equality and Diversity leader  Heads of Sector	Annual monitoring of feedback from staff, employed trainees and employers	Feedback from staff, employed trainees and employers shows freedom from harassment and victimisation
Communicate a welcome to diverse communities	Promote equality	Publicise support to meet diverse needs associated with protected characteristics via the Internet	SMARTT Marketing	Annual review	Employed trainees and employers are attracted from diverse communities

**Objective 4 - Monitor learner representation and success and take action to promote equality.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Meets legal duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
Monitor the admission and progress of employed trainees and act to address underrepresentation and underperformance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate unlawful conduct</li> <li>• Promote equality</li> <li>• Foster good relations</li> </ul>	<p>Record age, disability, ethnicity and gender of employed trainees.</p> <p>Review data gathering processes on-entry and on programme</p>	Equality and Diversity leader	Length of Scheme	<p>The diversity of employed trainees with the diversity of communities served.</p> <p>Parity of success between employed trainees with and without the protected characteristics</p>

**Objective 5 - Consult and involve staff, employed trainees and outside organisations in assessing the suitability of these equality objectives, in identifying priority areas for action, in taking action (where practicable) and in reviewing progress.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Meets legal duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
Ensure arrangements for involving people in determining the response to equality legislation, and in reviewing the effectiveness of that response, are continual and are developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote equality</li> <li>• Foster good relations</li> </ul>	Establish routine involvement of staff, employed trainees and employers with the protected characteristics	SMARTT Executives, Equality and Diversity leader	Length of scheme	Developments show consideration for protected characteristics

**Objective 6 - Embed the evaluation of equality impact evidence into policy development, business planning and quality assurance processes so as to identify how this evidence supports proposed developments.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Meets legal duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
Implement the Single Equality Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate unlawful conduct</li> <li>• Promote equality</li> <li>• Foster good relations</li> </ul>	Action plans	SMARTT Executive	Annual cycle	<p>Action plans developed as part of business planning and budget setting.</p> <p>Annual report to SMARTT board</p>
Assess impact of policy developments on equality	Promote equality	Use of monitoring data, involvement of people with the protected characteristics and reference to relevant guidance	SMARTT Executive	Annual cycle	Policies justified in terms of equality in relation to protected characteristics

**Objective 7 - Ensure that partner organisations meet SMARTT'S standards and requirements for equality.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Meets legal duty</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Planned outcomes and output</b>
Promote equality in relation to protected characteristics amongst partners	Promote equality	Contract conditions relating to protected characteristics, where relevant and proportionate	SMARTT Executive	Length of scheme	Equality related award criteria and contract conditions to be introduced, where appropriate,