

## **Public Sector Equality Duty - Specific Duties**

### **Association of Colleges (AoC)**

The Association of Colleges (AoC) represents and promotes the interests of Further Education, Sixth Form and Tertiary Colleges and their students. Colleges provide a rich mix of academic and vocational education. As independent, autonomous institutions established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, they have the freedom to innovate and respond flexibly to the needs of individuals, business and communities. The following key facts illustrate Colleges' contribution to education and training in England:

- Every year Colleges educate and train three million people.
- 831,000 of these students are aged 16 to 18 compared with 423,000 in schools.
- 63,000 14 and 15 year olds study at a College.
- One-third of A-level students study at a College.
- 44% of those achieving a level 3 qualification by age 19 do so at a College.

AoC provides guidance and advice to member Colleges on aspects of employment and equality matters, including the Equality Act and the public sector duty.

### **AoC response**

Colleges would welcome the proposed changes to the Equalities Act, as they reduce process and publication burdens and focus instead on outcomes.

We are aware that trade unions are unhappy about the proposed changes and will push for public sector bodies to follow processes that mirror the earlier draft Regulations published in January 2011. Therefore, even though the new Regulations may be lighter touch and more flexible, public bodies may find that their unions have different expectations. Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission on how to implement the specific duties would therefore be helpful.