

# TORBAY COUNCIL

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## Torbay Racism Review Panel

### Review Panel Notes

**Monday 8 November 2021**

**Review Panel Attendees:** Councillor Atiya-Alla (Chair), Councillor Barrand, Councillor Loxton, Councillor Douglas-Dunbar (substitute for Councillor Steve Darling), Maia Thomas and Kevin Dixon.

**Also Present:** Laurence Frewin, Principal and CEO, South Devon College, Liz Lawrence, Assistant Principal, South Devon College and Kelly Sooben, Vice-Principal, South Devon College.

**Other Councillors Present:** Councillor Law

**Apologies:** Councillor Steve Darling, Councillor John Thomas, Kofi Yeboah-Aidoo and Rehan Uddin.

**Pecuniary Interests:** None declared.

The panel asked a range of questions to the representatives from South Devon College and the key points that came out of the questioning were:

- The college supports BAME students via its tutorial system and via a personal development programme which focuses on citizenship and equality and diversity. The college also does a lot to promote Black History Month, has an International Club, a country of the week and a focus on current affairs issues. The college did a lot on the Black Lives Matter issue and celebrates events such as Diwali at the College and offers cultural trips for students.
- The college has an Equality Working Group that focuses on all protected characteristics and meets regularly to review the experiences of BAME learners but the college does acknowledge that it could do more
- The college measures the success of these initiatives via the student voice and listens to students. The Senior Leadership Team meets once a month to review equality and diversity issues and to identify issues and gaps. In relation to staff that leave, exit interviews are held to determine any issues and the same is done with learners who leave South Devon College
- The college has a buoyant take up from adult students who have english as a second language
- The panel questioned whether students felt safe to voice concerns on race issues. The college explained that they have a system in place that allows students to raise issues anonymously or they can raise issues via the tutorial system with their tutor. Other mechanisms are also available such as student councils and specific groups such as young carers

- Staff can voice concerns via the robust policies in place via their manager or HR team and the college regularly reviews these policies to ensure they are best practice
- The college stated that in relation to race the culture of the college was explicit. This was backed up by its statement in response to George Floyd's death in May 2020
- The panel asked about racist incidents at the college and the college stated that they were not seeing high levels of reporting but they are aware that there could be underreporting of incidents. However, the college did state that over the last 12 months they had no racist incidents with staff
- The panel questioned whether the college had measurable objectives on racial equality and they responded by stating that they had more work to do on this and that it was still work in progress. They explained that they wanted to do more work with BAME staff and learners to explore what the right actions and measures could be
- A member of the public asked the college what work they did with families of learners to address racism. The college stated that they already did lots of general work with parents and families but often found it difficult to engage with them and that they could do more to engage with BAME families specifically to support them and their children
- The college explained that all new staff have mandatory equality and diversity training when they arrive at the college and then all staff have annual updates to keep them up to speed on best practice in this area. In addition, some staff such as those involved in the Prevent Agenda have specialist training
- The college considers that their strengths in relation to equality and diversity are listening to their learners, the strengths of the personal development programme, clear code of conduct for staff, robust Equality Impact Assessment process and low instances of racist incidents with staff
- The college considers its areas for development in equality and diversity to be; improved data tracking, better engagement with the local community to check they have the right actions in place, improving reporting processes to encourage learners and staff to report incidents, to increase number of BAME staff and learners, to work more closely with families and parents on equality and diversity, to work more closely with staff to find ways to remove or overcome barriers, to encourage BAME staff to come and work at the college and to highlight existing staff who can be role models for others
- The panel questioned whether a formal process for raising incidents for staff and learners was appropriate and whether informal processes also played a role. The college explained that all incidents start off informally and then, as appropriate, scale up to the formal process if required. The important thing the college wanted to express though, was that all racist incidents at the college would be treated seriously
- The panel questioned how quickly the college could implement improved reporting of incidents and the college responded by stating that the personal development programme for learners could be revised in two weeks to focus on any changes required

- The college stated that they were very keen to work collaboratively with other organisations in Torbay but especially those in the public sector, to have a joint approach to tackling racism and other aspects of equality and diversity. The college was particularly keen to learn from other organisations on how to improve reporting of incidents
- A member of the public suggested that the college look at using theatre to raise the issue of racism with their students and inspire conversation about it
- In response to a question from the panel the college stated that the council could help them on this issue by removing some of the barriers to BAME staff and learners moving to Torbay via improved housing, more jobs and making the culture and environment of Torbay more welcoming to people from a BAME background. They also wanted to collaborate more closely with the council as they recognise this is not just a college issue but is so across Torbay's organisations and institutions. The college was keen that a community wealth building approach was taken to tackling the issue.

Action – College to provide racist incident figures to panel

Action – College to share any adjustments made to personal development programme with panel